

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The perspectives of Pupils, Parents and Teachers, in a
Secondary School, regarding the role of Homework.

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Hull

by

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June 2007

For Nicola and Joanna

With grateful thanks, for all their encouragement, to

***Nigel G. Wright MA
Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull:***

and

Tim H. Bennett BEd(Hons)

Dr. Valerie E. Dagley BA(Hons) MA EdD

Angela J Francis Cert Ed

Barry D. Gransden BA (Hons) MSc MBA

Ron E. Munson BSc (Hons) MA

and the whole community of

Cromer High School and Language College, Norfolk
who willingly submitted themselves to this research project

and for the support of

The Yellis Institution, University of Durham.

Thanks also to

Alan R Childs BA(Hons) MPhil and Susan Moore Cert Ed

who have proof read this dissertation.

Abstract

Homework has long been a subject of discussion. This research reflects upon previous research in this area and endeavours to clarify some of the more significant issues surrounding homework. Using a case study based upon Cromer High School in Norfolk, five cohorts of pupils and their parents were surveyed about their attitudes towards homework, and the practicalities of how they complete it on a day to day basis. The teachers in the school were surveyed separately. The GCSE results of all five cohorts, and their value-added scores were provided through the Yellis project at the University of Durham. Two groups of pupils were identified; one group who had achieved far better GCSE grades than might have been expected, and a second group who underachieved at GCSE. Both groups were then compared with the whole pupils' cohort in relation to their data about homework.

The main findings are that:

1. There is evidence that homework helps to produce better results at GCSE.
2. Pupils expressed a view that greater clarity of purpose in setting homework would be welcomed.
3. Homework is perceived by the majority of pupils of all ages as easy and lacking in challenge.
4. A majority of pupils values the recognition of good work through the Merit Mark scheme.
5. There is a wide variation in the amount of time pupils report spending on homework. A great number of pupils report spending less time on

- homework than the school policies indicate.
6. The Pupil Planner is shown to be a successful tool appreciated by many.
 7. The use of work space appropriate for homework and the availability of useful resources both indicate a wide variation.
 8. Parents request advice on how to support and encourage pupils with homework tasks.
 9. A number of teachers are unaware of the school's and/or their department's Homework Policy.
 10. Responses of pupils and teachers indicated that there is a discrepancy in how feedback is viewed and understood.

The conclusions indicate that there is evidence that homework has a beneficial effect upon student attainment as identified in terms of a value added approach. There are, however, still many issues relating to homework which the evidence gathered in this study suggests needs further exploration, discussion and agreement between pupils, parents and teachers.

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Glossary of abbreviations found within this research:

AAM	<i>(former) Association of Assistant Mistresses</i>
AMA	<i>(former) Assistant Masters' Association</i>
AMMA	<i>(former) Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association</i>
Allis	<i>Advanced Level Information System</i>
ATL	<i>Association of Teachers and Lecturers</i>
BBC	<i>British Broadcasting Corporation</i>
CATs	<i>Cognitive Ability Tests</i>
DES	<i>(former) Department of Education and Science</i>
DfEE	<i>(former) Department for Education and Employment</i>
DfES	<i>Department for Education and Skills</i>
GCE A level	<i>General Certificate of Education: Advanced Level</i>
GCE O level	<i>(former) General Certificate of Education: Ordinary Level</i>
GCSE	<i>General Certificate of Secondary Education</i>
HMI	<i>Her Majesty's Inspector</i>
HMSO	<i>Her Majesty's Stationery Office</i>
ICT	<i>Information and Communication Technology</i>
IEP	<i>Individual Education Plan</i>
KS	<i>Key Stage of the National Curriculum (England and Wales)</i>
LEA	<i>Local Education Authority</i>
LSA	<i>Learning Supports Assistant</i>
Midyis	<i>Middle Years Information System</i>
NAS/UWT	<i>National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers</i>
NFER	<i>National Foundation for Educational Research</i>
NICED	<i>Northern Ireland Council for Educational Development</i>
NUT	<i>National Union of Teachers</i>
Ofsted	<i>Office for Standards in Education</i>
PGCE	<i>Post Graduate Certificate in Education (formerly implied Qualified Teacher Status)</i>
PSE	<i>Personal and Social Education</i>
QTS	<i>Qualified Teacher Status</i>
S4/S5/S6	<i>Scottish system for identification of year groups of pupils; S4 is the year group in which 16 year old pupils take their public examinations, and equates to Y11 in the English system.</i>
SE	<i>School Effectiveness</i>
SI	<i>School Improvement</i>
SPSS	<i>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</i>
TES	<i>Times Educational Supplement</i>
TIMSS	<i>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</i>
TV	<i>Television</i>
UK	<i>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</i>
USA	<i>United States of America</i>
YELLIS	<i>Year 11 Information System</i>

Throughout this research the word "pupil" has been used to refer to children and young people up to the age of sixteen. However, some literature has used the word "student". These should be regarded as being synonymous.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and summary of the issues.

The initial research questions aim to explore:

1. Previous research and literature relating to this area of investigation.
2. Through three distinct, but interrelated, surveys of pupils, parents and teachers in the school to ascertain attitudes to homework and provision and practice of homework at the time of this survey. Through these surveys the following issues will be considered:
 - a. The commitment of teachers to homework as an aid to improve results;
 - b. The commitment of parents to support their child achieve the best possible results at the end of the formal education process;
 - c. the commitment of the young person to achieve, or exceed, their potential;
 - d. Whether or not available resources assist pupils in the learning process within homework.
3. Using the value-added score of each of these pupils as a result of their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, two groups of pupils, will be identified. One achieved high (positive) value-added scores and the other low (negative) value-added scores. The responses of these two groups will be compared with the responses of the whole sample in relation to findings about homework.
4. The data obtained from the responses will be analysed to discover any information which might shed light on approaches to homework and School Improvement.

Homework has traditionally been set for generations of school pupils; schools generally expect pupils to undertake regular subject homework, yet there is obviously not a total commitment to homework amongst parents, pupils or

even teachers. The main political parties thrust homework into the educational limelight in the lead-up to the 1997 national elections. It would seem that secondary schools generally expect their pupils to complete subject based homework on a regular basis; in primary schools the policy is less consistent. "Prep." is a long-standing feature of the (fee-paying) independent schools, occupying pupils in peaceful activities during the long spell between end of teaching time and bedtime. Perhaps there is an implied conflict between homework which is set as a follow-up activity, and "prep." which is a form of preparation for the work of the next lesson.

Review of writings by MacBeath and Turner (1990), Buckland (1993), Wooton (1993), Feeney (1996) and Stern (1997) as well as Reports by HMIs (1987 and 1995) would review the arguments of the last ten years. What is the current viewpoint of teachers (and headteachers and governors)? Does the school have a Homework Policy?

The trouble with a Homework Policy... is that it tends to be yet another triumph of hope over experience. There is too often a marked difference between what the school policy *says* should happen and what in practice *does* happen.

(Wootton 1992, p.3)

There are many interested parties involved with homework, for diverse reasons. Teachers, parents and pupils are the most directly involved, but there are other groups less directly involved.

Speculation would question whether homework is able to improve results at GCSE. Whether there are any connections between homework and results in public examination may be questionable, but even if there is not, homework would not necessarily be negated; learning to work alone for its own value

could be regarded as a "life skill". Homework needs to be relevant for the pupil and for the subject and not an add-on imposed with little thought as the lesson ends. Pupils need to be able to know how they have coped with such work, so the whole question of monitoring, marking and feedback needs to be resolved by the school and adhered to by the teachers.

Parents have a role to play in homework. Homework can be a source of conflict within the home, and because of the uniqueness of each family, the school needs to be ready not to impose an inflexible homework regime but to offer strategies to assist and support. It may be this research will offer some fresh insights; it must be best for school and home to work together. Parents may need support in providing the best environment for individual work, and to know how best to help their child. The more that parents are involved, but perhaps not interfering, the more likely the task will be achieved. Whilst the parents who feel that they have little expertise to offer their child may be at a disadvantage, equally, so are the parents who feel they know everything and have all the answers. The parents' role is a very delicate balance.

In addition to reviewing literature published in recent years in order to gain an overview of previous work done in this area, an extensive survey has been completed by pupils, parents and teachers. This research has been anonymous; no individual has been identified. Whilst it would be inevitable to rehearse the arguments for and against homework, it also would be helpful to obtain an overview of the current status of homework amongst pupils, parents, teachers and others. Whatever the philosophical arguments supporting and contradicting homework, the situation, as it is translated into the lives of pupils, is, at least, equally valuable. If homework cannot be made to have any educational worth, and is not relevant to the educational development of pupils, it has doubtful value. If it becomes a disproportionate imposition upon

the time, energy and resources of the classroom teacher, jeopardising the relationship between pupil(s) and teacher, its continued unaltered existence must be questioned. If homework creates conflict between parent and child, strategies must be established which allow families to live together without having daily life disrupted. This may mean that a variety of support tactics or even the review of homework itself is employed, especially if homework is affecting adversely the family unit.

This research does not merely rehearse the arguments for and against homework, but would identify current practices within this specific case study school, exemplifying unusual and innovative experiments and even challenging those involved with homework into fresh insights and new perspectives. The research will also endeavour to ascertain whether or not there is evidence to support the notion that a positive attitude towards homework by pupils (and/or their parents) could be seen as a significant attribute in individual pupils' value-added score at GCSE level, and indeed the whole ethos of School Improvement. If there are aspects of homework which appear to assist towards School Improvement or individual increased value-added scores, these aspects need to be identified, publicised and lauded. The case study school is Cromer High School, (Appendix A: letter from Chairman of Governors) Norfolk, an 11-16 years all-ability High School serving the seaside town of Cromer and its rural hinterland. At the time of the research there were nearly six hundred pupils. The school's last Ofsted inspection (in May 2000) reported:

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This popular, mixed 11 to 16 Foundation school has 636 pupils on roll. Over 99 per cent of the pupils are white. There are 115 pupils on the register of special educational needs: an average number (24) have statements. The school is located in the north Norfolk coastal town of Cromer. It draws its pupils mainly from the surrounding area, but some also come from beyond and this provides a balanced socio-economic mix. While attainment on entry varies each year it is about the average expected for similar-

aged pupils nationally. An average proportion (15 per cent) of pupils is eligible for free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school. It has significant strengths in the good quality of teaching, the quality of care it provides for its pupils and in its leadership and management. Standards of attainment are improving when compared with national averages and those for similar schools. This school provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 4 in relation to national standards and well above those for similar schools.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and enables pupils to make good progress.
- The school's governing body, headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership and a clear educational direction for its work.
- There are clear priorities for raising standards and a coherent strategic plan, supported by very good financial plans, to achieve the clearly identified priorities for School Improvement.
- The quality of education provided and the progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about school: their attitudes and behaviour are good and the quality of their personal development and relationships are very good.
- Provision and support for pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent and complements learning in the taught curriculum.
- The quality of information provided for parents about pupils' progress is very good.

Ofsted report (2000) © Crown copyright 2000

The Ofsted Report did not specifically comment on the perceived success of homework within the school, but it did refer to homework within a limited number of subject reports, especially where it was felt that homework was used effectively.

1.2 Initial Research Questions

The initial research questions aim to explore:

1. previous research and literature relating to this area of investigation;
2. through three distinct, but interrelated, surveys of pupils, parents and teachers in the school to ascertain attitudes to homework and provision and practice of homework at the time of this survey. Through these

- surveys the following issues will be considered:
- a. The commitment of teachers to homework as an aid to improve results;
 - b. The commitment of parents to support their child achieve the best possible results at the end of the formal education process;
 - c. the commitment of the young person to achieve, or exceed, their potential;
 - d. Whether or not available resources assist pupils in the learning process within homework.
3. Using the value-added score of each of these pupils as a result of their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, two groups of pupils, will be identified. One achieved high (positive) value-added scores and the other low (negative) value-added scores. The responses of these two groups will be compared with the responses of the whole sample;
 4. The data obtained from the responses will be analysed to discover any information which might shed light on attitudes to homework and School Improvement;
 5. Issues raised from the literature review will be compared with the results of the surveys to see whether or not further insight is obtainable.
 6. Recommendations will be made for:
 - a. Cromer High School;
 - b. School Homework Policies in general;
 - c. Potential future research.

1.3 The structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is organised in seven chapters; the first is this introduction which is followed by:

2. Literature Review

3. Methodology
4. Results
5. Responses to issues arising from the Literature Review
6. Summary, Practical Implications and Recommendations
7. Conclusions

2. Literature Review.

This literature review will fall into three sections:

1. *"Homework in a wider perspective"* [section 2.1] will consider the development of homework practice in England (but with some reference to practice in other countries too) and will consider the various occasional involvements of political parties. An overview of the case study in Scotland by John MacBeath and Mary Turner (1990) will also be included.
2. *"Operationalising Homework"* [section 2.2] will review issues as they will relate to individual schools: aims and objectives, policies, styles of homework, marking and feedback, differentiation, the time factor, excuses for not doing homework and appropriateness of punishments for not doing homework.
3. *"Homework within a triangular relationship: pupils, parents and school"* [section 2.3] will consider communication channels between these three parties, homework facilities at home and at school, and the use of homework diaries.

2.1 Homework in a wider perspective.

2.1.1 What is homework?

A definition of 'homework' has to cover a range of possibilities but recognise the common features. Such a definition would refer to learning:

- That is relevant to teachers' curricular objectives
- Which takes place outwith formal classroom teaching
- Which is primarily the responsibility of the learner himself/herself

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.1)

Simply, homework is work done by school pupils at home, as opposed to schoolwork, which is the work they do whilst under direct supervision at

school. In some ways the two are very separate: why spend time at school doing work which could be done at home, without the direct supervision of the professional, the teacher?

Similarly, school work should in general be done in school, not at home, and where homework is set, it should involve work that could not easily be done in school.

(Stern 1997, p.3)

However, as can be so adequately illustrated, schoolwork and homework are very integrated, and it is this integration which is so fundamental to the education of the whole person.

For *OU* courses homework is clearly more than an 'add on': it is the centrepiece of the whole institution.

(Stern 1997, p.6)

There is a whole world of correspondence courses, and there is the rather unfashionable world of instrumental tuition. I still remember my piano lessons, and can still more or less play the piano, but the lessons were only for an hour a week, much less time than I spent on French or Physics, both of which have left far less of an impression on me. Typically, instrumental tuition involves about one hour a week of 'lessons' and an hour a day of practising; a ratio of 1:7. Again, this implies that homework is more important than it seems to many schoolteachers. What makes the *OU* ratio of 1:18, or the instrumental ratio of 1:7 possible, when History teachers like myself find it difficult to get pupils to do half an hour of homework a week to support between one and two hours of lessons? The average school class work to homework ration is around 3:1. English teachers, for example, set an average of one hour ten minutes of homework a week to Year 9 pupils (according to Rutter *et al.* 1979) and they would be lucky if the pupils did that much. So why is it so difficult?

(Stern 1997, p.6)

Homework is at its best when it is more than just extended class work.

(Stern 1997, p.143)

Homework, to be effective, needs to be integrated with the work done in the classroom. The quality of the work set for homework needs to be every bit as good as the work done in the class, yet teachers, who often prepare for the classroom in great detail, and with great professionalism, are often quite content to set homework as an afterthought.

In the past there was, perhaps, a tendency to think of homework in a somewhat restricted way, as being a matter of reinforcement and revision. Its value in this respect will continue to be recognised, but in school where the general policy is to promote in its pupils characteristics such as personal pride in achievement, initiative and self-confidence, a wider view is likely to prevail. (NICED, 1989)

(Stern 1997, p.149-150)

The success of homework was related to the quality rather than the quantity of the set assignments. (DES, 1987)

Summaries of homework research suggest that the relationship between homework and higher achievement is strongest where the following conditions are met:

- The task is appropriate to the pupil's level of ability
- The task is linked to ongoing work in the classroom
- The teacher gives recognition and feedback to completed work
- There is some degree of parental involvement

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.8)

These conditions are less likely to be achieved without adequate preparation and planning by the teacher.

A more acid test of homework might rest on whether or not it increases motivation to learn and encourages young people to assume ownership for learning.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.8)

Most studies conclude that homework should be more an integral part of teaching and learning, that it should be more carefully constructed and communicated, and that there should be guidance on how to make most of homework.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.9)

The integration of homework and class work is hence important, and such integration should be obvious to the pupils. They are less amenable to homework when it appears to them to be an add-on activity that has no apparent relevance to the work they have undertaken in the classroom, and appears, to them, to be a time-filler. As the pupil proceeds up the school, it is more usual for homework to last over longer periods of time. GCSE coursework often lasts over six or eight weeks. The skills required by pupils to manage this are quite advanced and complex.

In the third and fourth year the varied pattern of homework requirements by different subjects is a continuing theme. While most subjects now give homework, some require a regular three or four times weekly commitment while others set assignments once every two or three weeks. A once-fortnightly ink exercise (a neatly presented write-up of an experiment, for example) is a quite regular feature in some subjects, particularly in science. For pupils, keeping track of different subject requirements and organising time accordingly, was becoming increasingly complex.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.31)

Nevertheless, organisational skills that are achieved by pupils not only set them up with useful life skills, but also enable the requirements of the examination syllabus to be efficiently and effectively covered.

Properly designed homework can play a valuable part in a pupil's education. Certainly, over a school career, it can add a substantial amount of study time. It offers opportunities for work which is (*sic*) independent of the teacher; it can exploit materials and sources of information which is (*sic*) not accessible in the classroom; it allows pupils to complete work started in school or to practice skills learned in class; it permits the setting of tasks in accordance with the abilities of individual pupils; and it can help strengthen the liaison between the home and the school.

(DES 1987, p.1)

Traditionally, homework appears to be in opposition to many other activities pupils would like to undertake during their non-school hours. Perhaps it is worth noting that it can be argued that it is not just activities that confine a pupil to a table in the bedroom that can be called homework. Many other activities can be used to attract pupils and to make homework acceptable and fruitful.

The examples and suggestions in this report have mainly referred to homework as traditionally conceived. But many out-of-school activities which fall outside the strict limits of homework, can be equally, if not more, valuable educationally.

(DES 1987, p.38)

Where examples of successful homework across the age range were found they had a number of characteristics in common, all of which derived from this relationship of homework to curricular objectives. First, homework was interpreted and implemented within flexible guidelines which avoided an adherence to a rigid time allocation and made allowance for widely differing circumstances, including age, ability, home conditions and other demands on pupils' time. ... Second, the success of homework was related to the quality rather than the quantity of the set assignments. Successful

homework was designed to take account of the different ages, abilities and needs of the pupils. ... Moreover, the work set in some instances encouraged pupils to assess and to record their progress in a systematic way and the work produced was marked regularly and sensitively by the teacher. ... Third, successful homework is more likely to occur as a result of a school Homework Policy, devised as part of its general policy on the curriculum, than when it is left solely to the initiative of the individual teacher. Such policies were found in all types of school, and they properly varied according to age, needs and circumstances of the pupils concerned.

(DES 1987, p.43)

It can also be argued that *what* is done for homework is not the important factor. It is important that pupils develop the ability to take charge of their own learning and their own organisation, to develop areas of research, to follow an activity through to a conclusion and to organise results to meet deadlines. These skills will equip them more for their adult life than the content of many homework exercises.

We did not need to be reminded that it is the attitudes to learning that lie at the root of success or failure, but perhaps we did not need to be reminded that attitudes to learning are formed as much, if not more, by what happens out of school than by what happens within it. If we believe that success is ultimately determined by the ability to take charge of your own learning then it is likely to be tested most critically outside school.

(MacBeath 1996, p.21)

So perhaps the concern of the political ideologies being expressed in current political life is the feeling that they are concerned more about using pupils' free time (perhaps to keep them off the streets and out of trouble) rather than in developing the value of homework as an activity in preparation for life. Their agenda seems to suggest that this should be limited by cost. Writing in the TES, Michael Bassey lamented the parties' disregard for the role of research in formulating policy,

Education featured prominently in the general election, but educational research hardly got a mention. Am I guilty of special pleading in expecting that the party manifestos would make some mention of the role of research in developing education? I think not.

(Bassey, TES website, 1997)

Ten common purposes of homework have been defined by Epstein (1998) as “the ten P’s”, and quoted in Sharp, Keys and Benefield (2001):

1. Practice
2. Preparation
3. Participation
4. Personal development
5. Peer interactions
6. Parent-child relations
7. Parent-teacher communications
8. Public relations
9. Policy
10. Punishment

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), pp. 7-8)

Mnemonics may have the advantage of making a list memorable; the desire to produce such a list may give an incomplete and generalised overview. Policy seems hardly to be a purpose to justify homework and Epstein does comment that the last purpose (i.e. punishment) is hardly a purpose that is defensible.

Cooper (1989a) proposed positive and negative effects of homework:

SUGGESTED EFFECTS OF HOMEWORK

Positive effects

- Immediate achievement and learning
- Long-term academic effects
- Non-academic effects
- Greater parental appreciation of, and involvement in, schooling

Negative effects

- Satiation (loss of interest in academic material and fatigue)
- Denial of access to leisure activities
- Parental interference
- Cheating
- Increased indifference between high- and low- achievers

Cooper H 1989 (a) p.87

It is the outcome of “long-term academic effects” which this study is seeking to clarify. The justification of homework may be best served by a confirmation of this effect. The negative effects are issues which need to be addressed separately.

2.1.2 An historical overview.

The debate in recent years concerning the virtues, or otherwise, of homework, is nothing new. Political parties in the lead-up to the 1997 General Election all heralded “homework” as if it were their invention. In the 2001 General Election “homework” hardly merited mention by any political party. Yet homework has been given to school pupils for decades. More than sixty years ago, in 1937, the then Board of Education, the forerunner of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) issued a paper, the content of which is not so far removed from what is actually happening at the start of the new millennium; perhaps little seems to have changed.

In the very great majority of the schools a homework timetable for each form is drawn up by the Head Master or Mistress in consultation with those members of the staff who are responsible for the subjects and for the forms. It is a common practice to embody in the prospectus or school rules a statement of the time allocated to homework in the various forms of the school, and to require that the parents shall inform the school if the homework takes, or could take, appreciably more or less than the time specified. This is an arrangement which is often a safeguard to the school in case of parents' complaints, but in practice may be an insufficient safeguard for the child.

The schools, however, by no means universally rely on the complaints of parents as a sole check. It is fairly common for the Head Master or Head Mistress to delegate to the form master or mistress some responsibility for oversight. In about one-third of the schools where conditions were investigated a fairly complete check on the homework set was found to be in operation. In some, but not all, of these schools there was also a check on the work actually done.

(Board of Education 1937, p.29)

In 1937 schools were expected to have a policy on homework; subject-teachers were expected to set, form teachers were expected to monitor it; and parents were expected to play their part in supervision, and communication with the school. It was, perhaps understandably, easier for homework to be set for the more academic pupil, who would work through written exercises, whereas the less-able child posed more of a challenge for the subject-teacher.

There has ... grown up in the mind of the public a false correlation between homework

and intelligence, and even between homework and social status. This has often expressed itself in the view that the best children do homework and the worst do not, and it is even claimed that the quality of a school can be judged by whether or not its pupils do homework.

(AAM 1974, p.3)

Parents have always expressed a diverse range of views regarding the merits of homework, some prepared to encourage and support, and others oppose. The AAM expressed the view that there was a direct correlation between academic progress and the amount of homework undertaken.

A corollary ... is the hope that a child's academic standards will automatically improve if he does homework, and so we get parents who regularly set their children homework or who appeal to the schools to do so. On the other side of the coin are those parents who believe that homework is an unwarrantable interference in the lives of children or that it puts an excessive strain on children from which they should be protected, and those who believe that it magnifies and perpetuates existing social inequality.

(AAM 1974, p.3)

2.1.3 The international perspective.

Across the developed world it is generally the experience that schools expect their pupils to undertake homework tasks on a regular basis. In the United States of America the time factor is often recommended by State Laws, and is not dissimilar to what has been suggested at times in the United Kingdom.

The [National] Commission [on Excellence in Schools (USA)] recommended that 'pupils in high schools should be assigned more homework than is now the case'.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p.71)

In 1984 New York City Schools adopted a policy requiring nightly homework assignments for every pupil, with minima ranging from 20 minutes for first graders to two hours for high schools seniors (Fiske, 1985). Likewise Chicago Public Schools recently adopted a policy which mandates a minimum of fifteen minutes for kindergarten children to 2.5 hours of homework per night for high school pupils

(Snider 1986 *quoted in* Johnson and Pontius 1989, pp.71-72)

Race and gender may also be differentiating factors. American research has found no correlation between race and achievement but does suggest that on the one hand, girls do more homework than boys, but on the other that parental expectations are lower for girls. The explanation for this is likely to be found in broader cultural attitudes to school work in general.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.10)

Japanese pupils have a heavy imposition of homework: because of the strong work ethics perceived in Japanese culture, the status of homework is justified by some on the grounds of the eventual benefits and outcome. The situation in South Korea is similar.

Nick Seaton, the chairman for the *Campaign for Real Education*, is quoted as saying that the sooner British Children understand the work ethic, the better (quoted in Carroll, the *Guardian*, 31 August 1993). He argues that Japanese children who are used to completing several hours of work at home each week, develop work skills and self-discipline at an early age which stands them in good stead in the harsh, cut-and-thrust business world of today.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.448)

A survey by an education magazine found that South Korean pupils spent 15% more time on homework and private tuition than their workaholic counterparts in Japan. In addition, many South Korean parents attend courses to learn how to help with schoolwork. Parental keenness to assist with education has helped to make the educational resource and service industry into a billion-pound annual business. With most high-school pupils now receiving extra tuition, educational expenses now consume as much as a quarter of the income of the average family. While schools in the West are looking at ways of increasing pupils' workload, teachers and politicians in South Korea are more concerned about the detrimental effect of excessive academic pressures on young people's mental and physical health.

(Greenlees 1998)

The importance of homework within a nation's education system, and the aspirations of parents for their child will probably impinge upon the effectiveness of homework.

On average, 13 year olds in England and Scotland spent less time doing mathematics homework than their counterparts in the other participating countries: only 6% of students in England (and 4% in Scotland) said they spent four hours a week or more doing mathematics homeworks, compared with 37% in China and 33% in Korea and the Soviet Union.

(Lapointe *et al.* 1992, *quoted in Sharp et al* 2001(b), p.68)

This is but an example and it must not be assumed however that this is reflected in all subjects in all countries.

2.1.4 The current state of homework in England.

General consensus regarding homework amongst the educational establishment, whilst not absolute, appears to be very much in favour; such a consensus is less apparent in many other European countries, including France and Germany. This could offer the opportunity for further comparative research.

Even without the confirmation of the HMI report earlier this year [1987], we knew that a large measure of agreement existed between educationalists on the importance of homework for pupils of Secondary School age - at least among British educationalists: many of our European colleagues are more sceptical.

(Macfarlane 1987)

As has already been acknowledged, homework continues to be high on the agenda of educational policy makers. Ofsted continues to make general evaluations of the role of homework in schools, and to highlight in their reports of inspections in schools examples of good and bad practice. Yet whilst Ofsted has cited schools whose commitment to homework is apparent and tangible, there has been a reluctance to be prescriptive in respect of the amount of time demanded of pupils for homework.

Mr Squire also launched a report by Michael Barber, Professor of Education and Dean of New Initiatives at London University's Institute of Education. In seven schools out of a sample of fourteen cited by the Office for Standards in Education the pupils did more homework and participated in more after-school activities. Mr Squire did not recommend hours of homework, despite the report showing that the Ofsted-cited schools mostly did six or more hours per week.

(Rafferty 1997b)

The report by a team led by Michael Barber ... shows that at 70% of schools from a sample of those judged as "excellent" by the Office for Standards in Education, pupils did six or more hours per week. This compared with 36% of schools found by Ofsted to be "acceptable" or "good" where pupils did the same amount of homework. ... It also found that pupils from Ofsted-cited schools were more likely to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as sports clubs and choir. The report recommends that schools should be made aware of the Homework Policies and practices in the most effective schools.

(Rafferty 1997b)

It has to be acknowledged that research into homework is not easily verified because, by its very nature, it is done at home, outside a controllable environment.

There are (*sic*) a number of reporting difficulties associated with this survey. First, work undertaken outside the classroom, much of it away from school premises, is not accessible to direct observation and inspection, nor is (*sic*) such factors as home circumstances or parental attitudes.

Some of what is said has therefore been based on indirect evidence.

(DES 1987, p.2)

Stern (1997) argues, perhaps partially overcoming the “uncontrollable verification of homework” problem, that homework should be regarded as a facet of the overall education of the individual, and not as a single issue. The integration of homework as a part of the education of the whole person is his recommendation, and he argues that it needs to have a higher profile in planning, preparation and support within the total system than currently appears to be the case.

Most schools try to get pupils to do homework, and to get teachers to set homework. Schools today use homework in many different ways, and in the 1990s it has become a political issue, too, with local and national policies being developed, and high profile charitable contributions to the field. It is used to complement and supplement the classroom experience, to promote strategies of independent learning, to finish off class work, to punish children, to get homes/families involved in education, to incorporate hobbies and leisure pursuits into school work, to research for GCSE coursework, and, no doubt, to fulfil many other functions. However, the effort schools put in to homework is much less than that put into class work. Much less time is spent justifying, planning for, and supporting homework than is spent on class work.

(Stern 1997, p.v)

MacBeath and Turner (1990) has proposed that homework is also partially governed by the frequency in which a specific subject appears on the weekly curriculum of a pupil. Those subjects which appear daily have more versatility regarding homework than does a subject which appears only weekly. The homework timetable will invariably suggest value-judgements of specific subjects.

There is also the hidden curriculum of the timetable which, as well as reflecting high and low priorities, dictates and constrains the pattern of homework by the way in which it distributes different subjects across the week. There is a wide range of approaches to timetabling from the 8 period day to the 2 period day. Each of these has far reaching implications for the allocation and planning of homework.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.30)

MacBeath and Turner (1990) proceeds to recommend that pupils need guidance in study skills, study strategies, time management and stress control.

It is important to discover how young people are tackling their learning, to help them understand what are useful approaches to study, and to help them deal with their anxieties. Guidance teachers are often in the best position to get a better understanding of such pressures and they can play an important role in helping develop strategies for more effective study.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p. 59)

Perhaps teachers are generally and gradually beginning to pay more attention to the *quality* of homework set. Experience will provide time to reflect on the suitability and worthwhileness of tasks, and to accumulate suitable resource materials to enable pupils, even the more disadvantaged, to have a realistic opportunity successfully to complete homework. The ability to work alone and unsupervised is an integral part of the overall learning programme.

It was agreed, for example, that pupils were entitled to homework that was engaging, challenging, at their level of ability and which fed into and enhanced what they learned in the classroom. They deserved to know well in advance what they had to do, and why, and they were entitled to feedback and help on completed work. Parents were entitled to similar kinds of information, as well as to advice on what they could do to support their children, where and how they could get help and what redress they had when entitlements weren't being met. Teachers were entitled to some specific forms of communication and support from parents, co-operation from pupils in completing and preparing work and taking responsibility for supporting and informing their classmates.

(MacBeath 1996, p.22)

As schools build upon their corporate experiences of homework, it can be hoped that the situation regarding homework will improve. Faulkner and Blyth recommend that the profile of homework would be heightened if it had a syllabus, or scheme of work, on a par with that being done in class, and was not, as seems so often to be the case, regarded instead as a last-minute addition.

... it goes without saying that such a system would require extra time and resources within the present state school system. With the heavy demands already made upon teachers' time by the National Curriculum with its accompanying Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs; DES 1989), and with the detailed keeping of pupils' records of achievement, it is too much to expect teachers to regularly set, mark and provide homework feedback to the extent we are proposing. ... we are also suggesting that a homework syllabus should be provided for each year group in the same way that a subject syllabus is submitted. As a result, the provision of extra non-contact time within normal school hours would not only be necessary, but imperative.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.452)

Whilst there appears to be much evidence to support the use of homework within schools, the reality is that homework continues to be a problem area, not just for pupils and their parents, but also for teachers.

Why, then, is homework so disliked in the British educational world? It is fairly widely known that pupils will accept and learn from appropriate homework tasks (Murphy and Decker, 1989; Miller and Kelley, 1991; Mims *et al.*, 1991; Hodapp and Hodapp, 1992; Keith and Cool, 1992; Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon, 1992; Marino, 1993). The evidence suggests, too, that an increased level of contact between home and school can have a noticeable effect on a pupil's success rate (Struckoff *et al.*, 1987; Canter, 1988; Stein, 1988; Murphy and Decker, 1989; Toomey, 1989). Nevertheless, according to a survey carried out by the Consumers' Association's youth magazine, **Check it Out**, published in September 1993, only 11% of British schoolchildren worked at home for longer than two hours each evening. Some 33% worked for only one hour, and one in five of all pupils surveyed admitted to working at home for less than thirty minutes a day. So what is going wrong? Why is this possible source of invaluable extra support going to waste?

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995 p.448)

The question also has to be raised whether parents are generally committed to the importance and intrinsic value of homework. Could it be that their support for it is nominal: because so many other parents support it, and talk about it, it becomes in itself a status symbol which any self-respecting parent feels obliged to continue to support? Irrespective of the experiences the parents had themselves as pupils, and however dubious they may honestly consider homework to be, simply because all other parents appear to be supporting it, they too feel obliged to support it and its intrinsic value, for the sake of their own children.

[Mrs Karen Smith] claims that today's parents have no choice but to push their children because schools are becoming "ridiculously demanding ... it's like a pressure cooker gone mad. Some nursery schools insist on testing children as young as two."

(Kogbara 1998)

The earlier "baseline" testing of children, when they first start school, could suggest the need for children to gain a firm foothold on learning before they have even started school. If such progress, ahead of the norm, is to be maintained, homework will also have to become the norm. The younger the age of the children being set homework, the more controversial it seems to be.

Children as young as five could be covered by formal homework contracts setting out their obligations, the government said this week. Launching its latest homework guidance, education junior minister Charles Clarke said schools will come under pressure to adopt contracts for the majority of parents and pupils. There is no legal compulsion to use them, he said, but failure to do so may bring criticism from the Office for Standards in Education. All schools must produce the contracts from September 1999. The government guidelines, published earlier this year, recommend at least 10 minutes of homework a day for five-year-olds, rising to two-and-a-half hours at GCSE level. Education minister Estelle Morris said: "Parents have a right to have written down what is expected of them and what they can expect from their child's school." Nigel de Gruchy, leader of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said he was concerned schools were being required to take over more responsibilities of the home.

(Ghouri 1998)

The persistent demand for raising standards in education has become a political football, with national politicians feeling equipped to pronounce with authority on many educational issues. This is irrespective of their previous involvement in education, and whether indeed they have even used the state education system for their own children. Politicians appear to be ready to pronounce with authority on matters of which they have little experience, and for which they have received little unbiased and unpartisan advice. Rather than establishing funding and forums for educational research which might produce some valid advice, however unpalatable it might be, they seem more prepared to speculate with educational policies, without being prepared to provide adequate funding, and irrespective of the consequences for the

futures of particular cohorts of children.

The debate over how much homework children should do is likely to be fuelled by a new study which suggests that more than 40% of 11-year-old primary children are never asked to work at home. David Blunkett, the shadow Education Secretary, recently called for national homework targets for primary and secondary pupils of half-an-hour and one-and-a-half-hours a night. He justified the move by pointing out that primary children were spending up to 12 times longer in front of the television than they were with their schoolbooks.

The Labour spokesman's statement was criticised by most of the teacher unions, but Mr Blunkett may feel that a survey of 2,300 11 and 12-year-olds that the National Foundation for Educational Research is to publish on November 17 vindicates his stance. ... Predictably, the secondary children did more homework than the primary pupils-19% hit Mr Blunkett's target of one-and-a-half hours while 13% did even more - but they also managed to watch even more television.

(Keys, Harris and Fernandes 1995a *quoted in* Budge 1995 in TES online)

It seems, listening to some politicians, that there should be no limit to the amount of time children should spend doing homework. The inference is that quality is not a significant factor, but quantity is. The more they do, and consequently, the less time they have left to do other things "less-worthy", the better it is. Fortunately, not everyone would advocate this.

Children need to develop as rounded human beings, and to do so they need time in the evenings for all sorts of non-academic activities ... Technological changes mean that more and more people are now working from home. I believe that it is entirely appropriate to teach pupils how to work independently and that the working day does extend beyond the workplace.

But quality, not quantity, is the key here. I want pupils to work smarter, not harder or longer, and to get some balance into their lives. For us, the homework bandwagon has started to roll in the wrong direction.

(Insch 1997)

Ofsted is in a unique position to monitor and evaluate homework. Regular inspections of schools in England and Wales should enable them to produce evidence, not only of what is happening in terms of the practicalities, but also to evaluate the role of homework in the overall education of the pupil as a feature in raising standards for that individual. However, though able to pronounce on general policies and practices, even they are unable to

comment on the home circumstances in which many pupils find themselves. Ofsted's role is not to inspect homes, and therefore they are not able to comment on the circumstances of individuals. Fielding (1995) raises the spectre of the inequality of home backgrounds for different children. One possible solution advocated is a move towards the "prep" of the independent schools, which is completed at the end of school day, but whilst still under the supervision of the school and using school facilities. This would offer the potential of equal opportunities for all pupils. Fielding also points out that the inability of schools to buy extensive resource materials might also be reduced by this method. However, Fielding concludes

The reason it probably won't happen is partly that it would be expensive, with supervisors to pay and buildings to keep open. But it might also explode the myth that taking work home is good for everybody and reveal it as just another example of our divided society in which the highly motivated and supported succeed and the rest struggle.

(Fielding 1995 in TES online)

There is a great need for "homework fact" to be separated from "homework fiction"; the subjective views of parents, pupils, teachers and politicians need to be tested in objective research. As results become available from this, so homework, if it does have intrinsic value, should have clearer aims and objectives, and be funded appropriately to enable such aims to be achieved. Resources, human and physical, should be appropriate to fulfil the aims of homework. Budge (1995) reports that a NFER survey had showed that children who had completed more maths homework were more likely to score more highly than those who had not. NFER had concluded that the results should be "handled with care" and that how teachers had approached homework tasks, and built on them, was also important. They concluded that the feedback from teachers was also important.

The value of feedback on homework was, however, less evident in the science classes.

And though there was a link between the amount of homework and the science test score it was also less clear-cut.

The two NFER reports to be published next week, which are based on test results and questionnaire responses collected in 1995, complement the two earlier reports generated by the 40-country TIMSS Data on the 13-year-olds' maths and science performance were published last November and the nine-year-olds' results were announced last month.

(Budge 1995 in TES online)

2.1.5 Political parties and teaching unions.

The arrival of the *National Curriculum in England* in the early 1990's removed from schools and teachers much of the curriculum choice, which had been theirs' for decades. A prescribed curriculum in turn led to a more accountable system in which schools were regarded as being answerable and accountable to their customers - pupils, their parents, and the wider community - represented through elected politicians. The standards achieved within education in general, and individual schools in particular, imposed upon schools a visible system of inspections through Ofsted, and through published league tables including SATs, GCSE and A level results. Perceived shortcomings of the system enabled politicians to offer a panacea; political parties were soon advocating the virtues of homework as a remedy for falling standards.

This week the [Conservative] government launched research to support the importance of homework on school performance. Its thunder, however, had already been stolen by Labour leader Tony Blair, who in a TV interview spoke about setting guidelines on the amount children should be doing.

(Rafferty 1997b)

In the interview on BBC's *Breakfast with Frost*, Mr Blair outlined his plans: nursery education for all four-year-olds to replace the [Conservative] government's voucher scheme, base-line assessments in primary schools, a national literacy target, home-school contracts, teacher-training reforms and more. "Our kids aren't doing the amount of homework that they need and we want a special set of guide-lines for homework in primary schools, ..." he said. "A Labour government would dedicate National Lottery money to homework centres for children."

(Rafferty 1997b)

At the 1997 General Election the major political parties were all advocating that homework, irrespective of the quality of the tasks, would, by its very existence, raise standards in schools. It seemed inconceivable that there might be a negative side to homework; homework would be for all pupils, irrespective of age or any other variable.

The [Conservative] government's proposals, announced two days after Mr Blair's, did come with the promise of money. Schools' minister Robin Squire said a grant of £60,000 is to be used to establish and develop homework initiatives in twelve schools. The money would be given to Education Extra, an organisation which supports after-schools activities.

(Rafferty 1997b)

The UK, apparently enjoying stress and limitless tasks, expects all schools to have homework policies and to set homework regularly, but with no upper limit.

(Stern 1997, p.131)

Generally, the popular press supported the initiatives of politicians, and in turn by parents, mirroring what had happened over fifty years before.

During the last decade or so the problem of homework has attracted steadily increasing interest throughout the country. ... Public interest has shown itself in letters to the press, in articles, and finally in a debate in the House of Commons in which all the arguments adduced were on one side.

(Board of Education 1937, p.1)

Lest it should have been thought that there were only the two extreme options in the homework debate, a sensible balance was then proposed.

I think the dangers from too much homework are grossly exaggerated. Boys and girls as a rule are not conscientious to the point of ruining their health by excessive homework. Teachers as a rule are not such heavy slave drivers as not to realise that there are definite limits to the amount of work they set. Parents as a rule don't think they are getting full value for their money if a reasonable amount of work is not set. Teachers who set little or none are regarded as slack and lazy. As things are at present it is quite impossible to cover the requirements of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate without some homework... A certain amount of homework is really necessary in the interests of the pupils themselves, but, as many parents have pointed out to me, it keeps the boys,[sic] particularly, out of mischief. I honestly believe more harm than good would result from its abolition.

(Board of Education 1937, p.25)

The National Union of Teachers acknowledged that there were a number of

interested parties in this debate: not only schools, boards of governors, teachers, parents and pupils, but also politicians, unions, and the wider community, as voiced through the press.

For many years the question of homework has been one in which a lively interest has been shown. It has attracted attention in the columns of the daily press, at various conferences, and even in the House of Commons itself.

(NUT 1937, p.1)

It was recognised that, whilst the principles of homework might be regarded as straightforward, the practicalities were less clear, especially to those who were involved in the daily administration of homework - that is the teachers, the pupils and to a lesser extent, the parents.

This enquiry ... has revealed "the excessive demand which it (i.e. homework) makes upon certain children". "In fact," says the report, "it is not an exaggeration to say that up and down the country there are (*sic*) a substantial number of children who suffer from a sense of oppression which makes itself most evident in their attitude towards this part of their work". While the charge cannot be made against all schools, it is sufficiently general to call for immediate consideration and, at least, for some measure of amelioration of the conditions. The main defects are classified as follows:-

- (1) Insufficient control by staff.
- (2) Faulty organisation.
- (3) Failure to secure the co-operation of parents.
- (4) Unsuitable home conditions.

(NUT 1937, p.8)

Acknowledging the inequality caused by these practicalities, the National Union of Teachers, accepting that homework should continue, proposed that it should be monitored.

It would appear that the investigators agree that homework should continue. They offer suggestions "in order that homework may not be, as it now often is, an unnecessarily heavy burden, and that the time given to it may yield the fullest advantage". These include remedies which fall under two heads - regulation and reduction.

(NUT 1937, p.9)

The Association of Assistant Masters and Mistresses (the forerunner of today's Association of Teachers and Lecturers) had, in parallel, been recommending guidelines for quantity and quality of the work being set as

homework. It proposed that a partnership between the home and the school was required in order for homework to be fully effective; so that homework could ignite pupils' learning initiatives and allow for reflective research by teachers and schools. It would require, especially in the early years of homework, a form of induction training to prepare pupils as to how they should approach homework tasks.

Three resolutions of the Association of Assistant Masters and Mistresses call for mention. The first, passed in 1929, laid down "that the hours of homework, on the basis of a five-hour day, should be the following scale:-

From 11 to 12 years not to exceed ½ hour per day

From 12 to 14 years not to exceed 1 hour per day

From 14 to 15 years not to exceed 1½ hours per day

and that in considering the scale of homework attention should be paid to local conditions."

The second, passed at the Annual General Meeting in January 1933, was based upon a Memorandum of the Education Committee of the Association. It runs as follows: "The Association of Assistant Mistresses believes

- (1) That a definite moral and intellectual value is attached to a reasonable amount of independent work done away from the school premises by children attending Secondary Schools.
- (2) That in order that homework should be fully effective it is essential that there should be co-operation between the school and the home.
- (3) That homework is especially valuable when it stimulates voluntary effort.
- (4) That there is room for experiment with a view to discovering the most effective way of using time allotted to homework."

The third resolution, adopted in January 1936 records: "That this Association considers that during the first year of a Secondary School course children should be given definite training in the correct methods of working before they are expected to work alone at home."

(Board of Education 1937, p.27)

Homework became accepted in most Secondary Schools, and in some primary schools. It was often demanded by parents, as well as by governing bodies of schools. The advent of a National Curriculum enabled schools more easily to be compared. Standards were set, inspected and monitored by inspection, and homework became an issue in accounting for the standards achieved. Schools responded by establishing Homework Policies. It would be a brave Secondary School that argued against homework. In spite of such policies and monitoring of pupils and teachers by senior school managers,

governors and parents, evidence suggests that the wish of politicians was not always fully complied with.

The use of homework is generally one of the weaker aspects of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4. Although it is well used in over one-third of schools in Key Stage 3, it is poor in one-sixth. There is a little improvement in Key Stage 4, where just over two-fifths of schools use homework well, but use remains poor in nearly one-eighth.

(Ofsted 1998)

In January 2005 the national media reported that St John's School and Community College, Marlborough, Wiltshire had abandoned homework.

Newspapers and television reported the story, albeit simplistically and erroneously, and it was untrue. The School had revised the way that the Key Stage 3 curriculum was delivered, and consequently the approach to homework also reflected a changed approach.

Regular homework is an essential element of learning and contributes to the development of sound study habits, especially with regard to the evolving skill of independent learning. It provides opportunity to consolidate and reinforce work in school and is also important in relation to lifelong learning and adaptability.

(St John's School, Wiltshire 2004)

2.1.6 No homework?

What are the likely effects of homework not being employed? Whilst the immediate reaction of teachers, especially those teaching for examination syllabuses, is likely to be that they stand no chance of fulfilling the entire syllabus using classroom time only, there are other effects in the broader education of the young person.

Some of the skills traditionally encouraged by homework are recognised as important and would still need to be acquired. If there is no homework, then they may need to be practised during school hours.

(AAM 1974, p.11)

To encourage independent study and self-reliance it might be necessary to incorporate some periods for private study and preparation.

(AAM 1974, p.12)

Stern's suggestion is that a pupil who is not set homework on a regular basis is disadvantaged by a year of work during the course of their secondary education.

For many pupils in Secondary school, homework is a forgotten year: forgotten by teachers as well as pupils.

(Stern 1997, p.9)

This has to be balanced by the possibility that the teacher is less able to manage and support the learning process.

From the teacher's point of view to be present at the production stage of the pupils' learning process provides a much better vantage point for assessing strengths and weaknesses than that offered by marking work completed in circumstances of which the teacher has no knowledge. This approach to homework would have major implications for teaching styles, classroom management and the kind of resources children required. And this is probably tantamount to saying that such a proposal is a non-starter. ... As one 13-year-old put it: "I mean, fair enough, homework's useful but besides this there's a whole world out there." Perhaps we ought to give children more time to discover it.

(Macfarlane 1987)

Whilst Stern points out the disadvantage of homework, and the potential negative effects of it, he also points out the possible effects on the relationship between parent and child.

There is either too much or too little homework, it is too difficult or too easy, it spoils hobbies or social activities or it fails to keep the children off the streets. Homework is the most common cause of educational arguments between parents and children, parents and teachers, and children and teachers.

(Stern 1997, p.97)

Even sixty years before Stern, the then-Board of Education was pointing out that a balance needed to be kept, and that children needed to be prepared for leisure time - a concept that seemed to be new in the 1990s.

Many of the new Senior Schools are showing keen realisation of the increasing importance of a proper training for leisure. The schoolwork accordingly leaves the

children leisure after school hours, and the school itself provides some opportunity and encouragement for out-of-school occupations.

(Board of Education 1937, p.21)

The Board of Education continued not only to point out the disadvantages for pupils, but also to identify the problems for teachers who endured a heavy load of setting and marking homework.

“For many years during my experience I have held the view that the importance of homework was over-rated. It seemed an undue tax on both pupils and staff.

For the pupils, two points in particular stand out:

(1) The varying conditions under which homework is done. For some the conditions are excellent, parents doing everything possible to give solitude, or at least silence, during a definite time in which the homework is done, but in the great majority of cases the conditions are so hopeless that no genuine work is done, the only result of the homework being to render the children irritable and discontented.

(2) It is often overlooked that a large percentage of the pupils have a long journey to and from school. Many of them leave home at 7.30 a.m. and do not return until 6 or 6.30 p.m. It is, in my opinion, grossly unfair to ask these children to do any further work.

For the staff also, there are two points which need stress:

(1) The majority of teachers, even at best, talk too much in the classroom and do not give the children sufficient opportunity to learn to work by themselves.

(2) The correction of homework exercises, or of exercises set in class on prepared homework, takes up far too much of the teacher's time.”

(Board of Education 1937, p.26)

The National Union of Teachers (with membership predominantly in Primary Schools) cautioned all parties to weigh both sides of the arguments for and against homework, before rushing to make a decision.

The most drastic remedy would obviously be the total abolition of homework. Before such a step is taken the proposal calls for careful examination, and the cons as well as the pros should be carefully weighed.

(NUT 1937, p.8)

The AAM, in 1974, (with a membership mainly in Secondary Schools) argued against homework. They suggested that home factors were very variable, can give rise to family conflict and that in some homes other demands are made upon children. Excessive homework can be counter-productive and is unnecessary in some subjects if the teaching methods and syllabus-content

are overhauled. Homework can also place impossibly heavy marking loads upon some teachers, especially the more-conscientious; if marking is not done, or if it is too late, the homework is devalued. However, the AAM continued, should homework be abolished, alternative action would have to be taken in order to solve the ensuing problems.

It seems clear that the whole timetable and the teaching pattern might need review if homework were to be abandoned for all. It might even be necessary to lengthen the school day, at least for some pupils at certain stages of their school careers.

(AAM 1974, p.12)

Glover, Gough and Johnson, in the last decade of the century, suggest that the evidence regarding homework is apparently contradictory: it might depend on the audience being addressed.

... there are some issues which deserve attention. These include concern that 25% of Year 7 claimed to be doing more than an hour each night, whilst 22% of those approaching GCSE claimed to be doing less than two hours in the course of a week. Could it be that the pupils' responses were coloured by what they felt their peers expected them to say?

(Glover, Gough and Johnson 1997, p.43)

There is, of course, a diverse range of opinions on the value, or otherwise of homework. Little more than anecdotal evidence supports many of these opinions.

If there's a sacred cow for (*sic*) all sacred cows in education it has to be homework. That it must be set and must be done is a universal tenet for schools across the land. To speak out against it feels like heresy but speak out against it I will. First, homework used to be a set of manageable, time bound exercises to be completed with the help of the appropriate textbook and presented for marking the next day. ... Second, homework used to begin at age 11, but now my eight-year-old suffers shades of the prison house long after school has finished... Homework is not by definition a good thing, however popular it is with parents, governors and education ministers. And setting lots of it doesn't prove you're a good teacher (though it may indicate the opposite). Too much homework can demoralise the conscientious, overstretch the most able to the point of underachievement, and act as a catalyst for lateness and absenteeism.

(Davies 1996)

The teacher-parent speaks out – but even if they are prepared to argue

against homework for their pupils and their children, are they prepared to hold their own to ransom? Whilst it is easy to argue against homework, the consequence of abandoning it, especially with one's own children, are perhaps a more unpleasant pill to swallow.

Everyone involved in education is agreed. It would seem that homework, is a Good Thing. I disagree. Although I am a teacher and well past the age when such views are common, I hate homework... All of us work hard at school all day. At the end of the day we want, we need, a little time for each other, a little time for family life. And aren't we all in favour of "family values" these days?

(Harries 1994)

Teachers, as a professional body, are not convinced of the value of homework as opposed to the disadvantages. Perhaps a first step ought to be to have a reasoned debate, and try to persuade the profession to come to an agreement.

Teachers working several hours a night and a big part of their weekends to keep up with the correction and preparation of in-school work must be dismayed to see politicians jumping on the homework bandwagon and pontificating on the need for all children to be given a set amount of homework per week. Comments about too many children failing are coupled with grandiose statements about the need for homework, with no substantial body of research to back them. ... Homework undermines not only the child's self-esteem but her confidence in her parents. It reinforces feelings of failure while obscuring the pupil's difficulties from the teacher. It is thought and spoken of in the same breath as punishment exercises and often viewed with resentment and dread. What can be worse than struggling with homework you cannot do, only to be given a punishment for not completing it? Then there are children whose home circumstances are not conducive to doing homework – they "forget it" or "lose their jotters" or one of the other time-wasting excuses which lead to punishment. ...

Maybe we should look again at our definitions of success. Missing out on childhood, so that you can get a place at university, which you don't really want, is not success. It's a waste, if you have to give up everything else. You can always go back into education, but you can never get your childhood back.

(Gray and Anderson 1997)

It would be an unlikely scenario, but a profession in which all members are agreed about the value of homework might mean that homework is then valued. With so many diverse views amongst teachers, it is hardly surprising that pupils and the wider community have such a confused image of the value

of homework.

2.1.7 John MacBeath and Mary Turner's research: a case study.

The Research Study, published in 1990 and commissioned by the Scottish Education Department (and carried out at Jordanhill College, Glasgow by Professor John MacBeath and Mary Turner), is entitled "Learning out of school: homework, policy and practice". Thirteen schools across Scotland were taken as a case study.

The 1989 national survey of parents' views of school education in Scotland ... clearly indicated a need for further research focused specifically on homework, but also the need for research which would compare parental views with those of teachers and pupils. It concluded that:

- there were wide variations in the amount and frequency of homework reported by parents
- there was a lack of consistency in practice between and within schools
- there was a general failure to explain homework to parents
- for most parents the amount of homework was "about right" but for others it was insufficient, erratic or difficult to ascertain
- most parents would welcome a more consistent statement of policy from the school
(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p2)

The research set out to explore a number of questions, including the following:

- What are the different purposes served by homework?
- How are these purposes communicated
 - a) to pupils?
 - b) to parents?
- What is the relationship between what children learn at school and at home?
- What kind of homework tasks are most appropriate at different stages of primary and secondary?
- Are there optimum times that should be spent on homework at different stages?
- How can homework meet different needs?
- How can parents be helped to support and monitor homework?
- How should homework be managed and monitored by teachers?
- What are the implications for 'good practice'?

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p3)

Much of the [recent] research conducted into homework has attempted to establish whether homework is actually beneficial or, in fact, counterproductive. The questions around which that research has tended to revolve are:

Does it raise achievement?
Does it increase motivation?
Does it develop skills and affect attitudes?
Is it discriminatory? (does it benefit some and penalise others?)

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p7)

Very often research will raise more questions than it answers. The very act of asking a question is often more important than the answer which is proffered.

The very process of asking questions and debating the issues can offer an awareness of and empathy of the viewpoints of others.

The schools in this study (MacBeath 1990) all served deprived populations in Strathclyde, and the intention of the initiative was to provide students with a supportive environment that may be lacking at home. As well as providing access to learning resources, the homework centres created a social environment, focused on learning, in which pupils could benefit from working with other pupils and teachers. Parents, heads and teachers had positive views about the value of Homework Clubs in helping pupils' learning. Participating pupils felt that the centres had made homework more enjoyable, and given them a better chance of passing their exams.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p.44)

Among MacBeath and Turner's main findings were the following points which are relevant to the present study:

- Pupils value homework which is set within clearly defined guidelines, with adequate time allowed, and appropriate to their level of ability. They tend to devise their own strategies regarding the "when, where and how" they do their homework. The older the pupil becomes, the more the responsibility for homework shifts onto him or her. Pupils should not be held responsible for the shortcomings of either the school or of an individual teacher.
- Parents, whilst perhaps sharing a common belief in the value of homework, their assumptions about homework are not necessarily the same as the school's; they appreciate the advice given to them by teachers and through the school's governing body, especially regarding motivation, monitoring and support of pupils.

- Teachers all need to be involved in the formulation of the school's homework policy, but so do pupils and parents. Teachers generally believe in sanctions for the failure to do homework, but such sanctions may become unnecessary if there is established support, guidance and expectations within the school.

2.1.8 Homework: how it relates to School Effectiveness and School Improvement.

The two distinct movements of School Effectiveness and School Improvement have developed in recent years side by side, with a similar outcome by dissimilar means.

“School Effectiveness is more directed to finding out “what works” in education and “why”; whereas School Improvement is practice and policy oriented and intended to change education in the desired direction. That means that in the orientation on the outcomes, input, processes, and context in education School Effectiveness and School Improvement also have much in common.”

(Creemers 2002)

School Effectiveness policies have become, unfortunately, a political tool.

Politicians and Civil Servants have jumped on some of the concepts to wage war with the teaching profession. Class size, teaching methods and school leadership are all issues that have been controversially attacked by this method. S.E. policies are used to blame perceived ineffective headteachers for “failing schools”. S.E. has been viewed as a tool of politicians and civil servants to use against the teaching profession. Professor John Elliott states that

... there is now a much greater degree of agreement amongst school researchers concerning appropriate methodology for such studies, about the need to focus explicitly on student outcomes and, in particular, on the concept of the “value-added”, by the school...

(Elliott 1996, p.3)

The view that S.E. is imposed from “above” in an attempt to get all schools to

conform to a preconceived format of educational strategy antagonises those involved with the educational process by denying individualism and the legitimacy of dissenting voices. Seven factors of S.E. are cited by Rutter *et al.* in a study entitled "Fifteen Thousand Hours", and were summarised by Elliott (1996). One of these factors was homework.

Children had better academic success in schools where homework was regularly set and marked, and where teachers expressed expectations that a high proportion of the children would do well in national examinations. ... in turn the children's good work will tend to reinforce and support the teachers' high expectations of them.

(Rutter *et al* 1979, p 188)

Here in these factors *the positive use of homework* is placed as a key part of the academic development of pupils. The perception is that homework is an essential, not optional constituent of a school improving the academic development of its pupils. School Effectiveness, it implies, is entirely within the umbrella of school-influenced factors. Are home-based factors irrelevant? I would argue that homework, of all aspects, is one that depends upon the home and the school working together. Parents and teachers need to have a similar strong commitment, and sense of purpose towards homework if young people are to acquire maximum benefit from it.

However, the S.E. movement would argue that the home background, the overwhelming influence of external factors and any perceived social disadvantage, whilst having an effect of how the schools may approach homework, still allows for schools to be able to have a profound effect. School Effectiveness has developed the "value-added" approach to assessing school performances, as opposed to the use of the raw scores. Whilst this has done a little to allay the concerns of many over the insensitivity of the earlier forms of School League Tables, and how they might be interpreted by the uninformed,

these tables were seen to imply that the school's performance was more important than the individual's. There seems to be a general agreement that there are some effective attributes appropriate in all countries:

1. High teacher expectations of pupils.
2. Pupil involvement with lessons.
3. Extra-curricular activities and the running of schools.
4. Behaviour incentives based on rewards rather than punishment.
5. Organisational cohesion, consistency and control.

In a 1995 report by the University of London, Institute of Education (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore) to Ofsted the authors identify eleven key characteristics of School Effectiveness:

1. Professional Leadership: firm, purposeful, participative approach, the leading professional.
2. Shared vision and goals: unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiate and co-operation.
3. A learning environment: orderly atmosphere and attractive learning environment.
4. Concentration on teaching and learning: maximisation of learning time, academic emphasis, focus on achievement.
5. Purposeful teaching: efficient organisation, clarity of purpose, structured lessons, adaptive practice.
6. High expectations all round communicating expectations and providing intellectual challenge.
7. Positive reinforcement with clear and fair discipline and feedback.
8. Monitoring progress: monitoring pupil performance and evaluating school performance.
9. Pupil rights and responsibilities: raising self-esteem, positions of responsibility and control of work.
10. Home-school partnership: parental involvement in their children's learning.
11. A learning organisation: with school-based staff development.

(Elliott 1996, pp 5-6)

Whilst these characteristics do not specifically mention homework by name as a factor, there are several areas where homework can obviously be included as a significant factor. Perhaps it is just a case of the emphasis that is being put upon them.

However, John Elliott would argue that many of the characteristics listed by the University of London, Institute of Education are, and always have been,

implicit concepts within teaching, and that the S.E. movement has not produced anything new. Elliot's view is that they are stating "the obvious". He was concerned that the emphasis is placed upon the process itself, and the outcomes, rather than what may, or may not be gained by the pupil from the process. This he regards as the grammar school tradition. The implied values of orderliness, uniformity, adherence and hierarchy assumed within the Institute of Education's list leaves little room for self-directed and autonomous thinking by the pupil in the learning process. The implication of this is that S.E. is a "top-down management system" through school management structures, into academic departments and to the classroom teacher. This also implies that the variations between pupils' achievements are attributable to differences in the classroom rather than at the "higher" levels. Would improved "management control" eliminate such great variations?

School Improvement is, on the other hand, regarded as being a "bottom up" change initiative, which relies more on a qualitative approach to evaluation. Its history can be traced back to the late 1970s. In the 1990s the School Improvement and the School Effectiveness communities started to interact. Whilst School Effectiveness brought in ideas of value-added methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of schools, departments and teachers, the School Improvement tradition provided guidelines and strategies for taking educational change into the classroom. In the early forms of School Improvement

... there was an emphasis upon organisational change, school self-evaluation and the ownership of change; these initiatives were only loosely connected with student learning outcomes ... the practices struggled to impact upon classroom practice."
(Hopkins and Reynolds 2001, p.459)

In the 1990s the interaction between School Improvement and School Effectiveness began, and there were calls for a combination of “approaches and insights”. The contribution of the School Effectiveness approach was the value-added methodology and also a knowledge base about “what works” in schools to maximise pupil outcomes. The School Improvement tradition contributed

“... approaches to staff development and designs for development planning that focused upon learning outcomes and which linked together organisational and classroom change within a medium-term time frame.”

(Hopkins and Reynolds 2001, p.460)

In the late 1990s, with the experience of School Improvement from educational reforms around the developed world, some of which were more successful than others, it was generally regarded that there are still many hurdles to be overcome.

1. a centrally determined, unifying vision and explicit goals for student performance based upon the vision;
2. curriculum frameworks and related materials for use in accomplishing the goals set for students;
3. standards for judging the quality or degree of success of all students;
4. coherent, well-integrated policies that reinforce these ambitious standards;
5. information about the organisation's (especially the student's) performance;
6. a system of finance and governance that devolves to the local school site responsibility for producing improvements in system and student performance;
7. an agent that receives information on organisational performance, judges the extent to which standards have been met, and distributes rewards and sanctions, with significant consequences to the organisation for its success or failure in meeting specific standards.”

(Leithwood *et al.* 1999 *quoted in* Hopkins and Reynolds 2001, p.461)

Again, none of these specifically refer to homework as a factor which might contribute towards School Improvement, but homework could be implicit in many of these approaches, and the relevance of this current research into homework, as a contributing factor toward School Improvement, becomes the more important. Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own

learning – and homework is an obvious example – is often cited as being a good example of effective practice of teacher behaviour in School Improvement.

Summary:

Homework is the work done by pupils outside the classroom without the direct supervision of the teacher, offering them the opportunity to accept responsibility for their own learning processes but can be in conflict with many other activities they undertake in their non-school hours.

Parents need to recognise that homework need not just be what is done at the “table in the bedroom”. They have diverse opinions, often coloured by their own childhood’ experiences, regarding the relevance and need of homework; it should not be assumed there is consensus. “More homework” does not necessarily mean “better homework”.

Teachers need to recognise that homework and schoolwork is, and should be very integrated. It needs to be prepared equally as well as classwork. It may be that what is done for homework is less important than the pupils taking responsibility for their own learning and self-organisation, but that homework is not done under a “controlled” environment; the home is a very variable factor.

Controversy concerning homework is nothing new; it has been prevalent for most of the twentieth century. Erroneously the relevance of homework has often been correlated to the academic ability of children. The importance of homework in the United Kingdom is not necessarily reflected in other countries; across the developed world homework is often expected of children, but there is little consistency of practice.

Emerging issues pertinent to the current research:

Children need to be encouraged to take increasingly more responsibility for their learning through the homework activities. Whilst in school the learning is often under the direction of the teachers, at home that responsibility is passed to you, the individual learner. The young learner will need help and support from parents and teachers, but the intention is for that responsibility to fall more on the pupil as a part of the learning process for adult life. By the time pupils reach GCSEs at 16 years of age, this individual responsibility should be well established. This research will look at whether the evidence of this one school supports the notion that results are improved where the individual has taken on a positive approach to homework. The study's value-added scores as identified by the Yellis project will be used. As teachers in this school continue to refine approaches to homework, can this be identified in continuing School Improvement in the pupils' results?

In Section 2.3 this review will look at how this approach to homework is made possible (or not), how homework is appropriate to the individual pupils, and how much time is spent on it. It will also look at how a school deals with pupils whose homework is not completed. Homework is ideally fulfilled with the support of the parents and wider family; not all children will have this support, and some parents, whilst wishing to support, will not naturally know how best to put this into action. Teachers need to plan integrated homework activities that extend the class-work and are appropriate to the needs and abilities of the individual pupil. It is the coal-face approach to homework that is the crux of the next section.

2.2 Operationalising homework.

2.2.1 Aims and objectives of homework.

A definition of 'homework' has to cover a range of possibilities but recognise the common features. Such a definition would refer to learning:

- that is relevant to teachers' curricular objectives
- which takes place without formal classroom teaching
- which is primarily the responsibility of the learner himself/herself

(MacBeath and Turner 1990 p1)

Supporters of homework commend two positive aspects.

Firstly, even seventy years ago, it was recognised that it encourages the pupil to master study-skills, self-discipline and organisation:

A further advantage of home surroundings does not always appear to be appreciated. It is an aim of secondary education to help the pupil so to develop his interests and aptitudes that after leaving school he may be able, if he so wishes, to pursue this or that line of study by himself. Homework helps here: it accustoms the pupil to the idea that school surroundings are not the only ones in which he can work profitably.

(Board of Education 1937, p.67)

Perhaps the most important gain to be won from homework is the development of self-reliance and initiative, where the pupils are left to face unaided a problem suited to his abilities; or to follow up for himself a subject which appeals to his interests. Another gain, one of a more purely moral order, results from the pupils having to "settle down to his work" and resist distractions. All these advantages naturally accrue in a higher degree where the homework is done in home surroundings... than at school under supervision, with a teacher close at hand to give help when called upon.

(Board of Education 1937, p.67)

Whilst at the forefront of the mind of the individual subject-teacher is, understandably, the subject content of the homework, the general principles of learning, study skills and self-organisation have, perhaps, a longer effect on the life of the pupil.

Proponents of homework claim that it encourages pupil initiatives, develops independent learning skills, and allows time for practice and application of what has been learned in school, thereby increasing time on task.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p71)

Surveys consistently find that while teachers, principals, and parents hope that homework will strengthen academic skills, they usually praise self-discipline and independent study habits as its most important fruits.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p72)

Secondly, it enables pupils to have further opportunity to acquaint themselves with subject content, which, again as long ago as 1937, was being clearly acknowledged:

the various kinds of tasks can be classified as follows:-

- (a) Work designed to give the pupil such practice as may be necessary in particular processes or operations, or in the application to new problems of rules which have been dealt with in class.
- (b) Verbal memorising, as of poems, facts, principles or illustrative examples.
- (c) Revision of previous work.
- (d) Preparation for a coming lesson.

(Board of Education 1937, p.68)

In reality, these two common aims are perceived by teachers to be partners:

... teachers strongly agreed that homework was directly related to pupil responsibility and that homework benefits the pupils and their mastery of content. ... Teachers agreed that graded homework was beneficial, ... Most teachers felt that parents expect homework; ... Many teachers felt that motivating pupils to do their homework was difficult.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p73)

Critics of homework feel that social implications overshadow these aims, because there are socio-economic flaws to the principle of homework, the whole principle should therefore be disregarded.

They [critics of homework] also see homework as an instrument of class discrimination in that children from lower income homes do not have facilities appropriate for home study and are distinctly disadvantaged compared with their middle-class peers

(Coulter 1979, *quoted in* Johnson and Pontius 1989, p71)

The general expectation by government, as well as from many teachers and parents, is that homework should be set in schools, has been exemplified by objectives published in 1987 by the DES.

Possible objectives for homework were set out in the DES Notes [Homework. Notes by

the Department of Education and Science 1986]. For ease of reference, this list is set out here:

- to encourage pupils to develop the practice of independent study;
- to develop perseverance and self discipline;
- to allow practice, where it is needed, of skills learned in the classroom;
- to permit more ground to be covered and more rapid progress to be made;
- to enable class work to concentrate on those activities requiring the teacher's presence;
- to open up areas of study and to make possible the use of materials and sources of information that are not accessible in the classroom;
- to involve parents (and other adults) in pupils' work.

(DES 1987 p.18)

Homework is now a formally accepted part of the curriculum in England and Wales. Its position is accepted by all the major political parties, and by other relevant groups. This is a position that is not likely to be changed but rather developed and clarified in the light of experience. The evidence suggests that homework makes the greatest contribution to learning when:

- Homework Policy is led by the senior management of the school as part of the school's overall learning and assessment strategy.
- Tasks are carefully planned and structured to support progression in learning, as a part of the school's schemes of work.
- There is a consistent practice across the school in setting, managing and marking homework.
- There is a regular programme so that everyone, teachers, children and parents know what to expect each week.
- Pupils and parents are very clear about what they need to do.
- Parents are treated as partners in their children's learning.
- There are high expectations of pupils in completing homework.
- Pupils receive prompt, clear feedback on their work.
- Homework Policies are regularly monitored and evaluated to check that they support pupils' learning in the best possible way.

(DfES 1998, pp4-5)

2.2.2 Policies regarding homework.

For thousands of years, homework has been what everyone did: schoolwork has been left to a tiny proportion of the population, from academicians in the Ancient world through the Medieval schools and universities.

(Stern 1997 p.2)

If the premise is accepted that homework is a justifiable part of education, it

seems to follow that a policy should be established, whether it is the individual school or the national government that formalises it. Whilst political parties are often prepared to decree dogma concerning the quantity, they do little to go beyond that stance. It is left to the individual school to establish (or not) its own policy.

Decisions on homework should properly be issues for the whole school.

(Stern 1997, p.15)

Sharp *et al* 2001(b) (page 22) report that Weston (1999) had found that about 96% of the Secondary Schools and 78% of primary schools had written Homework Policies in autumn 1997.

The policy then needs to be communicated to the wider audience-primarily the parents and the pupils - and also to the wider community of the school.

All schools and departments within a school should have clear policies about homework, and many do. Most school prospectuses and brochures for parents include remarks and advice about homework; staff handbooks will also give details of the school's Homework Policy.

(Wootton 1992 p.4)

A school's policy for homework is often set out in a statement, written for a variety of audiences, including parents, teachers, LEAs, governors and pupils, or it may be confined to one or a combination of these groups. It may well arise from within a school.

(DES 1987 p.3)

A Homework Policy is not sufficient; as with any policy within a school, the whole community needs to be committed to it. An individual teacher who does not comply with such a policy will undermine its value to the pupils. As soon as a pupil perceives that an individual teacher doubts the value of homework, all homework from all teachers is then devalued for that pupil.

School policies may exist but, as always, the quality of outcomes depends upon the efforts of individuals.

(Glover, Gough and Johnson 1997, p.43)

School policies on homework are extremely varied. Even where a policy document

exists, however, nothing can be assumed about the way in which it is interpreted and acted upon by teachers or about its influence on the homework which pupils actually do.

(DES 1987, p.18)

In those schools of all types which had developed a Homework Policy, the ground covered by such statements varied considerably. The fullest statements referred to such matters as: the reason for setting homework and its educational aims; the procedures for implementing the policy, including such matters as how homework should be set, collected in, recorded and assessed; the kind of tasks deemed suitable; and the recommended time to be spent by the pupil on homework, differentiated according to age.

(DES 1987, p.4)

The notion of homework is that it should be an extension of class work; it should not be regarded as a separate alternative to class work, but a continuation. If pupils acquire the belief that homework is being imposed as a form of punishment - to "occupy their own free time" - they will develop attitudes towards it that are negative and therefore less than helpful.

A staff handbook which sets out conscientiously to counteract any such negative impression of homework sees the close integration of class and homework as the most effective way of doing this: 'Homework assignments should not be given out in a punitive manner as if they were set out of malice. As much as possible, pupils should feel that homework is closely related to the work they are engaged on in school and is relevant to their own understanding of their needs. This may mean for some pupils in some subjects that they should be set different homework assignments from the rest of the group so that they have a chance to overcome some of their weaknesses. As always, encouragement and praise for genuine effort should be generous. Mere token effort should be exposed as such and the futility implied in the kind of work made clear.'

(DES 1987, p.9)

A school, which sets homework on a regular and committed basis, is also sending out a coded message to its audience - pupils, parents and the wider community. Working alone or with minimal supervision is an intrinsic part of education, and a preparation for adult working life. It is also a means of integrating learning between pupil and parent.

The principal reason for setting homework is to give pupils additional practice in the work currently being studied. But you should recognise that there are other - often unstated - reasons for setting regular homework. Many experienced teachers will argue that homework is largely symbolic, giving both pupils and parents the message that learning is important and must not be seen as an activity that takes place only

within the school. It reinforces the view that education is a joint parent-teacher activity. In this respect it is also a means of communication with parents, giving them the opportunity - and for some parents it may be the only opportunity - of seeing the kinds of work being done by their children.

(Wootton 1992, p.5)

There is also a strange contradiction; many parents claim to have had a negative experience with education in general, and more specifically with homework. However, they still expect the school to set homework for their own children. It is perhaps difficult for parents to question whether they are discerning-enough to evaluate the worth of the homework. With parental choice of a school now being given prominence, one of the main criteria which seems to effect parental decisions, other than examination results, seems to be homework.

Research consistently shows that parents want homework and use that as a criterion in their assessment of schools. Schools often resist these parental expectations believing that they are nothing more than a hangover from parents' own experiences. Sometimes that resistance springs from a belief that parents should not usurp the teacher's role, and that parent help is counter-productive. ...One headteacher who had moved from a 'no-homework' to a Homework Policy explained the shift in the following terms. "It is a question of community credibility. If we are going to be judged by whether or not we are a homework school we must meet that expectation but also meet it with commitment to quality."

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.46)

There are those who would suggest that homework increases the gap between the more-able and the less-able pupil. Stern picks up the suggestion that a well planned and executed Homework Policy can in fact assist the less-able pupil to close the gap. Homework is regarded, by some, as being something to extend learning for the more able, and irrelevant to the less-able.

A poor Homework Policy and/or practice makes its contribution to enlarging the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils.

(Hargreaves 1984, *quoted in* Stern 1997, p.150)

The amount of time that is expected for homework is a controversial issue. Political parties have spoken with supposed authority. Schools set out their guidelines to parents, and yet what pupils often perceive, and what parents

experience can be completely different. What teachers set is different from what the school may have suggested. It is hardly surprising that confusion reigns.

Experience suggests that teachers are more likely to set too little homework than too much. In practice most Secondary Schools say that they expect about an hour each evening for younger pupils, rising to about two hours for those in their last years at school. But once again there is a big variation between what schools say they expect and what actually happens.

(Wootton 1992, p.9)

- All staff agree to set and monitor regular homework...
- Homework should be achievable by all pupils, whatever their levels of skill or home circumstances. ...
- Homework should always be relevant ...
- Over a period of time, homework tasks should be varied ...
- Homework should positively encourage the support and involvement of parents, carers and others with whom pupils have contact outside school. ...

(Stern 1997, p.151)

This last point, concerning the involvement of parents in homework, is one which schools would be wise to encourage. If parents' role is to supply the right physical surroundings and then to operate the stopwatch, that is a contribution which is being under-valued. Schools could do well to review aspects of the partnership.

... This kind of advice to parents provides a firm framework for implementing a Homework Policy. It implies a supportive climate in which the importance of good communications between school and home is accepted as a guiding principle. Such an invitation to parents to become involved actively in matters relating to the child's school and homework is valuable, since without it parents know only too well the counterproductive nature of appearing inquisitive when trying to take an interest in this way, and the difficulties which encouraging children to talk about their work can cause.

(DES 1987, p.5)

Homework, as a part of the school's curriculum, once it has been clearly defined to by teachers, and conveyed to parents and pupils, can make a valuable contribution to learning.

The evidence strongly suggests that homework can either be a dull and dreary task without any apparent meaning, or something that plays an integral role in the curriculum and is indispensable to personal and academic achievement. If it is to be better we need both principles and models of good practice.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.63)

Homework, when used to its maximum effect by a subject-teacher, can assist as a tool to extend the pupil's involvement within that area of the curriculum.

Homework can serve a variety of functions in the school curriculum. It can reinforce learning that has already taken place in the classroom as well as allow the teacher to determine the need for re-teaching. It can also serve as preparation for future study, or extension and application of skills learned in the form of exercises and individual projects. Results of this study show that teachers surveyed most often assigned homework for the purpose of practising the skills learned in the classroom.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p76)

Johnson and Pontius (1989) suggest that even greater benefit accrue from homework when all teachers within the school work with a common purpose, and where homework across curriculum areas is co-ordinated and integrated.

Principals may find that once teachers in their schools start working together to promote and co-ordinate homework assignments, pupil completion rates will increase.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p76)

A collegiate view of homework within the school can lead to educational gains outside the immediate curriculum area. Whilst the AAM had pointed out in their report (1974) the shortcomings of homework, they had also argued that there were strategies which, when employed, could make homework a beneficial experience for pupils. It could encourage the use of independent learning skills and offer the opportunity to practice specific skills which do not require the presence of the teacher. It allows the teachers to monitor the progress of how individual pupils have succeeded both in the classroom and with unsupervised tasks. Homework enables preparation to be made by pupils for a forthcoming area of work and to extend the amount of time which can be devoted to any particular area of work. It provided opportunities for pupils to read, to develop self-discipline and good working habits.

Gurney (2001) observed that

(Homework) always creates a few groans from the class when you mention it.

(Gurney 2001).

and encouraged teachers to observe Homework policies, plan the homework they use, and get them written in to Schemes of Work whenever possible.

Gurney advocated that teachers should make the task for homework relevant to the lesson and use a variety of tasks; time should be taken for the teachers to explain what is required and for pupils to record homework tasks in the Homework Diary. Teachers must record whether work is completed, mark it and offer pupils feedback.

In the Secondary School, individual academic departments need also to be clear in their own policy documents how they are going to implement the Homework Policy of the whole school, by all who teach in that subject area, and how it is to be communicated to parents. They should consider how and when homework is to be set; how it is to be monitored across the department; how it is checked and marked and how pupils are to be given appropriate feedback.

The amount of detail in such communications to staff, as in those to parents, varies. Documents tend to concentrate rather more on procedural and administrative aspects of setting homework than on the purpose and nature of the homework itself. As a result, the message often conveyed to teachers is that they have a strong duty to enforce the system by setting and checking homework regularly, by adhering closely to recommended time-allocations and by punishing those pupils who do not respond in the required way. There is virtually no indication about how or why such homework is to be set or assessed - considerations which characterise the most helpful documents. A lack of such a rationale can reinforce the impression that homework is often little more than a reluctantly enforced time-filler imposed on unenthusiastic recipients; its importance as a means of control appears to override its educational objectives.

(DES 1987, p.9)

In Secondary Schools where a policy on homework exists in more than outline form, there may well be a requirement for all departments to include in their syllabuses or schemes of work explicit attention to homework.

(DES 1987, p.10)

As academic departments within the school develop strategies for placing

homework at the top of the agenda, so, in time, pupils will start to place greater importance upon it.

A department, which took as its focus its homework procedures, attempted to respond to suggestions from pupils about how they could be given greater assistance with their homework by the teacher. The ensuing recommendations included:

- Explaining the homework clearly, writing it on the blackboard, ensuring that the pupils write it down in an exercise book of some sort, stating clearly when it is due in and how much will be regarded as adequate. Asking if anybody has any problems about the homework.
- Giving pupils ten minutes or so to begin their homework in class in order to fix the task in their mind.
- Devoting ten minutes at the beginning of the next class to making sure that it has been done - how important this is will depend upon the nature of the task. Build up, over a period of time, the expectation in pupils that homework will be checked. Don't leave several classes between setting and checking.

(DES 1987, p.12)

Ofsted (1994), in their report concerning the relationship between taught time and pupils' attainment observed that subject departments who set homework on a regular basis produced a diversity of assignments, opportunities for learning, developing skills and reinforcing prior learning.

Once again the collegiate position of the staff within the school is a key factor to the successful implementation of a Homework Policy for all teachers across the school.

Although most of the schools visited had developed effective homework practice for pupils at certain levels, no one school had implemented this consistently at all stages of progress through the institution. Those schools where homework had greater consistency, purpose and support were generally characterised by the belief that, among the teachers, an effective policy needed to involve not only the senior management team but departmental, pastoral and tutorial staff and be the product of extensive discussion. Moreover the communication of this policy to parents and pupils and, in some cases, the dialogue which this evoked were no less important to the policy's effectiveness than its acceptance by the whole teaching staff.

(DES 1987, p.17)

Recent developments within the United Kingdom regarding home-school contracts have enabled homework to be placed on a more formal footing. Whilst the acceptance of a contract by parents is optional, it nevertheless

gives a clear message regarding the school's position on homework. Once this position is openly stated to parents, schools then have an obligation to fulfil their side of the contract.

... it may be that to safeguard the high priority of homework and to mitigate against the possibility of the system becoming discriminatory, written contracts drawn up between parents and school, agreeing on the importance of setting and completing regular homework schedules, should be an accepted part of the school's overall policy ... to give these appropriate weight, and to provide the incentive for change, we suggest the government should make after-school work a requirement for all schools. Then, each school's written policies and practices regarding homework would be part of the formal and detailed assessment carried out during an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.452)

... it is our opinion that the time has come to take the subject of homework more seriously in this increasingly competitive world, British educational circles can no longer continue to neglect what may very well be a valuable contribution towards the pupil's success rate, not only in school but subsequently in the work environment at large. With its present policies of equal educational opportunities for all, education in Britain can no longer support an ad hoc system in which certain children benefit from the setting of regular homework but the vast majority do not. Unless British education accepts radical changes such as those suggested in this paper, the present situation is not going to change in any significant manner.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.452)

Developments in recent years in the United Kingdom, both educationally and politically, have brought about significant changes in attitudes towards homework from parents, teachers and pupils. We are led to believe that such changes have helped towards an improvement of standards within our schools, and increased the achievements of individual pupils. If such conclusions are justifiable from the evidence, it is to be expected that governmental agencies (Ofsted, DfES etc.) will wish to formalise such improvements into "expectations for all".

Most children, parents and teachers have good attitudes to homework, and many pupils do more work than teachers expect or realise. A report from the Office for Standards in Education, due out next week, is expected to recommend that schools should have agreed, written policies on homework, with clear guidance on the purpose of homework, how it should be developed over children's time in school, how often it should be set and how it should be assessed and marked.

Homework Policies should set out clearly the purposes of homework. These should include:

- Encouraging pupils to develop the skills, condition and motivation needed to study effectively on their own. This is vital given the importance for pupils in the future of life-long learning and adaptability.
- Consolidating and reinforcing skills and understanding developed at school.
- Extending school learning, for example through additional reading.
- Sustaining the involvement of parents in the management of pupils' learning and keeping them informed about the work pupils are doing.
- Managing particular demands, such as GCSE coursework.

(DfES 1998, p18)

2.2.3 Styles of homework.

To the casual observer, homework *is* homework *is* homework. Despite the obvious distinctions between subject areas, and between pupil ages and abilities, homework is still “branded” as one all-embracing whole. Yet this is now generally accepted *not* to be the whole picture.

Homework tends to be primarily of four types - finishing off work started in class, doing work that is self-contained or runs parallel with what is being done in class, spontaneous homework, or preparing work for a future class. While each of these approaches has its advantages and disadvantages, the balance of advantage is greater in some than others.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 63)

The four most common types of homework are finishing off class work, self-contained homework, project work and preparation for the next lesson.

(Hallam and Cowan 1999 *quoted in* Sharp *et al* 2001(b), p.50)

“Finish your class work at home” is probably the least useful of all teaching instructions. Homework should be a tool to develop independent learning and the use of ICT, and should allow pupils to have an input into lesson planning and put their work into the wider context of a series of lessons.

(Watson-Davies 2002)

The reasons for homework even existing have been simplified; the more children do, the better they will become. Practice makes perfect.

Homework, it was nearly always found, is extra work set to the children so that (it is

thought) they may have a better chance of succeeding in an external examination - usually a competitive one.

(Board of Education 1937, p.10)

Even at Primary school level as early as 1937, it has been regarded as a prolongation of the school day; simply throwing more time at the learning process.

Homework for Junior School children is found in most cases to be an extension of formal schoolwork into the home under the pressure of an examination. It consists merely of a repetition or prolongation at home of what has been done in school during the day.

(Board of Education 1937, p.10)

The justification of homework is not that simple. Homework exists for a plethora of reasons:

Homework of high quality, whether in infant schools or sixth forms, has a sense of purpose which is clearly understood by teachers and pupils alike. Where homework involves more than routine tasks, it has at least one of the following characteristics: it is closely integrated with and reinforces class work and has clear curricular objectives; it exploits the material and resources in the environment and the community outside the school; it encourages independence, research, creativity and initiative; it promotes the co-operation and involvement of parents and other adults.

(DES 1987, p.19)

Inconsistencies continue after transition to secondary education. Some pupils have already had negative homework experiences at their primary school, some have had positive experiences, and some have had none at all.

The transition from primary to secondary can create serious problems. There is an obvious need for Secondary Schools and their feeder primaries to co-ordinate approaches to homework.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990 p33)

Homework Policies cannot be looked at by a school in isolation, but ideally a whole cluster of schools needs to agree and plan together. When there is a clear consistency of understanding between professionals, and a commitment to a common purpose, schools may then better achieve a positive outcome.

Frequently, the reasons for setting homework appear to be unclear, not only to pupils

and their parents but also to teachers themselves, so we first need to clarify what the main purposes for doing so actually are. Listed, the claims include: practising skills learnt at school in order to consolidate and become fluent in them; acquiring information which can be most effectively learnt at home, such as learning the vocabulary of a foreign language; developing/using problem-solving skills; and most importantly, at the higher levels of secondary education, making sure all areas of the syllabus are adequately covered, especially regarding the necessary assignments required for some GCSE courses. At first glance, therefore, there appears to be very valid reasons for setting children regular homework, if we can genuinely accept these claims that homework does indeed offer such valuable support to pupils.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.447)

In the setting of homework, teachers need to remember the obvious, but often forgotten, circumstances in which pupils find themselves. Many work in less-than-ideal surroundings; others, and their parents, have differing attitudes towards the work; the expectation that the ideal will be achieved in these condition is unrealistic and unfair.

Not all children go home to space, quiet and the opportunity of privacy. Some may have failed to 'grasp the point' in class, so that mistakes risk being reinforced at home. Other may be so conscientious that they spend too much time on homework, becoming tired and stressed.

(Buckland and Short 1993)

Eunsook Hong (2004) expounds the theory that pupils, parents and teachers each has an individual motivation towards homework, and that there is a need for all parties to share information about the pupil's preferences and motivations so that the teachers are able to provide strategies which match the pupil to the learning and homework.

Working in total isolation is an activity that is expected from none, except a few select and motivated adults. Most adults work in partnership with like-minded fellow-workers.

Homework is usually regarded as a solitary activity, not merely in imitation of the academic's routine but simply because at the end of the school day most children go their separate ways to homes that are often considerable distances apart. There is, however, a solution. Homework used to be known as "prep" - preparation for what was to be taught in class. ... pupils would spend their homework time in the process of enquiry and investigation - asking questions of parents and other adults, collecting data

and materials, listening to tapes, radio and TV programmes, reading books, magazines and newspapers, and simply observing and noting things going on around them. Within this context, parents' natural desire to help their children with their studies could be channelled and legitimised; if homework were to take the form of preparation, rather than assignments for completion and assessment, there would be no need for parental help to be regarded as a form of cheating. ... Having carried out their initial enquiries, investigation and "research" on their own, pupils can then pool their findings and resources the following day in groups at school.

(Macfarlane 1987)

The boarding school sector of independent education in Britain is often cited as being an ideal example of what homework or "prep" should really be. It must be remembered that the pupils there are often highly motivated, with ambition-hungry parents keen for their children to succeed, anxious to get value out of fee-paying education. In addition to that, "prep" is hardly done in solitary confinement.

In the course of their schooling almost all pupils undertake some schoolwork which is in addition to that done in the classroom, laboratory or workshop. This work is usually known as homework or, especially in boarding schools, preparatory work ('prep'). For some pupils it starts at primary schools; others encounter it only in their secondary education.

(DES 1987, p.1)

While learning in school had apparently become more varied, more differentiated and more imaginative, learning out of school seemed to be stuck in a time warp. Classroom learning was often stimulating and inventive; pupils worked in pairs, in groups and discussed and shared what they were doing. In the evening work at home was, as one boy put it, "a lonely tedious activity".

(MacBeath 1996, p.21)

If this "lonely tedious activity" is to be avoided, teachers need to tackle the task of homework-setting with imagination. However, there is always concern about the circumstances in which teachers set homework. For many it appears to be an afterthought, with little if any planning. Whilst the planning of what goes on within the classroom may be efficient and effective, the same cannot always be said of homework.

Teachers take planning lessons for granted, yet when it comes to homework, most are happy with last-minute, badly thought-out, tasks of no great interest to anyone. There are issues of planning, timing, monitoring and chasing up homework, all of which worry

most teachers.

(Stern 1997, p.14)

A study found that 94% of homework was given at the end of the lesson, half of the time after the bell had rung, and in 9% of cases during the ringing of the bell.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, *quoted in* Stern 1997, p.150)

For homework to be done properly not only is a basic allocation of time necessary, but that time must be used productively.

(DES 1987, p.37)

[pupils] prefer interesting, challenging and varied tasks that are clearly defined and have adequate deadlines.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p iii)

Many pupils are disinclined to remind teachers that homework needs to be set; it does not ingratiate them with their peers. If homework is left to the last minute, pupils are inclined, perhaps correctly, to believe it will be a simpler task, requiring less time.

The assumption is made that pupils have recorded and comprehended instructions; little effort is made to check and reinforce, or to give the opportunity for pupils to question what has been said. The argument can be made that teachers already have a full workload, and that the prospect of setting, monitoring and checking perhaps several sets of homework in any one school day is impossible. This is, perhaps, a justifiable criticism. However, if pupils and their families are to be set homework, and it is deemed as being a worthwhile exercise for schools to set, the problems of how it is set, monitored and checked are issues which need to be faced by all schools.

... [homework] should be varied, encouraging and designed with the needs of the individual in mind. It should also relate to a policy which provides clear guidelines on both purpose and practice.

(Buckland and Short 1993)

The quality of homework is often limited by the poor resources available. In modern foreign languages, for example, when pupils can not take home a copy of the textbook, worksheet-based written tasks are seldom sufficiently stimulating and, more importantly, pupils lack essential reference sources to elaborate their response or check its accuracy. Vocabulary learning homework is often less challenging when restricted to only those items which pupils have copied out themselves. More broadly,

if pupils' reading is to improve, more should be done at home, and this requires the availability of attractive and relevant books across the curriculum to support and extend the homework that teachers have set.

(Ofsted 1998)

Pupils have their own views about the styles of homework as well.

Pupils expressed the views that:

- Homework should be clearly related to ongoing classroom work.
- There should be a clear pattern to class work and homework.
- Homework should be varied.
- Homework should be manageable.
- Homework should be challenging but not too difficult.
- Homework should allow for individual initiative and creativity.
- Homework should promote self-confidence and understanding.
- There should be recognition or reward for work done.
- There should be guidance and support.

(Hallam 2004, p.56)

The argument is, therefore, that schools need to think about homework, and its associated issues, much more clearly. Pre-conceived and unfounded assumptions need to be vigorously challenged. It is action research waiting to happen; what has changed?

We heartily endorse, therefore, the suggestion that those concerned with the training of teachers ... will give to these problems a prominent place in their scheme of training and that homework and experiments in homework will become the basis of much more research work in the immediate future.

(NUT 1937, p.11)

Surveying attitudes to homework over a period of time is one way of gauging added value, if not in the quality of learning itself, at least in terms of satisfaction and motivation. Questionnaires and other survey instruments can ask pupils about perceived purposes and benefits, supports and obstacles, sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, what teachers could and could not do. Questionnaire responses always brought some unexpected insights. One of the most penetrating issues had to be with feedback. Once homework is done what happened to it? Who gives feedback and advice, does anyone ever look at it?

(MacBeath 1996, p.21)

There is an increasing use of Information and Communication Technology in schools, as a resource for teachers and pupils. It is, therefore, easy to see

how homework that has an ICT element within it, is also seen as a useful tool. Schools need to be aware of the access which pupils have at home to appropriate computer resources. If the access is irregular, it is likely that disadvantaged pupils will become more so.

Not only do many pupils (up to 65% in recent surveys) have access to computers at home but many have developed sophisticated skills in using them.

(Wain and Flower 1992, p.8)

If Wain and Flower were correct in their 1992 assessment, it is fair to assume that things have improved even more since, and that the use of ICT as a homework tool is not unrealistic. If their findings cannot be upheld, there is great concern as to whether teachers are planning homework that would afford equal opportunities for all pupils. In the coming years there may be greater progress in this direction; if available for all, it is a powerful tool.

Looking to the future, developments in Information and Communication Technology have the potential to change, substantially and positively, the educational relationship between home and school. Schools and pupils' homes can be linked by Internet or Intranet. Some pupils already have access, outside school hours, to particular interest groups or experts. The exploitation of these new resources is just beginning but individual pupils already demonstrate their potential value in extending the range of their learning and fostering their ability to work independently.

(Ofsted 1998)

The Microcomputer Project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation with some additional support from the Mathematical Association and based in the University of Leeds, was set up to explore one possible way of exploiting the use of home-owned computers. The aspect chosen was the potential for devising tasks that could be set by the teacher as alternatives to "normal" homework tasks. Because not all pupils possess computers it was decided to devise tasks that could be set in parallel to those that are usually set. It was envisaged that, when the teacher was setting homework in the usual way, the computer-based alternatives could be offered to those who wanted to try them. Some of those without home-computers could, of course, use those at school if they wished.

(Wain and Flower 1992, p.8)

The use of ICT for homework has implications for teachers' abilities and also for the time factor for teachers setting two parallel homeworks.

Homework may provide useful opportunities for learning, but it needs attention given to it in the planning and preparation stages, equal to, if not in excess of, what is given to the activities in the classroom. Perhaps then homework will become a potent force. Homework tasks, when effectively set

are based upon the notion that homework:

- gives control
- can develop confidence
- can promote creativity
- can support differentiation by task
- can support differentiation by outcome
- can encourage pupils independence
- can support communication between school and parent
- can provide pragmatic ways of lightening the burden of assessment

(Buckland and Short 1993, p.1)

It sounds simplistic to state the obvious, but

... secondary pupils responded best to homework when they clearly understood what was expected of them.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p22)

because ...

While pupils value homework, they also see it as an encroachment on their free time.

(Hallam and Cowan 1998, *quoted in* Sharp *et al* 2001(b), p.51)

How often do teachers fail to ensure that the aims and objectives of homework are adequately explained to pupils? So often, inadequate time is allowed to give the instructions clearly.

2.2.4 Marking and feedback: grades and monitoring.

There is a disappointing lack of reliable evidence on 'what works' in terms of homework assignments, procedures, marking and feedback.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p iii)

It seems surprising that there appears to be little clear evidence to support the role of homework within schools. Nevertheless, schools in general follow a path that is assumed to be correct. Why?

Research in the UK (MacBeath and Turner, 1990), has found that teachers agree that feedback is essential for homework to be effective. However, their practice does not always seem to reflect this. Pupils perceive that some teachers do not provide feedback regularly.

(Hallam and Cowan, 1998 p.19)

The marking of work is always a controversial subject for many teachers; it applies not only to homework but also to all work undertaken by pupils. Perhaps because of the isolation of a pupil working alone at homework there is a *greater* need for such marking by teachers to take place. The time-factor is a very relevant problem for teachers, and teachers need to learn how to manage this time problem.

Staff agreed that most pupils did their homework at the right time and handed it in, and it was marked regularly.

(AAM 1974, p.7)

Whilst this statement at first seems surprising, it should be remembered that this professional association recruited its membership primarily from amongst teachers in girls' grammar schools. A view across the whole range of schools might not be so encouraging. More recently, this viewpoint has been supported:

Teacher expectation is one of the decisive factors in motivating pupils to do homework. It is important that feedback on homework is given, but more research is needed on the most effective type of feedback. Most teachers mark homework regularly.

(Hallam and Cowan 1998 *quoted in Sharp et al* 2001(b), p.50)

The monitoring of homework within schools often falls to the person responsible for the pastoral oversight of the pupil; it is perhaps that person who is best informed to draw conclusions about the individual pupil's attitude to homework.

Where schools check more closely and systematically on pupils' homework, the task is often performed by teachers with pastoral responsibility, especially group tutors. This can be most valuable in identifying particular problems with homework which pupils frequently experience and may be afraid to admit. It can also help schools to gain a much clearer picture of how long pupils are actually spending on homework, information which could well be essential for the effective implementation of a Homework Policy. There are also implications for teachers, who need time, not only to prepare effective and regular homework assignments for their pupils but also to mark and assess the work which is produced.

(DES 1987, p.37)

One of the common criticisms, justified or otherwise, is the lack of feedback pupils receive from subject-teachers. The balance of a "reasonable" approach is difficult to achieve:

Many Homework Policies state that homework should not be assigned unless the teacher is going to provide comment and feedback. Most teachers agree with this. ... However, it would appear from pupils' own reports that teachers frequently do not do this, and that parents are a much more likely source of help than the teacher.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 53)

Teachers can rarely mark work as quickly as they would like, and it is better to say to a pupil straight away "that looks really good, I'll look forward to marking it properly", followed by a fortnight's delay before it is marked, than to ignore the work at the time, but mark it in a week.

(Stern 1997, p.18)

Tests and homework exercises can be an invaluable guide to learning but the exercises must be clear and relevant to the learning aims. The feedback on them should give each pupil guidance on how to improve, and each must be given opportunity to help to work at the improvement.

(Black and Wiliam 1998, p13)

Black and Wiliam (1998) caution that formative assessment, such as may be used as a result of a homework task, can be misused by pupils who regard the "school reward" (merit mark, or the like) as the important goal rather than the goal of learning itself. The consequence might be that the challenge of a difficult task might be avoided, for fear of failure, and instead, the easier "right answers" are sought. Poor results in a formative assessment can lead a pupil to be discouraged and to avoid future learning challenges. The risk is under-achievement for many pupils.

Homework set in core subject areas, where the teacher is probably teaching fewer groups of pupils, but more frequently, is possibly easier to monitor and mark than that for a teacher of a minor subject area who is teaching a greater number of groups, but perhaps only once each week. For such a teacher the task is undoubtedly greater.

Homework is set in all types of school for pupils from a wide range of age and ability. The nature of homework itself makes it more difficult to organise and control than work in the classroom; it is almost always undertaken away from the direct supervision of the teacher, is subject to pressures from other activities and takes place in a variety of home conditions. For these reasons it is not possible either to be definite about the kind of homework desirable for all pupils or to be prescriptive about the precise amounts of time which it should be allocated. To do either of these things would be to take insufficient account of the widely different needs of the pupils for whom it is designed. Recent research studies, however, here and abroad have shown that the regular setting and marking of homework are associated with good education and effective schools.

(DES 1987, p.42)

Marking has two aspects. Firstly it enables the teacher to monitor whether homework has been done - or not. The problem of pupils not completing homework tasks is one which each teacher, academic department and school needs to face, whilst still creating a positive attitude towards homework.

Most teachers said that regular monitoring of homework was time-consuming and often impracticable, particularly in the Secondary School. It was common practice, therefore, to acknowledge that homework had been done by ticking the jotter or by circulating round the class and having a quick look at what pupils had done.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 53)

Whilst MacBeath and Turner imply that a variety of strategies might be appropriate for monitoring and marking, Stern (1997) emphasises the need that there must be a positive strategy; "doing nothing" is not an option.

Once a teacher has monitored the homework, and knows who has or hasn't done it, the question is what to do with the pupils who failed to do the work. ... I would suggest these strategies:

- Always record failure to do homework, however good the excuse, ...
- If possible, record the excuse for posterity. ...
- Where a sanction or punishment is wanted, it should involve doing the missing

work ...

- Better than punishments, give rewards for brilliant homework. ...

(Stern 1997, p.18)

Secondly, marking allows an assessment to be made of the standard of work of the individual pupil, so that future work can be prepared at an appropriate level. Pupils, who are able to perceive a link between the marking of one piece of work, and what is set as the next, will place greater value upon what is being suggested.

... pupils will take homework more seriously when it is commented upon or graded.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p76)

The marking of homework by already busy staff is a very great problem. Marking periods are difficult to preserve for that purpose both because of the high rate of staff absence and because less able children need more active supervision than those who are able to get on with independent study. This problem has been exacerbated by the number of staff out of school about their 'lawful occasions'.

(AAM 1974, p.7)

Parents, perhaps not sensitive generally to the diversity of the roles of teachers, are less than sympathetic regarding unmarked work:

There is also a common expectation among parents that homework will be promptly marked and commented upon by teachers concerned. Unfortunately, however, parents and pupils alike frequently feel that homework has little relationship to the work in hand, that it is poorly set and marked late, and that there is a lack of pupil/teacher interaction resulting in poor feedback for the pupil

(Hodapp and Hodapp 1992)

According to students, teachers gave out homework timetables but did not adhere to them. Teachers were not consistent in giving homework, and students became adept at knowing which teachers failed to check up on homework so they could avoid doing it. They complained that they were sometimes set work that was 'left-over' from lessons or tasks that neither contributed to, nor consolidated learning. More boys than girls voiced objections to homework.

(Harris and Rudduck 1994 p.46)

Whatever the reasons or excuses for the non-marking of homework, and however sympathetic one might feel towards the teacher, the learning process is less-effective because of this failure:

Thus, a valuable contribution towards the learning process is perceived as diluted or even lost completely.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995,p.449)

Pupils were asked whether it was true or false that their work was marked regularly. Overall, 72% of pupils believed that work was regularly marked. However, this masked a decline from 81% in Year 7 to 61% in Year 11, a time when most pupils need support.
(Glover, Gough and Johnson 1997, p43)

If non-marking is to be avoided, alternative strategies of styles of homework need to be devised and employed:

... if pupils are to feel positive about homework, teachers not only have to accept its validity but also need to be enthusiastic about it. It is important to ensure that homework assignments are appropriate to the work in hand, are marked on time and some suitable feedback is provided for each child. Consequently, it is obvious that some professional involvement in "Homework Clubs" is not only advisable but also essential. Dull homework combined with poor feedback is a recipe for disaster, and homework time is too valuable a commodity to waste.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.451)

It will be easier or quicker to assess homework if pupils assess their own or each other's work, with you checking their marking later. Homework can also be assessed by class work.

(Stern 1997, p.19)

... homework can be made an integral part of a larger piece of work - perhaps project work - so there is no need to assess it separately, as long as it is carefully monitored.

(Stern 1997, p.20)

Assessment needs to be able to acknowledge how much or how little of the work submitted is of the original authorship of the pupil, and whether they have merely had the homework "passport stamped" in order to keep them out of perceived trouble.

... assessment involves tact. Several parents will admit that they, rather than their children, do a lot of the homework.

(Stern 1997, p.20)

The assessment of coursework gives more credit for obedience and hard work than for flair or intelligence.

(Stern 1997, p.124)

When homework is consistently checked by the teacher it tends to have high status with the pupils. Where teachers set good-quality homework and mark it promptly and thoroughly it contributes significantly to pupils' learning. On the other hand, where

pupils spend time on homework and it is ignored, or where the teacher's response is inconsistent, motivation and attainment suffer as a consequence.

(Ofsted 1998)

Not only should homework be monitored and assessed, but there needs to be a recording of such monitoring and assessment so that teachers have an armoury upon which to build future strategies for teaching. Then they are able to report objectively to the school and to parents on the progress of each individual.

This data may be of use to schools seeking some benchmark of practice as seen by large numbers of pupils. It may also be of help in convincing parents that the majority of teachers do check work regularly, despite the protestations of pupils, and it may additionally help those schools wishing to underline the importance of known regular marking by teachers.

(Glover, Gough and Johnson 199,7 p.43)

As all of this is a demand upon the time of the teacher, it is therefore important that s/he devises appropriate and acceptable strategies to enable this to take place. Stern (1997) suggests various practical strategies which teachers could employ to make homework a more successful experience for pupils, and possibly less stressful for teachers as a consequence.

2.2.5 Differentiation in homework.

Differentiation, or taking account of these differences, is vital in homework, ...

(Stern 1997, p.10)

Homework needs to be considered in relation to the rest of the teaching and learning in the individual school. As one of a range of teaching strategies available to the teacher it needs to reflect the objectives of the curriculum and to be designed in accordance with the needs of the pupils at the appropriate stages of their development.

(DES 1987, p.42)

Teachers tend to take into account quite readily that pupils have differing abilities and needs, and that differing tasks are required for different pupils. It

is possible however that such differentiation does not always transfer to homework tasks.

First Year [Year 7] pupils throughout our ability range are generally keen to have homework; while they make the traditional protests, they enjoy acquiring new skills and are usually anxious to carry on with them at home. If their enthusiasm is to last, strict limits must be set upon the time spent on homework, and the subject matter must be fully within the grasp of the pupils concerned.

(AAM 1974, p.8)

This Study from 1974 was that differentiation in homework was already recognised as an essential factor of good teaching, if enthusiasm was to be maintained. Previous reports as far back as 1937 had promoted the necessity of pupils of all abilities having homework, and that it is not something to be added on for the more-able pupil.

The indisputable fact that many children... are striving for distinctions which they cannot hope to gain for lack of the necessary ability, cannot be used as an argument against homework as such. The fault here lies on the side of the head of the school, or of the parents, or of both, who have not been wise enough to restrain the child, or have wrongly engaged his ability, or who have been carried away by ambition,

(Board of Education 1937, p.67)

The staff considers that the setting of homework is valid both for the less able and the more able pupils of this selective school.

(AAM 1974, p.7)

The two main issues for teachers would seem to be:

- how to set appropriate assignments;
- how to encourage lower-achieving students to complete their homework.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p iv)

The, perhaps understandable, idea of setting only a notional homework for the less able is possibly misjudged. In order to achieve the very recognition and acceptability of their more able peers, such people need appropriate homework which they can not only complete, but complete well, in order to receive peer recognition and self-esteem.

Sometimes guidance staff put teachers in the picture, but sometimes kept the confidence of the family and asked teachers to simply "go easy". They were, in some

instances, able to make specific suggestions as to what teachers could do. "Just laying off doesn't necessarily help. It may be very important for a child struggling with her self-esteem to have homework like everyone else. It is possible to meet that personal and social need and at the same time make homework more manageable."

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 59)

In the course of our research study we met young people who felt disenfranchised, and resentful of the fact that they got no homework. There was, for them, a message in this. They saw themselves as being indulged or patronised, or simply 'too thick' to get homework. Yet there were those with learning difficulties who benefited most conspicuously from tasks set for them to do alone or with support from their parents; tasks which boosted their self-confidence and motivation and brought great satisfaction to parents who enjoyed this opportunity to share in their child's learning and sense of achievement.

(MacBeath 1996, p.22)

Over a fifty-year time-span the idea that children with special educational needs should also have homework is reiterated time and time again.

However, it must be emphasised that homework needs to be appropriate to the ability of the individual and that the teacher needs to take time to design tasks relevant to the needs of all pupils. Designing such homework can also aid the teacher in understanding more clearly the strengths and limitations of the pupils.

Thinking about homework can help us think about special needs, and thinking about homework for pupils with special needs can help us think about homework for all pupils.

(Stern 1997, p.10)

- The approach a pupil has to homework may help in the diagnosis of special needs. ...
- Pupils can be set homework that helps them to develop or practise skills that are difficult to focus on in a classroom. ...
- Catering for special needs means catering for variety. ...
- Resources are important to giving a good education to pupils with special needs. ...

(Stern 1997, p.11)

Homework, as has already been noted, involves the whole family. Parents have an important contribution to make to assist their child's progress. This is even more so with pupils with special educational needs, whether the less or the more-able. The demands made upon parents of such pupils must be taken into account, considering their abilities and limitations, and the needs of the

whole family. Faulkner and Blyth appear to have fallen into the trap of considering the less-able, but the more-able and gifted also need extending.

... help and support is especially important when dealing with parents of pupils with special educational needs, as they are often required to take a more active part in working with their children at home. Many such children can manage only a little as they are tired at the end of the day, and extra care and patience is needed when dealing with them.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.450)

... we suggest that individually-tailored homework schedules should be an integral part of the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP)

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.451)

The notion that homework should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual pupil is the ultimate development of differentiation. Differentiation can be achieved not just through the work being set, but also through what follows.

... homework represents a means of providing differentiated work which takes account of the individual abilities and needs of pupils - whether through the planning of different tasks or by the style of marking and the use of suitable modes of assessment. As an example of this diversity, a 'research' homework may well develop at different levels a number of skills, such as gathering information, analysing sources, evaluating evidence and forming judgements. At the same time it may permit swifter coverage of a topic, through extended reading, and release teachers from dispensing factual information as well as giving opportunities for pupils to exploit their individual strengths and interests.

(DES 1987, p.19)

What is being recommended is that differentiation applies through the full spectrum of teaching, including homework; differentiation enables teaching to be most effective for the individual pupil.

Where work in a lesson is closely matched to pupils' ability, the homework which follows tends also to be better matched. Where homework is well used, teachers ensure that it is integrated with, reinforces and capitalises on class work.

(Ofsted 1998)

2.2.6 How long is actually spent on homework.

How long should pupils be expected to work alone? There are, at the one extreme those who promote the idea that children should never get homework, and at the other there are those who say they can never have too much homework. The general dilemma has always been to find an appropriate place in the middle ground which would be reasonable and productive and likely to achieve success.

The most common complaint about homework, from parents, is that there is not enough, and the complaints come up most at Parents Evenings.
(Stern 1997, p.128-129)

95% of parents surveyed agreed that homework was important.
(Barber *et al.* 1999 *quoted in* Sharp *et al* 2001(b), p.25)

Parents, who generally want their children to succeed, are prepared to accept any advice offered to them from professionals. If schools, through the headteacher and the governors, suggest that homework is a "necessary and good thing" most parents are happy to go along with the proposal, and to make some gesture of encouragement to their children regarding homework. Nevertheless, for the sake of peace within the family, parents are also keen that their children should be able to keep a normal and balanced lifestyle, able to participate in a variety of cultural, social and sporting activities.

Perhaps the majority of parents fall into a middle group. They are prepared to accept homework as a concomitant of life at a Secondary School, particularly when they are assured by the Head Master or Head Mistress that a certain amount of home study is desirable in itself, and necessary if their children are to make proper progress. At the same time, they do not wish their children to be over-taxed or to have no leisure for pursuits not immediately connected with school.

(Board of Education 1937, p.29)

In 1937 the then Board of Education was suggesting guidelines for what was considered reasonable and appropriate for children of differing ages to spend on homework.

All these reservations being borne in mind, it may be suggested that the following table affords some kind of guidance. It would nearly apply in a day school in a thickly populated area in which the school hours amounted to 25 or 26 a week and the main course was of five years.

- (1) Preparation on not more than five nights a week: preferably on four nights only.
- (2) Number of hours a night -
 - Up to 14 years of age, 1 hour
 - Between 14 and 16 years, 1½ hours.

(Board of Education 1937, p.70)

Yet of recent years there has been a growing tendency in many elementary schools to set homework and a growing volume of complaint about the amount and nature of the homework which elementary school children are being called upon to do.

(Board of Education 1937, p.2)

Even in response to the 1937 recommendations, the teachers' associations were less than enthusiastic:

These are said to conform fairly closely to the recommendations contained in resolutions of some of the Teachers' Associations. They certainly do not impress by their drastic nature and we would like to see the time still further reduced.

(NUT 1937, p.10)

Half a century later the national position regarding the amount of time to be spent on homework had still not been clarified; there were still regional differences that were not easily explained.

A consistent finding of research studies is that time spent on homework varies widely. A survey conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research compared 9 year olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on maths homework and found that in England 71% had no homework while in Wales it was 48% and in Northern Ireland 3%. In Scotland a national study in 1989 reported 17% of primary school parents saying that their children never had any homework. It also found considerable variation from school to school, teacher to teacher, and from pupil to pupil in the same class.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p34)

Sixty years after the Board of Education recommendations, its successor, the DES was still trying to make national generalisations from the regional variations. These were still only guidelines, and there was nothing to compel schools to implement these guidelines.

Many schools, especially Secondary Schools, recommended minimum or average amounts of homework. Variations in the expectations of schools were again marked,

but a broadly common pattern emerged consisting of 60 minutes a night, made up of either two subjects of 30 minutes each or three subjects of 20 minutes each, for the first secondary year [year 7] rising to 120 minutes, frequently three subjects of 40 minutes each, in the fifth year [year 11]. In the sixth form, many schools expected about 15 hours a week (three hours a night), though this figure was sometimes assumed to include the considerable periods of private study time often available to sixth formers during the school day, where amounts of up to 10 hours a week were by no means exceptional. Where allocations are stated, such a rising scale from younger to older pupils is virtually universal, although in some cases the specified amounts are appreciably lower, for example 30 minutes in year 1 [7] rising to 60 minutes in year 5 [11]. Only rarely was any explicit distinction made according to levels of ability. In the absence of any such guidance many schools set the same homework for all pupils, and those pupils who find homework more difficult take longer to complete it. In some schools pupils preparing for GCE O-level examinations were required to do more homework than others. Moreover, when teachers were questioned about the difficulties they had in ensuring that homework was carried out, the 'poor response of the less able' was by far the most frequent problem they reported.

(DES 1987, p.36)

Perhaps as parents became increasingly conscious of the need for good academic results in order to achieve an aspiring middle-class life-style for their children, the common complaint to schools was that not enough homework was being set. Time to participate in a variety of cultural, social and sporting activities have, with some parents, become less important.

In interviews with parents they were more likely to complain of too little than too much homework, usually directed at Secondary School and usually with reference to [Years 8 and 9].

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p37)

It is difficult for teachers to judge with any accuracy the amount of time that a homework task will take. Some will complete it faster than others. Teachers should have a time limit imposed upon them from the school's policy documents, and they need to gain feedback from pupils and parents on how long it takes for a piece of homework to be done.

... it is by no means beyond expectation that some children - especially the more intelligent and active - would in fact voluntarily, without the slightest suggestion from outside, extend their efforts beyond what was required on the timetable. Than this there could hardly be a better way of developing initiative.

(Board of Education 1937, p.71)

Reliable estimates of the length of time spent by children on homework are difficult to

get. It was often found that the children's own estimate exceeded the teachers' estimates, sometimes considerably. Children are not accustomed to time themselves accurately over their work: but a piece of work which the teacher is justified in thinking could under good conditions be done in half an hour may, owing to interruptions or unsuitable surroundings, in fact take much longer.

(Board of Education 1937, p.8)

The time factor has constantly remained the measurement for homework.

Tasks that require differing amounts of time for different pupils are still measured as time-bound tasks. Sixty years appears not to have modified this form of measurement.

Homework occupies a substantial amount of pupils' time throughout their school careers. It is important for pupils of all ages and abilities, and the amount and nature of the work set should be carefully determined. This survey suggests that its potential is at present not being exploited. To do this effectively, a clearer consensus is needed than at present exists.

(DES 1987, p.44)

Once again the lack of consensus within education is brought to the fore; the DES is suggesting that until the country in general, and the profession of teaching more specifically, is agreed on what is required for homework, homework will never be used to its maximum potential.

It is possible that different factors operate across schools and individuals. The time an individual takes may be influenced by his ability and enthusiasm as well as the amount set for homework.

(McAskie 198-, p.28)

Clearly, if examining the issue of homework time as a school variable only studies using the school as the unit of comparison are suitable. Many studies of homework or in which homework time has been assessed have used the pupil as the unit.

(McAskie 198-, p.29)

Should time be a measuring factor? Perhaps an argument is that it should not. Would it be more realistic to use the task or the pupil as a measurement? Time, as the unit of measurement for homework, has been questionable for many decades, and yet politicians and schools still treat it as the important and relevant unit.

a plump volume that was on sale when Hitler invaded France, offers this guidance to a

lady asking how much time her daughter should devote to homework: "The real difficulty is that while it is simple to set time-limits it is next to impossible to ensure that children, especially younger children, adhere to them. One child will do half an hour's work in 10 minutes; another child of equal mental capacity will, owing to faulty methods or dilatory habits, take an hour for the same specified study times in 1937 (one hour a night for 12 to 14-year-olds and one-and-a-half-hours for 14 to 16-year-olds). But as these time-limits were not mandatory, and the world was soon at war, the advice was quickly forgotten.

The prevailing consensus is that Britain must climb the international educational tables if it is to prosper. ... More homework isn't always better than less: it is the quality of the exercise that is important. Homework does not always foster discipline and personal responsibility: if it is tedious and time-consuming it can be counter-productive.

Extra homework would inevitably impose a burden on parents because they would have to nag to ensure it was done. And it would add to teachers' workload. A new approach to marking might therefore be needed. ... No one should expect pupils to do more homework if they have no adult support and no quiet space at home, or indeed if they are members of the army of lowly-paid child-workers

(Rafferty 1997a)

Research in recent years - Pool (2003) – has tried to analyse the effect of television on Homework. Fourteen year old pupils were set a paper and pencil task, which included a memorisation task. There were three distinct groups of pupils: one group with a soap opera on television, a second group with just the soap opera sound track, but no visuals, and a third group with no distraction. Half of each of the groups was observed whilst they carried out the task. The group with the visual medium took longer to carry out the task and were less successful than the control group. There were no significant differences between the results of the audio group and the control group. The visual group took longer because they kept looking at the television screen, and the continual transfer of attention between the task and the television meant the task was done less thoroughly. So time cannot be detached from other factors. Yet, politicians continue to measure in terms of time - the minutes or hours being spent - irrespective of what is being done or achieved.

Mr Blunkett's proposal of half-an-hour homework for primary pupils every night and 90 minutes for secondary pupils is being widely interpreted as an attempt to snatch the traditionalist agenda back from Gillian Shephard, whose appointment of a steering group on spoken English to declare war on the "grunTERS" was announced at the Tory party conference. It has also been pointed out that the issue of homework highlights inequalities in education - if homework is so important, the child who can work in privacy and comfort with supportive parents is in a very different position from the one in a crowded council flat with the television on.

(Gardiner 1995)

What does seem to reveal itself again and again is the suggested evidence that time spent on homework produces improved results in public examinations, at least in Secondary Schools.

The most important influence on the size of the correlation between time spent on homework and learning outcomes was grade level. ... All of the correlations are low, but the higher level for the more advanced grades may merely reflect the fact that teachers set more homework for students who are more advanced and who have more positive attitudes towards school.

(Hallam and Cowan, 1998 p.9)

Homework stimulates the pupil's recall skills, enhances retention and generalisation, consolidates what has been taught during the day, assess performance and provide important feedback (Hodapp and Hodapp, 1992). Grades can be improved, and the practice of skills at home can produce significant progress in a child's schoolwork (Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon, 1992). Furthermore, work carried out in the international field tends to suggest that countries in which pupils average the most home study (8 - 9 hours weekly), also averages the highest test scores

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.448)

There is a positive relationship between time spent on homework and achievement at Secondary School level (especially for older secondary students).

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p ii)

There is a difficulty in crediting improved results solely or even partially to homework, whilst there could be other influencing factors.

Student achievement is related to time spent on homework after other factors influencing achievement have been taken into account.

(Keeves 1995 *quoted in Sharp et al* 2001(b) p.55)

A major criticism of homework, especially to pupils, but also to some parents, is that it can prevent pupils from joining in a range of out-of-school activities, many of which give opportunities not normally available through the school

system. Many of these activities are strongly based within the structure of the local community, and the demise of such activities, and the weakening of community cohesion could result from the exclusion of young people as a result of excessive quantities of homework.

There is a very real danger lest children of secondary age, spending their days at school and their evenings over homework should be brought up in an atmosphere of aloofness from much of the social life of their neighbourhood.

(Board of Education 1937, p.70)

GCSE pupils are having to do so much homework that some have dropped out of after-school activities, a new report from the Office for Standards in Education reveals. GCSE coursework requirements have led to a "considerable increase" in the time pupils spend on homework, and some "found it necessary to withdraw from worthwhile activities such as Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and sports in order to meet coursework deadlines", says the report, Homework in Primary and Secondary Schools.

It was usual for at least an hour to be allocated to each subject each week in Year 10, often increasing to 1½ hours during Year 11. Pupils reported that they frequently worked much longer hours than was indicated in the homework timetable in order to meet coursework deadlines. Some worked at home for three hours each evening and for several hours at weekends, says the report. However, they were rarely given guidance on how to organise coursework to make good use of time. The report shows that homework in Secondary Schools increased the working week by up to 20 % in lower secondary classes and 50 % in GCSE courses. "Some teachers felt this to be one of the contributory factors to the improvement in achievement at GCSE in their subject." The inspectors say homework provided additional time for redrafting work, leading to higher standards at KS4.

(Hofkins 1995)

Very approximately: about 10% said they did not do homework, 20% indicated that they spent a half and hour a day or less; 30% said they spent about an hour a day; 20% an hour and a half; and about 15% two hours or more; about 5% did not respond to this question.

(Keys and Fernandes, 1993, p.1-43)

Time spent on homework explains only a small amount of the variance in pupils' achievement scores, even at secondary level.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p ii)

It could be argued that a balance should be achieved between homework and after-school activities which will be best suited to the development of each.

Homework, carried out to the detriment of social experiences, is not appropriate. But this seems to be contradicted by ...

Levels of time on homework show a fairly strong association with performance in school examinations, with a consistent tendency for increased amounts of time spent on homework to be associated with higher examination scores.

(Holmes and Croll, 1989 p.44)

Time spent on homework in all subjects had a significant relationship with achievement at the lower Secondary School level...

(Keeves 1995, *quoted in Sharp et al 2001(b)*, p.55)

The school needs to take a collegiate responsibility in its policy documents to designate when and how much homework should be set. Having such a structure, which expects all teachers to comply, enables the pupil to have a formula around which to plan other social activities. The notion of homework set one day, to be returned to the teacher the next, allows little flexibility for the pupil (or the pupil's family). A longer span of time, perhaps three or four days, will enable pupils to take responsibility for planning time to permit a variety of activities to take place. Such a scheme, however, may impose further restrictions upon the teacher's ability to monitor and assess the homework in time for the next lesson and the next homework.

There are two different kinds of strategy for dealing with the problem of too much or uneven amounts of homework. One school's solution to this is to have specified homework night for each subject and to make sure these are known to all staff, pupils and parents. ... A second approach was to regard this as a management issue for pupils rather than for the school to solve, and to help pupils to develop the skills to cope with it successfully. It was these coping strategies that might, at the end of the day, prove the most valuable asset to young people.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p38)

A flexibility of homework timetable is satisfactory if the pupil is capable of good time-management. Time-management is a skill which pupils need to acquire, but whilst the skill is being acquired, chaos can ensue. The rigidity of a formalised timetable may be appropriate, but teachers do need feedback from pupils, or the parents, to give information regarding the amount of time, which

has been spent, on specific tasks.

A rigid homework timetable may be disliked by teachers, resenting interference, but it can benefit pupils. It will help pupils to organise their work if teachers set realistically time-limited homework tasks within an overall limit - that is, minutes per week in every subject. A simple way to find out how long pupils take over homework is to get them to write the timing at the end of the work, or in the homework diary. Otherwise, teachers will only guess.

(Stern 1997, p.17)

Sharp, Keys and Benefield (2001) summarise the significance of the time

factor of homework, and its relationship to achievement.

- There is a positive relationship between time on homework and achievement at secondary level (especially for older secondary students). ...
- Time spent on homework explains only a small amount of the variance in pupils' scores, even at secondary level.
- Studies conducted in the USA indicate that among younger children, lower-achievers spend longer on homework. The trend is reversed among older students ...
- A small body of research ... in the USA indicate that girls spend more time on homework than boys ...
- ... pupils doing either very little or a great deal of homework tend to perform less well at school than those doing 'moderate' amounts.
- Research into time on homework and academic achievement is difficult to interpret because of variations in definitions and sources of information.
- Correlation between time on homework and achievement should not necessarily be taken as evidence that more time on homework leads to better achievement.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p20)

This last point emphasises the fact that comparisons can only take place

between identical statistics, and that other extraneous factors cannot be

excluded as being influential.

2.2.7 Timefilling occupations.

The suggestion by Ofsted that homework is not always a worthwhile experience is borne out by much hearsay evidence. Teachers who are pressurised into setting homework can perhaps clear their own conscience by setting more or less anything; the quality of the work becomes irrelevant, as long as something is set. If this is done, the teacher is unlikely to be

reprimanded. Homework varies between relevant and interesting research that inspires the pupil to go further:

“Find out as much as you can about your grandparents,” the teacher said. “Ask lots and lots of questions. Then go to the library and see how their stories fit in with the stories in the history books.”

(Feeney 1996, p.5)

to homework which is repetitious and mind-numbing:

“Yes, Miss. In fact,” Ruth Davies said, holding a whole file of printed notes, “my dad allowed me to photocopy lots of pages from our set of encyclopædias.”

“Good, Ruth. Have you read it through? What did you find out from your research?”

“Well... I haven’t actually... “

“Ruth, the most important thing about using reference books is that you learn from them. That goes for all of you. Don’t just copy things from books, read and discover.”

(Feeney 1996, p.26)

Pupils said they did their homework because they had to - in order to fulfil an obligation and to keep out of trouble, not because of an interest in the subject or in the task set.

(Macfarlane 1987)

However, a caution is in order as well. We found a negative relation between the amount of homework teachers assign and students’ attitudes at lower grades and between amounts assigned and completion rates at upper grades. This suggests that teachers should ensure that assignments are of a proper length for the developmental level of their students. Teachers should avoid lengthy homework assignments that lead to fatigue and extinction of interest in the covered material.

(Cooper, Lindsay, Nye and Greathouse, 1998 p.82)

The relevance of homework to the teenage pupil continues to be a problem.

One of the benefits of homework may be seen to be that children develop the skill of working without finding it necessary to call upon adult support

whenever the need arises. The ability to work alone and unaided is one that can be developed and can be a useful acquisition for later life.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was to find that no development appeared to take place between the ages of 13 and 16 in most pupils’ understanding of the role of homework in their education - or in their ability to cope with independent study. ... few of this group saw any relationship between homework and even short-term material benefits of

education - qualifications, jobs and opportunities for further training

(Macfarlane 1987)

The effect of time spent on Homework also means that there will be less time for other activities, some of which may be regarded as important. If pupils are expected to undertake large quantities of Homework, this will reduce the time spent on other activities.

Reading a book for pleasure ... The mean time spent by students in England was amongst the lowest.

Watching television and videos ... The mean time spent by students in England was amongst the highest.

Socialising with friends ... The mean time spent by students in England was mid-ranking.

Sports ... The mean time spent by students in England was mid-ranking.

Playing computer games ... The mean time spent by students in England was amongst the highest.

Doing jobs at home ... The mean time spent by students in England was amongst the lowest.

(Keys, Harris and Fernandes, 1995a p.69-70)

Homework requires a range of high-level skills that many adults do not have.

Are we expecting from pupils skills which some teachers and parents do not have - the ability to organise time and resources; the skill of self-motivation, and the ability to meet deadlines of work and time?

Every night we ask youngsters to sit down after a day's work for between one and two hours and to study on their own in a manner that few adults - other than academics, creative artists and workaholic executives - would dream of doing. ... The instructions they are following will have been given hours, or even days, before, in fragmented form by a variety of people, often in conditions that would be quite unacceptable in an adult briefing session. Necessary support materials are often unavailable, there is no access to the people who set the task, and fellow workers are isolated in separate buildings. Above all, in these uncongenial and threatening circumstances, the various set assignments have to be carried through to completion and presentation for assessment.

(Macfarlane 1987)

With so many variables for individual pupils, *let alone* for individual schools, it is not surprising that results are so variable.

there is little direct correlation between the amount of time spent on it [homework] and the result the pupils achieve.

(Wootton 1992, p.9)

There is a sort of Parkinson's Law about homework which suggests that the child decides, consciously or unconsciously, how much time he is prepared to spend on it; the work is then adapted to fit into this time.

(Wootton 1992, p.9)

The factor of time spent by the pupil will affect the outcome; the nature of the work set by the teacher will also be highly relevant. Very often the work set will merely confirm the capabilities of the pupil. Those who are able to carry out the required task, will complete it yet again, and those who could not, will confirm in their own minds that they still cannot.

Most of us will be able to remember some fairly pointless rituals from our school days and even see these re-enacted with our own children, struggling over the five words to be embedded in five tortuous sentences. At times it seems pretty clear that homework can be both de-motivating and counter-productive. It also serves to widen the gap between the high and the low achievers, because in both cases these are self-fulfilling cycles. Those who do well in school are likely to have the motivation and interest to work at home. Those who experience difficulty and failure in class are unlikely to relish homework, unless they have a very special motivation of a highly supportive family.

(MacBeath 1996, p.20)

If homework is to have a positive value, it should not be reconfirming the inabilities of pupils, but should be enabling them to overcome difficulties, and make progress in their independent learning.

If homework is to benefit pupils' learning they must be given prompt and appropriate feedback on what they have done. Parents have a role in encouraging and praising children for the effort they have devoted to homework but pupils look mainly to teachers for a response to the quality of their work. Policies should make clear the timing and character of feedback which should be provided. Effective marking and feedback have always placed demands on teachers, but both are fundamental to helping pupils make progress. Managers in schools need to bear this in mind when arranging meeting or making other demands on teachers' time. Equally, however, it is possible to design many homework assignments which do not make heavy demands on teachers, and schools should make sensible use of them.

(DfES 1998 p24)

Homework is a team game, which involves primarily three players: the pupil, the parents and the teacher (but often others such as siblings, friends and others are participants as reported by Pupils in Figure 54). For it to be fully

effective, it needs all players to play a fully active part. The time factor impinges upon all – not just the pupil.

2.2.8. Homework is mud.

It could be argued that homework is mud; the more of it you throw, the more of it is likely to stick. The mathematics of time (theoretically) spent by the average British pupil doing homework may be a strong argument for the use of homework to improve examination results.

Teachers would be appalled if a large group of pupils missed a day a week of school, or if they missed all the lessons in two of their subject, for several years. Yet teachers are rarely surprised if they hear that a pupil has done no homework for years, or a class has been set no homework for years. I've been told by teachers that there's no point in setting certain pupils homework, because they simply wouldn't do it, or couldn't do it. It would be more trouble than it was worth, it would cause too much trouble, even to ask.
(Stern 1997, p.7)

Homework is an issue of rights and equal opportunities. Over five years, appropriate homework can add the equivalent of at least one additional year of full-time education - or lacking homework is the equivalent to losing one whole year's education.
(Stern 1997, p.150)

The suggestion that (some) pupils can't or won't do homework questions therefore whether it is appropriate to expect *any* pupil to do homework.

If a large number of pupils can do no homework, we should just abolish it. That would provide equal, if fewer, opportunities for all.
(Stern 1997, p.7)

If we abolished homework, pupils might have more equal opportunities, as all their work would be done in school, under similar conditions, with less advantages given to those pupils with desks and encyclopaedias at home. A school that sets no homework might have more tightly organised lessons, as teachers could no longer say "finish this at home", and pupils might have less stress, not worrying all evening about homework they should be doing.
(Stern 1997, p.7)

Teachers vaguely set homework without any time specifications; such vagueness could not exist in the classroom, and yet they are often prepared to leave pupils without appropriate directions. Should we not be giving pupils

guidelines: "this exercise will take you between twenty and thirty minutes; if it takes longer you should stop and we will discuss why at our next lesson".

Timings are essential in organising good homework. Teachers would be shocked if told that their lessons should last 'as long as it takes', and that they may not feel the need to have any lessons one week, if the previous week's lessons were particularly good. Yet the same is too often said of homework.

(Stern 1997, p.16-17)

If mud is going to stick, it needs an adhesive quality; there is such a quality to mud. Evidence to support the use of homework at Secondary level is conflicting and uncertain. The intuitive reaction of many parents and teachers is that there is a value to homework. Teachers often maintain that GCSE syllabuses (and the coursework elements of examination assessment) cannot be completed in the time allowed if only classroom teaching time is used. In spite of this common belief, it seems that teachers are less than efficient in putting their belief into action, and parents are less than efficient at fulfilling their part of the home-school partnership.

There have been two recent reviews of literature, relating to homework and academic attainment. Paschal, Weinstein and Walberg (1984) were able to identify 15 studies on which to base a meta-analysis. They concluded that homework had a positive effect on academic achievement, especially when commented upon or graded. However, Barber (1986) was very critical of that work, stating that "while homework may have some effect on learning, the studies reviewed have little evidence to support the claim."

(Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon 1992, p.3)

In the UK there have been very few research studies relating to homework. Rutter *et al.* (1979) found that those schools in which more homework was being set by staff generally had better pupil behaviour and greater academic success.

(Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon 1992, p.4)

These cited studies provide inconclusive evidence as to whether or not the benefits of homework can be measured. Intuition suggests that homework must have a positive influence upon the examination results, but it is more difficult to produce conclusive evidence.

Holmes and Kroll (1989) looked at the third-year school exam results in a single-sex

grammar school. The study showed that those who reported doing more homework achieved higher exam results having controlled for ability. They also found some differences across social class in the amount of reported homework and in residual gains.

(Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon 1992, p.4)

The evidence for the use of homework as a means of improving academic attainment, then, is not clear-cut, but there would seem to be a consensus that at Secondary School the relationship between homework and achievement is a positive one.

(Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon 1992, p.4)

Whilst the perceived value, or otherwise, of homework amongst Secondary School pupils may be unsurprising, the gender differences may be less than might be expected.

In gender terms, 28% of boys claimed less than two hours a week, whilst only 20% of girls felt that this was all they did. Girls were certainly working harder than boys, but open comment from respondents led us to the view that time may not always be equated with quality, especially where meticulous care is given to presentation.

(Glover, Gough and Johnson, p.43)

The evidence for A level (16 - 18 years) attitudes and practice with regards to homework is perhaps more conclusive according to the findings reported by Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon:

The analyses of the 1989 ALIS data relating to homework have produced the following findings:

1. There was a wide variation among A-level pupils in the amount of homework which they reported doing.
2. The amounts of homework reported for different curriculum areas were broadly similar, with the single exception of General Studies.
3. Girls and pupils with poorer prior achievement reported doing more homework, but there was no evidence of variation across socio-economic groupings.
4. The amount of homework varied from class to class.
5. The more homework that the pupils reported doing, the better were their grades, even when pupils of the same ability were compared.
6. Classes which reported doing more homework did not fare better than classes which reported doing less homework over and above the differences which would be expected, given individual pupils' cognitive and homework measures.

(Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon 1992, p.9)

The inference from these reports is that whilst empirical research is perhaps

lacking to support or disprove the notion that homework improves results, (and the Alis project have reported no further update since the Tymms and Fitz-Gibbon (1992) report of the 1989 findings), credence might be given to the idea that there is more of a correlation between homework and improved standards at a higher age range.

Homework will have more of an effect in raising standards at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, and at post-16 than at Key Stage 4. This does not, however, exclude the need for homework at Key Stage 3 (or lower) where the regular and effective use of it might be setting an appropriate work ethic for later years.

... at this time of important public examination results, will those pupils who have slogged doggedly through their revision and homework schedules ultimately achieve more success than those who let them slide in favour of less academic pastimes? In other words, is regular homework important to a pupil's success rate, or is it merely an outdated practice of somewhat dubious worth?

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.447)

It is easy to generalise about the effects of homework. Whilst homework may be an influencing factor on raising standards, it is also difficult to separate homework from other factors which might have contributed.

The concept of equal educational opportunity for all pupils is also to be considered. The common practice of "prep" periods is widespread in the private sector of education. Here, pupils are given no choice about "homework", and both parents and schools place a high priority upon these mandatory after-school study periods in which "homework" is completed. So, is it possible that the importance placed upon this practice helps to account for the high academic standards often attained by the children in such schools?

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.449)

2.2.9 Excuses for *not* doing homework.

The role of teacher will include assessing and monitoring pupils' homework; without doubt, many teachers spend a great deal of time pursuing pupils for homework that has not been presented. Whilst reasons for non-presentation

can provide traditional staffroom amusement, the teacher has to evaluate each reason proffered, because some may be genuine.

It can be really fun listening to people saying why they haven't brought their homework into school:

"The dog got it."

"My little sister chewed it."

"I've left it on the desk in my room. I can see it now, Miss, Honest."

"I've done it in rough, I just need to copy it up."

"I left it on the bus, I was showing it to someone."

"It's been stolen. Our house was burgled."

(Feeney 1996, p.119)

If the excuse for non-presentation is not acceptable to the teacher, the school needs to have a policy to deal with this; consistency by all teachers is required if there is to be any hope of conquering non-presentation. Divided, teachers will fail. It needs to be recognised that a majority, if not all, pupils would prefer not to have homework. To them, their freedom and independence outweighs the benefits of homework.

One quite important group within our own education system would welcome a "no homework" policy in this country. The pupils themselves appear not to share the view of their elders and betters that homework is good for them.

(Macfarlane 1987)

Even experienced teachers indicate that it is sometimes difficult to motivate pupils to do homework.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p76)

Whilst the suggestion that pupils are not "homework-willing" may be regarded as a reflection of their tiredness at the end of a demanding school day, this argument has been long recognised as being too simplistic. Being "too tired" to do homework may just be an indication of other influencing factors such as excessive social activities, lack of sleep or uninspiring lessons.

No one has yet offered conclusive proof of so general a statement as that for the secondary pupil of normal health, strength and intelligence working under reasonably good conditions some twenty-five hours a week of schooling takes full toll of his energies. Moreover, where fatigue is evident, it may be - and frequently is - attributable

to other causes than homework, for instance, to an insufficient allowance of sleep.
(Board of Education 1937, p.66)

Recent research in Scotland suggests that antagonism from pupils is perhaps not quite as clear cut as this; apathy should not be regarded as being the same as open hostility. There may be a range of emotions in reaction to homework across a range of pupils, and also across a period of time; individual reactions may change.

A common assumption among those pupils who write about homework is that parents are enthusiastic, teachers ambivalent, and pupils hostile. This study provides no support for such a set of stereotypes, indeed it suggests that all three groups share broadly similar views.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p18)

Johnson and Pontius had already cautioned that homework was, and is, a complicated issue, and answers should not be regarded as being easy to find. However, if pupils are to value homework, and display a commitment to it as a valid and valued part of learning, the profile of homework, in the perception of pupils, needs to be altered. Until it is, it will continue to be perceived as a "waste of time".

If homework is simply a ritual exercise it will be something to be got out of the way as quickly as possible. If it is meaningful, on the other hand, it is more likely to be something that you take time and thought over.

(MacBeath, and Turner 1990, p21)

It may be a possibility that at times, schools and teachers are blinkered to the needs of many pupils. Assumptions are made regarding the resources available to pupils at home. If schools are not providing adequate resources, is it acceptable to assume that resources can be found elsewhere? This is especially true when the pupil has little parental support.

Overall, 68% of students said that homework was easier to understand with access to a textbook; 18% said they had insufficient books at home to support their learning.... Subject leaders indicated that it was usual practice for most pupils to have access to course/text books in lessons, but much less common for pupils to have a school-

provided book to keep with them and take home.

(Johnson 1999, *quoted in Sharp et al.* 2001, p.178)

Schools and teachers need to be responsible and reasonable in their expectations of pupils, especially those who may be socially disadvantaged.

2.2.10 Punishment for *NOT* doing homework.

In the eyes of teachers it may be an unforgivable crime not to do homework.

Teachers, in the pressure of the classroom, may be deaf to excuses or reasons, and the punishment is handed out as a mandatory sentence. The conclusion is irrespective of the cause, whether it be “cannot”, “has not” or “will not”.

It should be noted that automatic punishment is rarely a wholly satisfactory response to the problem of a pupil who will not do homework, and it is never appropriate for the child who cannot do the homework. It may not be easy to distinguish between a detention class and a supervised Homework Club.

(Wootton 1992, p.5)

Teachers, and school management teams, need to evaluate the appropriateness of sanctions, and whether they are likely to solve the problem, or whether the opinions of the pupil, and the parent, are likely to become more entrenched.

Summary:

Homework claims to encourage the pupil to master study skills, self-discipline and organisation; it also claims to acquaint further pupils with subject content. It requires from pupils study skills which many adults do not have. Ideally it should help to close the gap between the more able and the less able, and not to widen it. However, some pupils complete work faster or slower than others; time recommendations can only be a guideline. Consequently it is uncertain whether “honest” feedback from pupils on the time spent can ever be relied upon.

There appears to be some evidence of a limited correlation between time

spent on homework and improved examination results. However, a “middle ground” approach of quantity, reasonably demanding and appropriate to the classroom work, is most likely to achieve success.

Homework has been criticised for preventing pupils from joining in with community activities, and that the community is consequently weakened. Time between homework being set and collected should allow flexibility for pupils to learn to manage their own time, and to join in community activities. If homework is “meaningful”, pupils will start to credit it with time and thought. Schools should develop their partnership with parents. It may place the partnership on a formal footing through the home-school contracts; schools need to lead by example through fulfilling their side of the contract.

Family involvement in homework tasks is to be encouraged, and will benefit all pupils, especially those with special educational needs. Generally, parents complain that pupils never have enough homework and they expect homework to be marked. Homework should not be set without a time limit being set and that quality of homework needs to be in harness with quantity.

Homework should be covered by a policy which needs to be communicated to, and adhered to by all concerned; teachers must accept a “collegiate responsibility”. Any inconsistency between teachers will lead to a weakening of the effectiveness of the Homework Policy. This policy on homework is often regarded as a coded message, concerning schoolwork in general, to the wider community.

Teachers need to remember constantly the circumstances in which pupils are working before setting appropriate work. Working in isolation is less realistic than working in partnership with others; if homework is done in isolation; the importance of marking and monitoring by teachers is probably even more essential. This enables the teacher to check whether homework has been done and to what standard.

Homework marking should assist the teacher in reporting objectively to the

school and to the parent. Homework is most effective when parent and teacher work in partnership with the pupil. ICT is a useful tool for homework, if it is a tool which pupils are able to access at home; if it is not, it will merely emphasise disadvantage. Evidence suggests that pupils with special educational needs can benefit from suitable homework projects appropriately supervised and that homework can greatly increase the time-contact with specific subjects.

Non-presentation of homework should be recorded and followed-up by the subject-teacher. There should be differentiation between “cannot”, “has not” and “will not”. The school needs to have a policy on how to deal with non-presentation and the school management teams need to evaluate the appropriateness of homework sanctions. Systematic monitoring by pastoral staff is a facet of good practice. Nothing should be done to allow homework to be perceived as a “punishment” in the eyes of children. There needs to be a clear distinction between Detention and Homework Club.

Emerging issues pertinent to the current research:

Schools use homework to encourage study skills, self-organisation and self-discipline and also to offer further acquaintance with subject content. In the context of the family home, socio-economic flaws may unduly overshadow homework. Subject-teachers need to be, and should try to be, aware of possible inadequacies home situation when planning homework activities, including the use of appropriate ICT activities.

The school should have an appropriate Homework Policy which has been conveyed to all staff, parents and the wider community, and which is implemented by all. This should include details of how homework is monitored and marked by the subject-teacher under the oversight of the curriculum leader who is responsible for the implementation of Homework Policy within that academic area.

The “homework timetable” should include reference to the amount of time it is expected that pupils will spend upon a homework task; and teachers need feedback from pupils and/or parents regarding the time spent.

The school’s policy needs to be clear how teachers will record and respond the non-presentation of homework. Teachers will need to differentiate between the “cannot”, “has not” or “will not”. The school’s policy regarding the outcome of non-presentation needs to be clear with suggested sanctions. Any conflict between Detention and a Homework Club needs to be avoided.

All this pre-supposes that there is a clear partnership among the family, the school and the pupil. Section 2.3 will consider further into this triangulated relationship.

2.3 Homework within a triangulation relationship: pupils, parents and school.

2.3.1 Growing teenage maturity of attitude towards homework.

It could be argued that education is about growing up; growing up confers individual responsibility upon the adult, following a gradual transition of responsibility from babyhood through to adolescence. Homework could transfer the responsibility for learning from being externally imposed, often by the teacher, to becoming self-motivated by the mature individual. Homework, it could be argued, should enable the individual to assume responsibility for his, or her, own learning.

The fifth-formers [Year 11] involved in the research project manifested much of the same attitudes to homework and were frustrated by the same fundamental difficulties as the second-year children [Year 8] three years their junior. They had apparently gained little in maturity of attitude and approach from several years of homework experience. They appeared neither to have been shown, nor to have acquired for themselves, the means of organising and managing their independent learning successfully, and therefore had not experienced the genuine pleasure and sense of achievement that provide the best self-motivation and commitment to study.

(Macfarlane 1987)

Macfarlane's case suggests that these pupils had changed little in their perception of homework; the Year 11 pupil was no better equipped than (s)he was three years earlier. There is a need to teach pupils how to organise themselves to complete self-study or homework tasks; how to meet time deadlines; how to accumulate and sort appropriate resources, and how to keep a balance view at times when pressure mounts. These could all be skills that are reckoned as worth learning for use in adult life.

Pupils will benefit if they are used to reading and following instructions, have planned their revision, can concentrate for an hour or three, can time what they do and balance the time spent on different tasks, and keep reasonably cool under pressure.

(Stern 1997, p.126)

"It is worrying that we don't actually offer much help and guidance to kids on how to

manage all this. This is what used to happen to us at university and plenty of us didn't cope with it too well."

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p31)

One of the troubles with this might be that such teaching does not fall neatly into the normal curriculum subject areas, and hence the school may need to work out a policy to designate exactly who is responsible for such teaching. It may be argued that such work comes within the brief of the personal tutor or Personal Development Programme. Whatever the case, the designation needs to be clear in its origins, and cross-curricular in its implementation.

These [study skills sessions] often contained a lot of useful information, and it was, therefore, disappointing that pupils often said that they did not find this advice valuable. The explanation for this is that some advice is unrealistic, and that general precepts are not always valid for individual circumstances. For example, study skills quite typically suggest that pupils find somewhere quiet on their own, and assume that they will sit at a desk. In fact some pupils find it easier to work in company, and somewhere with background noise, and have a wide range of places where they work - on the floor, at a table, or on their bed. Because approach to study is so individual and contextualised the most helpful advice appears to be that which takes as its starting point what pupils actually do and attempts to work from there.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p61)

The curriculum commitments of the timetable for pupils to the age of sixteen do not traditionally provide for private study time. The opportunity for using study time to assist pupils is therefore severely limited. Homework Clubs may enable some opportunities to be afforded.

In upper secondary pupils are often expected to take responsibility for their own learning out of school, but this is likely to be effective only where it has been seen throughout school life as an intrinsic part of pupils' personal and academic development.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p33)

Teachers readily accept that children learn from mistakes. Time management, rather like behaviour, is an area in which pupils are generally not permitted by teachers to "get it wrong"; yet such failures should provide the opportunity for positive learning by teacher and pupil.

'A pupil should be confronting the limits of his knowledge and understanding through

the medium of careful set prep, [homework] as well as exploring the range of his own potential. Intellectual and emotional maturity is only developed by this constant process of facing up to difficulties recognised as being not quite insurmountable by the pupil.'
(DES 1987, p.14)

The Homework Policy of the school should deal with more than just the practicalities of things such as how much, when and where. It should clearly set out the policy for how young pupils are going to acquire those skills necessary to enable them to work alone, unsupervised and within a deadline. When a school's teaching staff has sorted out such basic principles, homework may become more than just a chore imposed upon the unwilling.

Where a school begins to reflect on how to implement a Homework Policy, it may well decide that this is not a matter for individual departments alone but requires a coherent and consistent approach by the whole school. In particular there may be implications for tutorial work carried out by members of staff with specific responsibilities for pastoral care. Homework can feature as part of a personal and social education (PSE) programme. In one such programme, all first year [year 7] pupils undertake a 'homework unit', consisting of a series of lessons ... The programme continues with a series of activities on such topics as 'organising your work', 'where to do your work' and 'can parents help with homework?' It then moves into a section on 'evaluating homework' in which pupils are asked to study two examples of completed homework and assess them in relation to a number of questions; this is used as the basis for discussion about what to look for in a good homework. The difference such a programme makes to the pupils' own performance will inevitably vary from individual to individual: some may well pay lip-service to all the 'right' ideas and still not be willing, or not know how, to modify their own practice. In the schools observed work of this kind was most successful when it was undertaken as part of a co-ordinated programme in which all subject departments were involved. In this way, the ideas being discussed in the 'homework unit' were related to pupils' actual experience of homework, and valuable principles from the subject and from the PSE programme could reinforce each other.

(DES 1987, p.15)

It may well be that in demanding that children perfect the skills of self-motivated learning, schools are expecting them to display the very skills which their parents, and indeed some teachers, are lacking. The school must therefore inspire the pupil towards goals that can only be developed away from the school, and with the support of the school.

Homework can be a powerful tool in developing independent study habits by promoting research and initiative. It can also help to develop pupils' self-organisation,

perseverance and self-discipline. Very practically, homework allows more ground to be covered and enables class work to concentrate on activities that require the presence of the teacher. Often, however, homework involves simply 'finishing off' work begun in class and frequently fails to stimulate, challenge or extend.

(Ofsted 1998)

Positive attitudes to homework are associated with positive attitudes towards school.
(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p iii)

In further education, even greater emphasis is placed upon working alone; private study periods and study days, in addition to the more traditional homework, enable pupils to develop and hone the skills required for self-motivated study.

Homework is significantly better used post-16: use is good in almost two-thirds of schools and poor in very few. For sixth-form pupils, homework blends with private study within the school day. Arrangements and expectations for private study vary considerably. A minority of schools provide structured programmes and supervision; others only require pupils to be in school when they are being taught. The effective use of private study depends more on pupils' attitudes and their ability to work independently of the teacher than on specific arrangements. Sixth-form pupils are normally set an appropriate amount of work to carry out in their own time. The content is usually suitable, though sometimes the style of working required of pupils does not directly contribute to the development of their independent study skills. On occasions, activities which require the pupils to work by themselves in lessons could be more efficiently set for homework.

(Ofsted 1998)

Those pupils who move on into higher education are expected to have perfected the skills of self-directed work, and to be capable of planning time, setting targets, accumulating resources and achieving success. If such skills cannot be immediately endowed, they need to be learnt gradually.

[homework] encourages the gradual transition from motivation to work for external rewards, such as pleasing the teacher, to more internal motivation where the completion of work becomes intrinsically satisfying for its own sake.

(Junger at al., 1990, *quoted in* Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.448)

There are gender issues which relate to attitudes towards homework by pupils, and hence to the likely outcomes. It is likely that such gender difference may

relate not exclusively to homework, but in all attitudes to education, and to even wider aspects of adolescent life.

Females were often prepared to do school work at home and to discuss it with peers outside school. Many girls completed two or three hours of homework most evenings and at weekends. In comparison, males tended to make strong distinctions between the home and the school. They preferred to devote spare time to sport, were less committed to regular homework, and only completed up to three hours homework per week.

(Harris *et al.* 1993, *quoted in Sharp et al* 2001(b), p.83)

If this is a difference of approach that is more widely recognisable, and homework has an effect upon the outcome of public examinations, it may be a contributing factor towards a difference in gender comparisons in many subject areas.

2.3.2. Communication between:

Homework is a partnership between the school, primarily through the subject-teacher, and the pupil, supported primarily in the home by the parent.

The amount, quality and usefulness of homework is jointly determined by teachers, parent, and students. If one of the three legs of the homework stool is unsupportive, little may be accomplished academically in the large amount of time students spend outside school.

(Walberg, Paschal and Weinstein, 1985 p. 79)

As with any partnership the essential ingredient to lead to success is communication. When honest communication takes place between parties who are all working towards the same goal(s), there is likelihood of success. When communication does not exist, or is fragmented, success is less likely.

2.3.2.1 Parents and children.

Nearly everyone thinks parents should encourage children to do more homework and watch less television, according to an opinion poll carried out for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers by Harris

(Anon 1995)

Research does not indicate a clear relationship between the amount of parental involvement in homework and pupils' achievement at school.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p iv)

... the amount of parental involvement varies according to the age of the child, and is much greater with younger children.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p35)

There are probably no greater mysteries to teachers than what goes on in individual homes; however well teachers may claim to know their pupils, they can only surmise the relationship pupils have with their parents or carers. Schools are likely to know little if anything about the school experiences of the parent, and consequently how these colour their own perceptions of their children's schooling

Few pupils were prepared to admit their difficulties to staff and habitually concealed from them the extent to which their parents helped with their homework or, in some instances, did it for them. ... the unwillingness of pupils to reveal the full extent of the practical help and guidance they were receiving with their homework must have affected their teachers' perception of the degree to which their classes were understanding the work they were doing.

(Macfarlane 1987)

Stern suggests that "all parents value education" though some teachers may dispute this as a generalisation. Many could cite parents who appear to have no apparent acceptance of such a value. Nevertheless, many do value education, and homework gives parents an opportunity of being involved.

Parents can have high expectations for their children, and they can communicate those expectations to their children.

(Keith, T.Z. and Keith, P.B.1993, p.481)

All parents value education, and want their children to do well, but there are ways of showing how much you value education that can help children do even better. By doing courses ... By getting involved with your child's school ... By asking your child about their school work and homework. ...

(Stern 1997, p.98)

... parents want schools to set homework, although homework can be a cause of conflict between parents and children.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p iv)

Parents generally want to support their children's homework but may feel inadequately equipped to do so. Helping children do homework can cause tension in the family.
(Hallam and Cowan 1998, *quoted in Sharp et al* 2001(b), p.51)

If such assistance is the main form of help that parents and carers are able to give to their children, perhaps schools need to give guidance to parents on practical ways of helping.

Parents can demonstrate that they believe school and learning are important by monitoring, and, if necessary, helping with, homework, by attending school events, and by visiting their children's schools and talking with their teachers.
(Keith, T.Z. and Keith, P.B.1993, p.481)

There are four practical stages of help that you can give.

- Getting started is often the hardest part of doing homework. ...
- Finding a space is the next task. ...
- Doing the homework itself comes next. ...
- Finally, help your child be lazy. ...

(Stern 1997, p.100-101)

For many parents, staying out of the way will be the 'help' most asked for.

(Stern 1997, p.124)

... three main dimensions of parental support for homework, namely:

- Support for children's autonomy
- Direct involvement in homework
- The elimination of distractions.

(Cooper *et al.* 2000, *quoted in Sharp, Keys and Benefield* 2001(a), p36)

In order for pupils to complete their GCSE homework as efficiently as possible:

- Study skills should focus on the issue of distractions when completing homework. It should also teach pupils about setting targets, in terms of tasks and time, and the importance of rest periods
- Parents should be given the opportunity to learn the study skills that their children are taught in school so that they can reinforce and encourage the self-directed learning which GCSE requires. They should also be provided with clearer information regarding the demands of GCSE
- Teachers should think carefully about the length of time a piece of homework will take a *pupil* to complete, and ensure that homework tasks are fully explained.

(Kibble 1991, p.6)

Homework is an area, which is common to parents and child, and is an area for discussion. Parents who find it difficult to establish conversation with their child may find such common ground a useful starting point, which enables

conversation then to be taken on into other areas. However, such conversations need to be a part of the regular, perhaps daily, family routine; if not, they are likely to be regarded as “parental interference”.

Most parents also said that they talked to their child on a fairly regular basis about what he or she was doing in school. While some of this has a monitoring, or quality control function, many parents explained that they talked to their children in order to show an interest, help their children take the work seriously, or to make them think more about what they were doing.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p48)

MacBeath and Turner go on to expound the idea that such conversation and interest can be perceived by *both* parties as being helpful.

“If there’s something I’m not happy with I just talk it over with my mum and dad. They’re awfully helpful, not just because they want me to do well, but because they’re interested in me and what I do.”

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p49)

Such parent-child conversations are more common place with the younger child. At Key Stage 1 parents will often read to the child, and listen to the child read. Such a relationship is carried on into Key Stage 2; such parental interest seems to decrease as the age of the pupil increases. It may be that relationships tire, or that there are other priorities for parents, or simply that they become “subject-scared”. One school was reported as follows:

The work done in this primary school is no longer of the kind which would lend itself to homework in the traditional sense of the word. However, children are encouraged to take home their reading books in the early stages. This gives them added practice and in a few cases teaches the parents to read. It also encourages the parents to read to their children, a pastime which seems to be dying.

(AAM 1974, p.9)

When children are very young, reading to them or listening to their reading may play a key role in that bonding process, but equally, in senior school, when the interests of young people and their parents may have drifted apart, discussing schoolwork can provide a common reference point.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 51)

It may be that reading to parents at home provides the very forum to enable

parent-child discussions to take place, and the opportunity to lead on to talk about other key areas of schoolwork.

One researcher, Peter Hannon (1992) concluded that in many cases children's experiences of reading to their parents was of higher quality than their reading experiences in school. Home readings were longer and with fewer interruptions than reading sessions in the classroom. Parents' relationships with their children allowed them more easily to relate what they were reading to children's own experiences.

(MacBeath 1996, p.20)

Thus, the parent who provides an appropriate environment for their child, can assist greatly in enhancing the "learning environment", possibly beyond that which can be achieved in school. This appropriateness includes the active participation of the parent in achieving excellence.

If we are serious about state schools we have to reassure parents that we rate achievement as highly as independent schools and that homework is a key factor in achievement."

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 52)

When the communication between parent-pupil-school breaks down, the school is often the initiator of re-establishing the partnership. Whilst it is perhaps easier for the school simply to punish the child, working with the parents to re-establish the communication often produces more positive and long-lasting results.

In Secondary Schools guidance staff are usually brought in to deal with problems over homework. They are seen as the link between home and school and sometimes mediate between teachers and parents. Guidance staff generally do not like being used in a policing capacity, and try to discourage teachers from using them as just another form of sanction or pressure point. This may be a matter of school policy, and guidance often becomes involved only where they can offer support to the child or family.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p59)

... in theory, homework appears to be useful, in practice it is often experienced by pupils as boring and to be avoided at all costs. Furthermore, the pupil's attitude towards homework is frequently influenced by peer group and community factors (Cooper, 1989; Ulrich, 1989; Murphy and Decker, 1990; Reetz, 1990; Miller and Kelley, 1991, Pratt *et al.*, 1992), and these include the most important influence of all: that of parents.

The parents, who are actively involved in partnership with their own child, are undoubtedly best-placed to monitor the homework process; when enough is enough they should have the courage to draw stumps - and to tell the school why. The school should have the grace to listen.

There is not, as far as I know, any evidence to suggest that swotting which excludes all else leads to long-term wisdom, achievement, emotional stability or contentment. One suspects that people might be better parents if they put less pressure on themselves and their children.

(Kogbara 1998)

For older (secondary) school students, a fourth dimension emerged ... described as "parental interference" (i.e. parental involvement aimed to make homework go faster; involvement in homework that pupils were supposed to complete on their own; and involvement that parents had admitted had resulted in making the homework task harder for their child).

(Cooper *et al.* 2000, *quoted in* Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p36)

The fine balance of when too much homework is being done is one that has tested many parents. It is unprofessional for teachers to suggest that pupils can never have "too much homework"; it would probably be the same teachers who take too long to mark the same homework. If a teacher can have too much work, so can a pupil.

The parental survey detailed in the last volume of *Managing Schools Today* indicated that about 20% of parents from the complete range of social contexts felt that their children were set too little homework. About 10% felt that too much work was set and the remaining 70% appeared broadly satisfied with the provision. In asking pupils about homework it became clear that they had differing perceptions.

(Glover, Gough and Johnson, 1997, p.43)

Bush offers practical guidelines to parents who want to make homework go more smoothly:

- I. Discover how your child learns
- II. Develop a routine
- III. Be informed and be proactive
- IV. Offer incentives and rewards
- V. Don't do the work for them
- VI. Ask for help from the wider family and friends

(Bush 2003)

This advocates the development of good work habits in the home and the support of family involvement with homework. Pupils can benefit from adults irrespective of the helper's preconceived notions of their own academic achievement.

2.3.2.2 Teacher and pupil.

The crux of many of the problems associated with homework and its implementation may be put down to inadequate communication; communication is a two-way process which involves the one giving information and the one receiving, and vice-versa. Assumptions tend to be made, and if there is guilt in this respect, perhaps it should be placed at the door of the adult and not the child.

Many children suffer constantly in this way throughout their schooling, but in this sample of [846] pupils, the experience was more widespread in the homework situation. Thus while 50% of the children said they enjoyed school, only 2% admitted to liking homework. By far the most common problem was a breakdown in communication between teacher and pupil, resulting in an inadequate understanding of what the homework task entailed. Insufficient guidance, hurried instructions (often issued against a hubbub of noise after the bell had gone), a lack of opportunities to ask questions and seek clarification, assignments unrelated to class work and inadequately explained - these were repeatedly cited as the cause of difficulties that arose during the evening's work.

(Macfarlane 1987)

An interesting survey was carried out some years ago into pupils' understanding of some commonly used technical words. It discovered that two-thirds of eleven-year-olds did not understand the word *revise*. When teachers instructed pupils to 'revise', the pupils did not understand what they were expected to do and therefore did nothing at all. No one ever questioned the fact that they had done nothing, and so some pupils came to believe that *revision* is the word teachers use when they have decided to set no homework.

(Wootton 1992, p.8)

A criticism placed firmly on teachers is the way in which homework is so often set.

Time is at a premium in the classroom, and there is no allowance to enable teachers to check that pupils have understood what is required, or for pupils to query any aspect of which they are uncertain. Teachers are often concerned with

the short-term benefits of homework-matters relating to the curriculum content. They perhaps overlook some of the less-obvious benefits, which are perhaps more pertinent to the developing maturity of the young learner.

“At the centre of the curriculum running across all subjects in the central purpose of helping young people to manage their learning. This means helping them to develop attitudes and skills which are an integral aspect of their personal and social development. So, working in the school, working at home are simply facets of the same thing. It is a seamless cloth.”

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p25)

Until the teacher understands the needs of the developing individual, homework is likely to be less than relevant. Once the individual is assessed by the teacher, work can be tailored to that individual's needs, and is likely to fulfil the purpose.

Among other factors determining pupils' approach were their own motivation, mood, well-being, weather, family circumstances, the quality and quantity of homework assigned and its relevance for that individual pupil. Pupils resented work above or below their level of ability, and criticised teachers who catered to the lowest common denominator of ability or pitched their homework to some notional middle ground. In the view of pupils good teachers individualised homework. Teachers, in fact, tended to agree.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p23)

Whilst homework, by its very name, suggests an involvement of those at home, the family, teachers need to be aware of the inequalities which homes and families can accentuate. Less able children may find it even more difficult to work alone than their more able colleagues. Homework, which may be done with little family support, can, nevertheless, provide a small modicum of independence and self-reliance, however imperfect.

The staff often feel that it is the less-able children who need homework, however inadequately completed, in order to give them a sense, or illusion, of progress, and a feeling of involvement with the subject and teacher.

(AAM 1974, p.7)

2.3.2.3. School and home.

Part of the interest of homework is that it represents in both a practical and a symbolic fashion a link between home and school and an opportunity for parents to exert and influence, and, in some cases, offer help.

(Holmes and Croll, 1989 p.44)

If it is accepted that the correct use of work at home can contribute to the success rate of the pupil, and that home/school relationships are a significant factor in deciding a pupil's attitude to such homework, then it can be argued that a role has been identified here for a group of pupil service providers to facilitate the most effective use of homework time (Junger *et al.*, 1990; Brewer, 1992). This would ensure that as many pupils as possible have equal access to this valuable commodity. And who better to offer this service than teachers and parents in partnership.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.450)

[homework] provides evidence of the school's seriousness of purpose; it gives them a 'window' on their child's experience.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p35)

Homework is the key link between school and parents. ... the best way of helping a pupil learn is for the school and family to work together.

(Stern 1997, p.128)

Stern (1997) advocates the popular view that the best way to help a pupil is for the home and the school to work in a partnership, and Johnson and Pontius (1989) had already proposed that this partnership would provide an opportunity for informing and educating parents too.

Properly designed and administered homework has the advantage of providing parents with a positive view of what is taking place in the classroom.

(Johnson and Pontius 1989, p.77)

This is not the end of parental involvement; for instance

... educators must continue to encourage parents' attendance at their adolescents' activities at school.

(Deslandes, Royer, Potvin and Leclerc, 1999, p.505)

It appears that many parents are expecting their children to be set homework; there is a perception by them that homework must be "good" for the pupil. If this is what many parents are demanding as one of their expectations when selecting a suitable school, it is not surprising that schools are setting down

very formal Homework Policies in order to satisfy the aspiring parents' needs.

Turnstone High School, situated in a socially mixed suburban area, now attracts three times as many first-choice preferences from the parents of 11-year-olds as it did a few years ago. The reason is clear, says the headmaster, Robin Byrd: "we have tightened up our attitude to homework."

(Wootton 1992, p.3)

The relevance of homework needs to be placed in context of relative proportions of a young person's life which are spent under the influence of the home, as opposed to the time spent within the orbit of the school. The family and home have a tremendous influence.

There are about 140 000 hours in 16 years. Expert or not, families are responsible for bringing up children for approximately 125 000 hours, up to the age of 16, whilst schools are responsible for the remaining 15 000 hours. Whatever schools think, families are more involved in bringing up their children than schools are: in terms of hours, they are over eight times as 'responsible'.

(Stern 1997, p.93)

There are three stages in building partnerships with parents:

- Recognising the skills, understanding, commitment and ... responsibility of parents and carers for the upbringing ... of children.
- Providing realistic opportunities for parents and carers to help their children with their work. This may include homework diaries, schemes requiring work to be done with helpers at home, or classes or advice for parents on improving their basic skills. Being realistic means realising that there is no quick fix for all problems.
- Promoting and participating in shared initiatives, perhaps with other organisations and services, in which schools and families can work together to create more opportunity for children. 'Sharing' doesn't sit well with a lot of rules and regulations, with punishments or contracts when people break these rules. It should be a positive approach, based on an assumption that everyone wants the children to be successful and happy.

(Stern 1997, p.94)

Setting up such a partnership, however well intentioned, and however formally structured, does not preclude a flexibility because:

Teachers recognise that it is unrealistic to expect that all pupils, regardless of ability, motivation and parental support, will readily undertake unsupervised assignments at home. It is also unrealistic not to recognise that there may be occasions when the teacher is so overwhelmed with marking, or short of books and equipment, or simply short of ideas, that it seems convenient to 'forget' to set homework. There may also be times when it is genuinely inappropriate to set homework, and sometimes it may be

argued that the subject or topic does not provide suitable scope for pupils' activity in the absence of the teacher.

(Wootton 1992, p.4)

... to increase parents' confidence in their own parental skills, educators should design positive communication activities, such as informal meetings, phone calls, or notes on a student's work and progress. They may want to consider sending home easy-to-read one-pagers that provide information about course requirements, classroom work, school activities, special education and future educational and job opportunities.

(Deslandes, Royer, Potvin and Leclerc, 1999, p.504-5)

Whilst there may be a policy for homework and a realistic way of putting that policy into practice within the school, there are inevitably going to be times when it is not appropriate for the policy and practice to be put into action. Parents need to develop a sensible and realistic understanding of these variations, and the need for them. This partnership was recognised many decades ago.

In this matter of the regulation of homework the importance of securing the co-operation of parents can hardly be exaggerated. Co-operation here implies that parents will in a general way understand the main purpose of homework. It is true that at present most schools do invite parents to inform the Head Master or Head Mistress if a pupil is overburdened, but this safeguard is by no means complete. The parent may be diffident or may not understand, and frequently the pupil himself (or more often herself) prevents the parents from taking the obvious or necessary steps. There exists, then, a variety of subtle influences which prevent some parents from being quite frank with the head of the school or his assistants. It is the aim of the school to combat these influences, and it is worth while to go to a very great trouble to overcome them. In this, Parents' Associations can be valuable allies, and where they exist their fullest co-operation should be secured.

(Board of Education, 1937, p. 68)

Homework is subject, therefore, to a policy formation procedure, in which the school, under the authority of its governing body, establishes and publishes a Homework Policy.

School policy handbooks and brochures for parents usually include some statements about the purpose of homework. Most commonly these are in terms of reinforcement of learning, and instilling good habits and self-discipline. There are, however, many other purposes mentioned:

- allowing practice and consolidation of work done in class
- allowing preparation for future class work

- offering access to resources not available in school
 - developing skills in using libraries and other learning resources
 - providing opportunities for individualised work
 - allowing assessment of pupils' progress and mastery of work covered
 - providing evidence for the evaluation of teaching
 - training for pupils in planning and organising time
 - developing good habits and self-discipline
 - encouraging ownership and responsibility for learning
 - providing opportunities for parental co-operation and support
 - creating channels for home-school dialogue
 - fulfilling the expectations of parents, pupils, teachers, and public
- (MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.11)

The role of parents in homework is crucial; parents regard homework as an opportunity to be seen to be aligned with the school.

Homework is seen as a status symbol. Parents welcome the opportunity to see the child's book at home and sometimes help. They believe, often naively, that if a child brings books home and does homework, he/she is bound to make progress. It also gives the child something to do between 4.00 p.m. and bedtime (which seems to be about 11.00 p.m. for all pupils over 11 now).

(AAM 1974, p.6)

Irrespective of the quality of the homework set, and being done, the quantity can become the guiding factor for parental evaluation. If children are doing homework, it must be a good thing, so the more homework, the better.

So homework is often parent-work, and yet the biggest complaint about homework, from parents, is that there should be more of it. Like castor oil, the fact that it is so unpleasant is taken as evidence that it is good for you.

(Stern 1997, p.98)

A monitoring system between parent and school is likely to identify how much, or how little homework is being set or being done. *What* is being done is of considerably less importance.

Parents are frequently concerned about the content and nature of homework and about the amount of homework that their children are set - whether because it is too little or too much - and whether they are doing all that is set. A homework timetable which parents see, and are asked to sign, is one response by school to this anxiety. In one Secondary School, in response to requests from parents, fuller information was sent out, subject by subject, for each year of the school.

(DES 1987, p.7)

Improved parent attitudes are most likely to result from clear communication of homework's goals (e.g. fostering study skills in young children, reinforcing or enriching academic skills in all students) and through proper involvement of parents in the homework process itself.

(Cooper, Lindsay, Nye and Greathouse, 1998 p.82)

Parental involvement with homework means that a dialogue must develop between home and school about homework.

(Hallam and Cowan, 1998 p.23)

Schools can and should have a wider influence on the family contribution to homework but perhaps this is less-often done. Advice could be given by the school regarding suitable work-places for homework, and appropriate resources and how the family can contribute to and participate in the child's education.

There are, however, some general preconditions which may be suggested, which might form the basis of discussion with parents. These include: access to a suitable working surface; basic equipment, including books and reference books; a time set aside for homework which is recognised and respected by all members of the family; and interest in and support for the child's homework; firmness about it being done, while avoiding the pitfalls of nagging and undue pressure; and a recognition that the home provides many more informal education opportunities than are offered through set homework, whether through conversation, magazines or books, radio or television, clubs, hobbies, visits and help in the home or the garden.

(DES 1987, p.37)

... school educators should consider involving families in parent support groups, workshops on parenting skills (e.g. monitoring), and provide information on adolescent development. These types of efforts appear to particularly benefit special education students when homework is the target.

(Deslandes, Royer, Potvin and Leclerc, 1999, p.504)

As pupils become older, it has been perceived that parental "interest" in homework decreases. Is this because of parent-fatigue, or do parents feel less confident as the work advances? The interest in homework appears to degenerate into a clock-watching exercise.

Do parents become less significant sources of support as children grow older? Do teachers assume more significance and thereby increase the need for good supportive feedback? What happens to those who get feedback from no source at all? Why does it appear to be much more of a problem in the middle years of secondary?

(MacBeath 1996, p.21)

The introduction of Home-School Contracts could have been expected to formalise the agreement between the parents and the teachers about their respective roles and responsibilities in relationship to homework. Perhaps schools are still experimenting with this new formalised relationship which will become clarified after a few years, but...

... we were unable to identify any published research into the impact of home-school contracts on homework

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p.48)

School based research on homework needs to be on-going; schools need to develop a dialogue with parents so that the policy on homework can be put into practice more effectively.

A spot survey of Hillhead High parents has revealed that Labour's plans to set more homework may strike a popular chord. Almost four out of ten parents of fourth-year pupils at the Glasgow secondary were in favour.

(Henderson 1997)

2.3.3. Homework facilities at home.

It is generally assumed that children's success at homework is dependent upon the facilities they have at home, whether they have a quiet, undisturbed room, a dedicated desk-space, physical resources such as reference books or personal computers, and a family who will support and encourage. It is therefore the pupils without such support who will find homework difficult to complete satisfactorily. The AAM's document of 1974 made a rather sweeping generalisation:

The only children overburdened are the most able pupils with home backgrounds where every type of cultural pursuit is encouraged. ... discrimination would be foolish and undesirable at the present time.

(AAM 1974, p.7)

Parents can exert an influence on the homework environment, through creating appropriate conditions for learning and encouraging their children to complete the homework tasks.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p.v)

In spite of this generalised and perhaps misguided view, teachers can be so affected by the suggested disadvantages that this lack of home support produces, that the expectations of homework become modified and watered-down. It can become an excuse for setting simplistic rather than challenging tasks, and work which is primarily set for the ease of the teacher, rather than the advancement of the pupil.

Some teachers (perhaps to justify a reluctance to add to their burden of marking) point to inequalities between pupils' home conditions and suggest that homework does not always provide a measure of what we intend it to measure. Whilst there is obvious truth in this assertion, it does not always follow that children who are provided with a quiet room produce better homework than those who work in the kitchen with one eye on the television. Some children are quite happy to while away the time 'doing their homework' away from the parental gaze; and some parents measure the quality of the homework by the extent to which it appears to occupy the child.

(Wootton 1992, p.6)

Advice to young people and their parents often betrayed a lack of understanding of the character of children's learning out of school. Advice to pupils and parents typically advocated a quiet place to work, a desk and a desk light, an upright chair, a place free from interruptions. Young people were encouraged to plan their time over the week, a timetable beforehand, a routine of work in the early evening or after school. These admonitions failed to reflect the reality of young people's lives. Like adults, young people worked in a variety of ways and places and at times which suited their domestic routines or personal biorhythms, or which fitted the geographical and social composition of the home.

(MacBeath 1996, p.21)

Whilst teachers may have a clear image in their mind as to what best represents an ideal setting for homework, it is easy to forget that pupils have over their lifetime developed a natural resilience to less-than-ideal conditions. A lack of facilities that concerns or troubles the teacher often has little adverse effect on pupils.

The young people in our sample eventually persuaded initially sceptical researchers that music actually helped them to concentrate. It created a sound barrier between them and the outside distractions of half-heard conversations, television, phones and

doorbells ringing, parents and siblings arguing. ... Some described how distracting the utter silence of a library could be when each shuffle and drop of a pencil became resounding events.

(MacBeath 1996, p.21)

Some teachers and researchers increasingly believe in the positive attributes of music.

More commonly pupils have said that they found it easier to concentrate with music in the background either because it shut out other distractions or "built a wall of sound behind which they were able to retreat". Some teachers have been sufficiently convinced of the value of music for enhancing their pupils' concentration that pupils have been allowed to use Walkmans in class.

(Hallam 2005, p.63)

The effect of television is more questionable.

Watching television is another after-school activity widely believed to be associated with academic achievement. Television viewing is presumed to lower academic achievement by displacing more academically oriented activities such as homework or leisure reading (Gaddy, 1986). Other researchers have suggested that television viewing inhibits achievement by interfering with cognitive development (Anderson & Collins, 1988, as cited in Comstock, 1991)

(Cooper, Valentine, Lindsay, and Nye, 1999 p.370)

Are the resources important in themselves, or are they a reflection of the family's economic and intellectual capital (which may be the primary influence on academic achievement)?

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p.42)

There was a recognition that doing homework with the television on made homework more difficult, but a minority of respondents asserted that the presence of a television in some way isolated the person so that they were able to work more effectively.

(Wober 1992, *quoted in Sharp et al.* 2001, p.194)

Educational psychologists have proved what parents and teachers have known all along - that doing homework in front of East Enders or Neighbours is not a good idea. ...Researchers investigated whether students produce poorer homework if they are watching a soap opera. They took 192 14-year-olds, divided them into three groups and gave them the same reading comprehension and memorisation exercises to perform. ... The first group did the homework in front of a TV soap opera, while the second group simply listened to the programme's soundtrack. The third group was set to work with no distractions at all. ...Pupils were given as much time as they required to complete their homework. ...The researchers found that pupils who did their homework with the TV on took an average of 13 more minutes to complete their work than those working without distractions. The quality of the work they produced was poorer.

(Fletcher 2003)

Research was carried out into the effect of television on homework, in the U.S.A. in 1983 by Patten, Stinard and Routh, and in the and in the

Netherlands in 1996 (Beentjess, Koolstra and van der Voort). Further Dutch research, in 2003, has studied

“the impact of background soap operas on homework performance and time. Students in grade 8 (aged 14) did paper-and-pencil and memorisation assignments with two types of soap operas episodes in the background, or the soundtrack or soap operas, or no medium. ... Results indicated that students in the television conditions performed worse and used more time than students in the control condition. No significant differences were found between the audio-only and control conditions.”

(Pool, Koolstra and van der Noort, 2003)

The negative effect of television upon children’s homework may be a case which still requires further research; at the present time perhaps it should be “handled with care”.

Wotton’s premise is that the physical surroundings of the child at home are of less significance than is perhaps suggested. MacBeath and Turner had proposed that of greater significance was the influence of parents upon homework which relate directly to the influence of high-achieving parents with high aspirations.

Research findings tend to agree that there is a strong positive relationship between parental education and homework done by their children. In other words, the more formal education that parents themselves have had the longer their children spend on homework. There is also a strong positive relationship between parental aspirations and time spent by children on homework. Evidence also suggests that those who spend more time on homework benefit most from homework are the high achievers - most likely to come from homes of either high-achieving parents, or parents with high aspirations.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p.9)

... it has to be said that parents can be described as ranging along a continuum. At one end are the parents who have unrealistically high expectations concerning their children’s achievements, and whose interest in promoting homework is motivated mainly by ambition for their own offspring, whereas, the opposite end of the range will include those parents who have little interest in their children’s attainments at school, and who may display anti-school or anti-social attitudes themselves. Consequently, it is those who take a balanced interest in their children’s schoolwork who are likely to be the most effective facilitators for the successful completion of homework tasks.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.451)

Parental pressure for homework to be completed was evident. When individual schools are compared with the total cohort, there appears to have been greater pressure from those parents whose social background had led them to feel that homework was ‘a

good thing’.

(Glover, Gough and Johnson 1997, p.43)

The quality of support for children’s learning crosses the whole range of causal context and reminded us of Feuerstein’s work in cultures of extreme poverty. Successful learning, he argued, could take place in very materially deprived households because the key factor was the way in which learning was mediated by adults. Children living in extreme poverty without formal teaching and virtually written off by the school system, could make rapid progress where there was adult mediation between the child and the environment. They could help the child make sense of the world and to be in the appropriate frame of mind to make meaning out of school learning.

(MacBeath, 1996, p.20)

This advantage provided to pupils by their parent’s own achievements and aspirations is then reinforced by teachers who compound the success of the successful whilst failing the failures.

Not only are pupils who achieve highly most likely to get most support and help at home but on top of this they are also the ones most likely to get support and encouragement from their teachers. There is considerable evidence to show that teachers tend to reinforce and further exaggerate differences between high and low achievers by their differential expectations.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p10)

If parents are to support successfully their children, they first need to be made successful themselves; parent support is vital, in whatever guise it takes.

Pupils’ achievements could be dramatically enhanced by providing a parent support group in which they could reassure and help one another. This was particularly important for parents who were anxious, ashamed of, or even punitive towards their children. A common reaction to the first parents meeting was relief at discovering that their children were ‘normal’.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 60)

It would be over-simplistic to suggest that the parental support outweighed the physical facilities. It is not a case of “either-or”, but a situation where there is a whole spectrum of variables; no two pupils in the class can be working under the same conditions. Teachers need to remember these variables, and that results will consequently be equally variable.

At one extreme there were young people who had private tutors in a range of Secondary School subjects and at the other extreme young people who, left entirely to their own devices, invested huge amounts of time on ineffective unfocused copying or

reading, struggling to make their own sense of the printed page or giving up at the first hurdle. Some had the physical, psychological, encouragement and support from parents and peers who knew little about the subject matter but had a lot of good sense about time and pacing and strategies for finding out. Some lived in conditions which crowded out all possibilities for school-related learning.

(MacBeath 1996, pp.21-22)

Where the pupil sits down to undertake homework is often not within the sole choice of the individual, but is influenced by the needs of siblings, especially younger ones, and the wishes of the parent. However, given a relatively open choice:

The main places where children did their homework were:- kitchen table (40%); bedroom (24%); living room (15%), dining room (14%). Parents indicated that their children preferred to study in a family area where people were around to help and supervise.

(Reetz 1990, p.15)

2.3.4. Homework facilities at school: "Homework Clubs".

Initiatives over the last decade of the twentieth century have seen the growth of "Homework Clubs", appearing in many guises. Some have been based in schools, some in the wider community; some are school initiatives, some are community initiatives. Some, perhaps the earlier ones, were established to stop children, who have no access to the family home until parents return, from wandering the streets. Street wandering is acceptable to children, but only until the weather becomes inclement, and then they tend to congregate in shopping centres and libraries, where troublesome behaviour often begins.

Some schools operate supervised 'Homework Clubs' for an hour or so at the end of afternoon school. Whilst homework done at school is not really *homework* - and it is an opportunity for youngsters to convince their parents that they have already done their homework, even if they have not - most schools prefer pupils to spend their free time on worthwhile activities in school rather than roaming the streets.

(Wootton 1992, p.7)

If there are pupils unable to do homework, this is an issue about access to education, and therefore about equal opportunities and, generally, special needs.

(Stern 1997, p.89)

The lack of facilities for pupils to do their homework is not an issue which can be brushed under the carpet. Using the lunch break in which to do their homework has been a long-used tactic; the ability to share homework with a friend is nothing new - we have all done it.

The establishment of a 'quiet room' in each year area during the lunch hour, supervised by a member of staff, where children who wish to can do homework in reasonable conditions has been a great success; but we depend entirely on the generous goodwill of staff who do this task voluntarily.

(AAM 1974, p.8)

Even accepting the use of such public facilities as the library service - and that cannot be assumed to be available in all areas, especially rurally deprived areas - the invasion of the library by scores of teenage pupils is often more than their resources and staff can contend with.

The place where it is done will also vary, despite being 'homework'. Most pupils undoubtedly do at least some homework at home, but others, especially if working at home is difficult, may work at school, during breaks or at the end of the day, or use places such as public libraries.

(DES 1987, p.1)

It is common for pupils to do their homework in public libraries, and often teachers encourage the use of such facilities. Do make sure, however, that the library staff can cope with a four o'clock invasion by dozens of excited school kids, all seeking the same reference books.

(Wootton 1992, p.8)

Libraries can and should be ideal places to support homework, but certain conditions must be fulfilled.

- Timing and access are vital. ...
- Staff in libraries are expected to do increasingly complex jobs. ...
- Teachers should try to make sure that libraries can provide for the tasks they set as homework, ...
- Librarians are always trying to improve the resources they have, and teachers can and usually do help choose appropriate ones. ...
- Although libraries may have thousands of books and other expensive learning resources, the most valuable resource of all may be the tables and chairs. If pupils can work independently, in a space dedicated to learning, then they are half-way to success. ...

(Stern 1997, p.138-139)

Libraries should expect to be advised by teachers as to which resources are

required for pupils, and to enable time for libraries to make the appropriate arrangements. If work is to be set for pupils to do without supervision, there must be an expectation that pupils will have access to the appropriate resources. Whether the resources be within the physical confines of the school, or in an accessible and independent institution is irrelevant; what is important is that appropriate resources are available to enable the pupil to complete the homework tasks.

An ASCEL briefing paper states that homework clubs should:

1. help young people improve their educational attainment at GCSE and thus maximize their "life chances";
2. promote library skills or learning skills by helping young people help themselves by understanding the library and its resources better;
3. establish or confirm the library as a core community resource for young people by acting as a gateway to the masses of information available;
4. act as a help – this does not mean doing the homework (Murray 1996)
(Bevin and Goulding, 1999 p.53)

Most authorities ran their clubs in partnership with LEAs and/or schools. The partnership was considered vital because it ensured that resources on topics set for homework were available in the library. LEAs also sometimes provided funding for equipment. Other partner organisations included the school library service (SLS), the youth services, the Prince's Trust, and local training and enterprise councils (TECs)
(Bevin and Goulding 1999, *quoted in Sharp et al.* 2001, p.166)

Social class may well bring inequalities to pupils and to their capabilities to complete homework. Whether it is a suitable room with a table, adequate light, and an undisturbed environment, or whether it is free access to appropriate resources such as books or computer, the availability, or not, of resources will probably make the pupil's task more or less difficult. If money is in short supply within the family, such resources are less likely to be readily available.

Class affects facilities available to pupils, and a simple way to address these differences is to provide good facilities for all pupils, the philosophy behind many Homework Centres, ... Beyond this, homework that only addresses a narrow range of skills may favour one class over another.

(Stern 1997, p.9)

It seems that the usage of Homework Clubs is also likely to decrease as the age of the pupils increase:

The data gathered by this study suggested that the vast majority of users were from upper primary and lower secondary schools, with only one county attracting a significant number of users at GCSE level. It appears that the older the pupil, the less likely he/she is to use the club.

(Bevin and Goulding, 1999 p.57)

Homework Clubs have been a developing alternative to compensate for the inadequacies of provision at home for children to work independently. They may not be a perfect alternative: for instance, again in rural areas, access may be limited to those who, through family or friends, are able to arrange alternative transport, so social class is likely again to be a controlling factor in the access of some pupils to Homework Clubs.

In recognition that some pupils have less than ideal conditions in which to work at home and less support and encouragement than they need, an increasing number of schools have set up 'Homework Clubs'. These provide some or all pupils with the opportunity to do homework on school premises, after the end of normal lessons and/or during the lunch break. The amount of adult support provided during these sessions varies, but overall they have resulted in many teachers giving considerable amounts of their time. Significant numbers of pupils take advantage of these opportunities and there is every indication that they can enable pupils to make more rapid progress with their work.

(Ofsted 1998)

By the very way a subject department handles the issue of homework, coded messages are given to pupils regarding the relative importance of the subject.

There has been much publicity recently for various types of "Homework Club" and there's no doubt they have proved beneficial for many pupils. However, pupil performance can have a great deal to do with the ways in which Homework Policies are implemented within schools.

... In some subjects pupils were given homework every period, to be checked the following lesson. Each night many obviously felt that their priority was the work due in the next day. This, combined with an inevitable tendency to leave things to the last minute, meant that English homework was being left to the night before it was due, and would then be done in a rush, perhaps even handed in late, because the pupil found it could not be done satisfactorily in one evening (on which there would be homework of the next-day variety, as usual).

By ensuring that pupils were doing work every night, other subjects were improving their status, making their homework seem more important and squeezing out the sort of

work which was allocated over several days.

(Gray and Anderson 1997)

Some early examples of Homework Clubs were established independently from schools, using different buildings, with separated resources and manned by non-teachers, often parents. These schemes risked less-than-ideal facilities, when similar, but more suitable facilities were standing idle in nearby schools. Teachers were more likely to have the expertise to be able to guide and encourage pupils through work, and if necessary, to offer the appropriate disciplinary control.

Some of these conditions will be easier for some parents to provide than others, and where there are problems in meeting even these, schools and parents may need to consider what alternative provision might be available. One such possibility is the use of school accommodation, including libraries. There are many schools where the library is available for private study before and after school and during the break and lunchtime. ... Also within the school it is sometimes possible to have specialist facilities available outside the lesson times. These can be especially helpful in the case of specific subjects such as design, computing or music, where access to the relevant equipment may be vital in order to follow up class work effectively. Public libraries are another possibility, where the atmosphere can be conducive to work and a range of research materials might be available. Some librarians are particularly sympathetic to supporting pupils who wish to work in the library and schools might profitably liaise with local libraries to realise these possibilities.

(DES 1987, p.38)

Schools have therefore, through the establishment of Homework Clubs, become involved in neutralising the effect of social deprivation. By endeavouring, through the establishment of Homework Clubs, to compensate for the inequality of social deprivation, schools have tried to offer to all pupils the means whereby they might more easily achieve their academic potential.

There are indeed good reasons why pupils of similar abilities, but from different backgrounds, are likely to achieve at different levels, and schools cannot wholly 'compensate' for social inequalities. Yet every study of schools also recognises that schools can make *some* difference, and that different schools, or different teachers within the same schools ... can affect pupils in different ways. Some of the more subtle studies went further. They looked at why an environmental factor might affect pupils' achievements, and how schools could address the problems. In Strathclyde ... the Social Services sector came to the reasonable conclusion that poverty at home might disadvantage children at school, as children from such homes might have fewer

facilities to help with homework, and so on. In order to reduce the 'cycle of poverty', that is, children of poor backgrounds being consigned to adult poverty, the authority funded homework centres in schools in relatively poor areas. This acknowledged that schools were not entirely passive when it came to environmental influences on their pupils.

(Stern 1997, p.92)

Some Local Education Authorities have taken upon themselves the establishment of Authority-based schemes:

The Social Services Committee ... in Strathclyde funded supported schemes from 1990 in many of their Primary and Secondary Schools, as an anti-deprivation scheme - trying to break what they saw as a cycle of deprivation, in which pupils in poorer areas were more likely to fail in school because of the lack of good learning resources at home.

(Stern 1997, p.140)

Whilst we may celebrate such innovation, it becomes increasingly apparent that little is new in education, for a similar scheme was established more than sixty years ago:

... Somewhere between the two, perhaps, should be placed the "homework classes" established by one Local Education Authority in certain poorer districts. These meet after school in the evening, and are under the paid supervision of an assistant teacher. They last for one or two hours, and in the regulations governing them it is stipulated that at least half of the duration of the class "must be devoted to homework in the accepted sense." ... It is intended to produce "the atmosphere of a quiet and well-ordered home."

(Board of Education 1937, p.23)

A network of pioneering Homework Clubs is being set up in local libraries in the London borough of Southwark to help Secondary School pupils with their projects and homework after school and at weekends. The initiative will warm the cockles of Labour education and employment spokesman David Blunkett's heart and is believed to be the first large-scale and systematic attempt by a local authority to involve the library service in boosting the educational achievement of pupils in this way. Southwark is investing £28,000 in the scheme.

(Hodges 1996)

The increase in Homework Clubs in recent years has meant that finance has to be made available. It is impossible to conceive that any worthwhile scheme can be established without appropriate funding; volunteers and charities are enabling those who control educational budgets to opt out of some difficult decisions. If the Homework Club system is worth using, it is certainly worth financing. If a decision is made not to finance Homework Clubs out of taxation

it should be accepted that any charitable substitute is likely to be insufficient and unevenly distributed.

A network of 8,000 Homework Clubs will be established by 2001, David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, announced this week. They will be funded with £200 million from the National Lottery. The government is hoping for a mixture of out-of-hours activities in 2,300 secondary and 5,800 primary schools. The scheme is part of its attempt to address social exclusion.

(Anon 1997)

The advent of Homework Clubs was soon linked to raising standards, not across the board, but specifically amongst the more able pupils. Curriculum extension became a justification for Homework Clubs.

Labour this week attempted to regain the initiative on education by insisting that comprehensive schools could adopt measures to accelerate the progress of brighter pupils. Tony Blair, the party's leader, praised schools that allowed pupils to move ahead of their year group in line with particular abilities or interests.

(Hackett and Pickard 1996)

Homework Clubs also have the ability to compensate for parental limitations. Some parents' have negative experiences of school and feel inadequate in what they are able to contribute. Some feel, possibly correctly, that the curriculum has changed and developed too fast for them. Others find that family or employment commitments prevent them from being able to assist with homework.

... some parents themselves have difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy skills. Only a few schools, of those ready to blame the underachievement of pupils on parents, have thought seriously about offering classes or advice to parents in basic skills.

(Stern 1997, p.92)

Pupils with English as an additional language find such sessions particularly beneficial in enabling them to keep up with their peers, to gain access to help in English which may not be available at home, and to reinforce language development in the context of new class work and homework.

(Ofsted 1998)

Homework Clubs may offer the opportunity for parents to be involved in a

supporting role, or to receive training, which they in turn can use to support their own children. Many pupils need help in planning, in acquiring resources, and in using time. Perhaps this is more so in the longer-term Course Work associated with GCSEs.

It should also be considered whether the "clubs" might have a role in training parents how to handle a range of difficulties associated with children working at home. These could include the use of homework diaries, and discussions concerning appropriate conditions within which a child can work.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.450)

If Homework Clubs has a role in training parents, it is not a big step to

envisage a "Club" specifically for parents.

A Homework Club for parents sounds unlikely. But there are plenty of takers at Robert Browning Primary. There, in a Victorian classroom tucked away in south-east London's Walworth Road, they sit with squares, triangles, pentagons and favourite tales such as *The Sun and the North Wind*. Children's stuff, this may be. But to families uncertain about how far they can, or ought, to help their children, the Share scheme of "homework" materials has provided essential support. Last week it was praised by education minister Estelle Morris, speaking at an international conference on school-parent partnerships sponsored by the DfEE and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The government has already helped Share expand from last year's introductory pilot in five local authorities to a further ten.

(Pyke 1997c)

If the Homework Club is to be successful it needs the support of pupils, who need to see it as a worthwhile activity in which to be involved, and also is acceptable to the peer group. Such pupil-acceptability will not happen automatically. It will need to be worked at, and pupils will need to be involved in the running and management of Homework Clubs.

Study support is so popular that 100 out of 130 first-year pupils at Bellshill Academy in Lanarkshire attend the Baffle Club (Bellshill Academy First For Learning and Enjoyment). Seventeen-year-old Fiona Robertson, a sixth-year pupil, told the conference immediately before Prince Charles's address: "The Baffle Club is cool. It has street cred." ... The club began two years ago with an emphasis on homework and improving grades. "It makes it easier for pupils to seek help because you sometimes get embarrassed about going up to the teacher in front of your peers," Fiona explained. But the attraction was the leisure session and the chance to socialise with other classes.

(Clark and Pickard 1997)

Setting up homework centres can be difficult, and although all the schools who have set them up seem to think they are the best thing since sliced bread, all also say they have learnt from their mistakes when setting them up. A good start is a survey of wants - with teachers, pupils, parents and everyone concerned with homework, being surveyed. (Stern 1997, p.141)

Rather than be a burden imposed upon a school with its already hectic schedule, Homework Clubs can become a corporate and unifying feature of a school, drawing together parents and teachers and pupils with the wider community.

... the setting up of a network of "Homework Clubs" on school sites could monitor and improve the use of homework time. It is more than obvious, however, that teachers alone cannot take on this extra task. Already their timetable is loaded down with the demands of the National Curriculum, its attendant progress tests and associated record keeping. It would be the responsibility of parents, therefore, to provide much of the manpower needed to run these "clubs" effectively.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.450)

Whilst it is easier to recognise the role of the Homework Club in combating social deprivation, such a Club can also have a role in promoting extension curriculum activities for talented and gifted pupils.

Professor Tim Brighouse, Chief Education Officer for the City of Birmingham, suggested in a speech in July 1994 to the Council of Local Education Authorities that a network of home-based learning centres similar to universities should be set up to provide access to specialist teaching for older pupils in schools.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.450)

There is a dichotomy for teachers; they probably do not want to be too involved, with the cry that they already have too many things thrust upon them, but they do not want to be left out and ignored. The suggestion is that a (senior) teacher has overall responsibility for the school's Homework Club provision, with an appropriate time allowance to compensate, but with the support of a number of other volunteers who will, perhaps with appropriate training, have direct contact with pupils. Such volunteers do not have to be

drawn exclusively from the parent body of the school.

Homework has to be taken seriously and given the priority it deserves. It is imperative, therefore, that it becomes an integral part of the school organisation and regime, rather than a mere appendage to it. Consequently, the present system would need to be radically changed. To give the "Homework Clubs" the authority they would need to allow them to work effectively, the subject of homework would have to take on a much greater priority within the ethos of the school. Their responsibility would need to extend well beyond merely making certain that homework is completed on time. For it to ensure that pupils make the most effective use of homework time, therefore, the scheme needs to have some influence on teachers as well.

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.451)

In order to make the system work, higher staffing levels in most schools are called for, and the provision of specialist teachers with posts of responsibility to organise and monitor the school's Homework Policies. The latter would also be responsible for supervision of the school's "Homework Club".

(Faulkner and Blyth 1995, p.452)

To enable Homework Clubs to become established and to flourish, funding has to be available. The source of the funding is, in many ways, irrelevant. The National Lottery is regarded by some as the panacea for all financial shortfalls; others argue that what is an educational right should not depend upon charitable donations. Others would argue for the support of industry and business.

Midweek lottery profits of £1 billion would be diverted to fund education and health projects, "the people's priorities", under a Labour government. Schools will get money to run out-of-hours Homework Clubs, and computer-shy teachers will be given training in information technology to "clear the skills backlog once and for all", Labour leader Tony Blair said this week. There will be help for talented pupils in science, technology and the arts. Money for a national network of "healthy living centres", offering advice on fitness and overall health, is also promised...

(Pyke 1997b)

Schools will be given advice on how they can get lottery money for Homework Clubs under a code of practice to be issued next week, writes Nicolas Barnard. The Prince's Trust, which has been giving financial support for after-school activities for five years, has drawn up guidelines for schools on setting up study support schemes to raise standards... Ms Lowell said: "There is a huge amount of work going on in schools. But it's either not co-ordinated or not giving the maximum benefit. "A school might have a mentoring scheme, a homework scheme run separately and a residential scheme to reach particularly disaffected children. When they come together there is a wealth of knowledge."

(Barnard 1997)

Whatever their motives, the (Labour) government has considered it worthwhile to raise enthusiasm, with financial support, for initiatives which promote homework and independent learning amongst children.

Labour leader Tony Blair and David Blunkett took to the field last Monday at two Premier League football grounds to launch a scheme to entice inner-city children to do their homework. Chelsea, Arsenal, Newcastle and Sheffield Wednesday have agreed to help fund study centres along with money from the DfEE and private sponsors.

(Pyke 1997a)

Unfortunately, as so often appears to be the case, political ideology takes over initiatives, and in order to persuade the nation of the worth of the proposals a certain amount of trickery seems to take place with the financing of the projects. Apparent promises of funding have to be untangled to ascertain whether extra funding is being provided for the project, or whether the funding being talked about is merely being diverted from pre-existing budgets.

Opposing political parties vie for acceptance by the voter.

There are times when politicians are glad that school children do not have the vote. And the time when homework becomes the best thing since sliced bread is one of them. This week the government launched research to support the importance of homework on school performance. Its thunder, however, had already been stolen by Labour leader Tony Blair, who in a TV interview spoke about setting guidelines on the amount children should be doing. It is known in the trade as a spoiler. "... Advocating that children should do more homework sounds tough and traditionalist. It fits into the rhetoric of making parents more responsible. It is also cheap. And although 14-year-old Jonathan Dalton was moved to write to a national paper claiming Labour's recommendations would result in a 42-and-a-half-hour week for pupils, his ire does not translate into a loss of votes for Mr Blair.

(Rafferty 1997b)

Government plans to set up a £200 million network of Homework Clubs could be impeded by a row over teacher pay rates. Thousands of schools may now have to negotiate their own agreements with teachers to staff the centres, after a recommended pay rate of £9.72 an hour was withdrawn by Education Secretary David Blunkett. Teaching unions had rejected the rate, saying it was too low, and that payment should be based on individual teachers' salaries.

(Thornton 1998)

Associated closely with the Homework Clubs' initiative has been the Prince's

Trust (founded by HRH the Prince of Wales). This Trust Fund has established over the last twenty years a number of initiatives to help combat social deprivation, and the involvement of the Prince's Trust in Homework Clubs is a part of this general scheme.

The Prince's Trust's bid for £13 million to establish a national network of study support centres looks almost prosaic. Nevertheless these centres could promote as much growth as any giant hothouse if they are as richly equipped and staffed as the Trust envisages. The idea of opening study support centres in disadvantaged areas is far from new. The Prince's Trust has been involved in this work for five years, has provided funding for 150 centres and has issued advice to at least 1,500 schools interested in setting up their own centres.

(Anon. 1996)

The media this week discovered the Prince of Wales's long-established enthusiasm for supported study when he addressed a conference held by his young people's trust in Edinburgh. The speech coincided with politicians vying to show a commitment to homework and followed stories that the Prince is studying ways of boosting his own flagging support in the country.

(Clark and Pickard 1997)

Whatever the eventual funding mechanism to finance Homework Clubs, recent anecdotal history supports the development of these clubs. The benefits achieved by them appear to be worth the effort put into them by schools and the wider community. As the evidence accumulates, perhaps the funding will be justified, and the clubs will be regarded as an essential right for all pupils.

However:

The long-term educational benefits of Homework Clubs are difficult to quantify, but there was considerable anecdotal evidence of their contributions to learning. There is an increasing trend to offer Homework Clubs in public libraries but the temporary nature of some sources of funding raises concerns about sustainability,

(Train *et al.* 2000, *quoted in* Sharp *et al* 2001(b), p.193)

There is little research evidence to date on the impact of organised Homework Clubs on pupil outcomes.

(Sharp, Keys and Benefield 2001(a), p.v)

This being the case, there is an urgent need for further research to be done, before time and valuable resources are expended further in this direction.

2.3.5 Homework Diaries.

For a long time it has been expected that pupils will note down what homework has been set in a particular subject, and when it is to be handed in to the teacher. In some cases this has been unsophisticated, simply jotting down in the subject's exercise book. Commercially produced Homework Jotters have been used in which a pupil will note down homework in all subjects. Recently, extensive Pupil Planners are produced which contribute to educating a pupil in self-organisation, of which homework is but one part. One purpose of such a diary or planner is to enable communication to take place between the school (subject and pastoral staff) and the parents. Schools need to assume responsibility for establishing channels of communication, the two-way flow of common matters of interest, between the home and the school. Stern is clear that the responsibility for establishing such a system of communication is the school's.

Homework Diaries are perceived as being a tool that enables pupils to record what has been set as homework and the time by when it should be completed. It also enables this information to be communicated between school and parents, and for parents to have the opportunity to make a feedback to the school.

A fairly common method of keeping track of the homework is to require the pupils to enter in record-books, supplied for the purpose, the tasks which are set. These books are taken home each night, and the parents may be asked to sign them from time to time.

(Board of Education 1937, p.29)

Stern's advice is as follows:

... I'll get the pupils to write the homework in the diary. If the children go home and parents don't see any homework in the diary, they should either worry about the children... or worry about the teachers... In both cases, it would help the teachers if you wrote in the diary 'Please remind Zoe to put her homework in the diary' or 'I'm worried that Zoe isn't being given much homework these days'.

(Stern 1997, p.128)

Homework Diaries are of greatest value when their use can be encouraged amongst pupils, and when such diaries are not regarded as yet another chore, which carries some form of punishment or reprimand if incomplete.

Communication, therefore, is vital. For regular communication, most schools have homework diaries. Where these diaries are used, they should be monitored, not in a punitive way, but in order to see how effective they are and how they can be made more effective.

(Stern 1997, p.91)

There needs to be a constant monitoring of the diaries, by the parents as well as by the school. It enables the teacher responsible for the pastoral care of the pupil to be able to encourage and develop the pupil's organisational skills. Likewise, it enables the academic department to monitor standards across the department, and it enables the parents to monitor, support and encourage the pupil, and to relay concerns to the school.

Monitoring may simply take the form of looking at, or, signing pupils' homework. While some teachers argued that signing of work was a ritualistic exercise and achieved little, parents tended not to agree. "It means I get a look at it and I get a damn good idea of how much effort she's putting into it. You can tell by *{sic}* if her writing is getting scrappier or her work more careless. It's a good check."

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 46)

Monitoring is a process that is a check by all interested parties on each other.

Time and standards are important issues.

When parents monitored homework they were in a better position to judge whether the standards that the teacher was demanding were realistic. They could, if they felt confident enough, do something about it. ... "She was obviously stressed and not coping with it. I went down to the school and complained and the teachers said "well, she should just do what she can ... This kind of direct action was, however, exceptional, and anxious or aggrieved parents often suffered in silence because they did not know what to do or did not feel confident enough to 'make a fuss'.

(MacBeath and Turner 1990, p 48)

Schools need to have in place a clear monitoring structure, so pupils and teachers know what is expected and how monitoring will take place. Parents should be a part of this monitoring strategy.

Many schools check that departments have Homework Policies, but it is much rarer to find senior managers or heads of department monitoring whether the policies are consistently and adequately implemented. This is done in some schools on a relatively informal basis, for example as part of a periodic review by senior managers of pupils' homework diaries. Ensuring that homework is not only consistently planned, set and followed up, but that its nature and quality are appropriate, requires monitoring by the head of department. Such monitoring is rare. In practice, the monitoring of homework by middle and senior managers is often limited to dealing with pupils referred to them for not completing tasks.

(Ofsted 1998)

Parents generally express strong support for the principle of homework and great concern when they see it neglected. Schools can, therefore, benefit greatly from parents encouraging and assisting pupils with their homework. Many schools provide homework diaries which parents are asked to sign, usually weekly. This is only effective where it is supported by clear information from the school as to what is expected of the pupil, the time to be spent on the homework and the objectives of the task set. Few schools, however, take full advantage of homework diaries to engage parents in a real dialogue about the work their children are doing. When this happens, well-informed comment by parents provides a valuable form of evidence for schools' monitoring of homework.

(Ofsted 1998)

This may account for an ideal system, but children do forget or mislay the Planner, sometimes genuinely and at other times deliberately. If a pupil does not want adverse comments to be passed between the teacher and the parent, the "loss" of the Planner may thwart this communication.

Summary:

Homework should encourage the maturing adolescent to take increasing responsibility for his or her own learning process. Failures of "time management" by pupils should offer a learning opportunity. Homework Planners enable pupils to note work set, to act as an aid to time-planning and self-organisation. These should be regarded as a tool not a chore. Planners need to be monitored regularly by the school and the parents if the value is to be maximised. Advantage needs to be taken with older pupils for offering study time.

The school needs to realise that not all parents possess the very skills we require from their children. All homes are different; there is no such thing as a typical home and what goes on between parent and child may be concealed from the teacher. Homework is dependent upon facilities and families at home; pupils without such support may find it difficult or impossible to complete homework satisfactorily. Therefore, schools need to advise parents on acceptable and appropriate ways of offering assistance with homework. However, parents will be best situated to monitor homework. Homework offers opportunities for parent and child to talk, but a balance needs to be maintained to avoid "parental interference". Schools need to continue a dialogue with parents so that homework can become more effective.

The Homework Policy, under the authority of the school's governing Body, is established by the professional teaching staff to reflect the demands of all interested parties. When the teacher understands the needs of the developing individual, homework will then start to become relevant. Assumptions are made regarding communication between teacher and pupil.

Teachers need to remember the variability of parental support and home physical conditions. A true partnership between school and home offers the best opportunity for success. There is a risk that teachers not only reinforce the success of children of successful parents, but also compound the failure of

the children of failed parents.

Homework Clubs were a feature of the 1990s; some were set up initially to counteract the problem of latchkey children, others provided a real opportunity for individual work. They idealistically offer the opportunity to counter social deprivation and to permit a wider audience to achieve their academic potential and can counteract the lack of facilities at home, or the difficulties of access to public facilities in a rural area. Conversely they can counterbalance the lack of parental support. The benefits of Homework Clubs appear to justify the effort put into them by schools and the wider community. Homework Clubs should support a school, not increase the burden upon staff. Such Clubs are not automatically acceptable to pupils; they need to become involved with the running and management of the Club. In addition, Homework Clubs can extend the curriculum for talented and gifted pupils.

Emerging issues pertinent to the current research:

This research takes as a case study just one rural High School and examines five year-cohorts of pupils, their views upon homework, and also that of their parents and teachers. It draws upon issues raised in this review of literature and looks at how homework is viewed by pupils, parents and teachers. It considers how the school's policy is implemented, and raises issues that perhaps the school has yet to address.

The research will also try to discover whether there are aspects of homework, especially as perceived by pupils, which have any relationship to value-added scores at 16 years of age.

Comparison between MacBeath and Turner Research Project (1990) and this case study at Cromer High School will be used to examine whether the two

projects produced similar or differing results.

3. Methodology.

3.1 Introduction.

The Literature Review has revealed that the whole subject of Homework is a complex area, dependent upon many variables. The key areas for investigation are:

1. Homework, as perceived by pupils, parents and teachers.
2. How value-added results relate to pupils' responses to the homework survey.
3. How the pupil-sample of this case study relates to previous research carried out by MacBeath and Turner(1990)

The Methodology will explain how these issues regarding Homework are to be investigated, using Cromer High School, Norfolk as a case study. The appropriateness of quantitative and qualitative research will be considered.

The sampling arrangement, and the subsequent design process of the surveys will be explained, and the considerations given to triangulation. The pilot run of the surveys (1998) and the full survey in the following year will be explained.

3.2 The research question: seeking the answers.

This research project has been established to investigate whether there is any connection between homework and academic results, especially at Key Stage

4. The perception is that parents, pupils and teachers are all keen that the results at GCSE should be the best that can be achieved, in order to give young people the best foundation upon which to build their adult lives. These are complex issues depending upon many variables, and the research will necessarily impinge upon some of these variables.

- Are all teachers committed to the importance of homework as an aid to improving results? The policy of schools alone is insufficient; it is how the subject departments and the individual teachers implement this policy which may have a greater influence.
- Are parents committed to homework? Homework, by its very nature, will impinge upon family life, and young people will, presumably, succeed more in a proactive homework-environment.
- Are the resources available to the young person, especially those at home, adequate to support the homework tasks?
- How do pupils react to homework?
- The research will investigate whether or not there are any indications from the responses to these questions which can be correlated with the value-added results of the individual pupil.
- The research will endeavour to draw out conclusions from the quantitative survey and produce recommendations which may be used by the case-study school in particular, and considered by other similar schools, which will enable the use of homework to be reviewed, revised and ratified.

Answers to these questions will be sought through a case study at Cromer High School, Norfolk, an 11 – 16 all-ability, mixed high school, serving the seaside town and its surrounding rural area. At the time of this research there were just fewer than six hundred pupils in the school.

3.3 The quantitative and qualitative approaches to research.

The notion of a case study at a specific Secondary School, with a clearly identifiable pupil population and parent and teacher bodies, affords the

opportunity for quantitative research. Whilst it would be possible to carry out a project of a qualitative nature, the sheer numbers involved would necessitate the survey being carried out with sample groups. To enable any valid work to be done it is necessary to reflect the ability range, gender, age and social grouping of the sample. Successful engineering of the group would be difficult, and it would be less than certain that sufficient indisputable evidence was available for such judgements to be made. The results, it could be anticipated, would be less specific than could be expected with the quantitative survey, potentially with the whole group. The decision to undertake the quantitative survey was made to enable as large a sample as possible to be surveyed, and to ensure that the same questions were posed within each of the samples (pupils, parents, and teachers). A qualitative survey would only have permitted a smaller sample to be approached, simply from time constraints within the school, even though questions could have been taken to greater depths. It would also have been less possible to compare results or respond to possible trends.

An essential feature of case study is that sufficient data are collected for researchers to be able to explore sufficient features of the case and to put forward interpretations for what is observed. Another feature is that the study is conducted mainly in its natural context.

(Bassey 1999, p.47)

Caution should be observed, however, with this case study (and indeed all case studies). It features five consecutive cohorts of pupils from one all ability High School in England. Cromer High School may well not be a typical school. Indeed, there can hardly be such a thing as a typical school because they are all different mixes of pupils, parents and teachers in widely differing communities. It is unwise to assume that what may be true for Cromer High School will necessarily be true of other schools. Attitudes to homework may

be important, but it may not be possible to isolate those factors which might affect the success, or otherwise, of homework.

If attitudes to homework *do* influence the results of GCSE examinations there are two aspects to be tested. One is the attitude, primarily of pupils but also of their parents and teachers; the second is the value-added score, whether positive or negative, of individual pupils. This is already used by Cromer High School as well as 1,300 other schools throughout the country. A survey, which, if honestly done, can identify areas that may be perceived as having an influence upon the successful completion of teaching and learning is a case of:

measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general causal explanations.

(Neumann 2000, p.122)

3.4 Sampling arrangements for the research.

This research will give the opportunity to involve all current pupils at Cromer High School, their parents (or carers) and all members of the teaching staff, LSAs and Language Assistants of the school. The school roll, numbering about six hundred pupils was taken in its entirety for a number of reasons:

- The sample needs to include pupils from each of the five year groups, about one hundred and twenty in each.
- There needs to be balance of gender and ability.
- Taking a sample of pupils would have increased the administrative demands of the survey and also weakened the potential of any findings. By using the entire population of the school, the need to make inferences from a sample have been removed.
- Whilst nearly 100% response could be expected from pupils, there is an uncertainty how many parents will respond. Without a sufficient large enough sample of parents, their contribution will be less valid.

- The number of teaching staff, even including LSAs and Language Assistants is not great; it is a relatively small school. There are likely to be those, for a variety of reasons, who will not complete the questionnaire. With so few potential contributors to this questionnaire, selection is not a sensible option.
- The **pupil survey** will be administered during classroom time, and endeavours will be made to follow up pupils who might be absent for the completion of the survey.
- All parents (or carers) will be invited to complete the **parent survey**. Only one copy of the parent survey will be sent home with each pupil. Parents will be invited to indicate on the survey whether the male parent, the female parent or both parents have completed it. The problem perceived with sending two surveys home with each pupil is that the data from two-parent families will statistically bias the findings. Additionally, there would be a temptation, however slight, for one-parent families to complete both surveys. It may not be unreasonable to expect both parents to hold similar views and offer similar responses to the questions being asked. What is being sought is a parental standpoint to complement the responses received from the pupil. Parents will also be able to indicate which year group (or groups) the pupil (or pupils) belongs to.
- The **teacher survey** will enable all classroom practitioners to indicate their main teaching subject area, and also to define their management role within the school. They will also be able to express whether their role as a teacher is duplicated as a parent.

3.5 A description and the design of the process.

The **pupil survey** is designed to tease out various aspects of the pupils' response to homework:

- Whether the pupil understands the reasons that school, and society in general, expect pupils to do homework on a regular basis;
- What the pupil considers are the important factors behind homework;
- Whether the pupil has different responses to homework within different curriculum areas;
- How pupils organise themselves, or are organised by others, in order to complete their homework;
- Whether the pupil perceives himself or herself able to complete homework “successfully”;
- Whether pupils have had any experience of homework at Key Stages 1 and 2;
- Whether homework should be, and is, monitored by the subject-teacher;
- What quantity of homework is set, and how the quantity is measured;
- How much time is allowed between the setting of the homework by the teacher and when the pupil is due to offer it as completed;
- How much time pupils perceive they spend doing homework;
- What other priorities pupils have on their “free time” at weekends and in evenings;
- At which stage of this “free time” do pupils usually attempt homework?
- What factors make homework more manageable by the pupil?
- Whether the pupil has access to useful resources when working on homework;

- Whether Homework Clubs are useful aids for pupils;
- How pupils perceive the expectations of their parents regarding homework.

The **parent survey** is designed to discover the parents' attitude towards their children's approach to homework. It will also act as verification to support the evidence that pupils have given in response to some questions:

- What parents' perceptions are of the aims, objectives and purposes of homework;
- What monitoring they offer at home for their child's homework;
- What monitoring they understand is being carried out by the school for homework;
- Whether they receive any guidance from schools, or individual subject departments, on how they might assist and support homework for their child;
- What "styles" of homework they are aware of, and the relative value of these;
- Whether the school provides any Parents' Meeting to help parents deal with homework issues;
- How much time their child spends doing homework;
- What resources they are able to provide at home to assist the child undertaking homework;
- What workspace is available for the child to do homework at home;
- Whether or not they consider homework to be a worthwhile use of out-of-school time;

- Whether or not they foresee any use for a Homework Club for their child as an alternate workspace for homework;
- How the relationship between the parent(s) and the child are helped or hindered by homework.

The **teacher survey** (some teachers are also parents, and it may be their roles become confused as a result) is designed to find out whether or not the teacher and the parent have similar or differing perceptions of homework:

- What is the teacher's role within the school, and does this impinge upon his/her view of homework;
- Is the teacher clear as to the Homework Policy of the school and of the individual academic department;
- Has the teacher his/her own personal views of homework that may be out of line with the school or academic department;
- Whether or not the teacher is able to give feedback to the pupil concerning homework that has been submitted;
- What rewards are offered for homework completion;
- Whether or not teachers give pupils the opportunity to revise and re-submit homework;
- Whether or not the teacher uses any penalty system for the non-completion of homework;
- The amount of time allowed for homework at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4;
- Whether or not there are specific "styles" of homework preferred by individual teachers;

- Whether or not the teacher has views concerning the appropriateness of workspaces for homework used by pupils;
- Whether or not there are formal arrangements for teachers to contact parents, and if not, how the teacher establishes necessary contact.

3.6 Triangulation of the data.

This research is being observed from three distinct viewpoints: the pupil's, the parent's and the teacher's. Sometimes one will confirm what another has said, on other occasions they may contradict each other; this will afford extra insight into the topic. Some questions have been repeated across the surveys. For instance: "How long does the pupil spend doing homework on a typical evening?" is asked of the pupil and the parent whilst the teacher is asked for the recommended guidelines as to how long the school expects the pupils to spend doing homework.

3.7 Design of the surveys.

"Learning out of school: Homework Policy and practice" was a Research Study commissioned by the Scottish Education Department, and published by John MacBeath and Mary Turner at Jordanhill College in November 1990. The survey used in MacBeath *et al's* research formed the basis of the survey used in Cromer High School's research project. However, this survey extends the questions asked, to take account of the historical and geographical differences, but maintains the basis of potential comparison between the two surveys. It is believed that there is some value in comparing the responses received, within the two research projects, even if based on different schools, in different parts of the United Kingdom and nearly ten years apart. The draft

was discussed in detail with the supervisor and then with twenty individuals or pairs connected with education and/or Cromer High School were invited to express their comments and criticisms of the draft survey.

- 1 First Governor, Chair of Curriculum Sub-Committee, former Staff Member at University School of Education
- 2 Parents of past, present and future pupils of the School. He is a former LEA Adviser and Ofsted Inspector; she is a Primary School Teacher.
- 3 Parents of past and present pupils of the School. She is a First Governor and a Visiting Instrumental Teacher; he is a Primary School Governor.
- 4 Primary School headteacher. [No Return]
- 5 Parent of present pupils of the school. Member of the School's Strategic Planning group.
- 6 Member of the School's Strategic Planning group.
- 7 Primary School Governor and former Primary School Teacher. [No Return]
- 8 Member of the School's Strategic Planning group.
- 9 Parents of past pupils of the School. Member of the School's Strategic Planning group.
- 10 Member of the School's Strategic Planning group. [No Return]
- 11 Parents of past and present pupils of the School. She is a Parent Governor and 6th Form Director at another school; he is a headteacher
- 12 Parent of past pupil of the school. Primary School Teacher.
- 13 Parent of past and present pupils of the School. He is a Parent Governor of the School and a Primary School headteacher. [No Return]
- 14 Parents of past and present pupils of the School. He is a member of the School's Strategic Planning group ; she is a Primary School Teacher.
- 15 Member of the School's Strategic Planning group. [No Return]
- 16 Former Independent Secondary School Teacher.
- 17 Parent of past pupil of the school. Chair of Governors of the School.
- 18 Parents of past, present and future pupils of the School. He is a LEA Adviser and Ofsted Inspector; she is a Primary School Deputy headteacher.
- 19 University School of Education Lecturer and Link Tutor to the School.
- 20 Parents of present pupil. She is a member of the LEA's Visiting Teacher Service; he lectures in Higher Education.

Fifteen returned their comments, and these were each considered as the draft was reviewed. That revision was used as a Pilot Version within the school with the Year 11 pupils.

3.8 The reliability and validity of the data.

RELIABILITY is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions.

(Bell 2005, p.50-51)

The piloting of the survey afforded opportunities for reliability to be tested. The procedure involved in drawing up the survey went through several stages:

- Reference to previous work undertaken by MacBeath and Turner
- Discussion with the supervisor.
- Editing and comments by a selected group of twenty professional acquaintances, many of whom have connections with the school.
- Verification by the school's Senior Management Team.
- Piloting in 1998 with a cohort of Year 11 pupils, their parents, and a group of teachers who would not be involved with the final survey.

Reliability was also provided across the three surveys (Pupils, Parents and Teachers). Some questions were common between the surveys, offering in some instances verification of reliability. In other cases reliability was coloured by comprehension of the issue, viewpoint or judgment. As Bell says:

VALIDITY is an altogether more complex concept. It tells whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe.

(Bell 2005, p.51)

The piloting procedure, as already mentioned as a part of reliability, also contributes to validity. This is especially so when the survey was piloted with a cohort of Year 11 pupils and their parents, and in the feedback which was obtained from that. Professional colleagues who were involved with this piloting stage also were able to respond with issues that had arisen during the administration of the pilot survey. These included matters dealing with the length of time allocated for completion of the survey (especially by less-able pupils), the complexity of some of the language used, and the ambiguity of the wording of some questions. It was particularly helpful to be able to discuss the

survey with a colleague who was an experienced teacher of special educational needs pupils.

3.9 The format of the survey.

The research is mainly quantitative, in the form of a survey that will be administered to all pupils. Separate, but similar surveys will be offered to parents of pupils and to all teaching staff.

- The **pupil survey** (Appendix 9.2.1) was administered during school time, with the active support of the headteacher, and the professional co-operation of classroom teachers.
- The **parent survey** (Appendix 9.2.2) was delivered by pupils in a sealed envelope on the day the pupil completed his/her own survey. Each envelope contained, in addition to the parent survey, a covering letter from the headteacher confirming his approval and support of the research project. The administrative details for the return of the parent survey, and an envelope addressed to the research author were given out so that surveys could be returned to the School Office, placing no extra burden upon the pupils' personal tutors.
- The **teacher survey** (Appendix 9.2.3) was handed out to all classroom teachers and to Learning Support Assistants. At the morning briefing on the day the headteacher and the report author both addressed the staff explaining the purposes of the survey and the administration details for the return; envelopes were supplied for this purpose enabling surveys to be returned via the report author's pigeon-hole.

The responses from the survey will be compared with the value-added results of individual pupils that have been obtained from the school's participation in the YELLIS project.

"The YELLIS project (Year 11 Information System) is a value-added monitoring system that provides a wide-range of performance indicators for students aged 14-16. The value-added approach allows ... a fair comparison of the progress made by ... students with that made by all other students participating in the YELLIS project. To make these comparisons each student needs to be measured against a common baseline at the beginning of the YELLIS cycle, with GCSE examinations providing an end measure".
(Year 11 Information System)

By using this data, two sample groups of GCSE pupils who have either significantly exceeded their predicted GCSE results, or indeed, significantly under-achieved the predicted GCSE results will be identified. Comparing these groups against the whole sample, the research project will endeavour to identify whether or not there are any factors which could be shown to be positive or negative influences upon the results of the significant sample groups.

3.10 The pilot run of the surveys (Summer 1998) and subsequent modification.

The pilot of the survey was made with the Year 11 in the Summer Term of 1998 (In order to avoid confusion with the Year 11 pupils in the full survey, which would be completed in the following academic year, this pilot group was referred to as Year 12). They were approaching the start of their written papers for GCSEs, and time was already at a premium. It was arranged that pupils would complete their survey form during a PSE session, under the supervision of their Form Tutor. The whole Year group were addressed that morning in a Year Assembly, explaining the basic outline of the research, and asking for their assistance. They were assured that that their honesty would be respected even if it was possible to identify individuals, and that their

comments and observations would be reported anonymously. I gave the Form Tutors the following briefing:

The plan is that time for all Year 11 pupils to complete this survey should be made available during PSE on Wednesday 6th May (Modules 13, 14, 15). I do not know how long it will take; I have estimated at 15 minutes, but it may take longer. I would appreciate if you would let me know exactly how long it takes.

I will hopefully brief the Year group in advance. Please encourage them to take it seriously (it has taken hours of time, and not a small amount of money to get this far). This is a "pilot", giving the opportunity for alterations before it is used on Year 7 to 11 inclusive in the next academic year.

I think it is worth your reading out the question and then giving them an appropriate amount of time to tick/answer. I fear there may be too much reading for some individuals. At the end, collect in all papers, and let me have them back. I will try to get round to collect them if I can.

I would also appreciate any written comments from you as to how it might be improved/alterd for next year's full run. Please, will you also complete the attendance register so that I can follow up on absentees?

At the end, there should be an envelope to be handed to each pupil with a letter to take home to parents/guardians. Would you emphasize the importance of this? Returns from the envelope can be left either in the front office, or handed direct to me around the school.

I know pupils are about to leave, and they might think that this survey is not relevant to them. If we, as a school, are going to improve what we offer for the future, we need their views urgently. (It might be their children doing homework here in a few years' time).

Thank you for your time and effort.

On the day of the pilot run, eighty-two out of a possible one hundred and twenty one pupils took part. It took longer than the fifteen minutes I had optimistically estimated; it will require more in the region of thirty to forty minutes. At the conclusion, all forms were returned to the research author.

The eighty-two pupils were each given a sealed envelope to take home to his/her parent(s). It was addressed to the parent(s), and as well as the Parent Survey, contained an envelope addressed to research author at the school for the return. Thirty-six surveys have been returned (43.9%), which, as it was at the very end of their son's/daughter's time in the school, was regarded it as being a very good response. This compared with a return of 46.15% in the full survey a year later.

The Teacher's Survey was piloted with four PGCE students on placement at the school, and two teachers, one of whom was retiring at the end of that term, and the other who had moved to another school at the end of the previous term. Only one of the PGCE students but both teachers responded.

In the light of the pilot, some general alterations were made to layout of questions. The following amendments were made to the subsequent full surveys:

1. Pupils' Survey

- a. When the full survey was dealt with it would be ideal to arrange for pupils to respond directly on the school's networked system, thus eliminating the need to transfer the data to spreadsheets. (It may also be possible for the teacher surveys to be done the same way.) After discussions with the management of the school, it was obvious that it would not be possible for the surveys to be completed on-line simply owing to the fact that the provision of the school's network system would not enable such a strategy to be employed.
- b. The time factor for hand-completing the survey for the majority of pupils was also longer than had at first been anticipated. If completion were to be made on line, the computer skills of some pupils would possibly not be sufficient to complete satisfactorily the task. Even with each question being read out along with the alternative answers, it was reckoned that 45 to 50 minutes was required by each group to complete the task. It was essential that, whilst an efficient use of time was required by the school, an inadequate provision of time would lead to the survey being rushed, and the results being less reliable.

c. Question F6 was reworded; in the pilot survey the five boxes supplied for each day of the week, indicating up to five possible subjects on any one night, was replaced with one box for each night of the week, in which the pupil was required to write the appropriate number.

d. Question F8, inquiring into after school activities, had asked in the pilot survey, for pupils to place the three activities in order of importance. This was an unnecessary detail, which in the full survey was replaced by unranked ticks in the appropriate three boxes.

2. Parents' Survey

a. The Parents' Survey was amended after the pilot to also include the pupil's Personal Identification Number, which would then enable, if required, links to be made between specific pupil's survey and their parent's survey.

This PIN identification was in addition to the identification by Post Code.

b. The wording in some questions was modified to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding; the section in which the parent(s) identified the year group and gender of their child/children was simplified. The layout of the Parents' Survey was also changed in style to make it both less intimidating, and using less paper.

3. Teachers' Survey

a. In question A1 the requirement was changed from asking the teacher to "place all that apply into a numerical order" to "tick three main reasons for setting homework".

3.11 The administration of the surveys (Summer 1999) to the sample groups of pupils, parents and teachers.

Following initial discussions with the Headteacher, I took the opportunity to address all professional colleagues at a staff meeting in order to explain what survey work I was proposing to undertake, and what help I was seeking from Form Tutors, and all colleagues. I also explained the need that I should be able to identify Pupils' Survey Forms and Parents' Survey Forms so that I could eventually link them to pupils' results, but that I would assure everybody that the identification of individual pupils and their parents would be restricted to me. Similarly I assured staff that, although Teachers' Survey Forms could be identified by the author, no identification would be possible in the final text.

The text of this Staff Briefing follows:

As many will be aware, I am carrying out, currently, a largish piece of research into Homework, and how it might, or might not, aid School Improvement. Apart from a largish research project across ten schools in Scotland, conducted a few years back by John MacBeath, there appears to be little research done regarding the effectiveness of homework. Generally however teachers are convinced that homework achieves something; Governors expect us to set it and mark it, and many parents regard it as a "good thing". In my work I am trying to link individual pupils' attitudes to homework to any value-added effect which might have been achieved for them or by them during their time here at Cromer High School.

I have now come (with some urgency for Year 11 who is already riding off into the sunset) to the survey stage. I am asking each pupil to complete a survey (white paper), under my supervision. With the headteacher's agreement and Senior Pupil Director's support I am meeting with Year 11, by tutor groups, in assembly time. I will liaise direct with Year 11 tutors. I will meet with Years 7, 8 and 9 during my Department's lessons over the coming fortnight. Year 10 has still to be planned. The survey is anonymous, but I am asking them to write their admission number on the survey, so that I can eventually link their responses to KS 2 and 3, CATs, Midyis, YELLIS, GCSE predictions and GCSEs actual grades. I am not interested in identifying individuals, and I am not prepared to break confidentiality to anyone, even though I will obviously know the identity of many. I will report general findings but not name individuals.

Pupils will also be taking home a survey to their parents (green paper). The pilot a year ago (last year's Year 11) reaped about 40% returns; I would hope for much better from the whole school. They will be going home in sealed envelopes, addressed to the parents, with a covering letter from the headteacher. I will be asking Form Tutors to distribute these after the pupils have finished their survey. It is probably best if you are "ignorant as to what these envelopes contain", and that you regard yourself purely as

distributors. Responses from Parents can be sent either to me or to the school office. Generally I would encourage you to be neutral if any pupil raises the Homework Survey with you. Please don't decry it as an expensive waste of time; I would encourage you to take the line that we want to discover how we can best help each pupil to achieve their very best in their time here at Cromer High School, and that includes trying to find out the value of homework.

I will also be asking all teaching staff to complete a survey (yellow paper); it should be printed by early next week, and will be put in your pigeonhole. It is mainly tick boxes. I would be ever so grateful if you could find time to complete it and return it to me by half term. Again, it can either be put in my pigeonhole or handed into the front office. Of course I am likely to be able to identify you from answers to questions if not from your handwriting; can I again reassure you that no-one else in the school will see your responses, so please be absolutely honest.

The three surveys are meant to "triangulate with each other" - in order to verify, or otherwise, the data. The whole survey will become less valid the fewer responses I get, or the less honest people are, so I do encourage you to make your contribution.

Once all surveys are completed, they will be processed at Hull University who are transferring the data onto a computer - thank goodness. I do not expect to come up with any findings this school year; in fact I expect it to be well into 2000 before I do.

If you want to discuss the survey, please do corner me. For your information, I will put a copy of all three Survey Forms on the Notice Board after it is all over.

Thank you for your help.

6th May 1999

3.11.1. The pupil survey.

The following briefing was given verbally to all pupils in the school:

"I am currently undertaking a four year research project at the University of Hull, and am about half way through at the moment - so about the time the present Year 9 take their GCSE exams, I will be submitting a written document of about 100,000 word to the University.

I am writing about Homework. Teachers talk a lot about homework; I want to get your honest views about homework. I don't want you to bother about what your friends say, or what your parents say. I want to know your truthful answers. If you are not absolutely honest, you are wasting your time sitting there answering the questions.

I am asking you for your Q number and your postcode. This means I can find out who you are if I really want to - but I don't. I am not interested in who you are. I need your Q number so I can link what you have said in this survey to you Key Stage 2 and 3 results and GCSE results, and other things like that. If you don't put your Q number in, I cannot use your answers, so again you are wasting your time.

I simply want to reassure you that absolutely no one else at Cromer High School will see your answers. When I write my report, no one will be named. If I want to talk about any one person they will be given an "alias". Your completed Surveys will be taken to Hull University and a Secretary there is going to deal with all the information - so apart from me, no-one else here at Cromer High School will read your response - so please be totally honest."

The Pupils' Survey (white forms) was carried out shortly after the beginning of the summer term. The pilot run of the survey had involved only Year 11

pupils. There could be concern whether the length of the survey might threaten the validity of the results. For this reason I administered the survey each time. I decided that it was necessary to read out, and explain each question, in an attempt to avoid pupils, especially those with low reading skills, not understanding the question, or simply ticking any box without comprehending the implication of their response. It also allowed me to keep pupils on the task.

Year 11, in the last few weeks of their pre-GCSE education, were my priority. It was possible to administer the test to the whole pupil body of Year 11 at the same time, using the provision for seating made possible by the Key Stage 3 SATs being undertaken at that time. The school's examination officer was also present in the room to give additional presence for a large number of pupils.

Year 10 pupils were dealt with in a similar fashion in June whilst the examination hall was furnished for the GCSE examinations.

Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils were administered in their teaching groups as they attended my lessons in one week during May 1999.

Those pupils who were absent for any reason, at the time their peers did the survey, were followed up at a later stage.

total uncompleted:	5 pupils		
TOTAL COMPLETED	589	(99.15 %)	n.o.r.594

3.11.2.The parent survey.

I discussed with the headteacher as to whether or not to send one or two copies to each home, to enable parents to complete separately. From a purely financial and logistical point of view it made sense to keep to one Parent Survey per pupil, and the opportunity for parents to indicate on the form whether it was the mother, father or both parents responding. Additionally,

enabling the parents to respond in duplicate would also raise the possibility that the results could be biased towards those particular responses.

The Form Tutor distributed these Parents' Surveys via the pupils, shortly after the pupils had themselves completed their surveys. I advised the tutors not to enter into discussions as to what the envelopes contained. Each envelope contained the (green) Parents' Survey Form, a covering letter from the headteacher and a reply envelope addressed to me at the school, and marked as "*Private and Strictly Confidential*". Many replies were handed to me direct by pupils, although a number of parents chose to post them to me at the school. Some were handed in to Form Tutors, and others were handed into the School Office. Form Tutors were asked on a number of occasions to remind pupils to encourage their parents to complete the survey, so that we could take all views into account. The Tutors were not required to keep any record of the return of Parents' Surveys. These were returned direct to the School Office, and I received them from there, unopened.

The response from the Parents' Survey was:

Year 11	30
Year 10	41
Year 9	64
Year 8	57
Year 7	84

TOTAL	276 (46.15%) n.o.r.598
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The responses received (46.15%) reflect the number of pupils whose parent or parents responded to the Survey, not (necessarily) the percentage of the overall parent body. This was a slight improvement upon the 43.9% that had been achieved in the pilot in the previous year.

3.11.3 The teacher survey.

The surveys were distributed to all Teaching Staff, including LSAs and Language Assistants, but *not* to those who were not directly involved in the

teaching of pupils. The (yellow) forms and return envelopes were distributed through the school's own internal mailing system. Teachers were invited to complete the survey form and return it by the same method. Frequent reminders were made in order to achieve the maximum response.

28 Teachers' Surveys of a total of 38 (i.e. 71%) were received.

3.12 The processing of the surveys.

The three Surveys were then transferred to the SPSS programme, using three separate spreadsheets. This enabled the following to be made:

- 1 Analysis of response to individual questions, including by gender and age where appropriate.
- 2 Comparison of responses between questions within the same survey.
- 3 Comparison of responses to the same or similar questions between two or three surveys.

3.13 Summary of the methodology.

1. The research reflects ideas that have arisen from the literature review and are pertinent to Cromer High School at the time of this research.
2. The research used quantitative methods over the total samples available (of pupils, parents and teachers) in preference to a smaller sample using qualitative methods.
3. The surveys (separately for pupils, parents and teachers) included both factual questions (e.g. where, when etc) and also questions which required opinions. When appropriate, opportunity was included for

personal views.

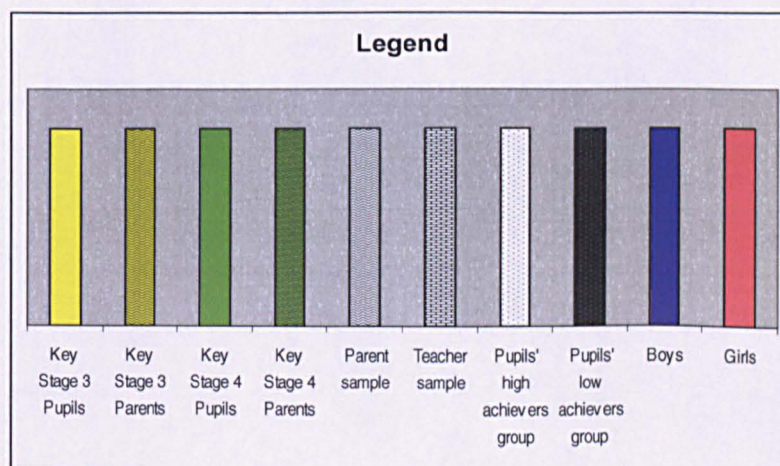
4. The surveys had been piloted the previous year with the Year 11 leavers, their parents and those teachers who were leaving the school. In the light of that pilot survey modifications were made to the surveys prior to the main survey; these alterations have been cited in Section 3.10
5. The surveys also allowed for a triangulation of measures to be made between surveys to verify responses.
6. The responses from the surveys were analysed using the SPSS programme. The input of the data from the completed surveys was carried out within the Computer Centre of the University of Hull. These files were transferred from the Computer Centre by disk. Given that the data are categoric in nature, the analysis focussed on producing descriptive statistics. All analyses were carried out under the guidance of my supervisor. Tabular presentations were exported to Excel for graphic presentation.
7. Pupils' responses were linked to their value-added scores as obtained through the Yellis project, and supplied by Cromer High School and with the approval of the Yellis project of the University of Durham. Once the two groups of "significant over or under performers" had been identified, as indicated in Section 4.2, a number of the SPSS analyses were re-run just for those two groups.

4. Results.

In this chapter the first section reports that the analysis of the data supplied in the three *Homework and School Improvement questionnaires* (Appendix 2) is displayed, and commented upon. The second section explains the creation of the two value added sub groups and how their responses varied in relation to the overall school population. How the findings from these surveys relate to issues from the literature review will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

4.1 Interpretation of data from homework and School Improvement questionnaires.

The questionnaires employed with pupils, parents and teachers are, strictly speaking, quantitative; however for a number of the questions asked, the opportunity was also provided for respondents to add in answers other than those supplied within the questionnaire. Therefore, throughout this section, the questions are referred to by the code as indicated on the sample questionnaires reproduced in *Appendix 2: Homework and School Improvement questionnaire*. Responses are listed verbatim; the number in brackets at the end of the line indicates if more than one respondent has offered the response. Throughout these Figures the following colour legend is used:



The analysis of the three separate homework and School Improvement surveys produced the following sample data:

Figure 01:

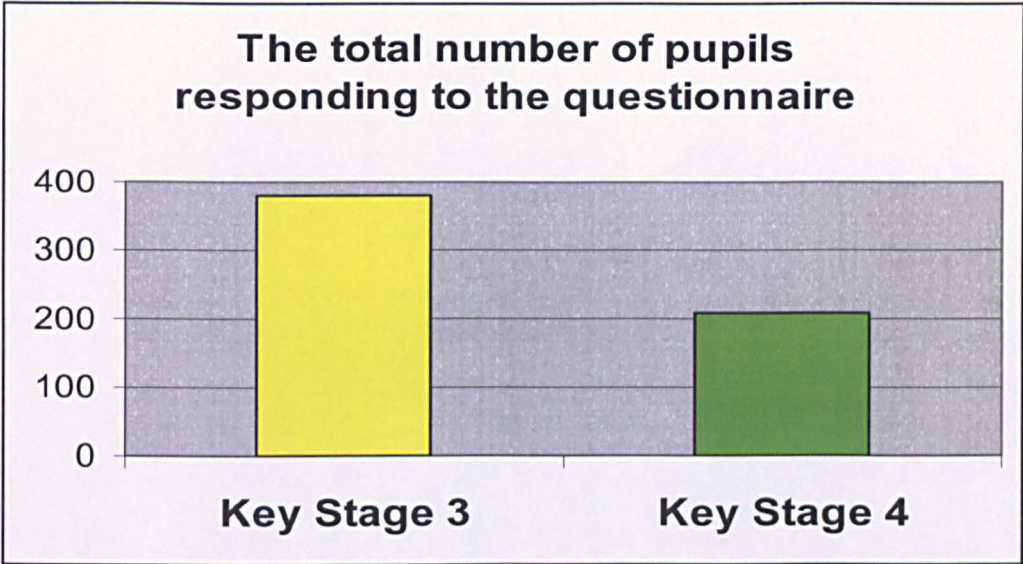
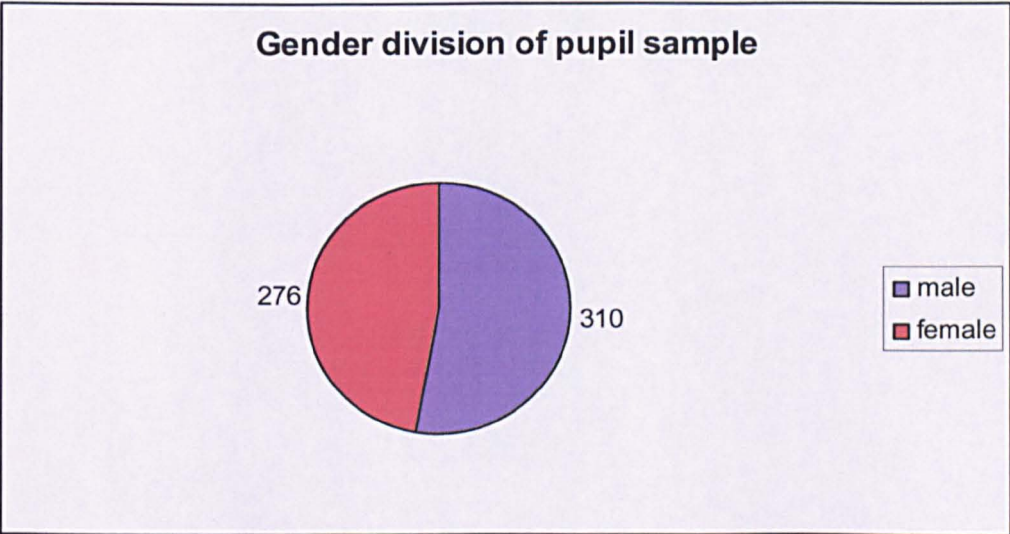


Figure 02:



In order to ascertain a socio-economic profile of the pupil sample, the pupils were asked to indicate the Post Code of their homes. This information was then compared with data obtained from the 2001 United Kingdom Census to achieve the divisions as indicated in Figure 03 and its subsequent table:

Figure 03:

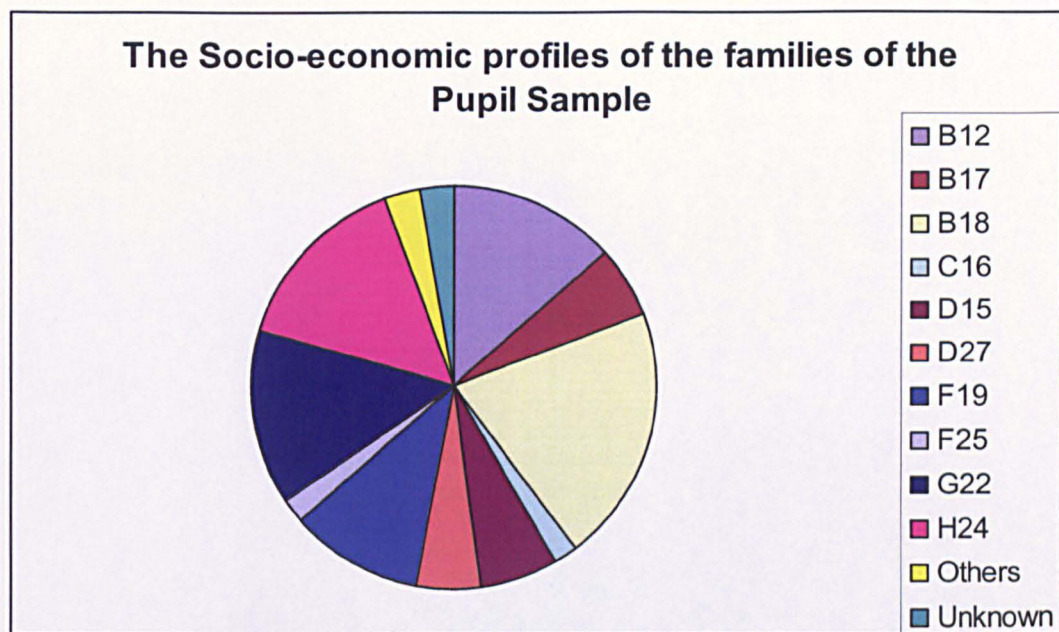


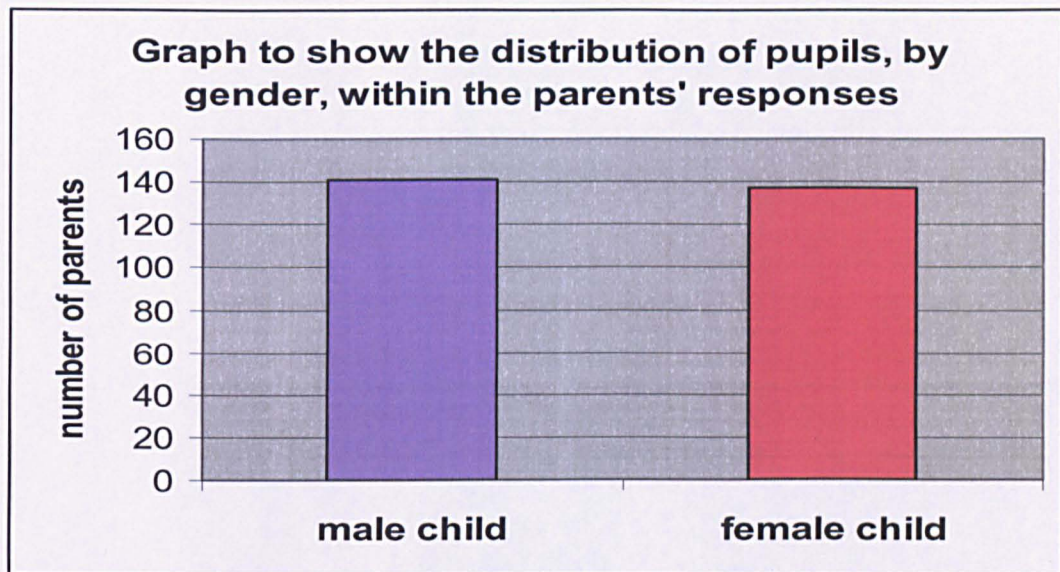
Table 01: Descriptions of Socio-Economic Groups

B12	Older professionals in retirement areas
B17	Comfortably well-off older owner occupiers
B18	Affluent ageing couples in rural areas
C16	White collar couples in mixed suburban housing
D15	Young white collar families in small semis
D27	Young white and blue collar families in semis and terraces
F19	Prosperous farming communities
F25	Smallholders and rural workers
G22	Retired white collar workers in owner occupied flats
H24	Older white collar owner occupiers in semis
Others, including:	
A06	Mature families in select suburban properties
G23	Older residents and young transient singles many in seaside resorts
G26	Old and young buying terraces and flats
G32	Retired blue collar workers in council flats
J31	Council tenants in multi-racial areas - high unemployment

However, the catchment area of the Cromer High School is a tourist area, an area of second home owners and also a popular retirement area; hence the population is very seasonal, and disproportionately elderly. Socio-economic groups B12, B17, B18, G22, H24, G23 and G32 are all made up of older, ageing or retired people and make up nearly 70% of the total. It seems that the

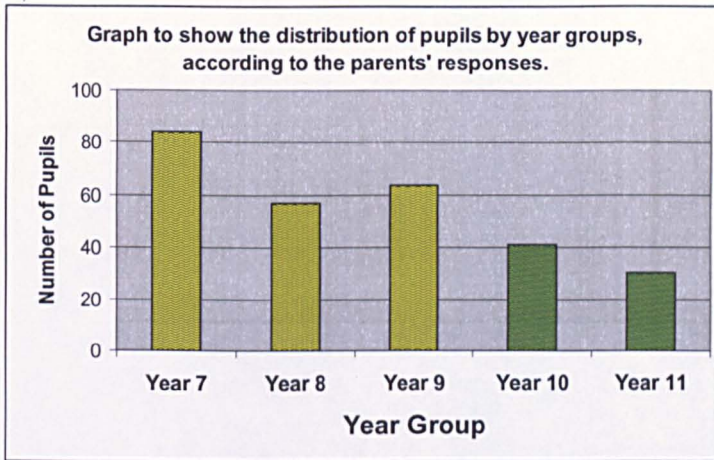
figures for the school have been modified by the socio-economic peculiarities of the area to such an extent that their value is questionable. It is therefore concluded that credence should *not* be given to results based upon the socio-economic groups as derived from pupil post-codes linked to census data. Even farming and fishing which were historical employment sources, are now insignificant sources of employment in the area.

Figure 04:



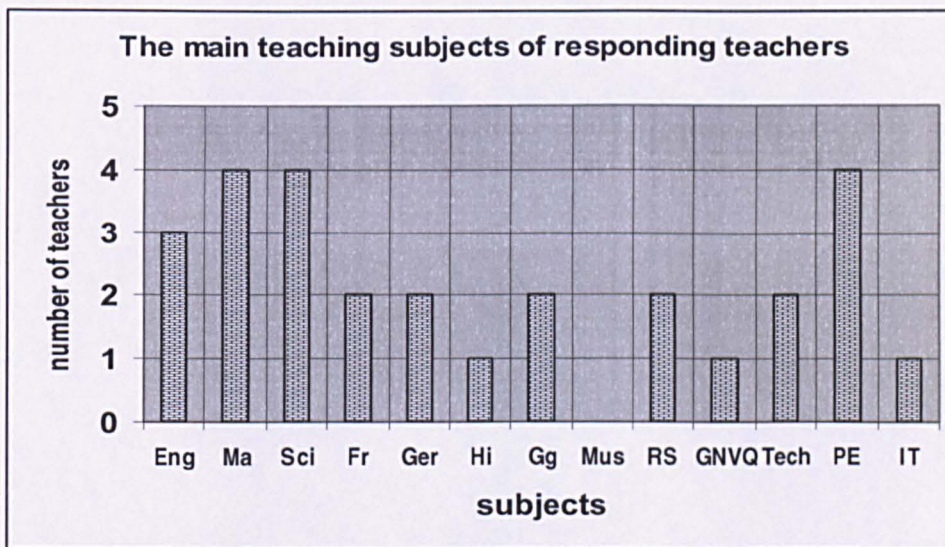
The response from such a high proportion (47%) of the parents to the survey was encouraging, possibly confirming that homework is a topic which is relevant to them and their children.

Figure 05:



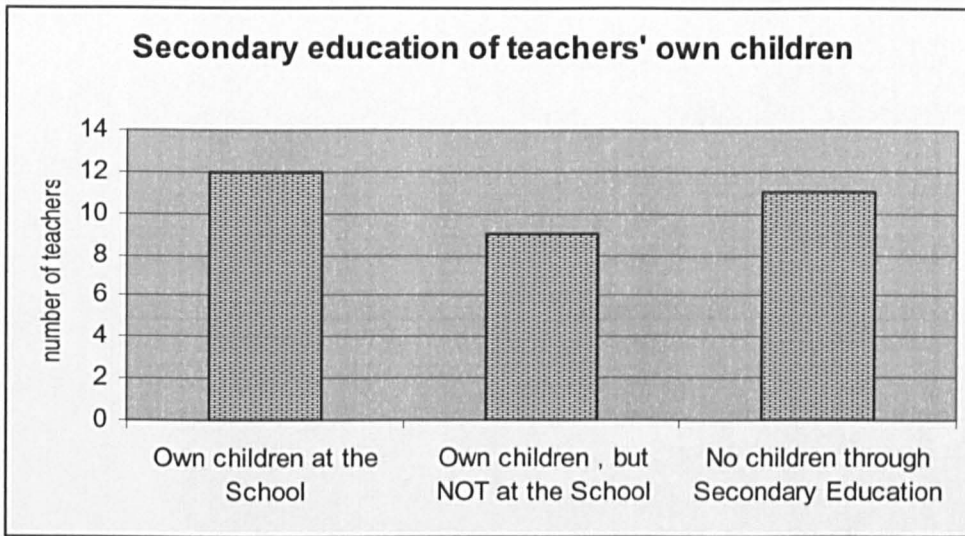
All teaching staff was able to respond to this research, including members of the Senior Management Team, who were also able to identify their main teaching subject as shown in Figure 06.

Figure 06:



As shown in Figure 07 a number of the sample of teachers had also experienced having their own children as pupils in the school, and some had children in other Secondary Schools. This provided the opportunity for a good perspective of the sample school and of practice in other schools too.

Figure 07:



There was a good division of teachers between those whose own children in secondary education had been pupils at the case study school, and those whose children had been pupils at other Secondary Schools.

Figure 08:

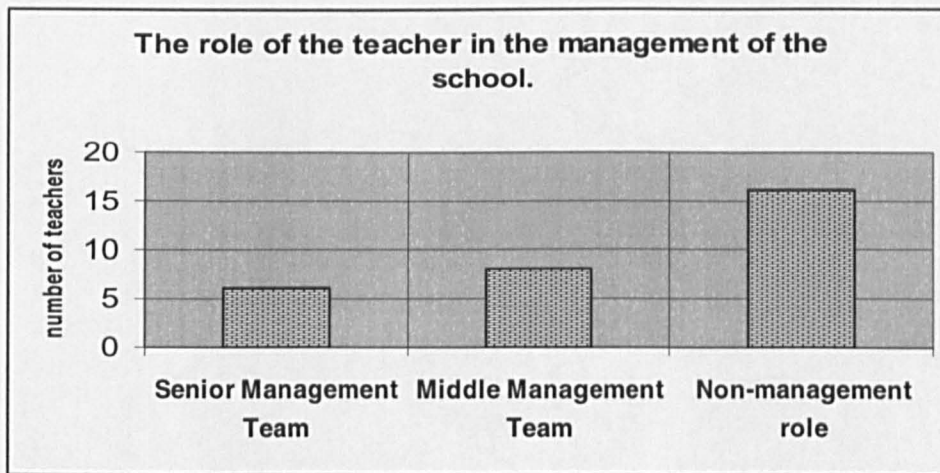


Figure 08 shows that the entire membership of the senior management team responded; the majority of the middle managers responded, but a lesser proportion of ordinary classroom teachers responded.

It is a concern that not all teachers were able to give a résumé of either the School's Homework Policy (Figure 09) or their department's Homework Policy (Figure 10):

Figure 09:

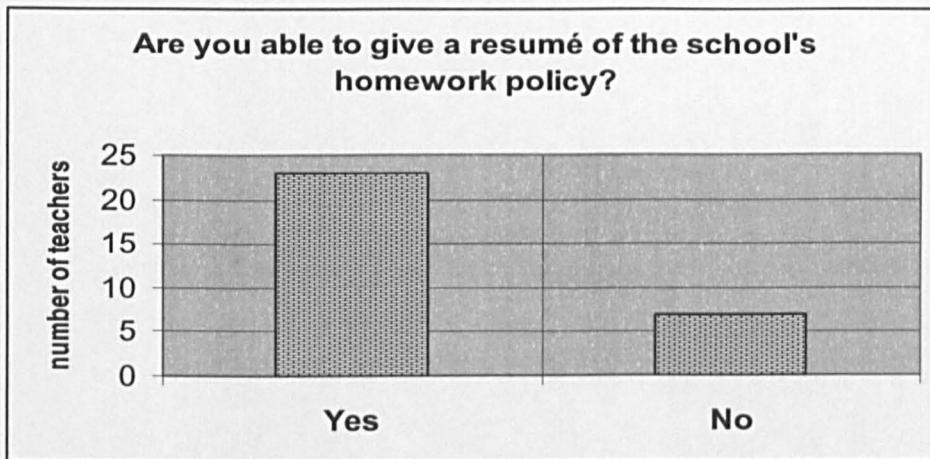
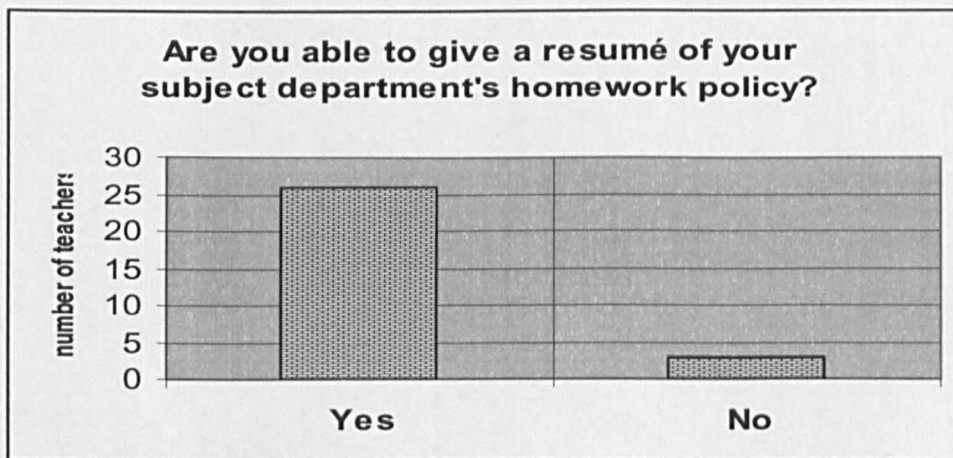


Figure 10:



When these results are further analysed, the cause for concern is even greater. Of the sixteen teachers in a non-management role, four claimed not to know the school's Homework Policy and three not to know their department's Homework Policy. This was replicated in the middle management team where of the eight responses; two claimed not to know the school's policy, although all knew their department's policy. In the senior management team there was

one who did not know the school's policy. Whilst excuses may be made for newly qualified teachers not knowing these policies (although this should surely be a part of the school's induction programme), the lack of clarity of the school's Homework Policy amongst members of the middle and senior management should be of concern.

Figure 11:

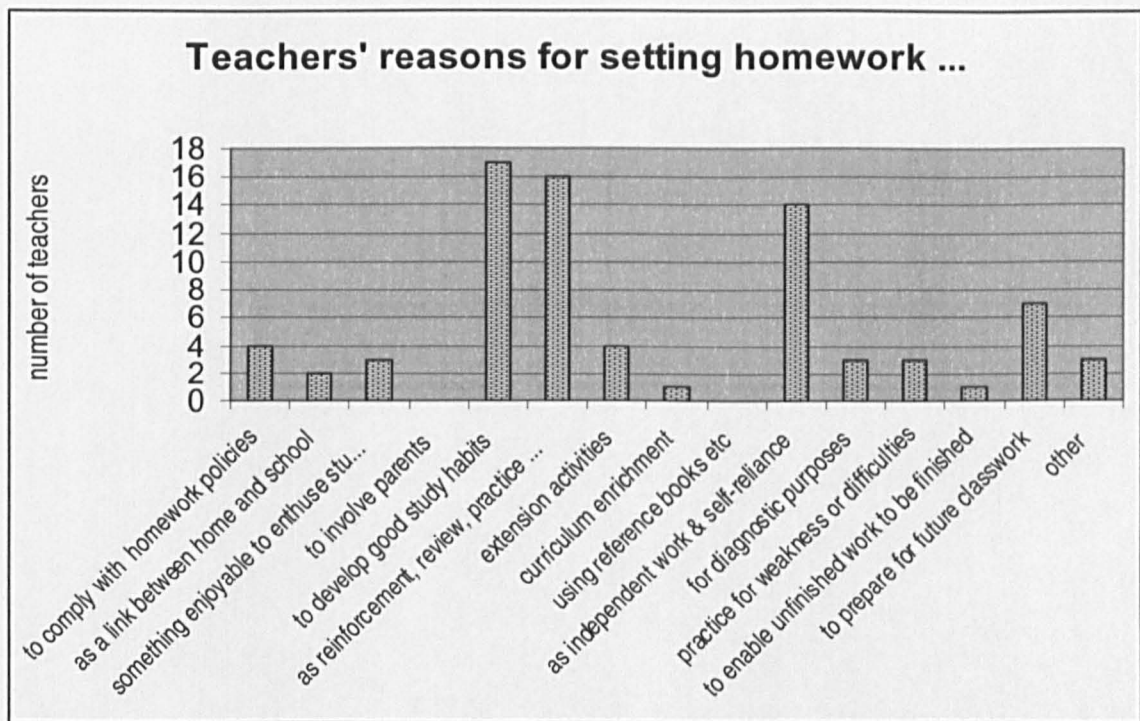


Table 02:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS

- To enable independent research and investigation in practical and theoretical evidence gathering. (2)

Figures 11 – 13 (and Table 02) compare the viewpoints of the three survey respondents to the purposes of homework and reasons why homework is set. The questions in this survey were based upon those used by MacBeath and Turner (1990) to facilitate possible later comparisons between this study and

theirs'. In that study the language of the questions is *not* the same between the three surveys. Teachers are perhaps likely to have more complex reasons for homework than parents, and it would not be appropriate to use the same terminology or even to expect all parents to understand such language. The language for pupils, as young as eleven years, also needs to be very simple. MacBeath and Turner used the word "reinforcement" which I felt was perhaps outside the scope of the majority of pupils; I replaced it with "to "fix" things in my mind". Whilst there may be difficulties in a direct comparison between the responses of the three surveys, Figure 12 does try to compare the response between parents and teachers on the main common factors.

The reasons for homework will vary among teachers, and also among curriculum areas. However, the responses shown in Figure 11 reflect three very common factors across a large number of teachers:

- To develop good study habits
- As reinforcement, review, practice and consolidation
- As independent work and self-reliance

Figure 12:

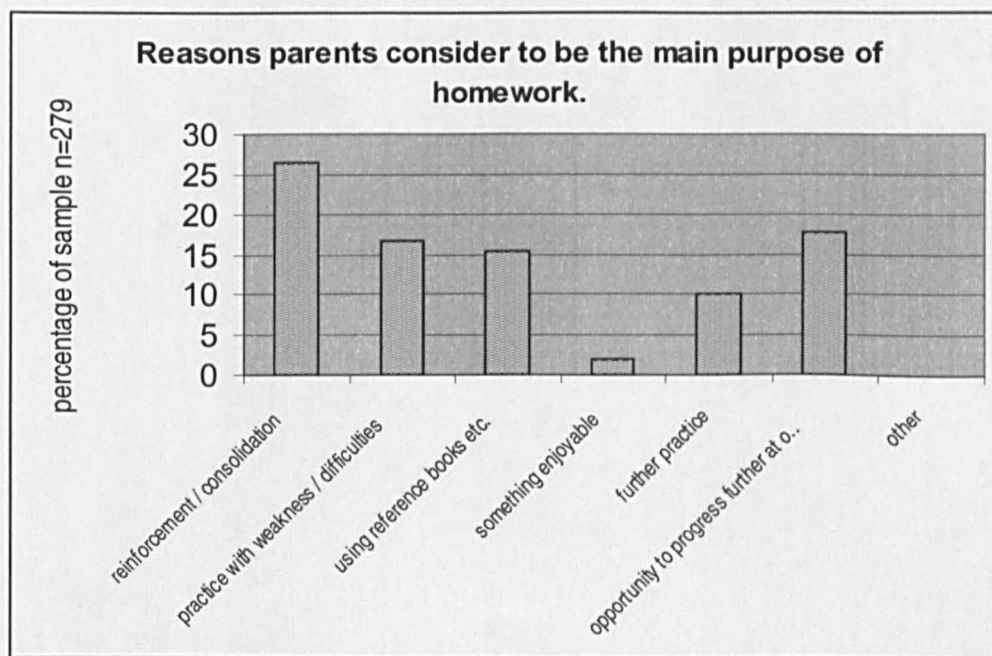
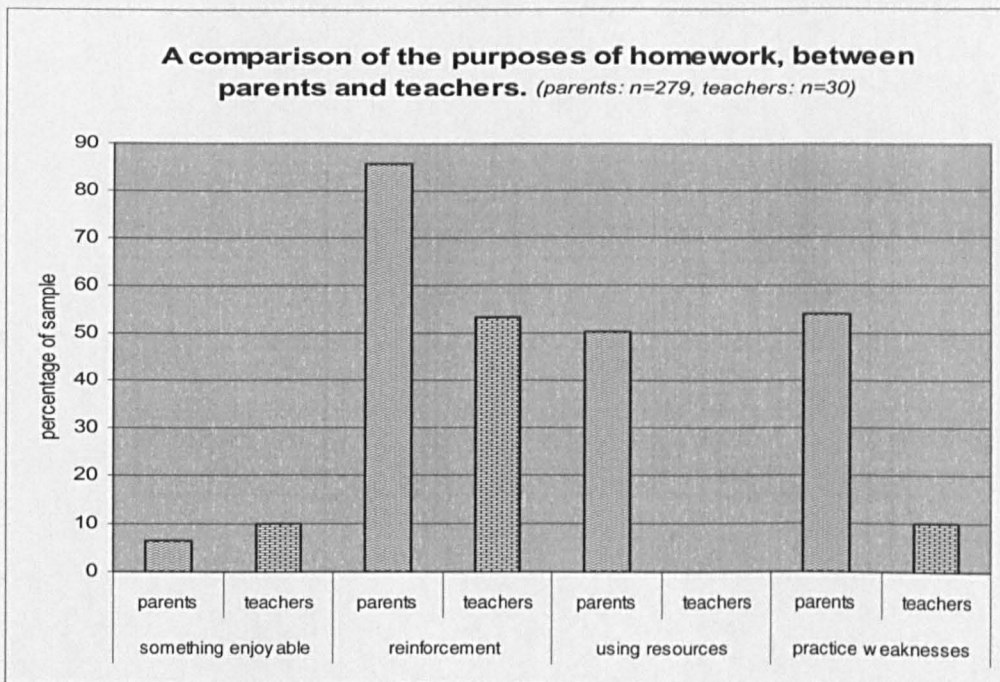


Table 03:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PARENTS	
• Complete work	(2)
• Preparation for the next lesson	(2)
• Causing disruption to family life	(2)
• Enhance their own study skills	
• Practice ability to work and search on their own.	
• Independent working	
• Family involvement in child's education	
• Self-discipline, self-directed study	
• Lesson times are short and homework seems to be a way of finishing the lesson.	
• To learn self-discipline and to structure time.	
• To cover what is in the National Curriculum, which has not been taught at school, owing to the lack of time?	

Parents' views of the purpose of homework (Figure 12) are not so startlingly clear, but a comparison, by percentages, against the teachers' responses provides some curious comparisons (Figure 13).

Figure 13:



Whilst it is not a purpose of homework *per se* to be enjoyable, it may be a useful tool in the weaponry to encourage pupils to be committed to their homework. It is sad that few teachers and parents in this survey place any

necessity for homework to be enjoyable. Whilst it may not be possible for all homework to be enjoyable at all times, is it unreasonable to expect that some effort should be made by teachers to achieve this as often as possible? It is unlikely that many adults would persist for a long time with a task which they found less than enjoyable. It is therefore not surprising that few pupils persist. All should make an effort to make homework an enjoyable experience whenever possible.

A substantially greater percentage of parents than teachers regard "reinforcement" and "practice weaknesses" as being significant purposes of homework; perhaps parents are looking at these purposes from the unique viewpoint of the needs of their child.

"Resources" rate importantly for parents; many doubtless invest significant finances into these resources, and yet some teachers do not regard them as significant. Yet, when resources are required for homework, many teachers make the assumption that they will be readily available at home.

Figure 14:

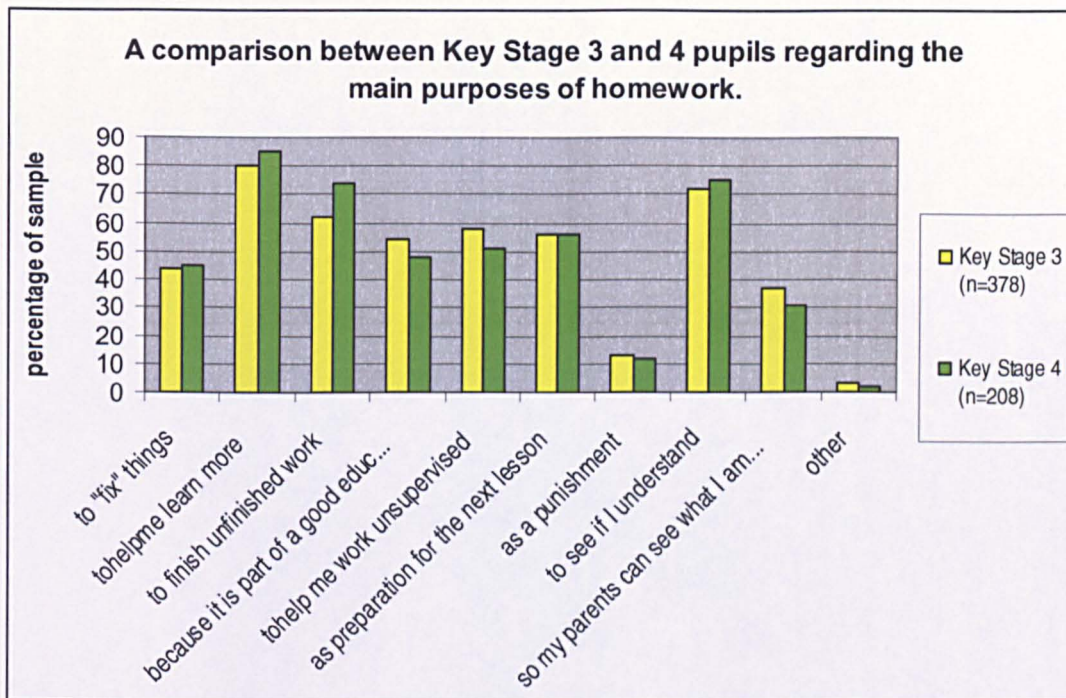


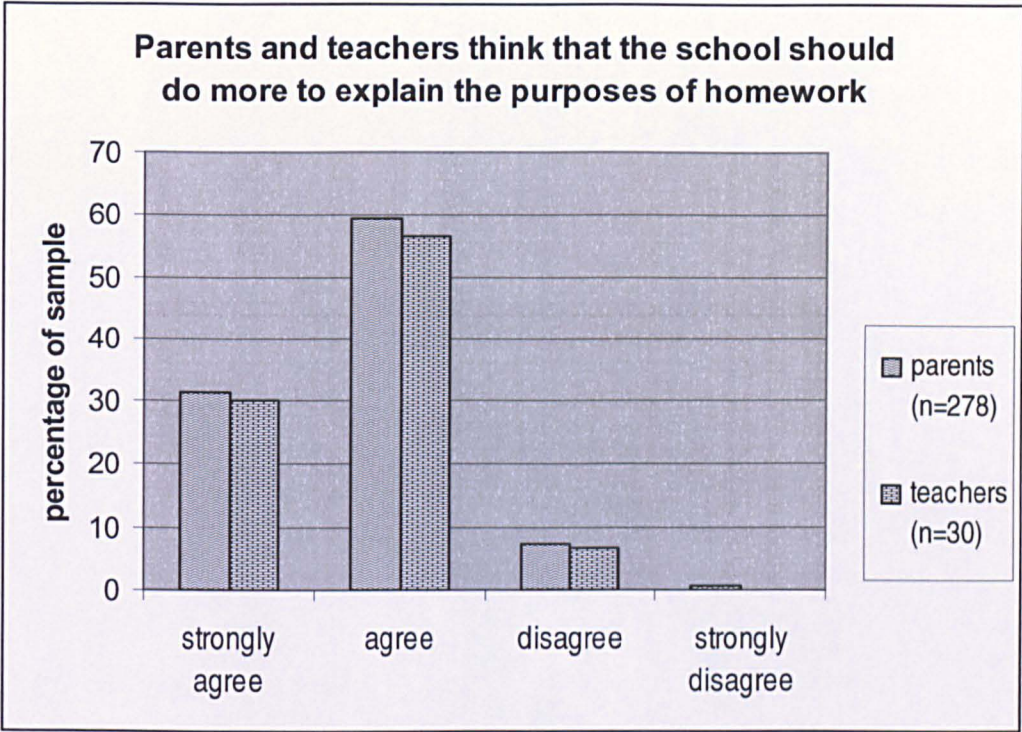
Table 04:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS
• There is not enough time in class
• To keep us off the streets
• Make sure what I am doing in class

The perceptions of the purpose of homework (Figure 14) between pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4 are very similar, and pupils seem to have a generally positive attitude towards homework. Those “purposes” which rate as more important for Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 pupils may be linked towards the approach of GCSE examinations, and the “more philosophical purposes” of homework become less important than they are for Key Stage 3 pupils.

Parents and teachers consider that the school should do much more to explain the purpose of homework (Figure 15). The lack of clear purpose of homework amongst pupils, parents and teachers is of concern. This is referred to again in Parent Education Courses later in this section.

Figure 15:



This lack of clarity is less marked when pupils are asked if they know the reasons why homework is set. It might be more difficult for pupils to verbalise those reasons. However, the suggestion is that at both Key stages (Figure 16), pupils generally feel they know the reasons.

Figure 16:

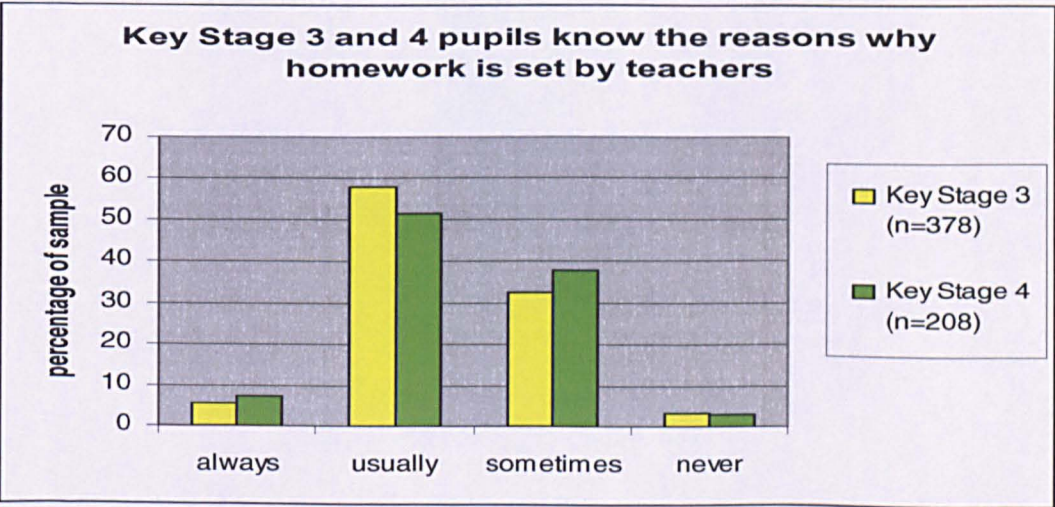


Figure 17:

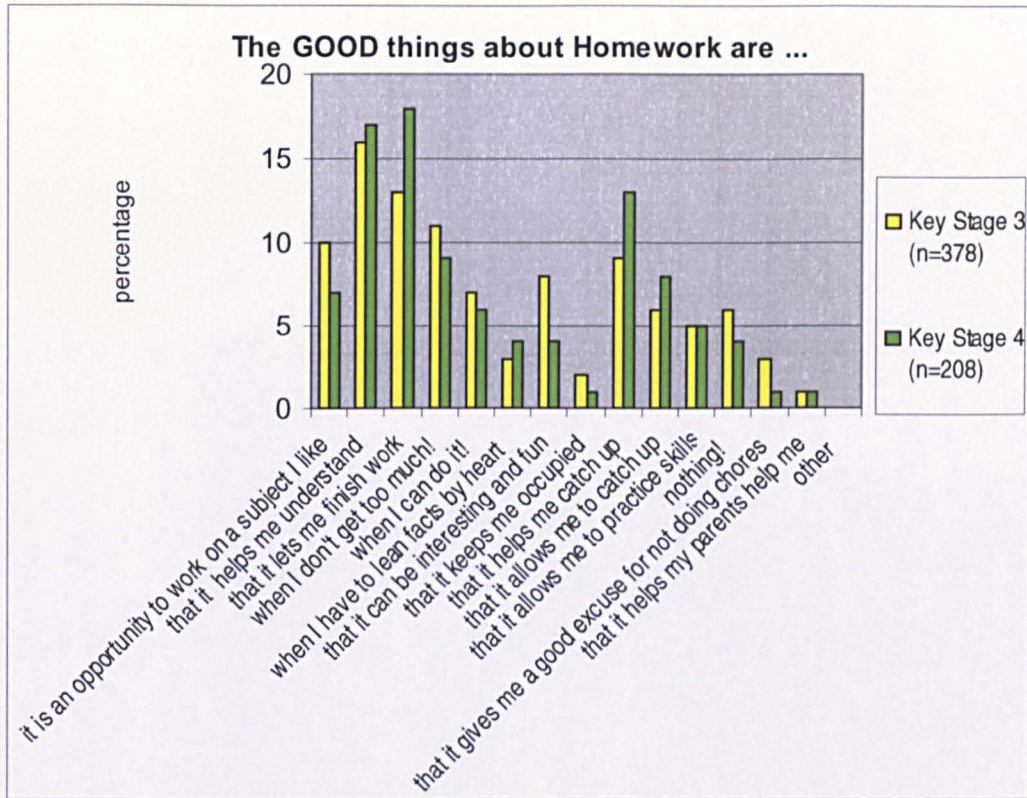


Table 05:

“GOOD THINGS” - WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS

- It is pointless
- You can take as much time over it as you want.
- Work at my own pace
- When you are told to just look something up
- When I am at home I can take care over my work
- There is nothing good about homework
- It helps me remember things
- It can mostly be done on computer
- So my parents can see what homework I get

(2)

It could be anticipated that a comparison between Key Stages 3 and 4 of the good things about homework (Figure 17) would draw out some differences, considering the maturation of the pupils and also the pressures of external examinations. The differences are less marked than might be expected. Most worrying is the perception that homework provides “less interest and fun” at Key Stage 4. In Figure 17, at Key Stage 4, only half the pupils reported it as “interesting and fun” when compared with pupils at Key Stage 3. In view of the

number of subjects that are either entirely optional choices, or have a certain degree of pupil choice within them, it is concerning that the pleasure in education appears to be diminishing; it might have been expected that with choice at Key Stage 4 “interest” in the subject would be stronger, and that there would be more pleasure gained from it.

Key Stage 4 pupils place greater emphasis on homework affording the “opportunity for work to be finished” and allowing them to “catch up”. This may be indicative of the pressure of the overload of the GCSE examination system, or it may be that a number of Key Stage 4 pupils become less focused on finishing work in the classroom. This viewpoint of Key Stage 4 pupils is compounded when amongst the bad things about homework they cite “having too much to do” and having “too many subjects” (Figure 18).

Figure 18:

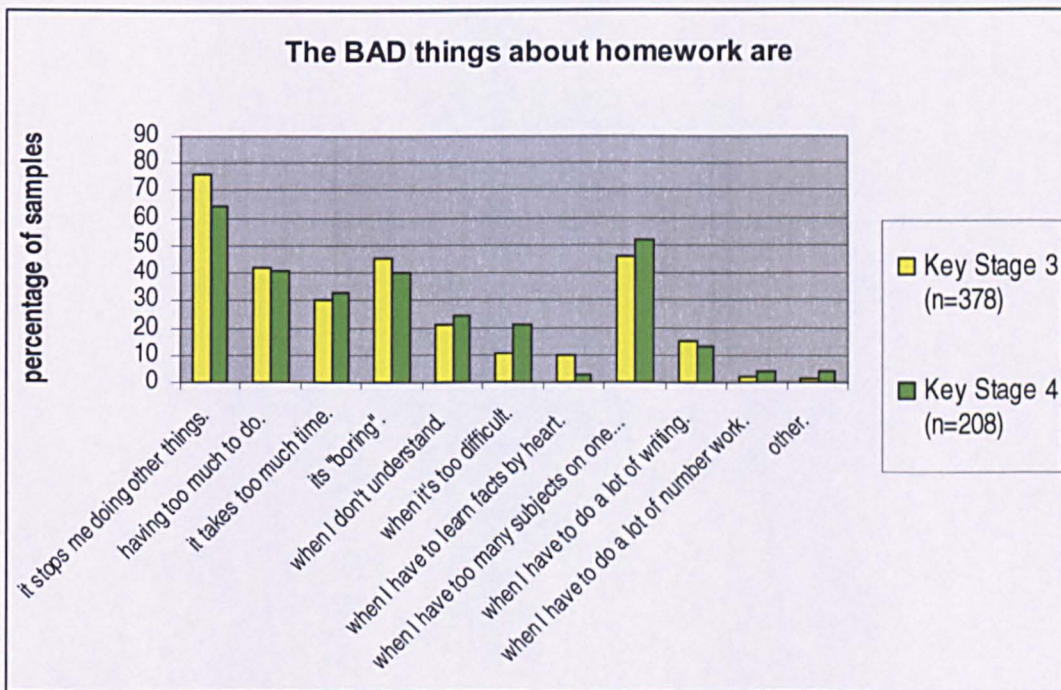


Table 06:

“BAD THINGS” - WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS

- It is pointless
- When I have better things to do such as going out with my friends
- I hate it
- That I can't go out with my friends
- Your mum makes you do everything in rough
- Having homework
- I live on a farm so I don't get much time
- When you forget your book and get a detention
- It is sometimes unnecessary
- When you get coursework and normal homework
- That I have to do it

(2)

At Key Stages 3 and 4 the bad things about homework draw attention to the perception by a number of pupils that homework prevents them from doing “other things”, although later evidence suggests that plenty of other things are still enjoyed. It may be a time management issue that needs to be considered. The complaint of too many subjects is again borne out by later evidence, although again time management is an issue.

Figure 19:

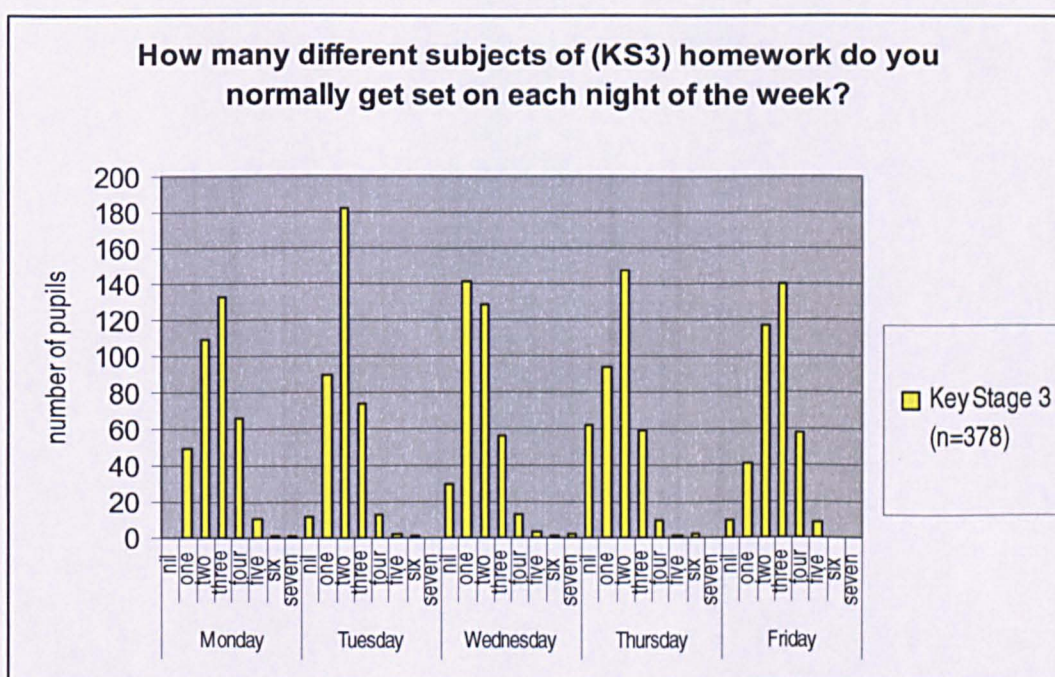
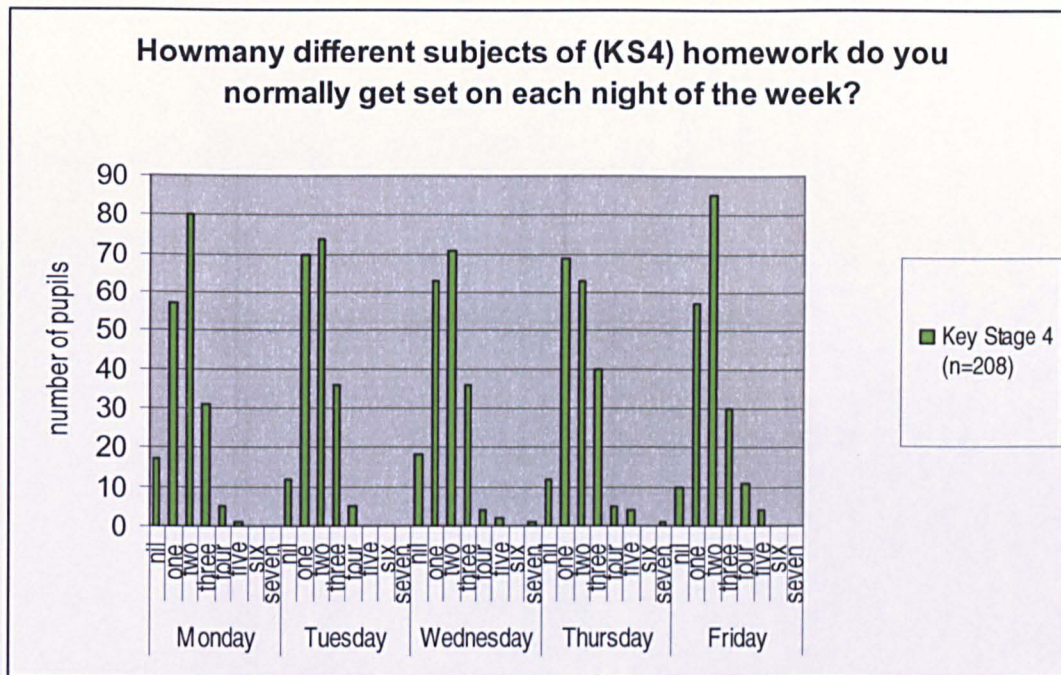


Figure 20:



At Key Stage 4 (Figure 20), when there are so many variations in the timetabling structure, it becomes increasingly difficult for the school to devise a strategy of homework timetabling which is fair to all. The school may expect 20 – 30 minutes in Year 7 and an hour per subject is the norm at Key Stage 4. Using this in conjunction with the number of subjects per night reported by pupils, it is possible to infer that for a substantial number of pupils the total time spent can often be around three hours per night. It is questionable whether three or more hours' homework on an evening for average ability pupils is worthwhile, or whether the argument of quality versus quantity ought to be considered more. For example, at Key Stage 4 there are always more than 30 pupils (about 15%) who claim to do more than three or more subjects on any evening; this, according to the school's guidelines is three or more hours. The time management skills of the pupils, and the "reasonableness" of teachers in the demands made upon pupils for handing in homework, may be issues which demand review, although the evidence, cited later, from

teachers, is that there is not an issue in this. The amount of homework time also may need to be proportionally related to the amount of teacher-pupil contact time in the classroom. The school's teaching day, at the time of the survey, was five hours. The efficacy of three hours homework, probably unsupervised and unassisted, in addition to the five hours in the classroom, may not be appropriate for many pupils.

Homework would be easier for pupils, according to them, if it were more interesting, and, especially at Key Stage 3 (Figure 21), if teachers explained the homework task more clearly. This confirms a frequent criticism that homework is often tagged on in the dying seconds of a lesson when there is no time left for teachers to assure themselves that all pupils understand the requirements of the task.

Figure 21:

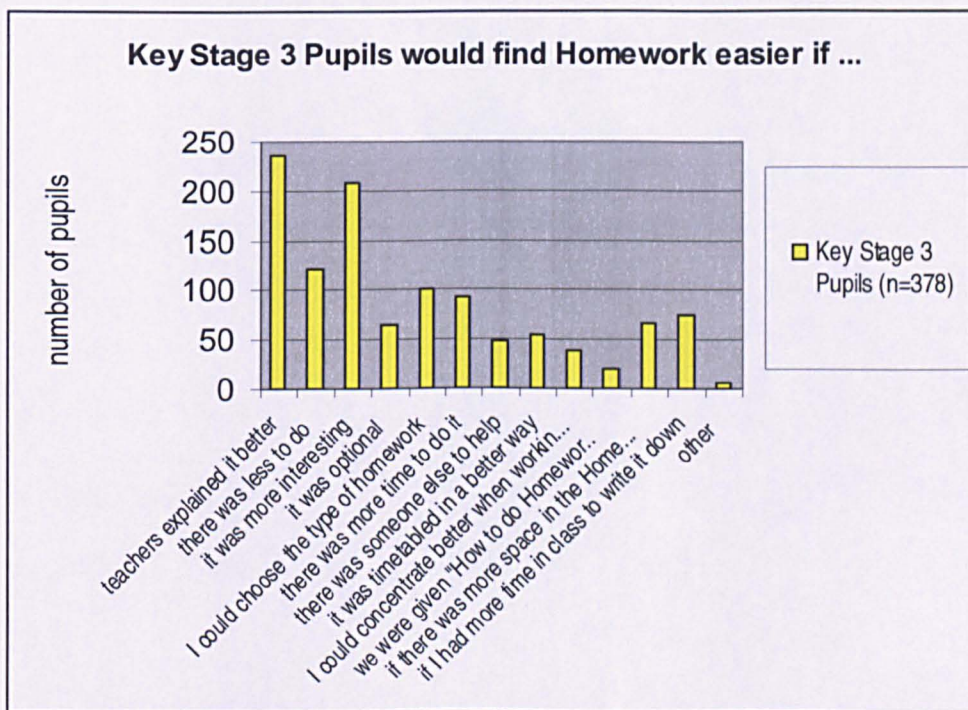


Figure 22:

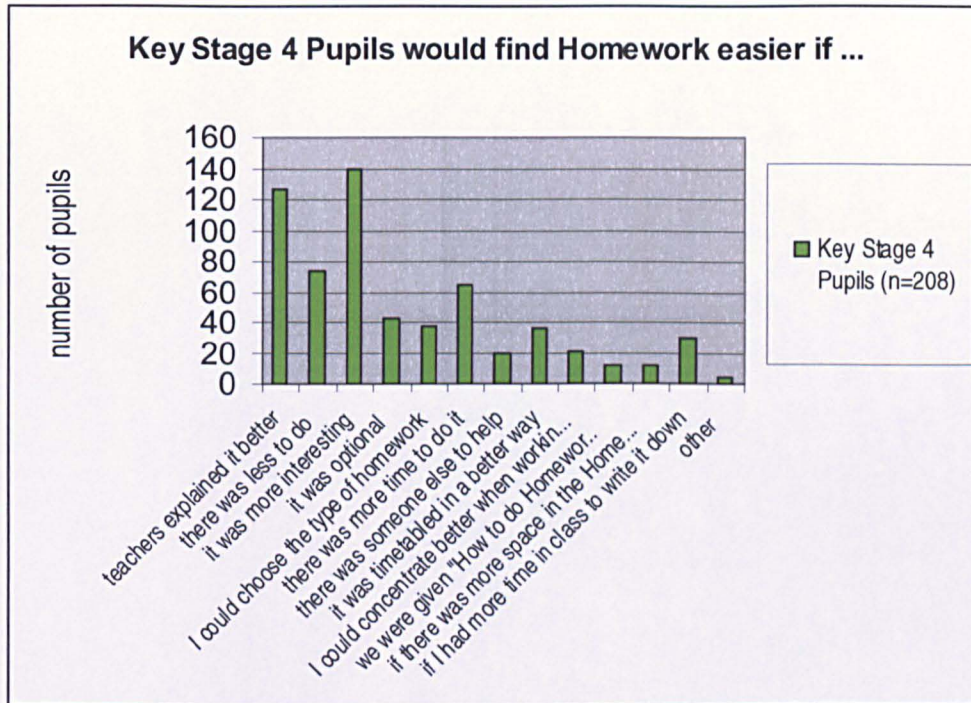


Table 07:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I didn't have any • It wasn't given at an inappropriate time - i.e. when revising for GCSEs • Work in groups • To work outside of school • If teachers didn't set homework at the same week e.g. Four pieces one week and none the next. • If we didn't get it so often • If we had use of computers after school to do homework on. 	(3)

When asked which types of homework (Figure 23) were “preferred” for their subjects it could be anticipated that there would be a variation of responses according to teachers’ subject areas, and this is generally so. However, nineteen teachers cited “to check pupils’ understanding”; this does not appear to be backed for the main purposes of homework, as indicated by teachers earlier in these results. In that, only three teachers listed “diagnostic purposes” of homework.

Figure 23:

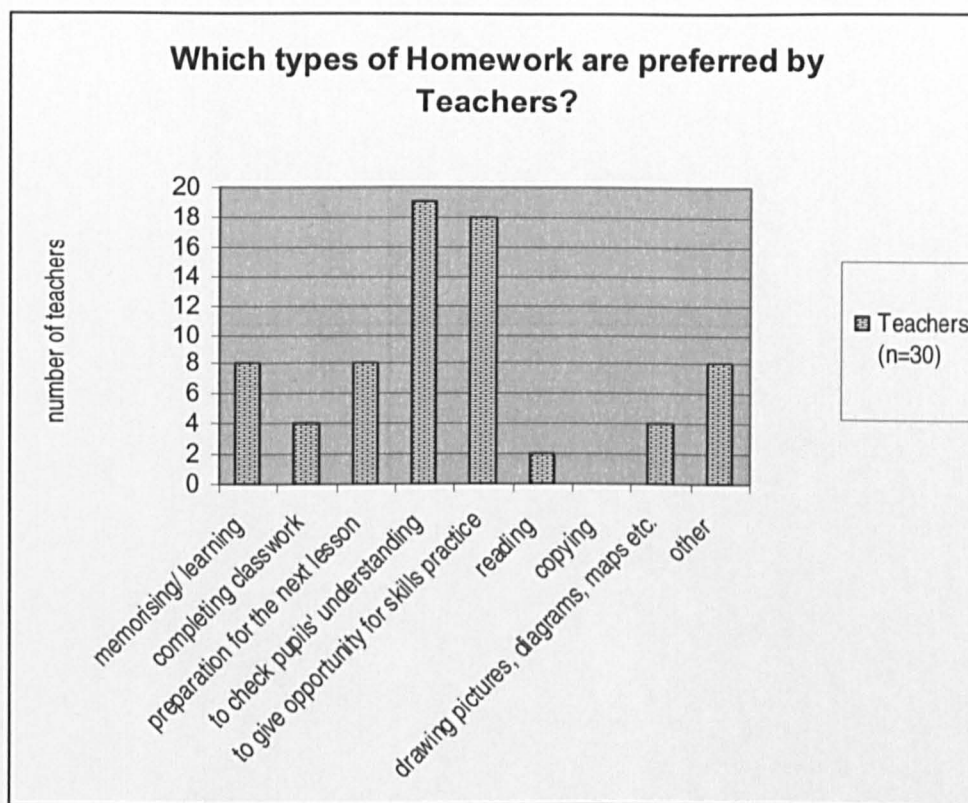


Table 08:

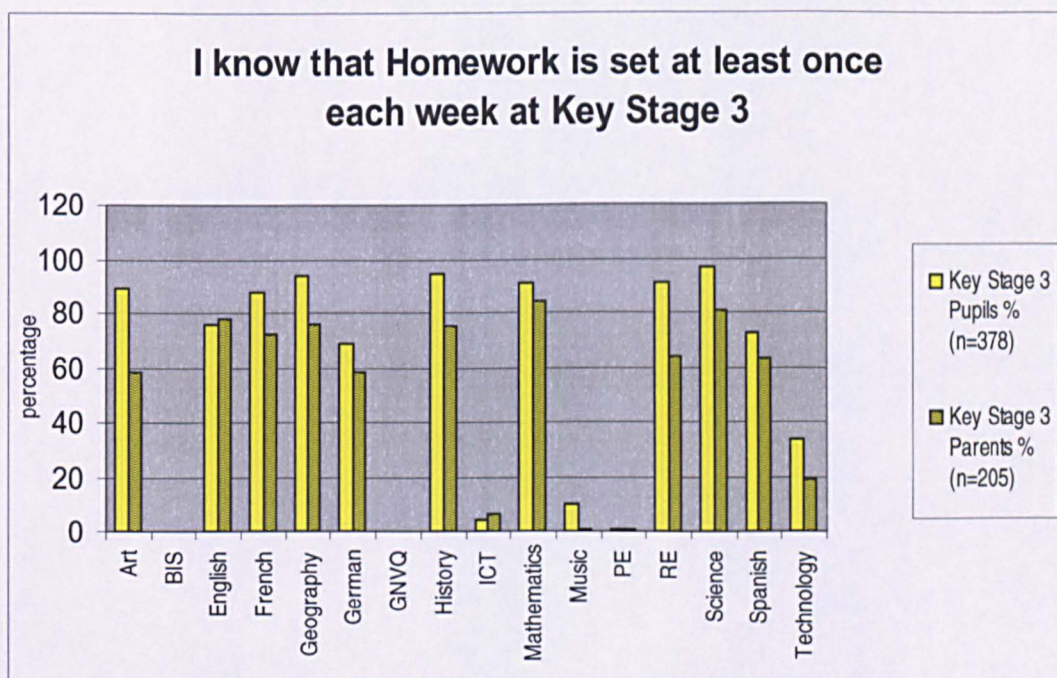
WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS	
• Research	(3)
• Extension of class work	(2)
• Practice techniques correctly	
• Investigation	

Pupils have already indicated a concern about the shortness of the amount of time they are given in which to complete homework. Teachers, responding to this question indicate a pattern which could be described as reasonable. It is encouraging that at neither Key Stage does any teacher expect an overnight turn round for homework. The biggest group of teachers allows pupils between three days and a week. This does enable pupils to plan their own homework schedule within the structure established by the school, but also assumes that they have the skills for such self-organisation, or that the school will include

time management training on a regular basis. Efficient time management ought to allow pupils to take part in those other activities.

The perceived reliability of different subject departments setting homework is variable. There are cautions contained within these results. Firstly, it should be remembered that the parents' percentages are obtained from a smaller sample than are the pupils' percentages. However, there is a remarkable similarity between the parents' and pupils' results (Figures 24 and 25), indicating that there has been reasonable honesty on the part of the pupils responding to the survey, and also, that there is an awareness amongst parents of the homework that the child is doing.

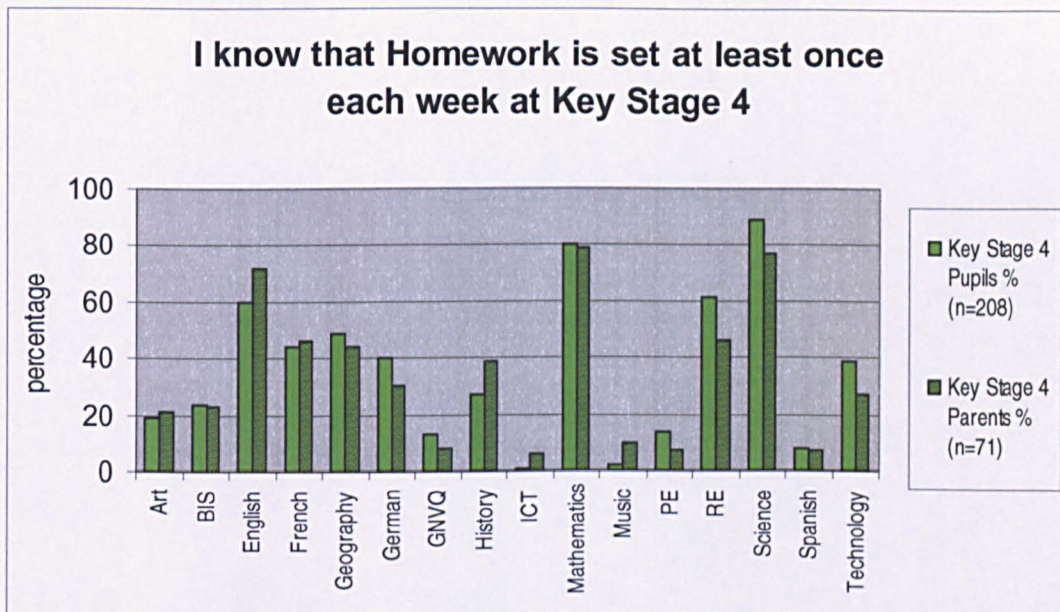
Figure 24:



A second caution is that at Key Stage 4 (Figure 25) it must be remembered that whilst some subject areas are in the core curriculum, others are in option areas, and some are even non-examination subjects. In both Key stages there are shortfalls in those subjects which ought to have a 100% take up in homework; it has been not possible, at present, to identify more closely why

this is. At Key Stage 3, 80% or more pupils report that homework is being set on a weekly basis in seven subjects (Art, French, Geography, History, Mathematics, RE and Science). At Key Stage 4 this reduces to just one subject (Science).

Figure 25:



Pupils were asked to complete identical responses for each curriculum area they meet. These results are reproduced here; it should be noted which subjects are core curriculum and taken by all pupils in the cohort, and which have an options element and thus are taken by fewer pupils. It is interesting to note that at Key Stage 3 (Table 09), in *all* subject areas, and at Key Stage 4 (Table 10), in all subject areas *except* French, GNVQ, History and Science, the majority of pupils perceive homework as being “mostly easy”. The question has to be whether pupils are being challenged sufficiently. It is not possible to identify whether the pupils who find the homework “mostly difficult” are from any particular ability range. Those four subject areas at Key Stage 4 (French, GNVQ, History and Science) have a majority of pupils who regard

homework as “mostly difficult”, although the same subject areas do not at Key Stage 3, using the same teachers.

Table 09: Key Stage 3 analysis of homework by subject

	Art	Eng.	Fr.	Geo.	Ger.	Hi.	ITC	Ma.	Mus.	PE	RE	Sc.	Sp.	Tec.
	C	C	C	C	O	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	O	C
Key Stage 3 HOMEWORK is ...	<i>percentage of the total sample (n=378), irrespective of whether it is CORE or OPTION</i>													
mostly easy	63	83	66	47	67	69	49	66	59	33	56	75	36	80
mostly difficult	34	13	26	21	29	28	8	30	11	4	40	23	35	9
fixing things in my mind	8	30	50	30	41	50	16	49	29	8	45	51	37	25
practicing things I find difficult	44	27	54	39	32	30	25	59	19	16	34	41	41	27
finding out new facts	18	46	33	24	68	75	20	30	35	10	65	59	26	35
something enjoyable	35	32	26	6	17	22	24	23	15	21	11	24	14	39
further practice at skills	72	46	56	41	47	44	33	62	27	23	42	50	41	46
opportunity to work at my own pace	48	47	31	25	36	40	20	42	22	12	41	41	32	36

German homework, at both Key stages, shows an interestingly high proportion of pupils who report that it includes “finding out new facts”. This is not the same in other Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish). Why is there such disparity amongst these three languages? “Finding out new facts” is apparently also significant in Key Stage 4 GNVQ homework, but this might be due to the nature of a vocational subject as opposed to an academic based subject.

ICT homework is exceptionally regarded as “mostly easy”. This information should be compared with the data below indicating how many (or how few)

pupils have access to IT equipment; this poses the challenge for all teachers to recognise inequalities in the ICT equipment for their pupils to use at home.

Table 10: Key Stage 4 analysis of homework by subject

	Art	BIS	Eng.	Fr.	Geo.	Ger.	GNVQ	Hi.	ITC	Ma.	Mus.	PE	RE	Sc.	Sp.	Tec.
	O	O	C	O	O	O	O	O	O	C	O	O	C	C	O	C
Key Stage 4 HOMEWORK is ...	<i>percentage of the total sample (n=208), irrespective of whether it is CORE or OPTION</i>															
mostly easy	12	16	67	18	19	35	6	15	11	57	3	25	60	43	5	77
mostly difficult	9	11	25	25	19	15	7	18	2	38	1	2	30	50	1	13
fixing things in my mind	1	11	27	24	16	22	3	2	4	56	2	16	41	58	3	31
practising things I find difficult	10	10	40	34	25	20	5	14	5	72	3	11	25	53	4	28
finding out new facts	4	17	23	10	10	36	8	30	8	26	3	11	56	62	2	36
something enjoyable	13	4	21	4	7	9	4	10	4	17	3	15	11	13	1	31
further practice at skills	20	15	62	31	25	24	7	22	6	73	3	15	29	50	5	47
opportunity to work at my own pace	15	12	41	20	12	16	8	17	4	42	3	8	32	36	3	40

Is homework a waste of time? Teachers and Parents are quite united with only 5% of the parents reporting concerns over it being a waste of time, and 3% of teachers. However, not surprisingly, the response from pupils (Figure 26) is more balanced, with a close correspondence between both Key stages.

Figure 26:

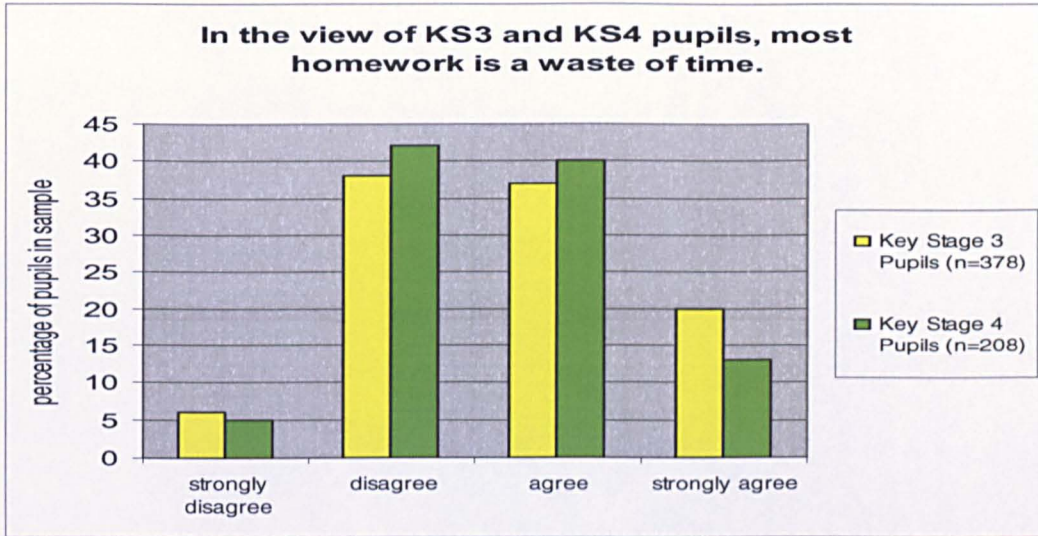
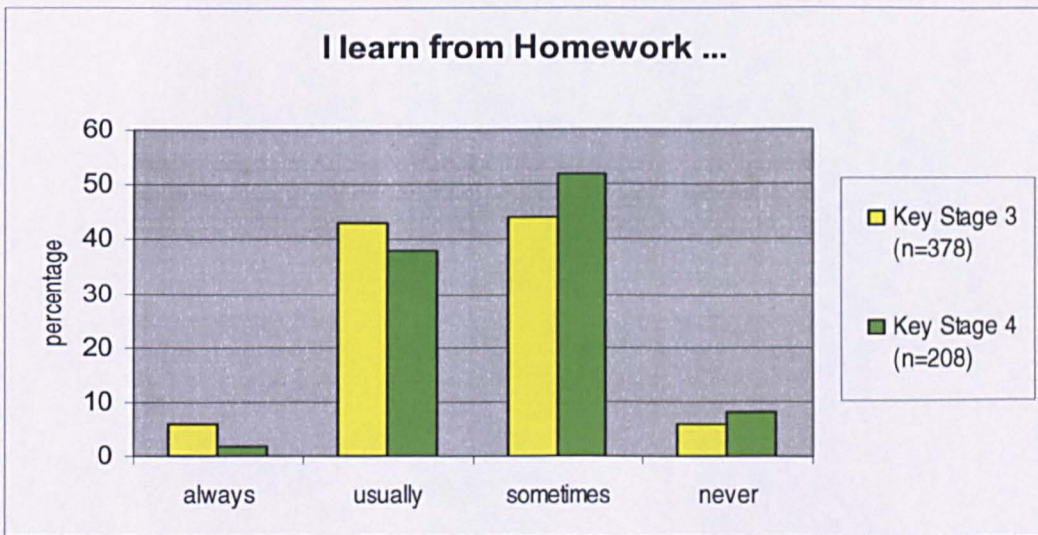


Figure 27:



Pupils from both Key stages report that they learn from homework, (Figure 27) if not all the time at least some of the time. Very few pupils claim never to learn from homework.

Parental perceptions of the quantity of homework, as compared with the pupils' perceptions, are interesting in that pupils at both Key stages feel that more often they have more homework to cope with than their parents feel they have (Figure 28). Additionally, there is opinion amongst a majority of parents

that pupils can never have too much homework. Pupils might respond “they would say that wouldn’t they.”

Figure 28:

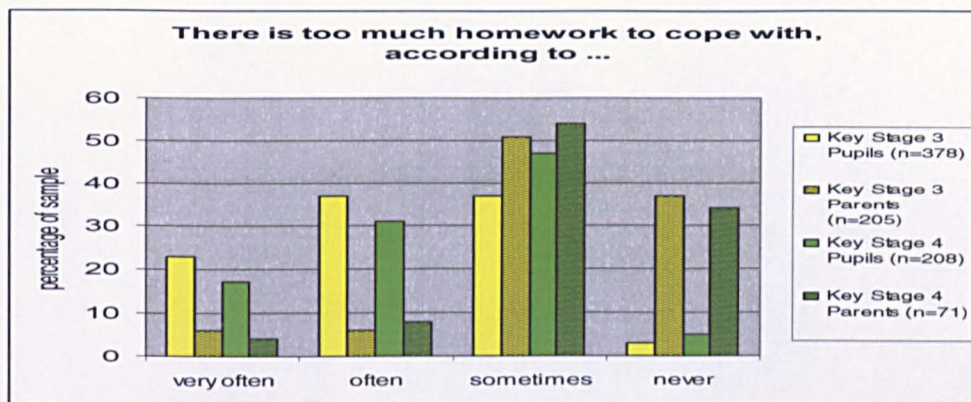
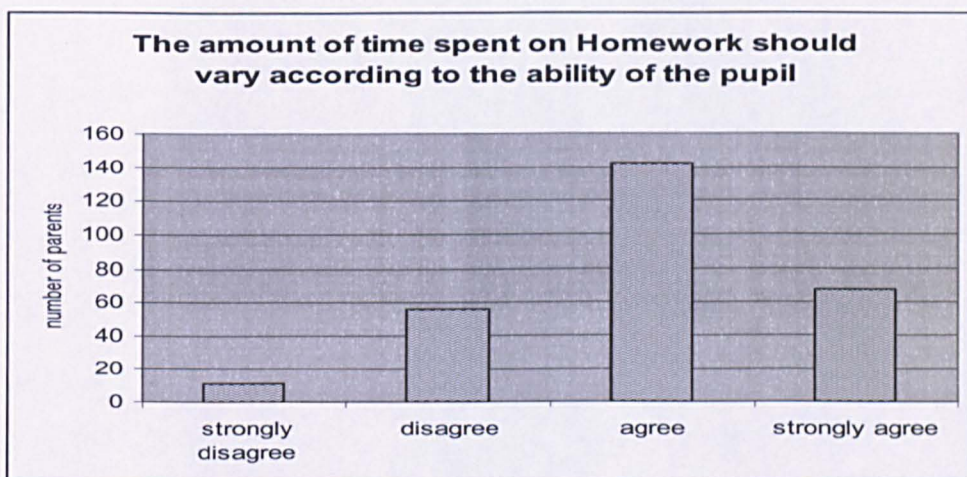


Figure 29:

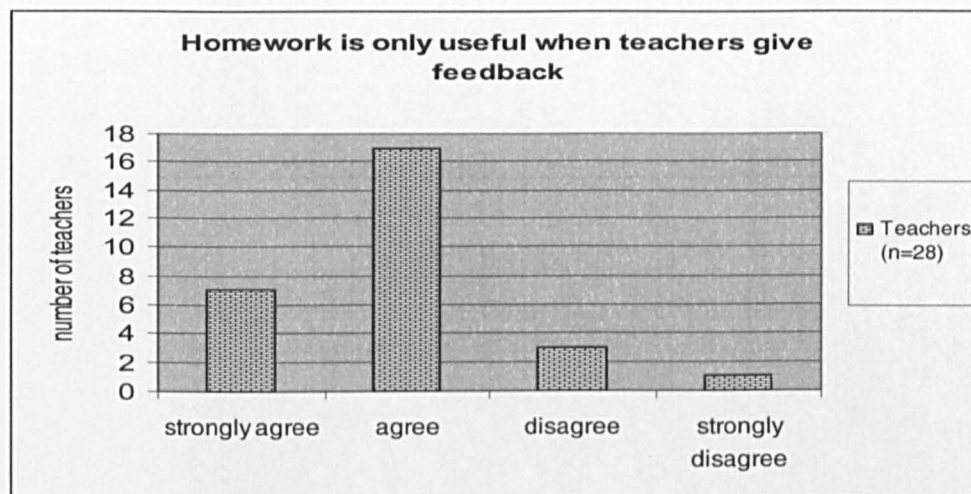


There is parental agreement (in the ratio of approximately 2:1) that the amount of time spent on homework should vary according to the ability of the pupil (Figure 29). The assumption is, presumably, that more able pupils should be given either a greater quantity of homework or more difficult homework and that less-able pupils will be less able to work without some assistance or for any sustained period of time.

The quantity of homework is not the only factor. Quality of the work being set needs to be appropriate, and so is the feedback pupils receive from teachers

in response to their homework. Feedback from teachers to pupils regarding the quality of homework should not be taken for granted:

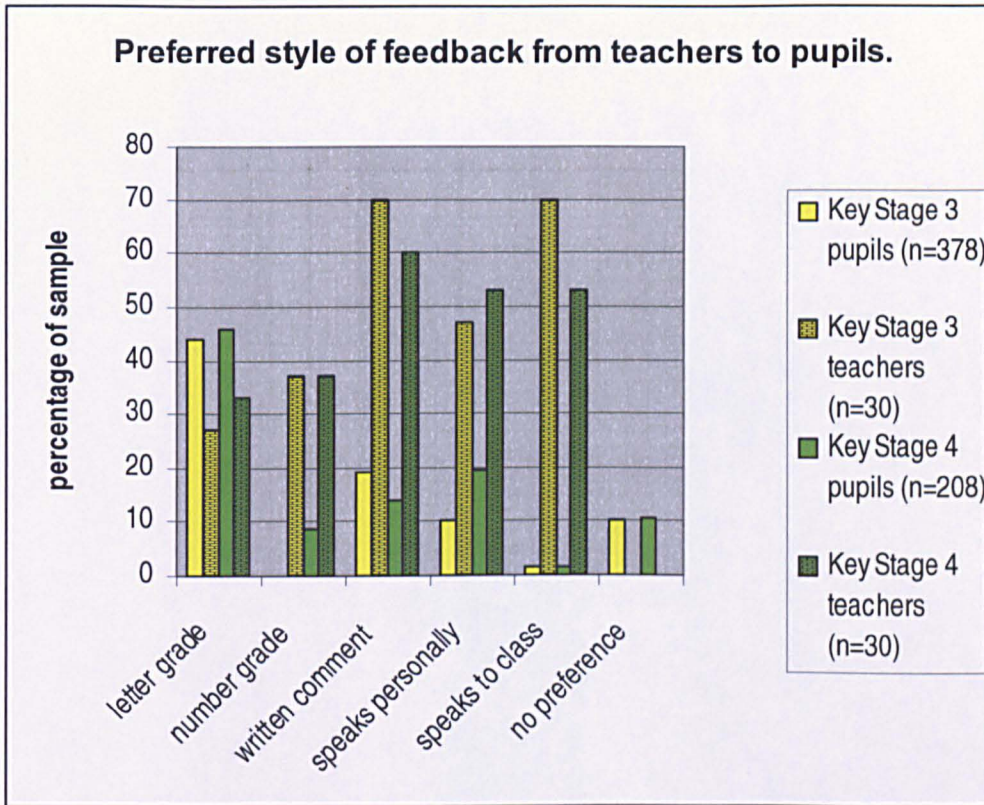
Figure 30:



Four teachers (13%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that “homework is only useful when teachers give feedback”. How does this fit in with the school’s Homework Policy, and how would parents and pupils view such a lack of feedback? When analysing the results of the “preferred style of feedback” there is a considerable divergence between pupils and teachers. Although pupils (Figure 31) were permitted to select only one from the choices available, whilst teachers (Figure 30) were able to select multiple choices, the outcome is clearly that at both Key Stages pupils are looking for a simple letter grading; less emphasis is placed upon the written comment from the teacher (which probably takes up more of the teacher’s marking commitment), and even less credence is placed upon the spoken comment, whether to the individual pupil or to the whole class. If pupils are so against this form of feedback is there any point in it being supplied, or is it just a waste of time and energy? Perhaps there should be some “pupil training” on the value of assessment in their learning process, and the difference between formative

and summative assessments. Perhaps the school and the subject departments should review this aspect of their marking policy?

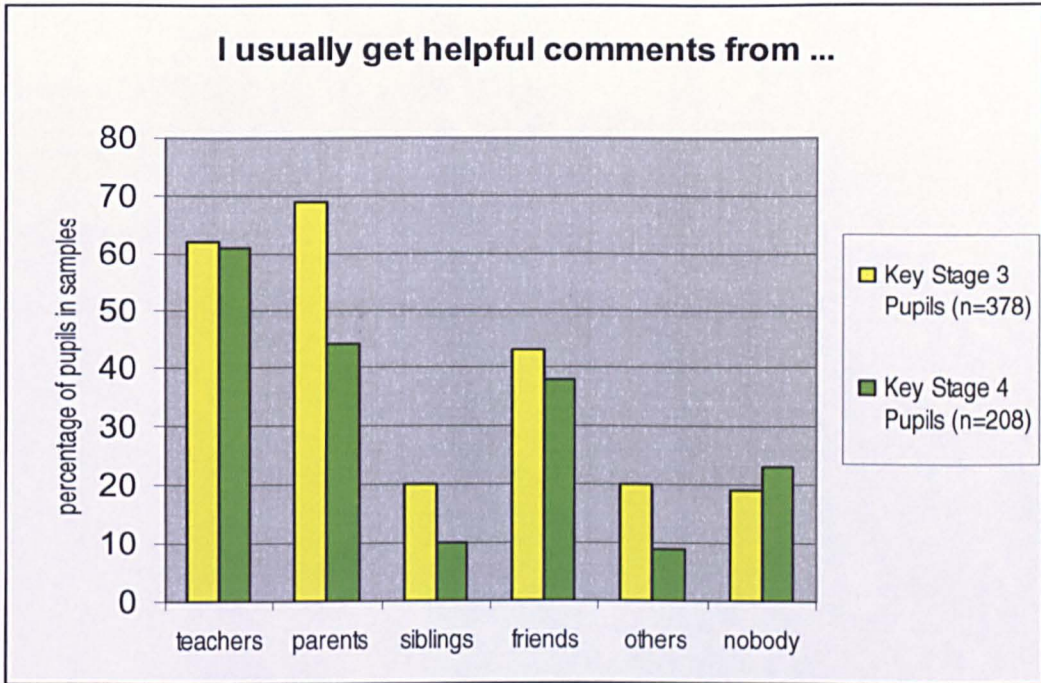
Figure 31:



Pupils were asked with whom they liked to discuss homework (Figure 32).

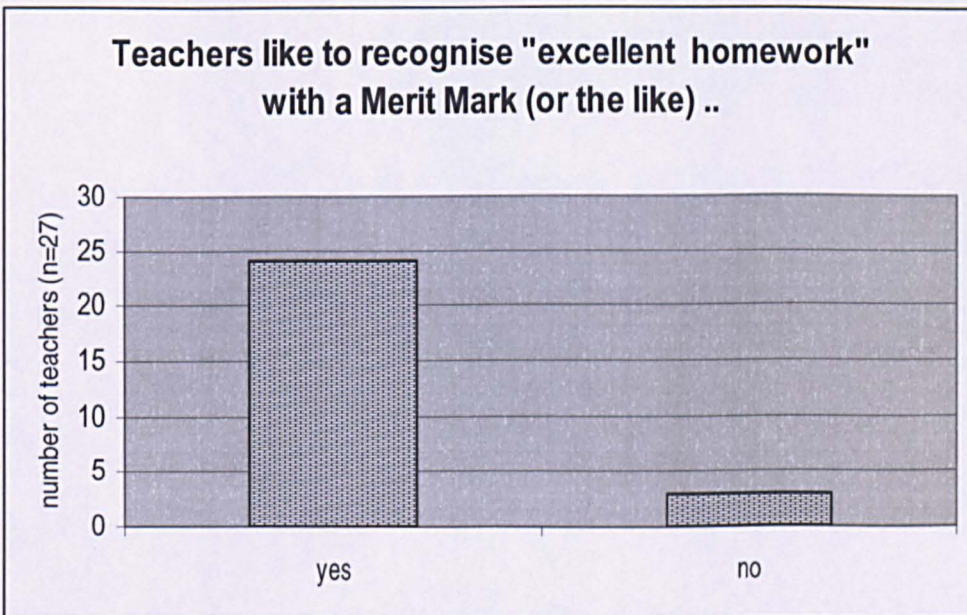
Whilst, as might be expected, teachers featured significantly, at Key Stage 3, pupils were happier to discuss with their parents. Key Stage 4 pupils were less happy about parental discussion; it may be that they felt parents lacked sufficient “expertise” to be able to contribute, or it may be that adolescents just do not want parents to be too involved in their affairs, or to know too much about what is - or isn’t - going on. Pupils will occasionally discuss homework with their siblings - that is, assuming they have a sibling of an appropriate age.

Figure 32:



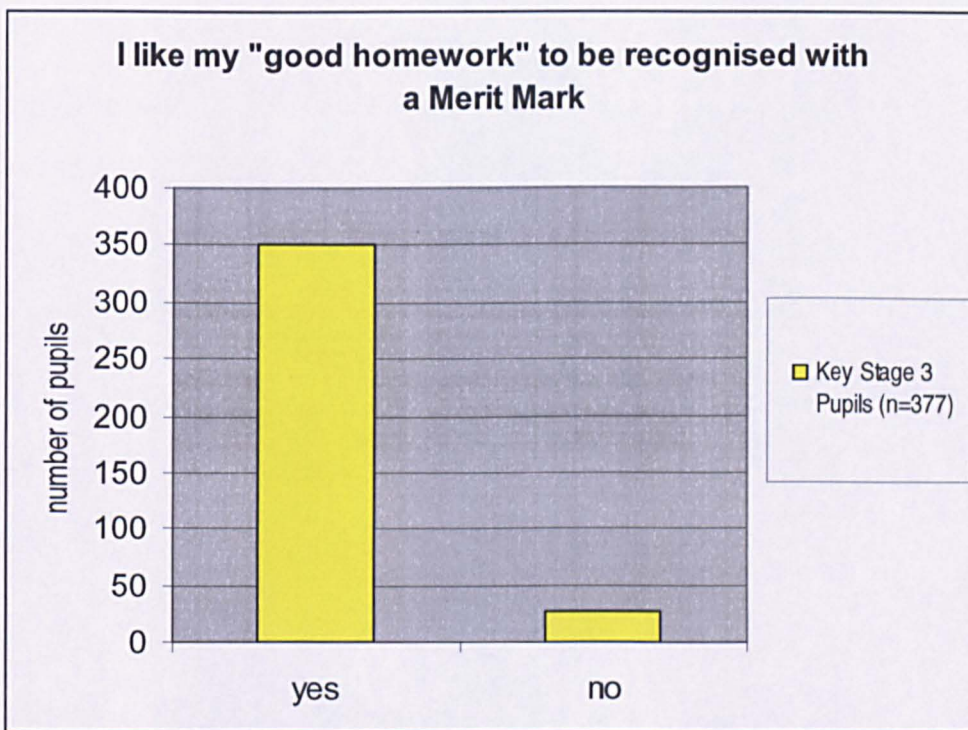
Merit marks (or a similar public acknowledgement of excellent work) feature in the school's life and are positively regarded by teachers (Figure 33) and pupils (Figures 35 and 36) at both Key Stages.

Figure 33:



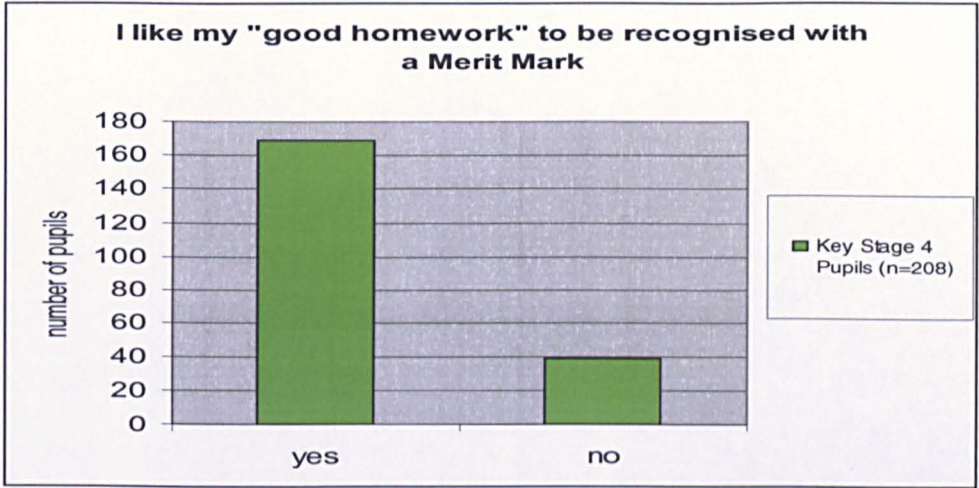
Three teachers, perhaps sadly, do not want to acknowledge such excellence through the merit system established within the school. Many pupils respond well to positive praise and, if this is lacking, it should not be surprising if some pupils cease making the effort. A merit system, which clearly defines the circumstances in which such an award is made, can be a positive factor in raising standards of achievement, especially when it is used consistently by all teachers.

Figure 34:



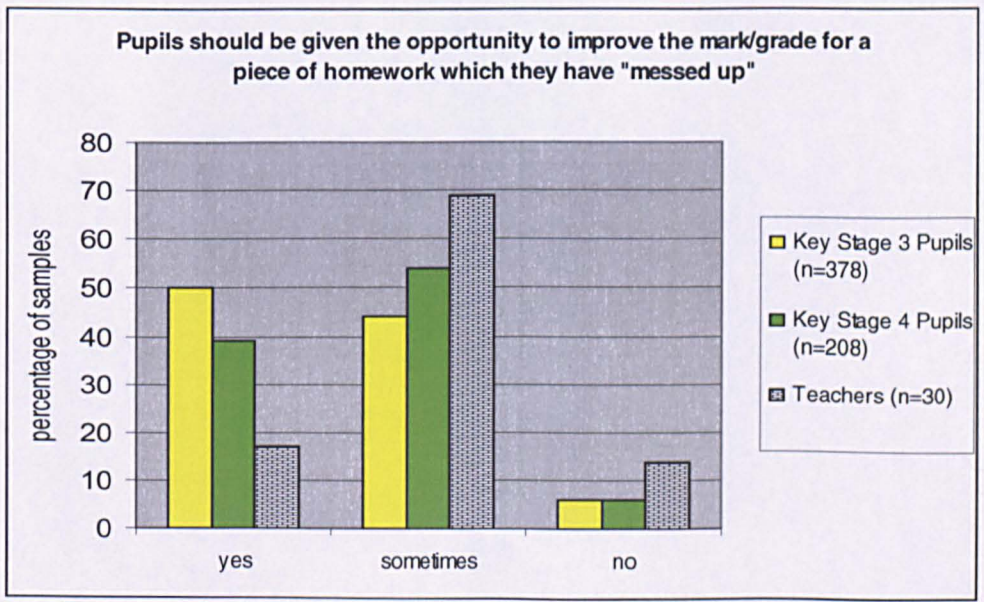
There are, doubtless, those teachers who would question whether Merit Marks are appropriate to Key Stage 4 pupils, and whether the pupils even want them. Clearly a large majority (about 80%) of Key Stage 4 pupils do.

Figure 35:



This suggests that the majority of pupils actually want to succeed with homework; if they did not want to succeed, they would not consider Merit Marks as something of value. Similarly, the majority of pupils are generally ready to take time to improve upon a piece of work if it is less than satisfactory at the first attempt. The enthusiastic younger pupil seems more ready to make this commitment; the Key Stage 4 pupil, who perhaps has the most to gain from improved GCSE coursework, has a more ambivalent attitude (Figures 35 and 36).

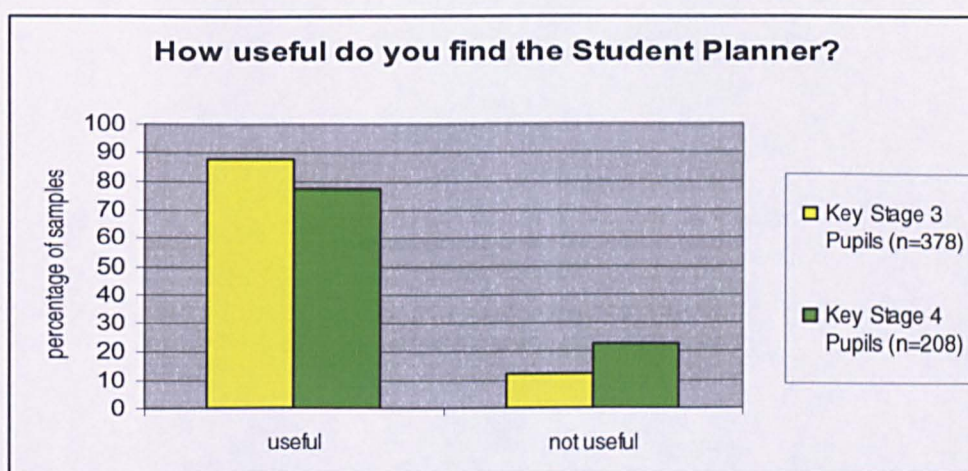
Figure 36:



Teachers report with less certainty about asking for pupils to “perfect” a piece of work. Perhaps pupils need to be challenged with the opportunity when it is appropriate and it would be to the pupil’s advantage to repeat a task.

The Pupil Planner, a device to encourage pupils to take on self-organisation of their own learning was introduced into the school at the beginning of the academic year in which this survey was done. The school should be greatly encouraged by the very high percentage of pupils (Figure 37) who reported that they found this a useful tool.

Figure 37:



The checking, monitoring and supervision of pupils’ homework by the school is often a contentious issue. Parents are significantly in agreement that the school carries out this function well (Figure 38); however there is still a sizeable minority who express concerns to the contrary, possibly reflecting problems which arise from the particular teacher’s monitoring and which are regarded as inadequate. Parents claim that (Figure 39) that they monitor homework themselves; a relatively small number just leave the pupil to get on with the homework unaided. Most parents claim to see, talk and help with homework. Only one parent owns up to doing the homework, but that, of course, is not what some pupils report: Figure 44 indicates that 5.3% (20 pupils) at Key Stage 3 and 3.8% (8 pupils) at Key Stage 4 claim that their parents actually do homework.

Figure 38:

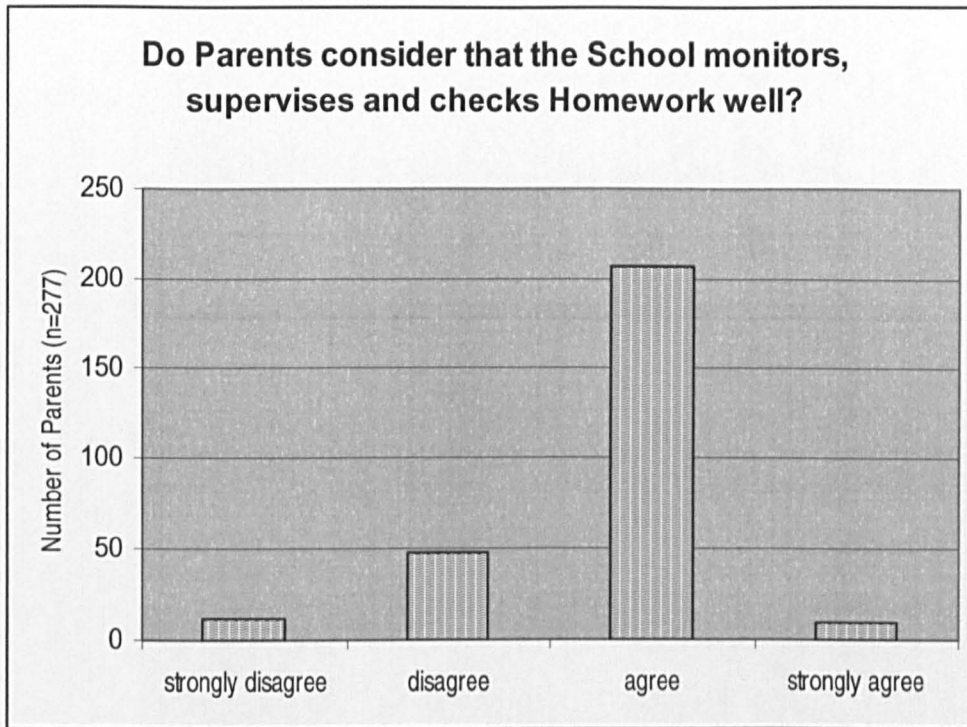
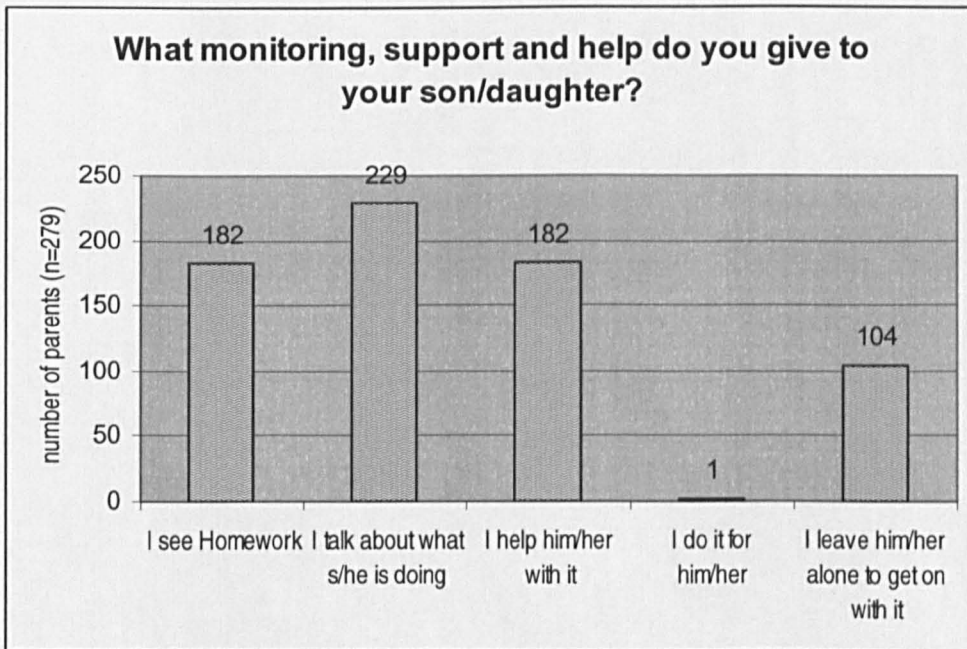


Figure 39:

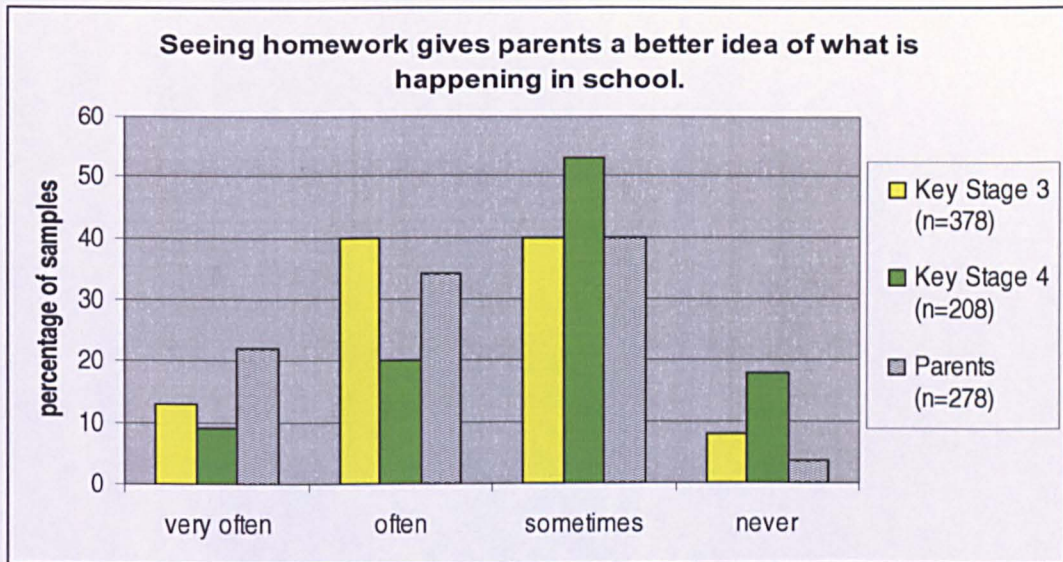


Parents indicate that this involvement with their child's homework actually gives them a much better idea of what is happening in school (Figure 40).

Very few parents admit that they never see their child's homework. Even at

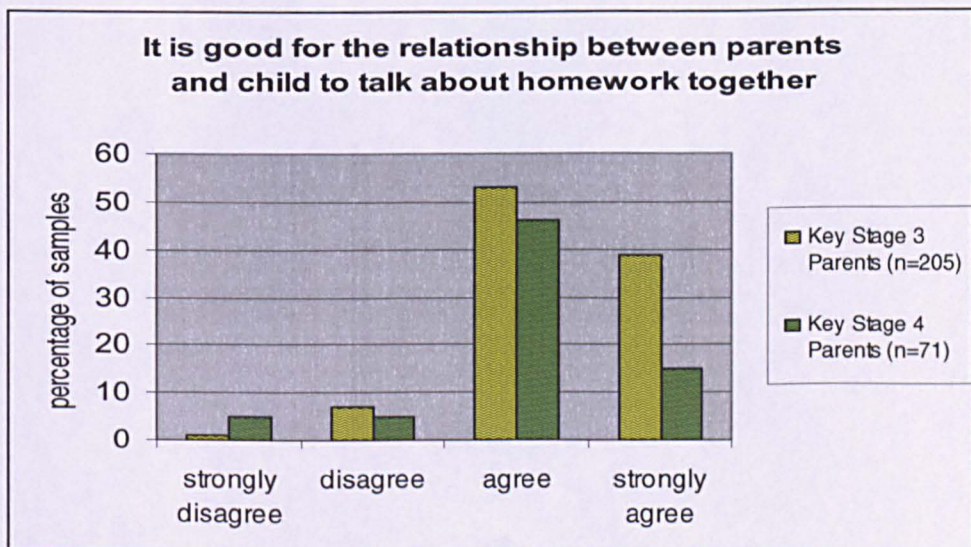
Key Stage 4 where it might be expected that pupils would want to keep the parent at arm's length, fewer than 20% never look at the homework.

Figure 40:



Yet, conversely, a significant number of parents seem to regard it as being unwise for the parent-child relationship to discuss homework too much (Figure 41). Perhaps “prying” into what many pupils, especially older pupils, would regard as a school-pupil matter would put additional pressures on the parent-child relationship, which might already be “fragile”.

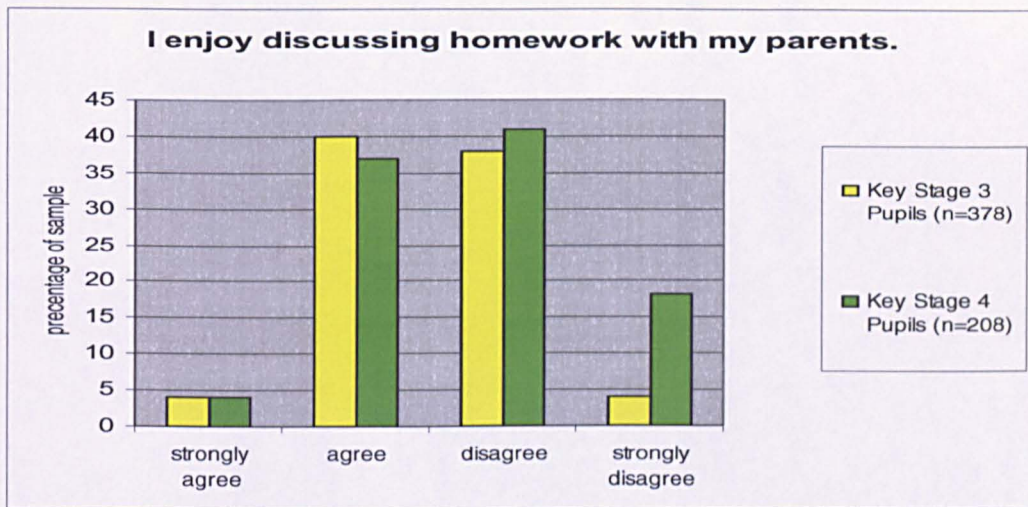
Figure 41:



Conversely however, almost 50% of pupils enjoy discussing homework with their parent(s) (Figure 42). This is a relationship which could be developed.

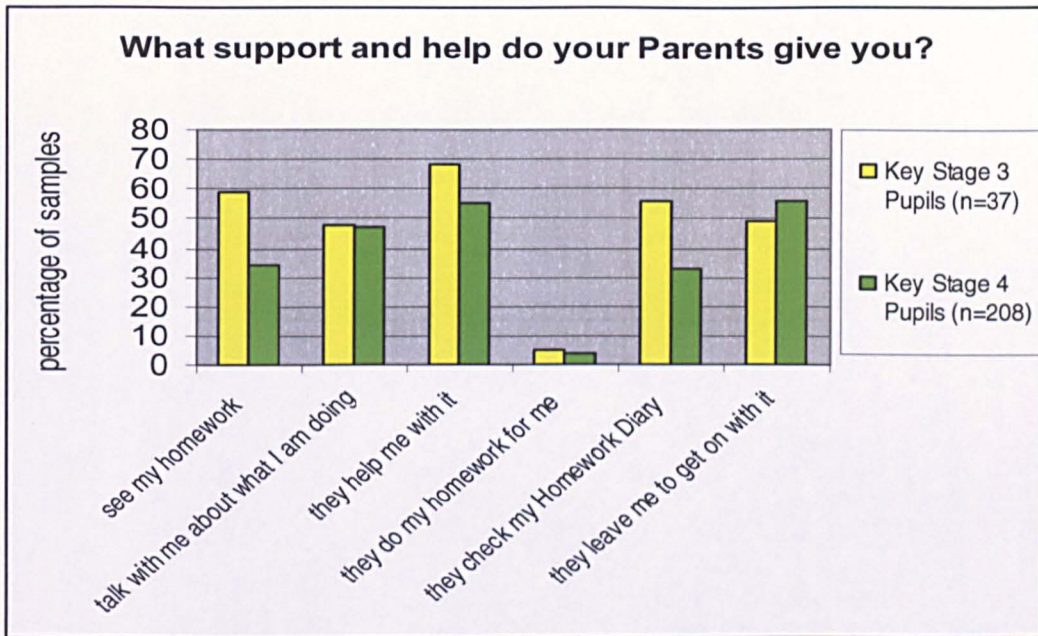
Perhaps there needs to be further investigation into the relationship between parent and child; it could be developed in a positive way to assist learning.

Figure 42:



In spite of so few parents regarding discussion of homework with the pupil as a good thing, pupils report not only enjoying the discussion with their parent(s) but also that it is a significant form of help that parents give (Figure 43). Wide discussion about homework takes place in the home for more than half of the pupils.

Figure 43:



Pupils complain that homework often prevents them from taking part in a host of other activities, yet when asked to record just three pastimes which they enjoy, their results are varied (Figure 44). Television, perhaps not surprisingly, rates as the most significant of these “occupations” confirming a widely-held view that it has a strong influence over young people. Socialising with friends is also a popular occupation. Sports, pets and computer games all decrease in importance between Key Stages 3 and 4, whilst conversely, and to be expected, paid work increases in importance. The data shown in figure 44 presents the frequency of after school activities reported by the present sample. These are broadly in line with those quoted by Hallam (2004:64-65) which refer to MacBeath and Turner’s 1990 study. Not surprisingly the reported use of computer games has increased.

Hallam (2004) commented that

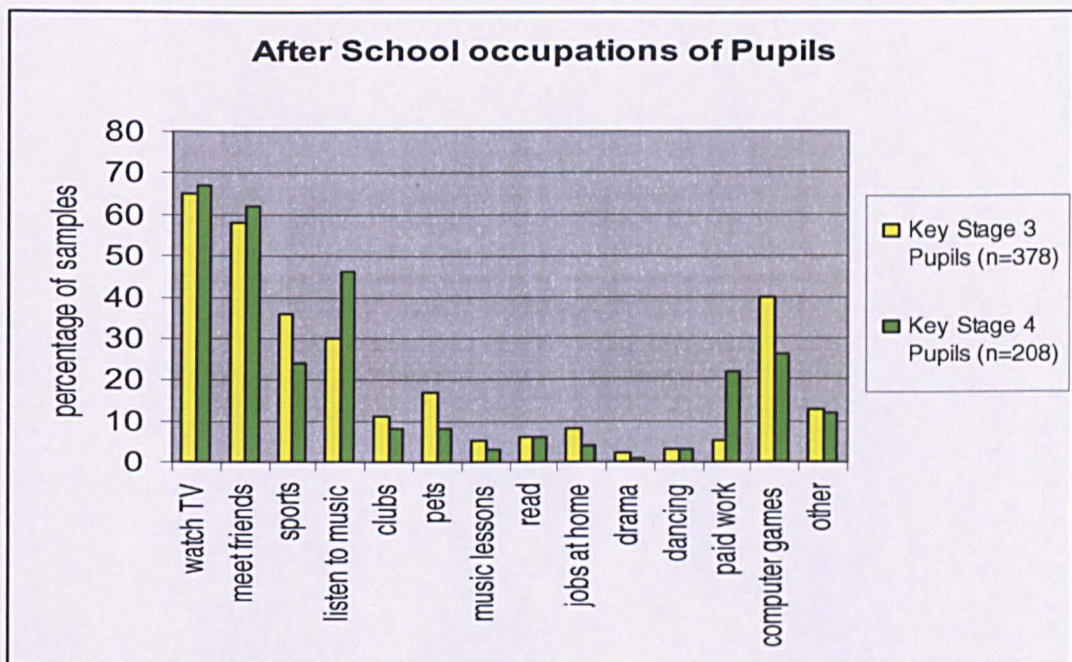
... pupils who spent more time on extra-curricular activities and less time watching TV or in employment achieved significantly higher test scores and better teacher assigned grades. ... This suggests that students may benefit equally from involvement in a wide range of activities not only doing homework, although it may be that students who

become involved in many extra-curricular activities are those who are already high attainers and simply seek out new challenges and activities.

(Hallam 2004 pp 62-63)

Schools need to be aware of the balance of homework against other extra-curricular activities, whether within the school or externally. Hallam is suggesting that a balanced extra-curricular involvement is advantageous for pupils, whilst watching television excessively may have the reverse effect.

Figure 44:



There is a wide range of additional activities, cited by pupils, which attract individuals or relatively small groups:

Table 11:

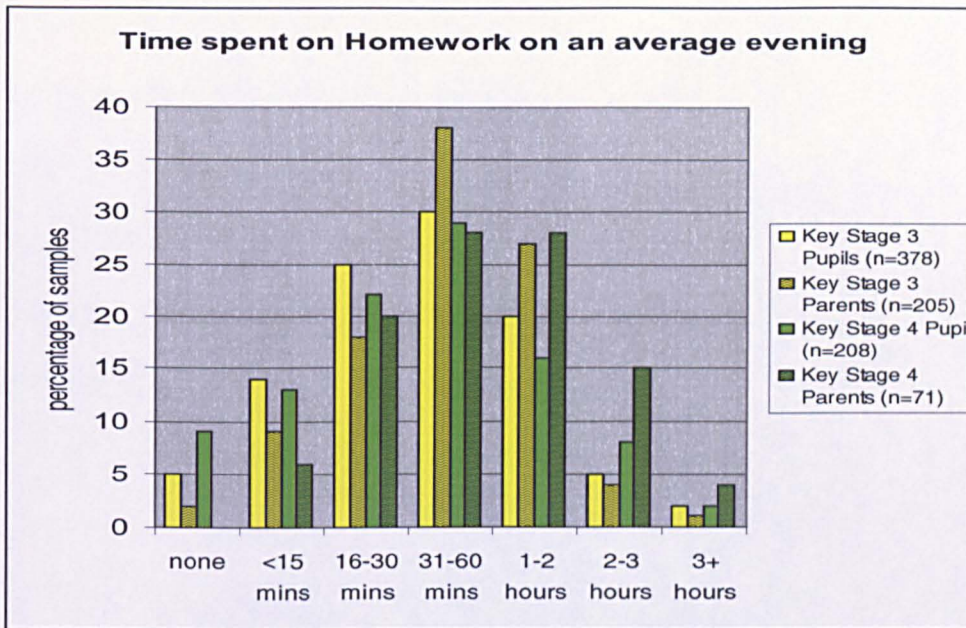
WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS	
• Homework	(17)
• Horse Riding	(7)
• Meet boyfriend	(6)
• Eat	(5)
• Go down the town	(4)
• Bike	(4)
• Skateboarding	(3)

- Go out with friends (2)
- Scouts and Cadets (2)
- Baby-sitting/Looking after little brother/sister (2)
- Boy racing
- Revision
- Going down the pub
- Go down the arcades
- Building and painting models
- Trials biking
- Stay out of home
- Go out and have a laugh
- Laying *[sic]* on my bed
- Deliver papers
- Seeing my girlfriend
- BMX biking
- Go fishing
- Bell ringing
- Cause trouble.
- Play on my own
- Self-employed disco and stage lighting
- War games
- After-school activities
- Going out on motorbikes or in cars
- Odd jobs
- Go for a walk
- Computer work

Pupils and parents were asked how much time was spent doing homework on a “typical” evening (Figure 45). It appears that quite a number of parents are unaware of how much time is, or is not, being spent doing homework.

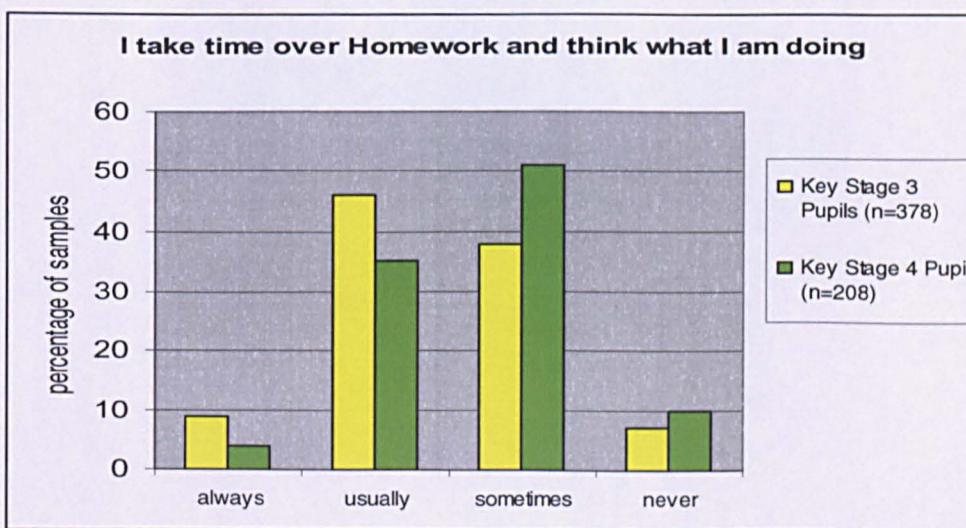
Speculation suggests that possibly once a child is shut away in a room apart from the parents it is not possible to monitor whether the child is actually spending the time on homework activities, or merely listening to music, playing a computer game or watching the television.

Figure 45:



The time taken over homework varies little between the two key stages. The largest group of pupils in both key stages claim to undertake between 31 and 60 minutes on a typical evening. This suggests that many pupils at Key Stage 3 are undertaking less than the school expects, and an even greater number at Key Stage 4 are putting in the expected time. This is a factor which could possibly contribute to pupils' value-added scores.

Figure 46:



A large majority of pupils (Figure 46), however, claim to “take time over homework and think what I am doing”. Only 10% of Key Stage 4 pupils claim never to do this. Conversely, in excess of 50% of Key Stage 3 pupils and 60% of Key Stage 4 pupils never do more than they have to do (Figure 47). It could be expected that pupils achieving above their predicted level would probably do more than the recommended amount.

Figure 47:

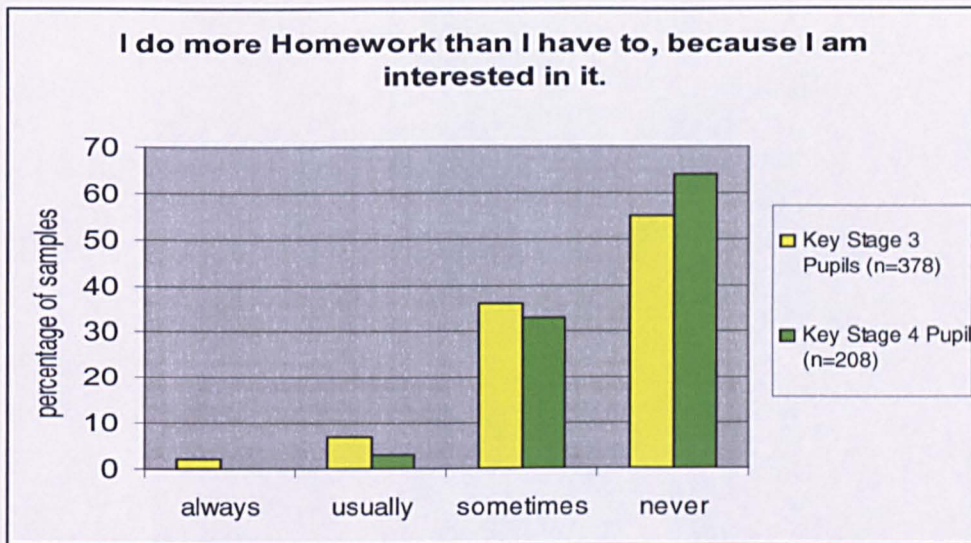
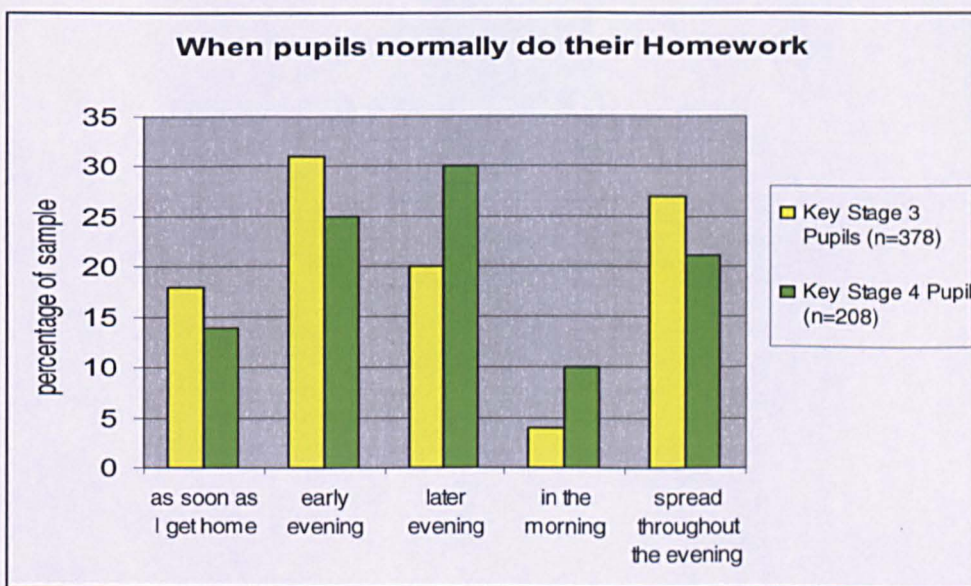


Figure 48:



Whilst the biggest group of Key Stage 3 pupils do their homework in the early evening, the biggest group (30%) of Key Stage 4 pupils operate in the late evening, with another sizeable group operating throughout the evening. The “morning group” is relatively small, but nevertheless, there are still 10% of pupils who, at Key Stage 4, feel able to complete their homework in the morning before going to school (Figure 48).

The workspace for homework is a controversial issue (Figure 49). Parents and teachers agree very closely. It is surprising that there are a number of teachers, albeit small, who consider that homework in front of the television is acceptable. In the light of the research cited in Section 2.3.3. Pool, Koolstra and van der Noort (2003) observed

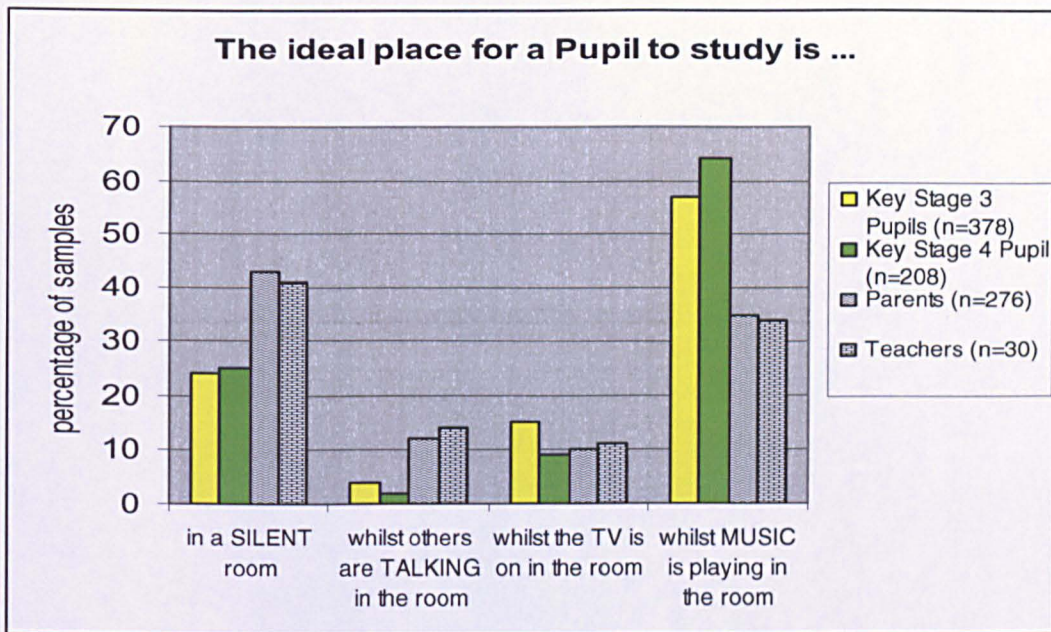
“that students in the television conditions performed worse and used more time than students in the control condition”.

The wisdom of watching television (unless it is a part of the homework task), whilst working on homework is questionable; it may still require further investigation, and the television factor may be more significant to some pupils more than others, but accepting that homework can be successfully achieved watching television is something that perhaps should be discouraged.

Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils are broadly in agreement as to the ideal place.

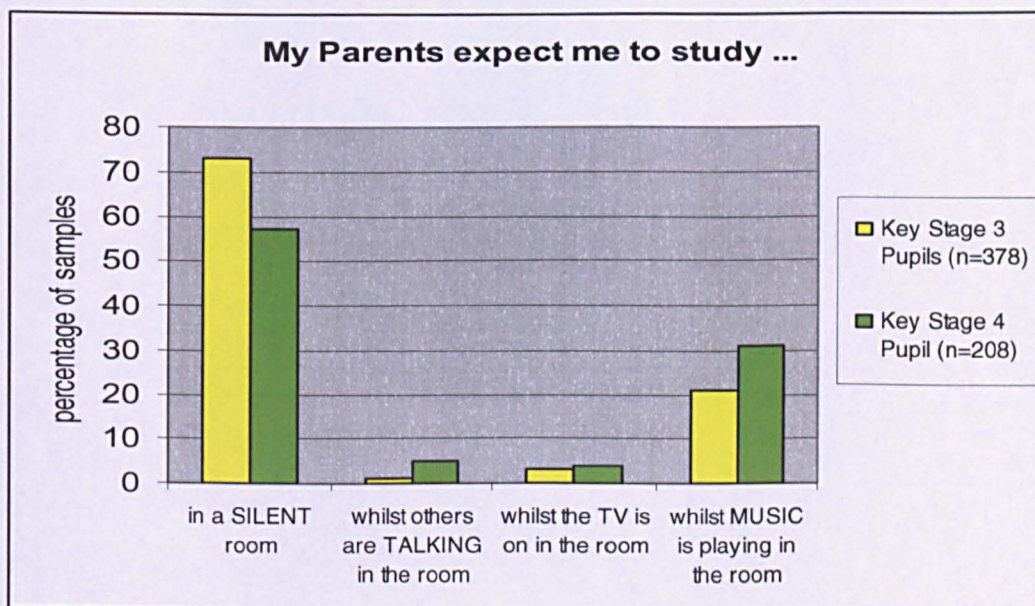
Unfortunately adults and children seem to have little agreement.

Figure 49:



Parents' expectation of a suitable workspace for pupils, in which to do their homework, is quite clear (Figure 50); predominantly a quiet room is significantly regarded as the appropriate workspace. Add to that the room with background music, and it leaves very few pupils working in a talking or a television environment.

Figure 50:



Between 80% and 90% of pupils have a bedroom of which they are the sole occupant and which is available as a homework workspace (Figure 51). A third of pupils have access to a study or workroom. There is a plethora of other workspaces which are also available, many of which would provide suitable accommodation.

In spite of this (Figure 52), considerably fewer (about 30%) pupils take advantage of the sole occupancy bedroom, with the biggest number removing themselves into the living room, with all its inevitable distractions.

Figure 51:

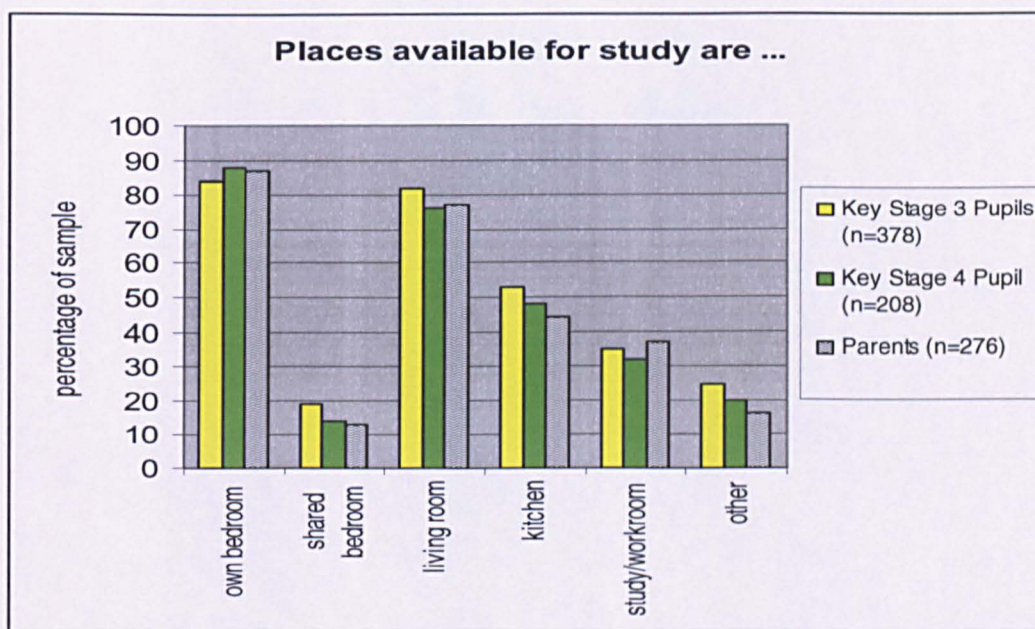


Table 12: Other miscellaneous places available for study

	Parents	Pupils
Dining Room	11	48
Conservatory	3	16
Friend's house		15
Garden Shed		5
Dad's office	1	4
Spare room	1	4
Library	1	4
Desk in the living room		2
Boyfriend's house		2
Hall	2	2
Mum and Dad's bedroom	2	2
The Flat		2
Playroom/ Games room		2
Loft		2
At work when I have my break and lunch break		1
Summer House	1	1
Grandparent's house	1	1
Aunt's house		1
Brother's room		1
Computer Room	2	1
Under the stairs		1
Caravan		1
Backroom		1
On the Landing		1
Office	1	
Living in a one-bedroom flat	1	
Workshop	1	

Figure 52:

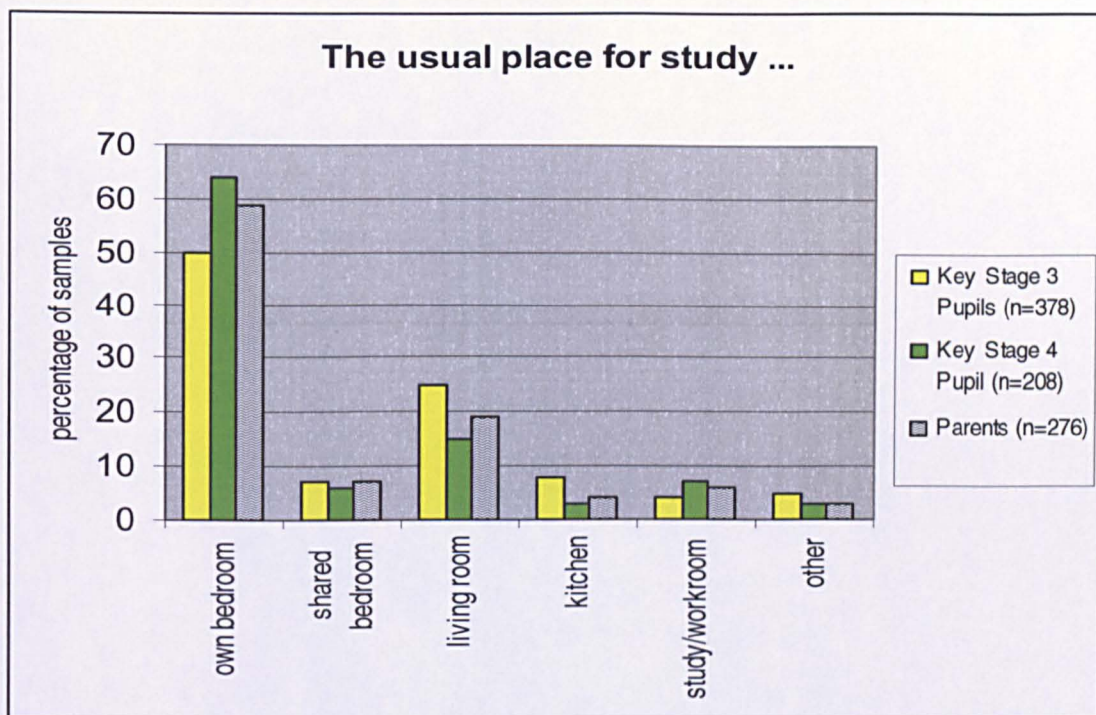


Table 13:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS	
• Dining Room	(17)
• Friend's house	(4)
• Conservatory	(4)
• Loft	(2)
• In my boyfriend's house	(2)
• School at break time	(1)
• Desk in the living room	(1)
• Library	(1)
• Grandparent's house	(1)
• Spare room	(1)
• Under the stairs	(1)
• Caravan	(1)
• Garage	(1)

Figure 53 indicates where parents have allowed homework to be done. Having (in Figure 51) specified which workspaces are available, nearly 30% fewer pupils are using their “own bedroom” (which is available to them). It could be argued that a dedicated, undisturbed sole usage space is ideal. It must be an

issue to find out why so many are not taking advantage of this and whether it is contributing to a less successful educational outcome. It could be argued that pupils need to talk about their homework and that working in isolation can be a disadvantage. In Figure 54 more than 60% of Key Stage 3 pupils and nearly 50% of Key Stage 4 pupils admit to having “help”. This “help” is less available to the pupil working in isolation. Talking is an important part of the learning process.

Figure 53:

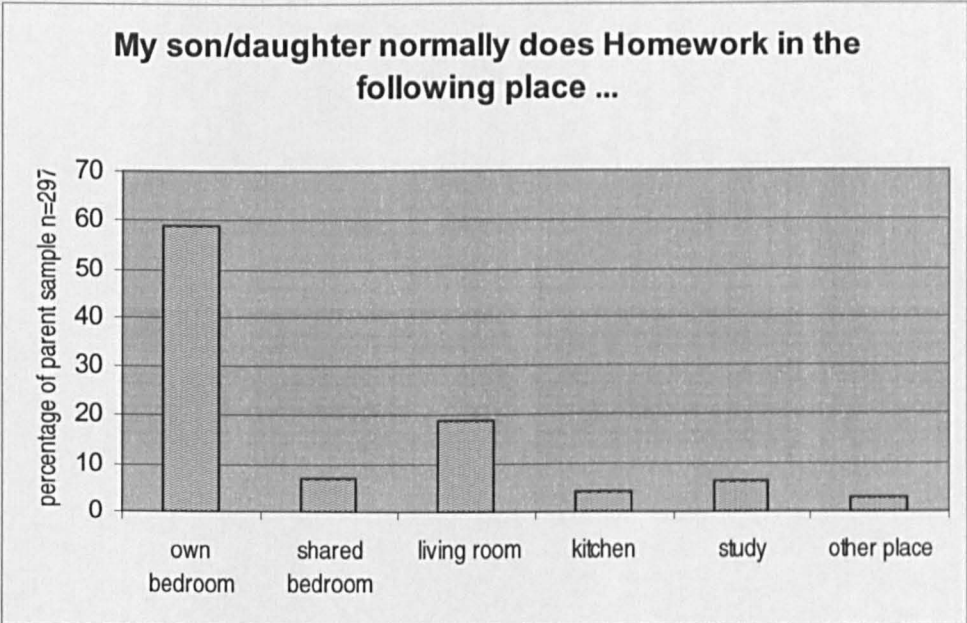


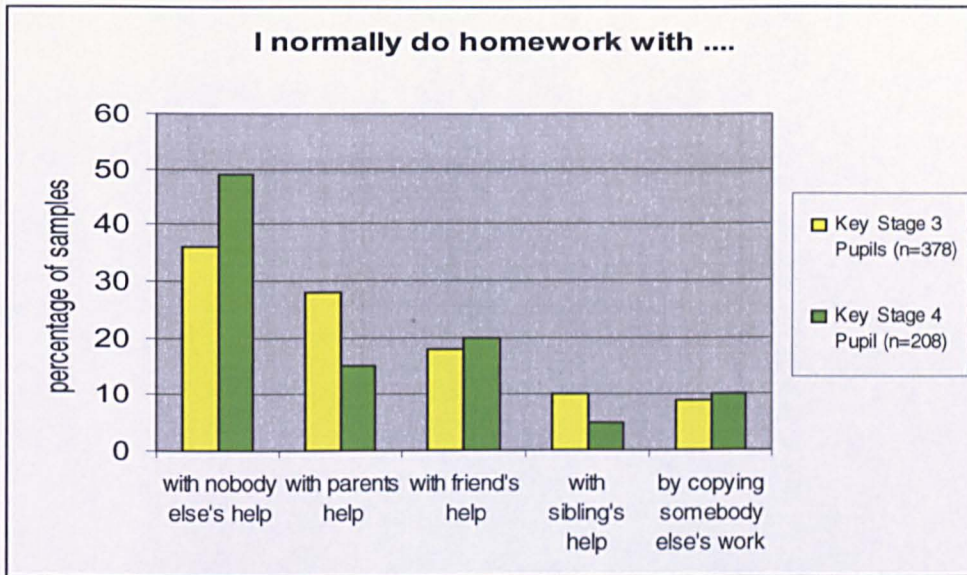
Table 14:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PARENTS	
• Dining Room	(9)
• Parents’ bedroom with computer	(2)
• School	(2)
• He studies in various places throughout the house	(1)

Figure 54 also shows that parental support is there for younger pupils, but again is reduced for Key Stage 4 pupils (but friends become more significant).

It may be that pupils think parents have insufficient ability to support them, or parents might feel this too.

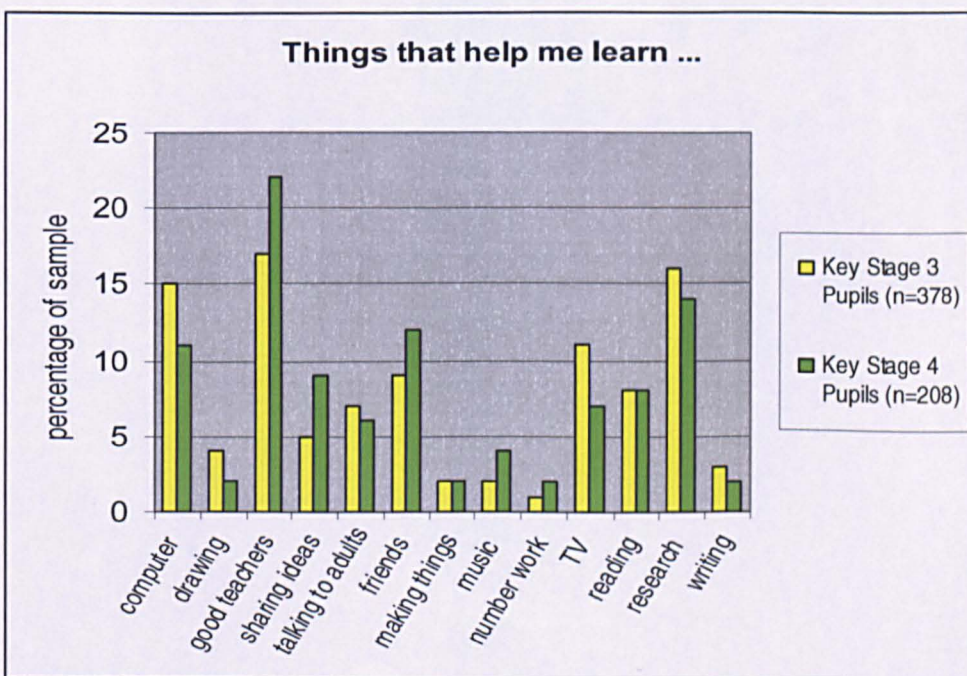
Figure 54:



Turning to resources, pupils were asked what helps them learn (Figure 55).

The largest group at both Key stages cited "good teachers". Teachers need to remember this; they are the most expensive, and the most precious resource, and pupils say so.

Figure 55:



When asked what specific resources were available at home there was very broad agreement between parents and pupils at both Key stages (Figure 56). At the time of the original survey (1999) only about 60% had access to a computer and about 30% to the internet. Were teachers assuming that this resource was available at home? Are children without this resource at a disadvantage, and what arrangements are made to give equality of opportunity?

Figure 56:

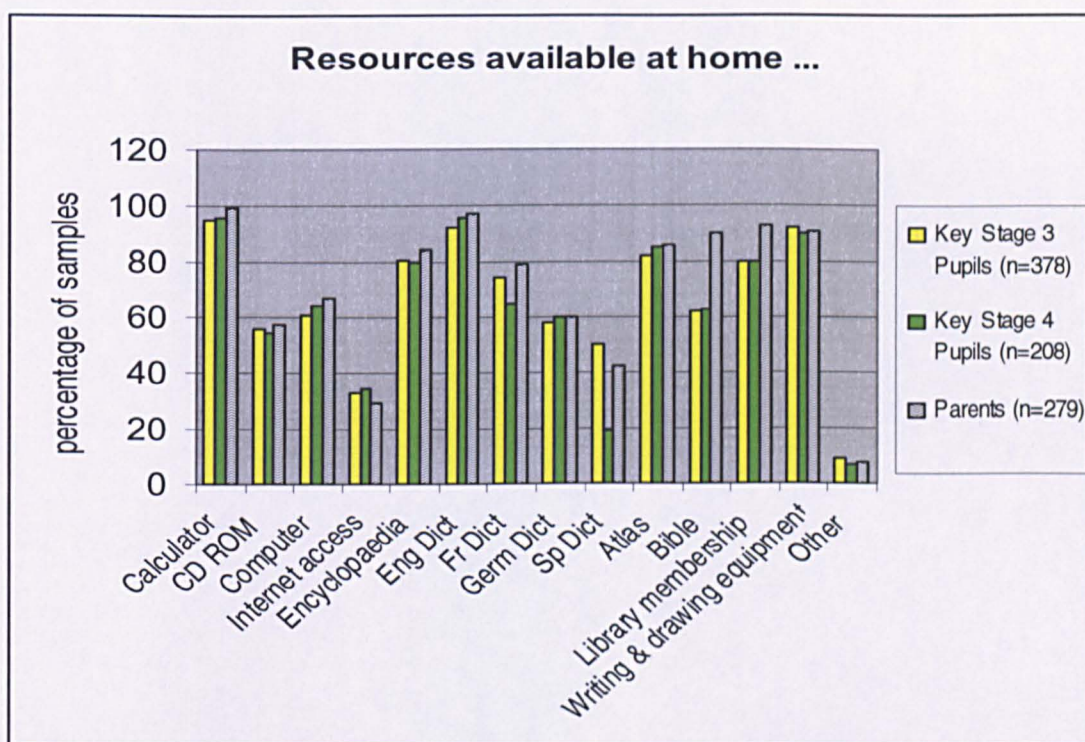


Table 15:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PARENTS	
• Parents' knowledge	(7)
• Human Resources	(3)
• Other family members	(2)
• Various reference books	(2)
• Freedom to return to Primary School for resources.	(1)
• Help from older siblings from Cromer High School	(1)
• Tools and materials	(1)
• Grandparents' knowledge	(1)
• Videos, CDs and records, human resources, telephone	(1)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • A family environment in which to live and grow | (1) |
| • Electronic Typewriter | (1) |
| • Wood workshop, garden, animals etc. | (1) |
| • Cook books | (1) |

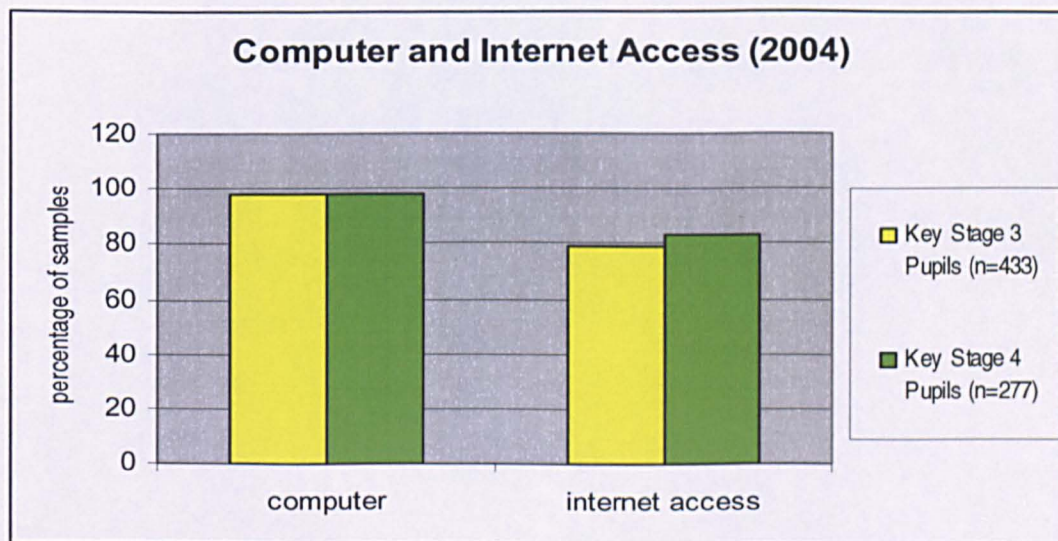
Table 16:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUPILS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| • Useful books about various subjects | (10) |
| • My mum and dad | (7) |
| • Family | (4) |
| • TV / Videos | (4) |
| • Telephone (to 'phone friends) | (2) |
| • Newspapers | (1) |
| • My own desk | (1) |
| • Radio | (1) |
| • Grandparents | (1) |
| • Bible notes | (1) |
| • Youth Leader to ask | (1) |
| • Playstation | (1) |
| • School textbooks | (1) |

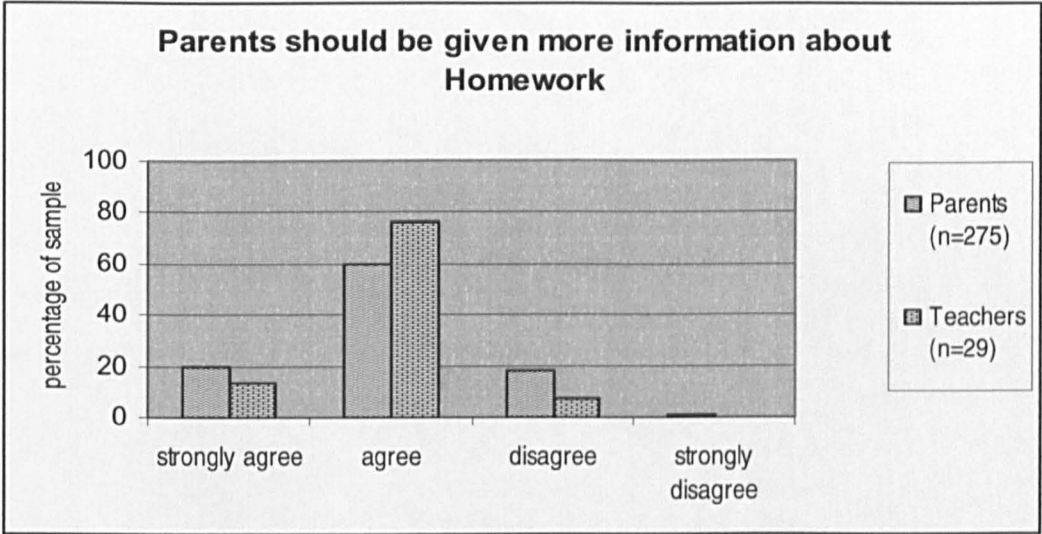
A fresh survey was made of current pupils in October 2004 (Figure 57) which revealed that nearly 100% had computer access and about 80% had internet access.

Figure 57:



Insufficient information about homework is given to parents, according to about 80% of parents and teachers (Figure 58), although this did not differentiate between general matters of principle, or subject-specific matters.

Figure 58:



A large group of parents asked for specific guidance (Figure 59) on how they should best help their child with homework.

Figure 59:

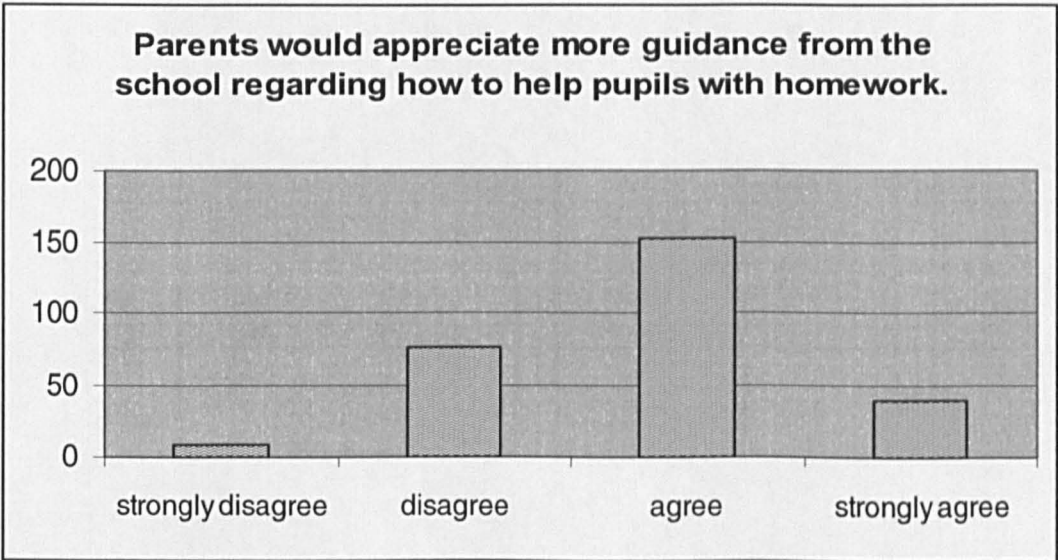
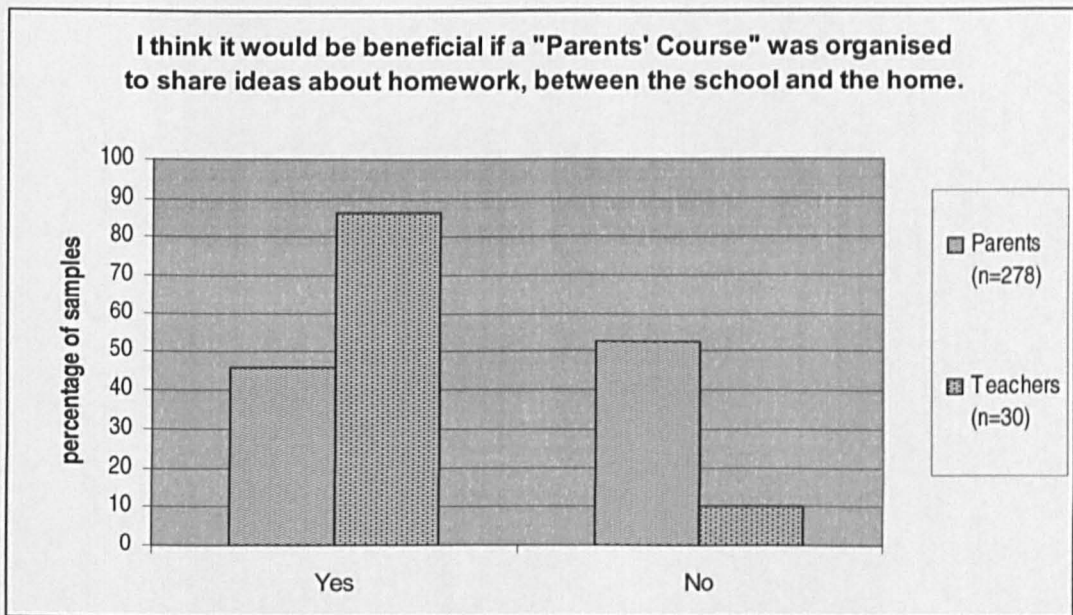


Table 17:

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PARENTS	
•	It would help if the objectives or instructions were available to me so I could advise him better.
•	Sometimes I would like more information to help.
•	However, I believe Cromer High School gives guidance already.

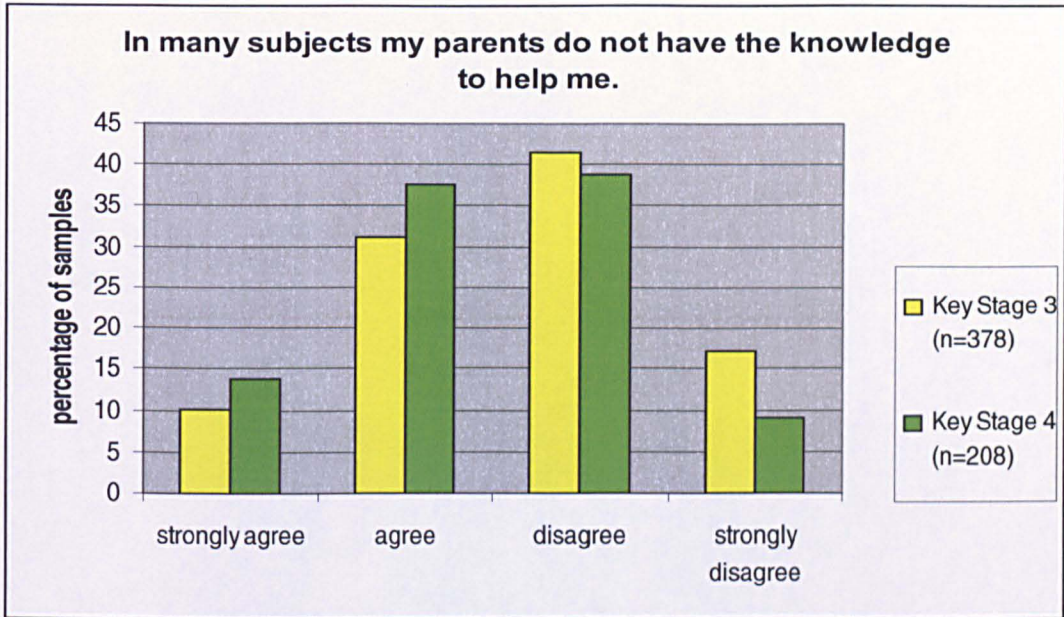
In response to the proposal of a more formal session for parents (presumably in an evening) offering advice and help about homework, teachers were significantly in favour, whilst parents were less than enthusiastic (Figure 60). Perhaps it is fine to want the help, but it is not always possible for a parent to be able to make the time available to attend yet another evening meeting.

Figure 60:



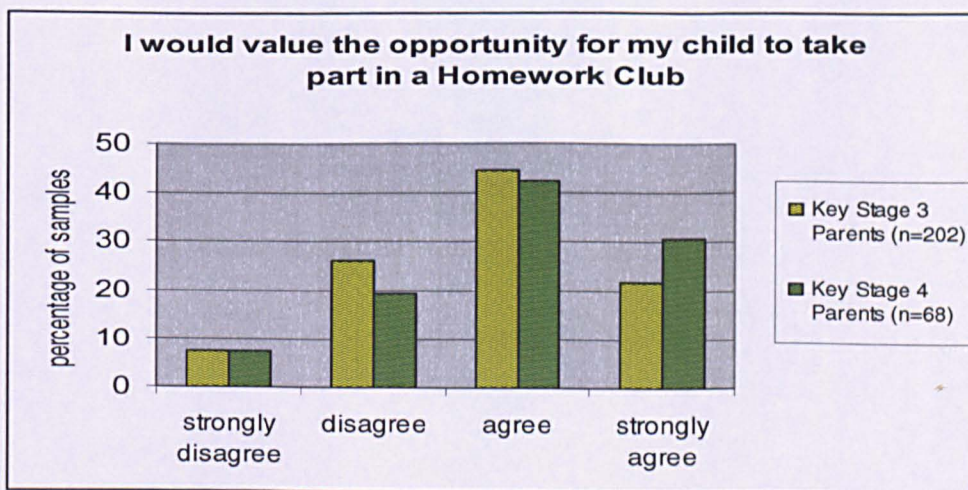
Pupils were asked whether they thought their parents have sufficient subject knowledge to be able to assist them (Figure 61). There is a predictable spread of views on this matter, as doubtless there is wide variety of parents with expertise in subject areas. Key Stage 4 pupils are slightly less confident that parents have such ability. This may reflect how the curriculum has changed since their parents were at school.

Figure 61:



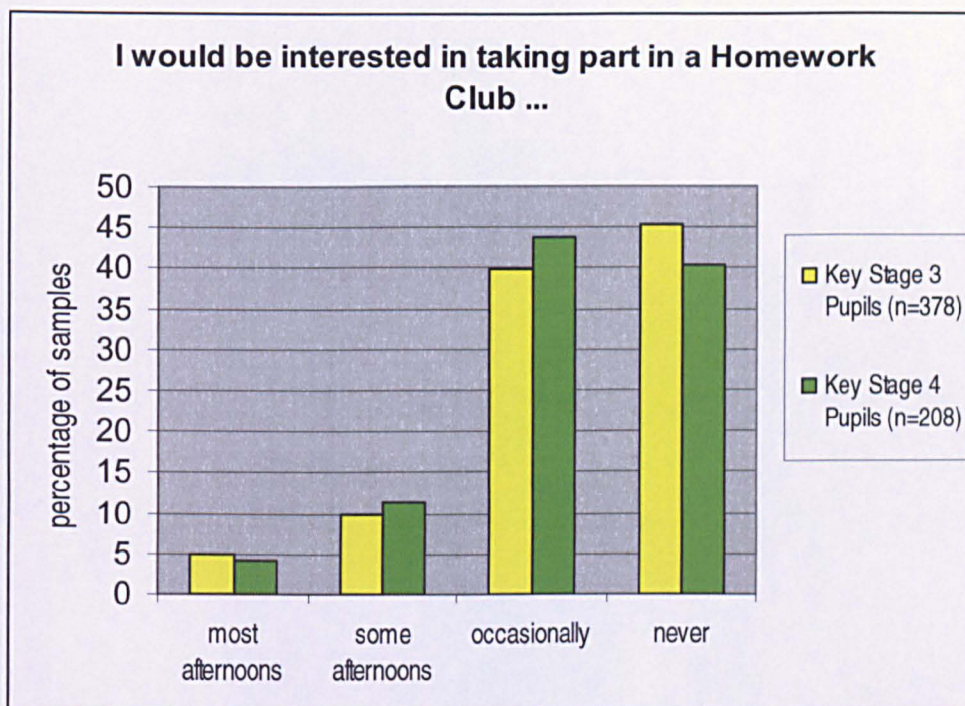
At the time of this research the school was contemplating starting an after-school Homework Club. Between 60 and 70% of parents thought that a Homework Club would be useful for their child, interestingly with a slight bias towards Key Stage 4 pupils (Figure 62). This might reflect a frustration on the part of parents to get their child to settle down to what they regard as appropriate homework; a Homework Club would put this responsibility back onto the school.

Figure 62:



Less enthusiasm was reported by the pupils (Figure 63); in excess of 80% saying that they would only occasionally or possibly never, use the

Figure 63:



Homework Club. Only about 15% of pupils would want to use it on most or some afternoons.

Summary of the analysis of data relating to Cromer High School surveys.

The quantity of responses to the surveys was most encouraging. Whilst the pupils were a “captive audience”, the response from teachers and particularly from the parents was most encouraging. It possibly reflects the importance of homework in the minds of parents. Responses, especially between pupils and their parents, were largely in agreement, and would suggest validity in the honesty of the results. Other significant points raised by these results include:

- 1a Concern that a number of teachers are unaware of the school’s and/or their department’s Homework Policy;

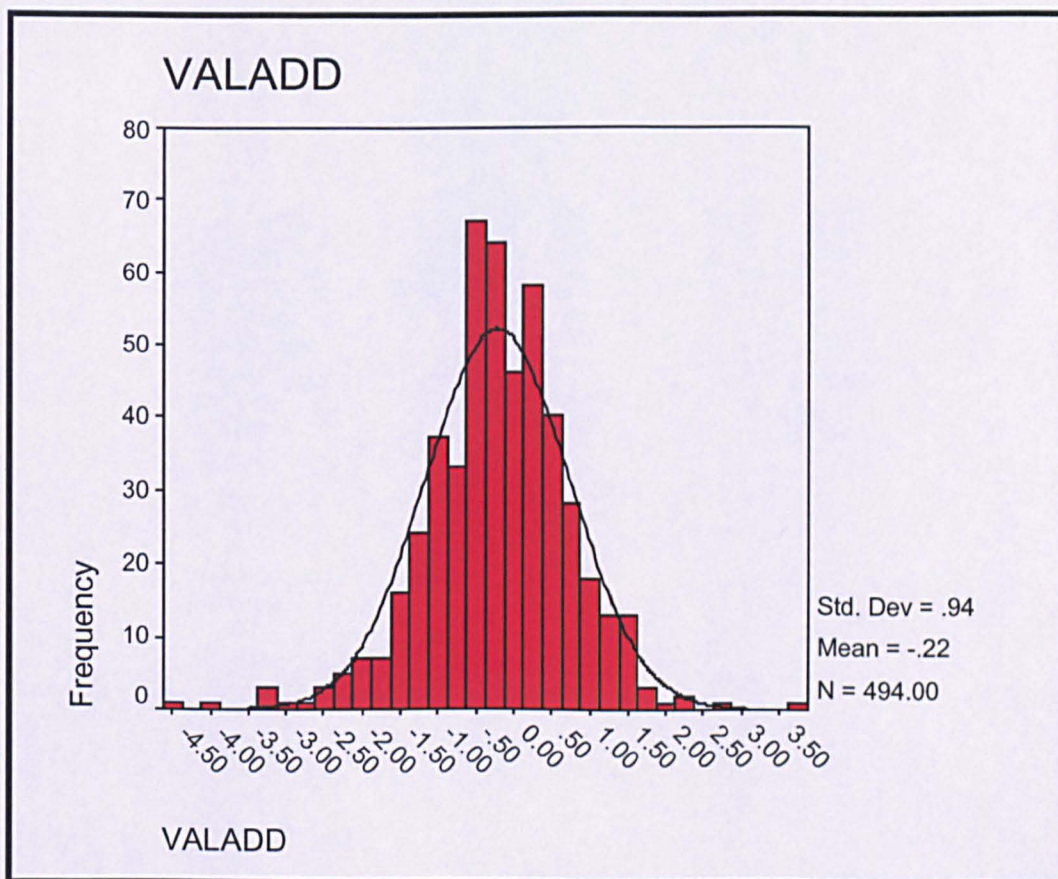
- 1b The majority of Key Stage 3 pupils regard homework in all curriculum areas as easy. The same is apparent in most areas at Key Stage 4. Homework is perceived as easy and lacking in challenge to the majority;
- 2a The need to develop a mutual understanding of all three groups regarding the purposes of homework;
- 2b Parents are asking for advice on how to support and encourage pupils with homework tasks;
- 2c The School needs to reflect upon the amount of time most pupils spend on homework, which appears, at both Key stages, to be well below the school's expectations;
- 3a Time management as a skill for all pupils;
- 3b Feedback from teachers to pupils about homework tasks needs clarification and explanation;
- 3c The School should persist in public recognition of excellent work;
- 3d The Pupil Planner is a successful tool for most pupils, and its use should be encouraged and developed;
- 3e Guidance needs to be given to pupils and parents about the appropriate, and inappropriate, workspaces for homework, and how to select from the possibilities available to an individual;
- 3f Guidance needs to be given to the parents and pupils regarding the acquisition of essential and desirable resources.

In the next section this survey will compare the findings of two groups of pupils: the "significant over-performers" who exceeded their potential GCSE results, however modest, and the "significant under-performers" who failed to reach their potential results. With these two identified groups of pupils it may be possible to see whether there are some areas of the survey which are more appropriate, or not, to particular groups of pupils.

4.2 Interpretation of data from the “significant under-performers” (-1.16 and lower) and “significant over-performers” (+0.72 and higher) value-added groups.

The research further created two value-added groups, the “significant over-performers” who exceeded their potential GCSE results and the “significant under-performers” who failed to reach their potential results, in some cases quite significantly. All the available value-added Scores were obtained from the cross-referencing of the Yellis prediction (normally obtained early in Year 10) and the eventual GCSE score obtained at the end of Year 11. An analysis of these value-added Scores gave a mean of - 0.22 and a Standard Deviation of 0.94. It was not possible to create an Upper group based upon the mean plus two

Figure 64: Distribution of the Value Added Scores of the Pupil sample.



standard deviations as this would leave a very small sample group, so the Upper group was composed of those pupils who were in the group of the Mean plus one Standard Deviation (+0.72). The lower value-added group comprised those whose scores fell below the Mean minus one Standard Deviation (- 1.16). This left the two groups with 68 pupils and 64 pupils respectively; this is a workable size for a sub-sample.

It is with little surprise that the division by gender (Figure 65) reveals that the majority of the “significant under-performers” value-added group is boys, whilst the majority of “significant over-performers” value-added group is girls. The school has been aware of this division and has taken measures to try to redress this misbalance. The school has, as is shown in Figure 02, a fairly equal balance of boys and girls.

Figure 65:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 02)

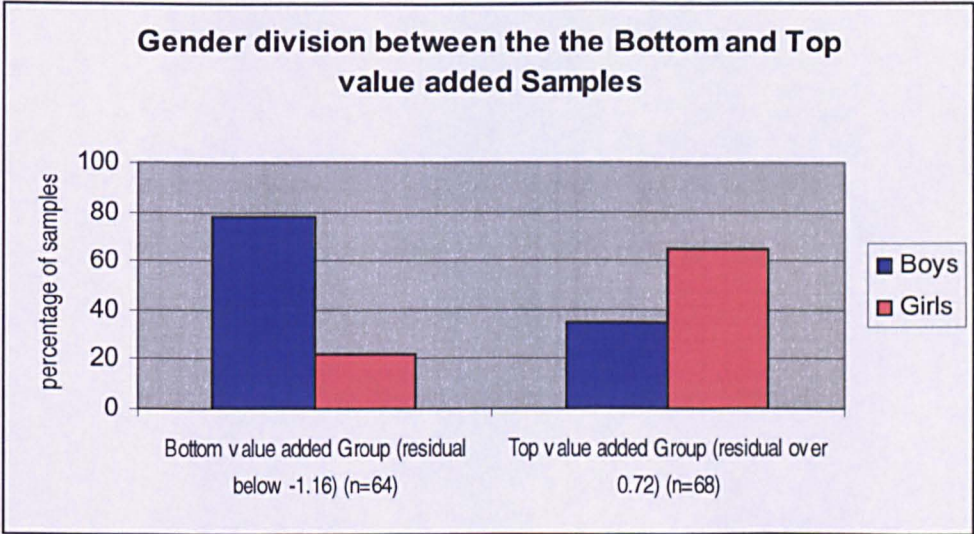
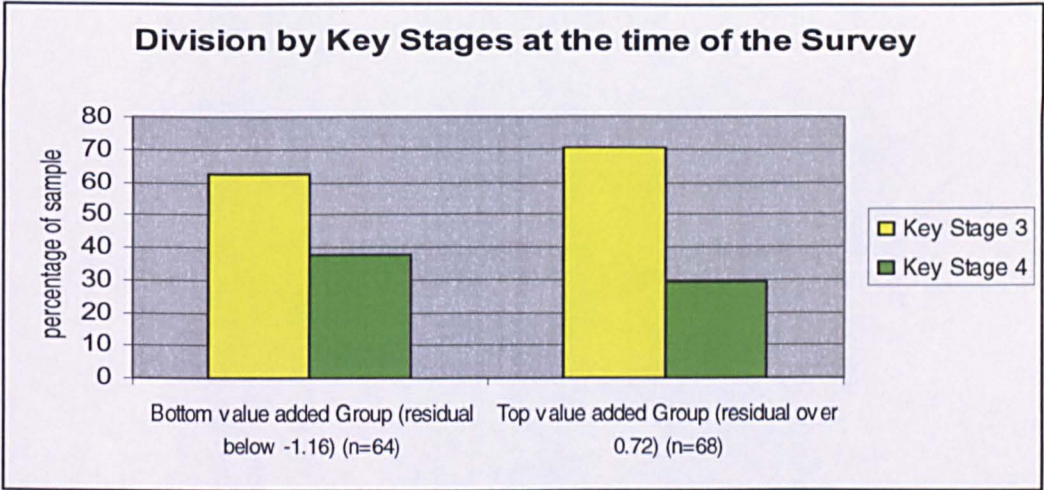


Figure 66 shows the division of pupils by Key Stages as at the time of the survey, and how they separated into the “significant over-performers” value-added group and “significant under-performers” value-added group. The

percentage of Key Stage 3 pupils is increasing towards the “significant over-performers” value-added group, and might indicate that the school’s policy and strategies for School Improvement are having some effect.

Figure 66:

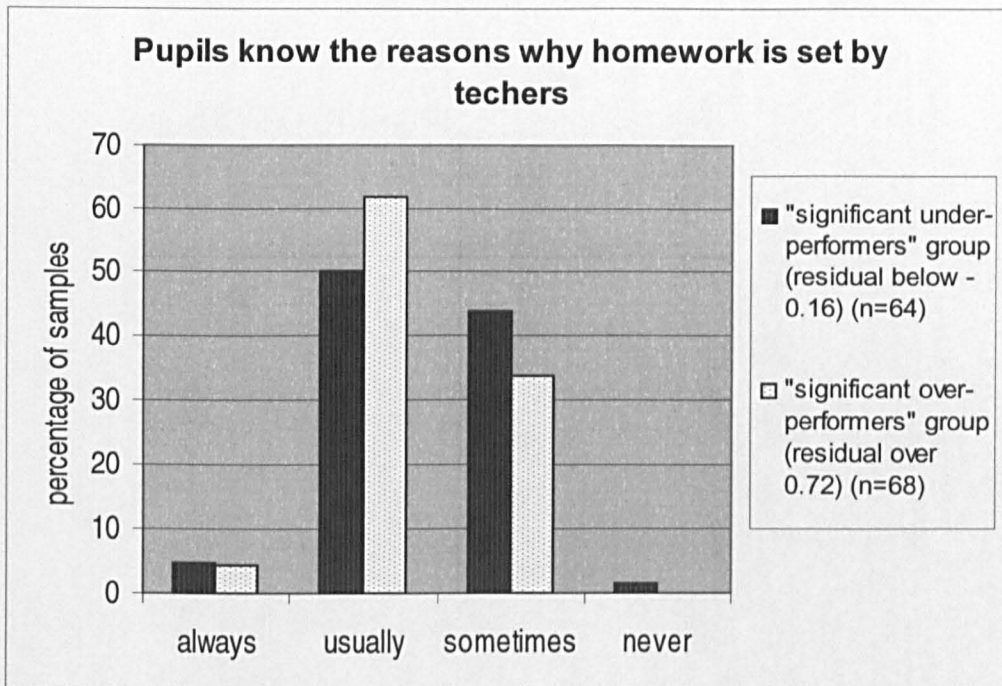
(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 01).



The reason why homework is set, whilst perhaps apparent to teachers is not always recognised by the pupils. However, none of the “significant over-performers” value-added group was ever unaware of the reasons for homework being set. If the purposes are clear to all pupils it is just possible that the results might be more productive; teachers should perhaps make it abundantly clear to the pupils why a homework task is being set, and the purpose for it. This, of course, assumes that teachers always have a positive reason for each specific task; if there is no valid reason for setting a specific homework it is perhaps an area of discussion and guidance for that teacher, within the department or the school.

Figure 67:

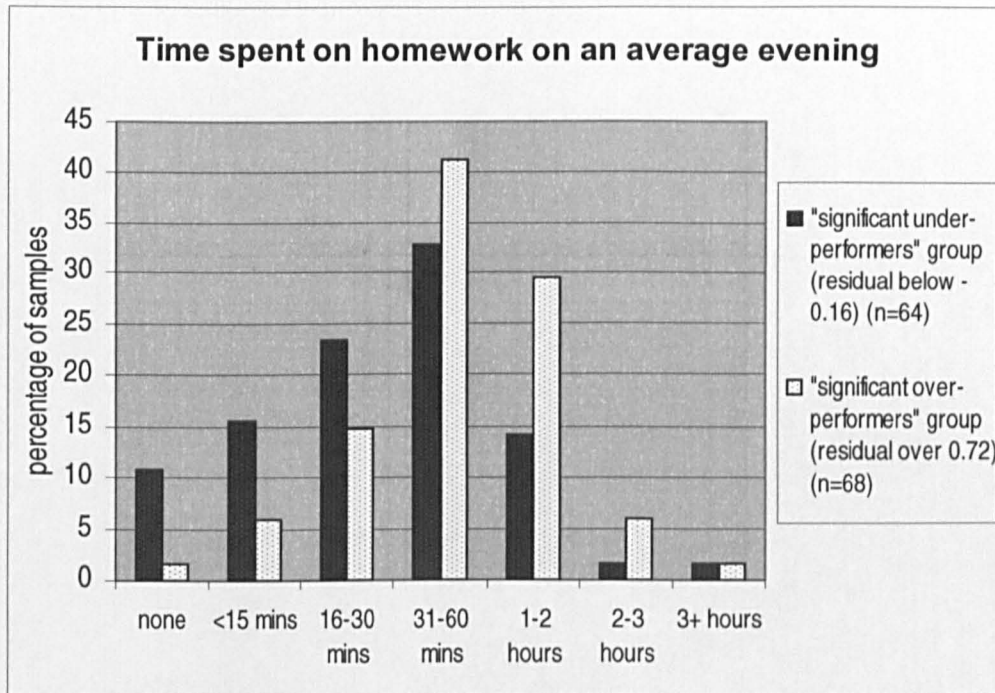
(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 16).



The time spent on homework is often regarded, by parents and teachers, as being one of the more important features of success. Aspiring parents expect sufficient time to be spent. Figure 68 illustrates quite clearly that those pupils who manage to achieve GCSE results beyond their predictions are more inclined to put in greater hours of work, whilst those in the “significant under-performers” value-added group are contrastingly more likely to put in fewer hours. It has to be assumed that those who put in the extra hours are using it purposefully and productively. The way in which

Figure 68:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 45).



these data were collected using an eight-point scale (Appendix 9.2.1.

Homework and School Improvement Survey for pupils, Question F7) raises an important point for the analysis. If, in common with many analyses of Likert-type scales, a mean is calculated for each item, it essentially means that the data have been considered to be parametric. If this were the case, an Independent Samples t-Test would be the appropriate test. However, recognising that some analysts (Reid 2005) would regard such data as categoric, in which case a t-Test would not be appropriate. Recognising the delicacy of these points the precaution of doing both a parametric and a non parametric test was applied. Therefore the results using a t-Test (parametric) and a Kruskal-Wallis (non-parametric test) were both used and the results from these are presented below. The clear outcome from both tests is that the two groups are significantly different.

Figure 69

T-Test

Group Statistics

	2	N	Mean	St.Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AMOUNT	significant under-performers	64	3.38	1.42	0.177
	significant over-performers	68	4.15	1.083	0.131

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means						
AMOUNT		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
AMOUNT	Equal variances assumed	5.491	0.021	-3.526	130	0.001	-0.77	0.219	-1.205	-0.339
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.497	117.68	0.001	-0.77	0.221	-1.209	-0.335

The t-Test indicates that the value of t is significant $p < 0.05$.

Kruskal-Wallis Test

Ranks

	2	N	Mean
AMOUNT	significant under-performers	64	54.45
	significant over-performers	68	77.84
	Total	132	

Test Statistics ^{a,b,c}

	AMOUNT
Chi-Square	13.251
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

- a. Kruskal-Wallis Test
- b. Grouping Variable: 2
- c. Some or all exact significances cannot be computed because the time limit has been exceeded.

The Kruskal-Wallis statistic H is reported by SPSS as a Chi-Square value and this too is significant $p < 0.05$.

There is, however, a small but significant group of the “significant under-performers” value-added group who are reporting spending three or more hours per night on homework. This use of time is not producing improved results for them, and such pupils need to be identified and offered specific guidance how to use the time productively and also how to know when to terminate the task.

Similarly, some might anticipate that the availability of resources at home could make a positive impact upon results. Figure 70 illustrates quite clearly that without exception a greater proportion of the “significant over-performers” value-added group has resources available at home than the proportions of the “significant under-performers” value-added group. If pupils are to stand a chance of being successful with homework they need access to appropriate equipment. Those pupils who do not have access are at a disadvantage.

Figure 70:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 56).

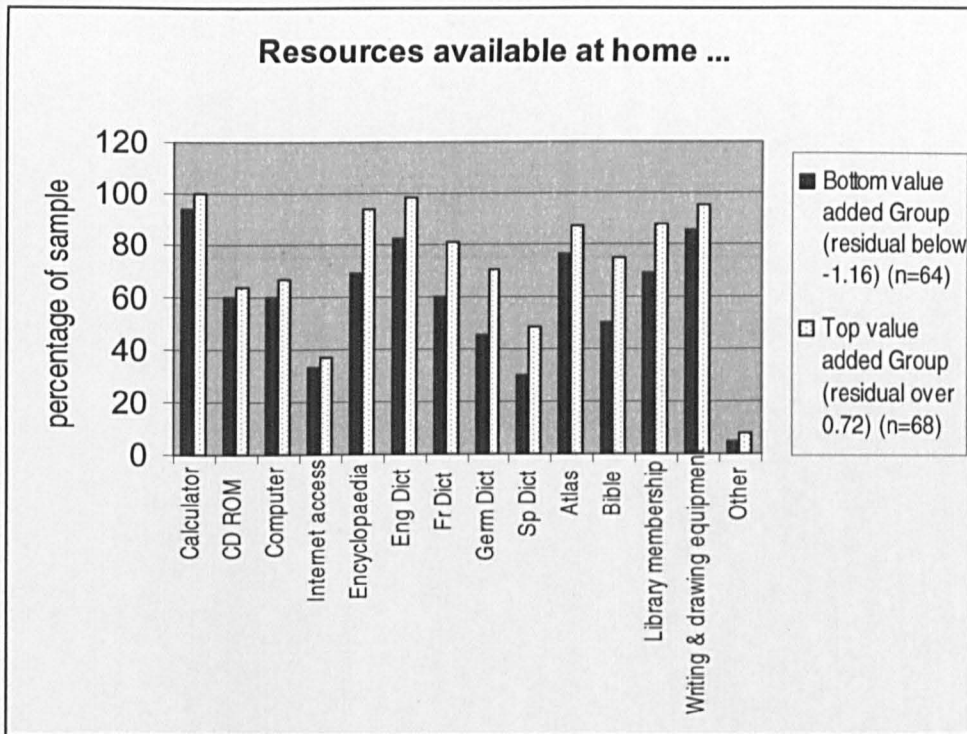
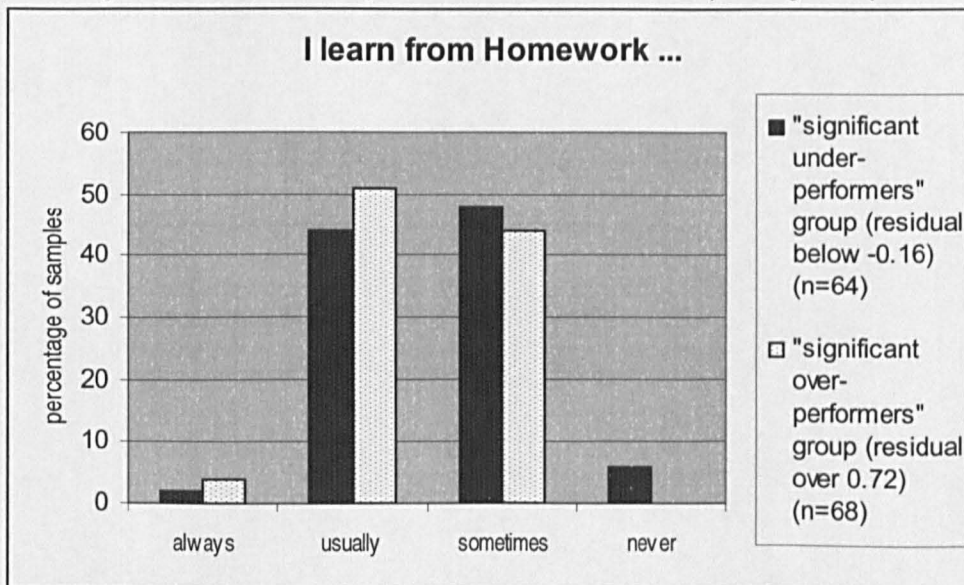


Figure 71:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 27).

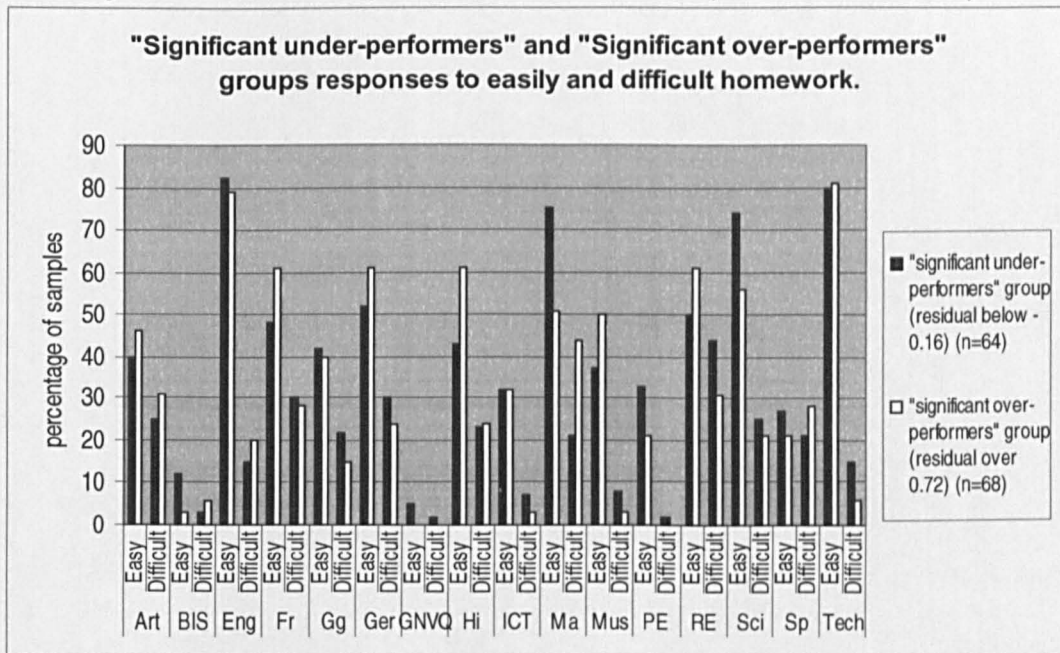


Is homework a positive learning experience for pupils? Whilst the “significant under-performers” value-added group is spread across the data in a way not

dissimilar to Figure 27, the “significant over-performers” value-added group does not appear in the “never learn from homework” category. Rather like the “reasons why Homework is set” (Figure 16), the “significant over-performers” value-added group seems to have a clearer and more positive approach to homework.

Figure 72:

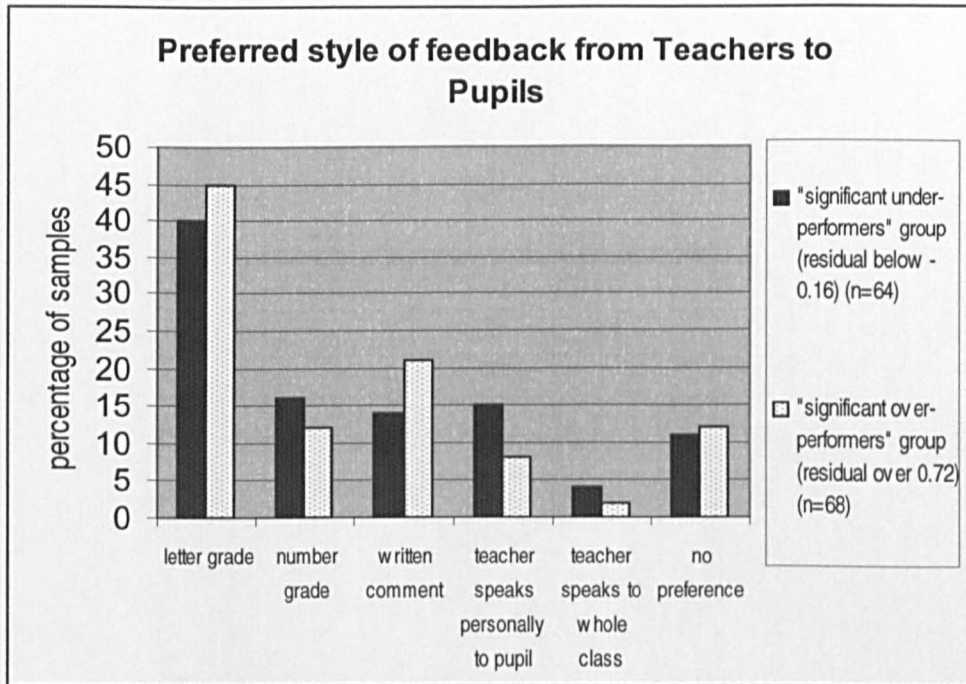
(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Tables 09 and 10).



It is a common feature of the “significant under-performers” and the “significant over-performers” value-added groups that without any significant exception the majority of pupils again regard homework as generally being “easy”. In Business Studies, English Geography, Mathematics, PE, Science and Spanish more of the “significant under-performers” value-added group are reporting that homework is easy than in the “significant over-performers” value-added group. Whilst other factors have to be taken into consideration as well, and this may include setting by ability, the fact that the pupils who achieved least well reported that homework was generally “easy” may be a reflection upon the fact they are not being stretched or challenged enough.

Figure 73:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 31).

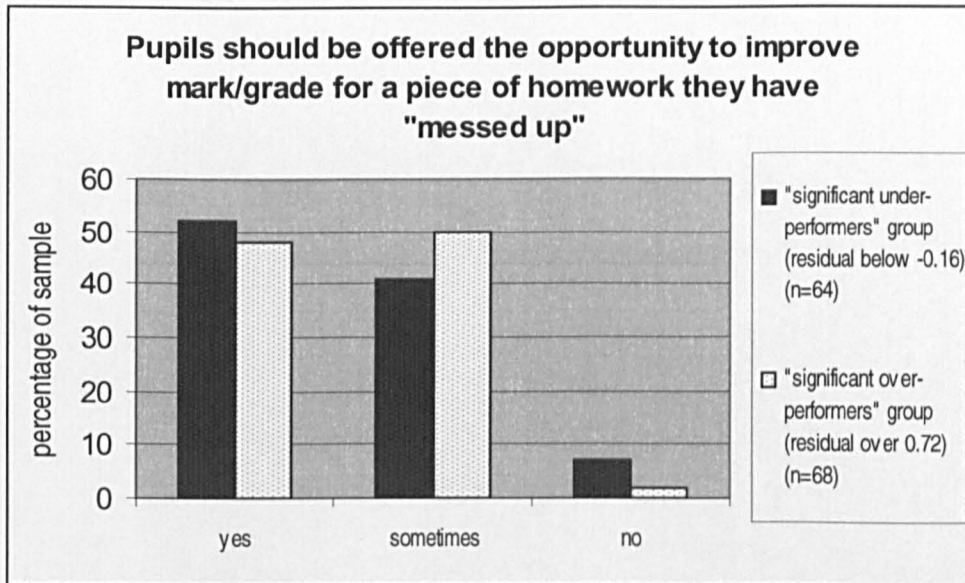


The “significant over-performers” value-added group appears to have a preference towards the “letter grade” system, which possibly gives a clearer relationship to potential GCSE grades. They also are keener to receive written comments from the teacher. Conversely there is some evidence to suggest that the “significant under-performers” value-added group prefers a numerical mark and spoken advice from the teachers; possibly the last thing that such a pupil wants is to have yet more text to read.

Figure 74 indicates that there is little difference between the “significant over-performers” and “significant under-performers” value-added groups regarding the opportunity to repeat a piece of work in order to improve the grading.

.Figure 74:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 36).



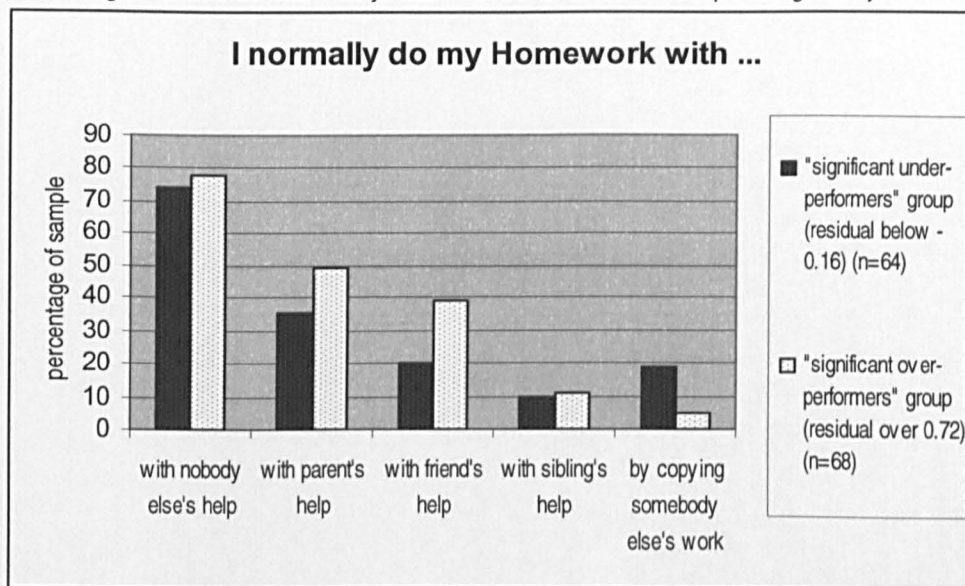
Nevertheless, the vast majority of pupils in both groups would like the opportunity, sometimes if not always, to improve upon a piece of work.

Figure 75 supports the notion that the "significant over-performers" value-added group has a tendency towards seeking others' help, whether it is parents, siblings or friends, when doing homework. Learning need not be a solitary occupation, and whilst it may be desirable for pupils not to have extraneous distractions whilst they are working, the support of another learner may be of assistance. This is particularly difficult where parents feel they do not have the "expertise" to help, or are just not available or where there are no siblings. Perhaps strategies need to be devised to enable parents to offer at least moral support to the pupil.

It appears that the straight copying of somebody else's work gains little or no benefit.

Figure 75:

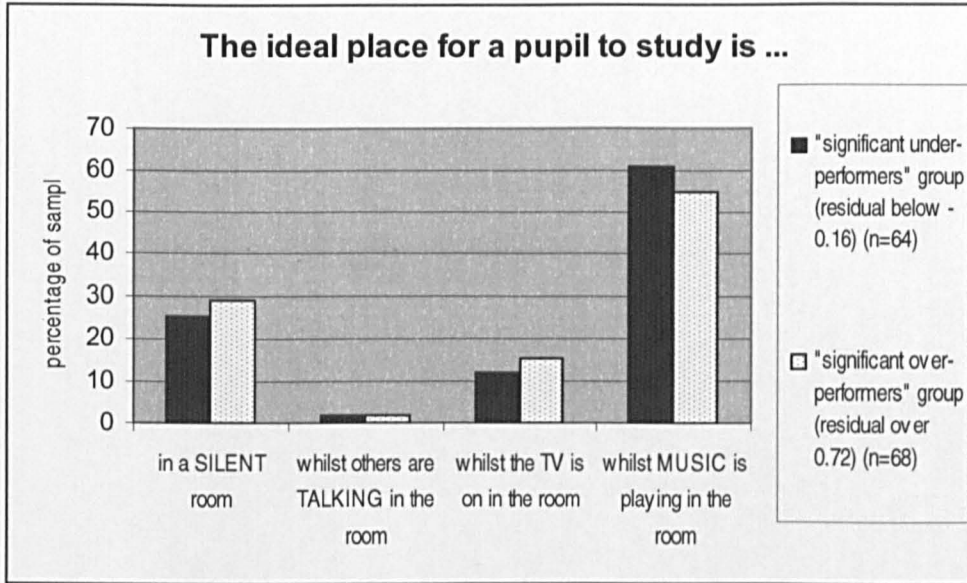
(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 54).



The ideal place for studying (Figure 76) reveals little difference from Figure 51 (the whole school response to the same question). The silent room or the rooms with background music are overwhelmingly the perceived ideal choices. Television on in the room is common to over 10% of both groups, but “talking in the room” is virtually unacceptable. Perhaps a distinction needs to be made between the “purposeful discussions of work” such as might be had with a sibling or friend, and the casual “gossip” which may distract from the task.

Figure 76:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 49).



The contrast between the notion of what pupils perceive as the “ideal place” and what the same pupils know their parents perceive as the “ideal place” is considerable. A huge majority of parents want homework to be done in a silent room. Music is only acceptable to a small minority. The “significant over-performers” value-added group is not permitted to watch television (at least, with parental consent), and only a few of the “significant under-performers” value-added group are allowed to.

Figure 77:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 50).

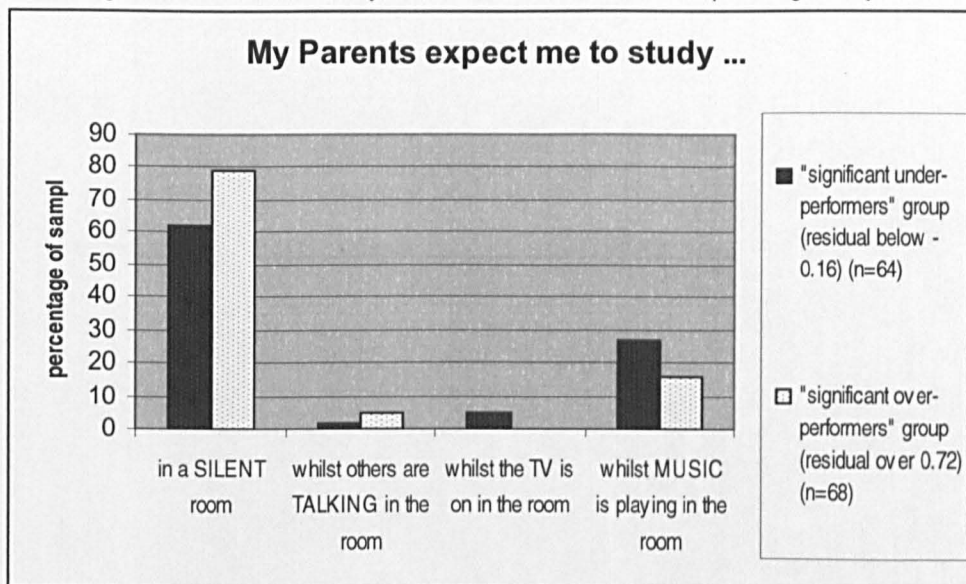


Figure 78:

(This Histogram should be read in conjunction with the whole School sample at Figure 43).

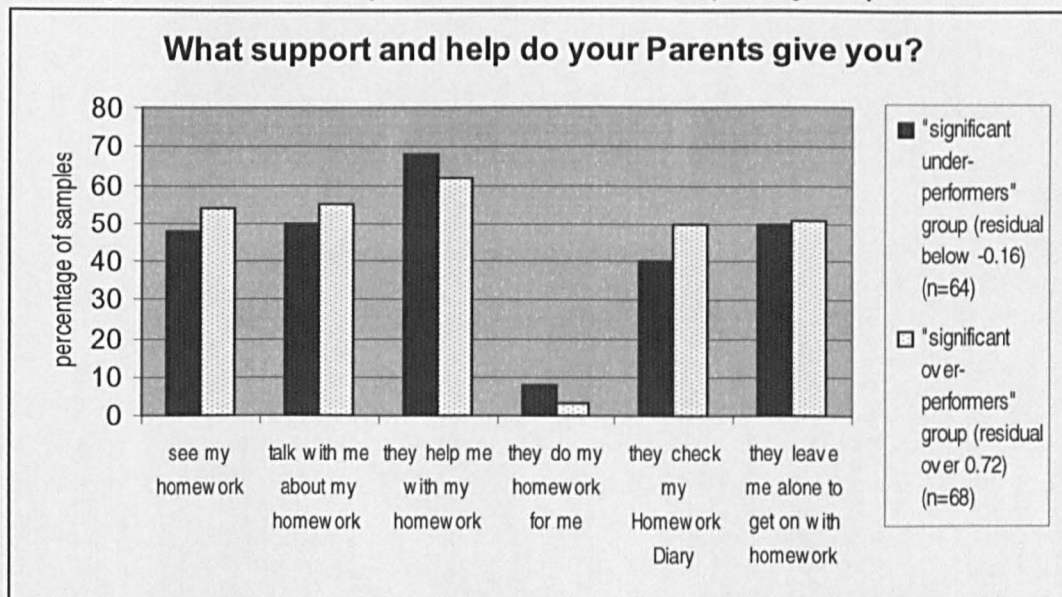


Figure 78 indicates that both groups of pupils receive interest and support from parents. The sample size, being relatively small, makes it unsafe to draw any significant conclusions, but it is worth noting that the only times the “significant under-performers” value added group exceeds the responses of

the "significant over-performers" value-added group is when parents are practically or actively involved ("they help me with it" and "they do my homework for me"). The "significant over-performers" value added group is more likely to receive organisational support and emotional encouragement.

Summary of the analysis of data relating to Cromer High School surveys for the "significant under-performers" and "significant over-performers" value-added groups.

The gender division in these two groups causes little surprise; it reflects a trend already well-known to the school, and common in many other schools too.

1. The time spent on homework during an average evening appears to be greater as reported by the "significant over-performers" group and less from the "significant under-performers" group. This of course assumes that the time is used productively. Even the "significant over-performers" group is still hardly achieving the minimum expected by the school.
2. More pupils from the "significant over-performers" group have access to resources at home than do pupils from the "significant under-performers" group.
3. Both groups report that homework is generally easy; it is *not* a reaction from one or other of the groups alone.
4. The "significant over-performers" group tends to be more likely to work in partnership with others, perhaps contradicting the idea of working alone. This perhaps also contradicts the idea of working in a "silent

room”.

In the next section the results from Cromer High School to the survey will be compared with the results of the 1990 research by MacBeath and Turner based on a group of Scottish Schools. A number of the questions in the Cromer High School pupils' survey were based entirely on the questions used in the Scottish research, with the view to ascertaining whether the results of the two surveys had any similarities or differences. These could reflect perhaps a more widespread trend to be worthy of further enquiry. Additionally other issues arising from the Literature Review will be related, when possible, to the findings of the Cromer High School surveys.

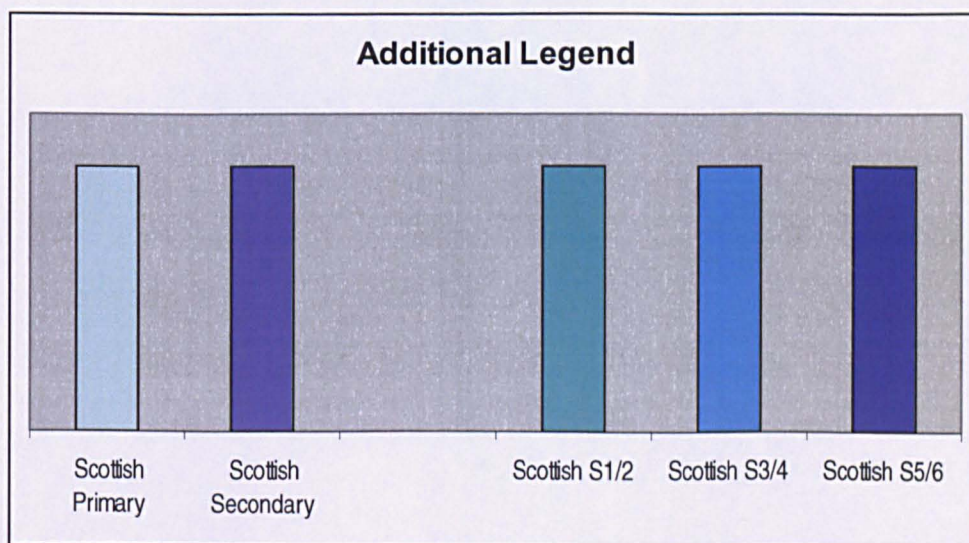
5. *Responses to issues arising from the Literature Review.*

At the end of each of the three main sections of the Literature Review there is a summary of the main issues which arise from that part of the review. It is not realistic that research on this scale could hope to respond to all these issues; however, there are issues upon which it is possible to comment from the findings of this research.

1. Responses to MacBeath and Turner's 1990 Research
2. Other issues arising from the Literature Review

5.1 **Comparison with MacBeath and Turner's 1990 research.**

In Section 2.1.7 (John MacBeath and Mary Turner's research: a case study) reference was made to the 1990 project lead by MacBeath and Turner in schools in the Scotland. This current research project has used some of the questions verbatim from the 1990 project, so that results could be compared between the thirteen Scottish schools and Cromer High School.



It should be remembered that there are distinct differences between the

Scottish and English educational systems. Additionally, for clarification, the Year group structure for Scottish and English schools is not the same.

Table 18: Nomenclature of Year Groups in English and Scottish Schools

<u>England</u>	<u>Scotland</u>
Year 7	Primary
Year 8	S1
Year 9	S2
Year 10	S3
Year 11	S4

In Table 19 it appears that pupils from the Scottish schools are placing greater importance upon “reinforcement” whilst at Cromer High School, pupils report as follows: “helps you get a good education”, “helps independent work”, “preparation for the next lesson” and “see if we understand” all rate as more important than the Scottish survey. There may be no right or wrong in this; the perceptions of pupils in different areas of the United Kingdom, and a decade apart, are different. Children are complex beings and homework is a complicated matter, and differences are not surprising, but a comparison between these two case studies is valid to identify differences as well as similarities.

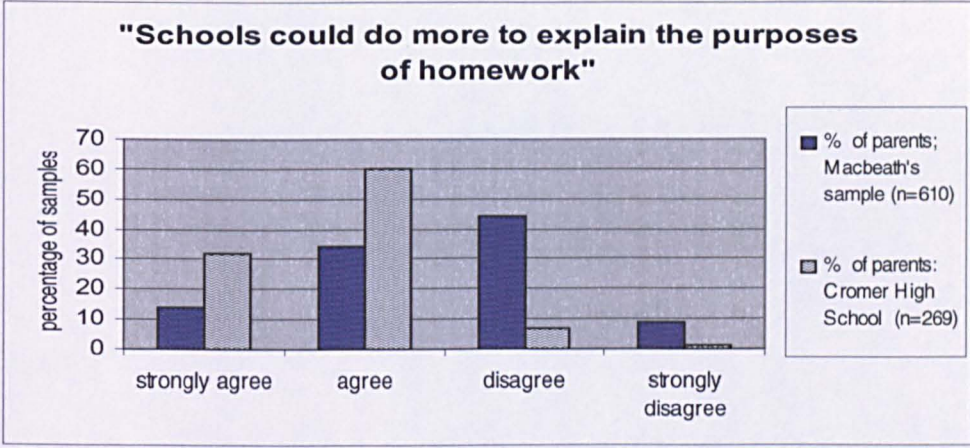
Table 19: “Teachers give us homework because ...” – a comparison (by percentages) between the pupils’ responses of Cromer High School and MacBeath and Turner’s sample schools.

	CHS: KS3	CHS: KS4	MacBeath: Primary	MacBeath: S1/2	MacBeath: S3/4
reinforcement	9	10	33	33	36
helps you learn more to finish unfinished work	17	18	30	37	15
helps you get a good education	13	15	12	17	26
helps independent work	11	10	7	5	5
preparation for next lesson	12	11	6	5	3
as a punishment	12	12	5	4	2
	3	2	3	3	4

see if we understand	15	16	2	5	8
lets parents see work	8	6	1	1	1
other	1	0	1	1	1

This may, or may not, reflect the different perceptions of the purpose of homework by teachers and managers and a lack of a clear national strategy. The perception amongst parents that schools should do more to explain the

Figure 79:



purpose of homework (Figure 79) is more strongly felt amongst the parents of Cromer High School than across the Scottish sample.

In Figure 80 pupils were able to respond to the "enjoyment factor" of homework. Excluding the Scottish primary pupils, there appears to be little difference between the perceptions of enjoyment between Cromer High School and the Scottish sample schools.

Figure 80:

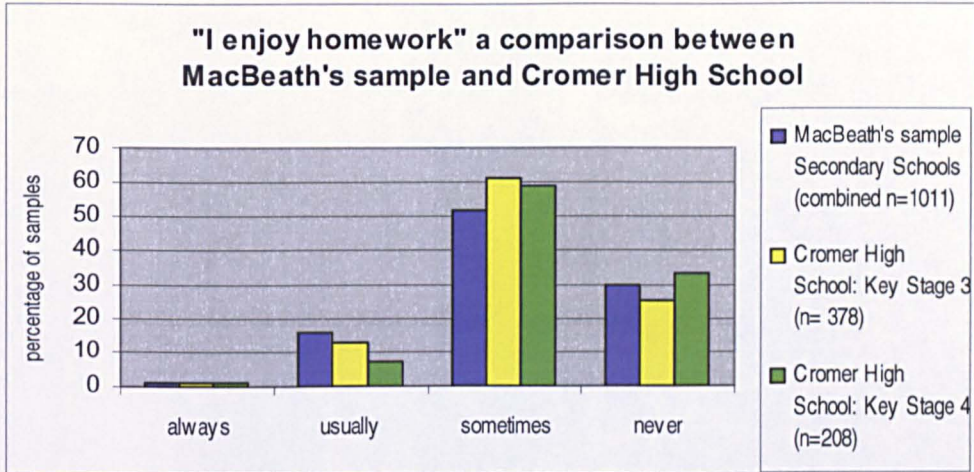


Figure 81 also reflects that similar proportions of pupils from each sample agree over the amount they consider that they learn from their homework.

Figure 81:

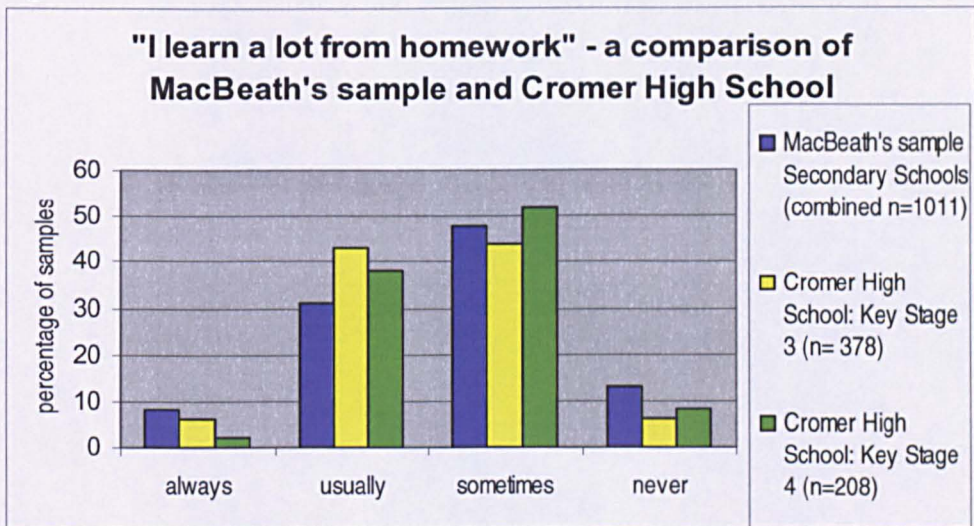
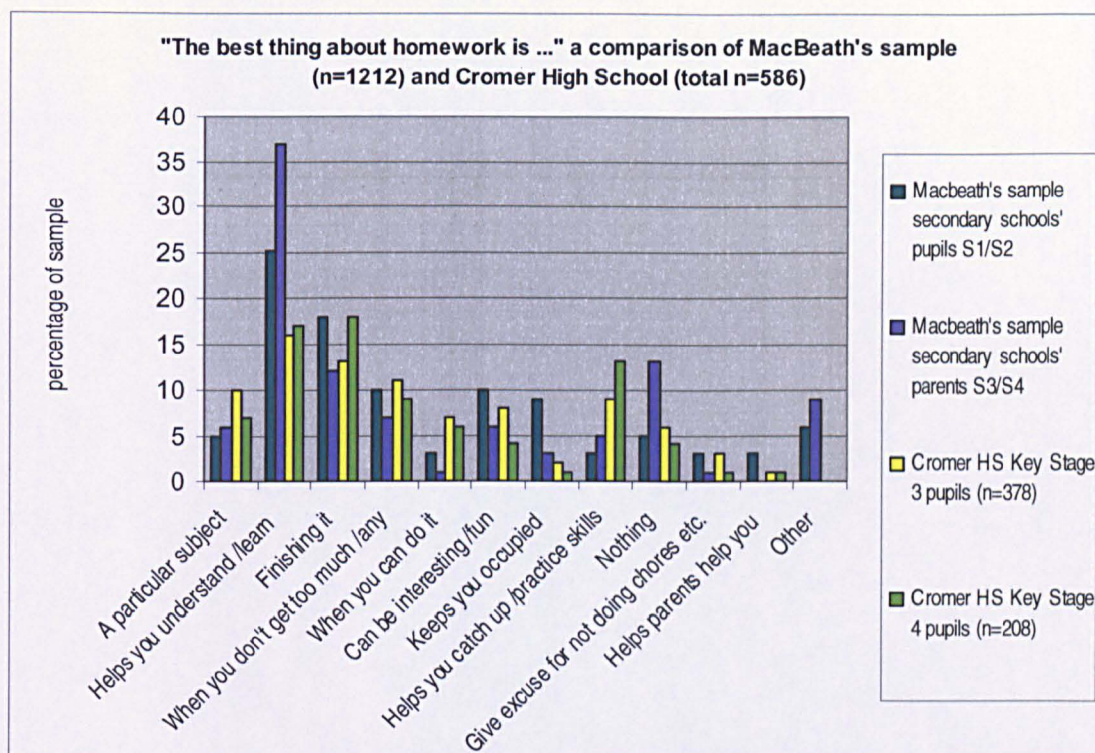


Figure 82 reflects the responses to “the best thing about homework is ...”.

“It helps me understand” appear as a widely spread set of results. The Scottish sample appears to regard that “homework helps them understand” as a stronger feature than in the Cromer High School sample. The perceptions of pupils regarding the “best things about homework” is not, however necessarily

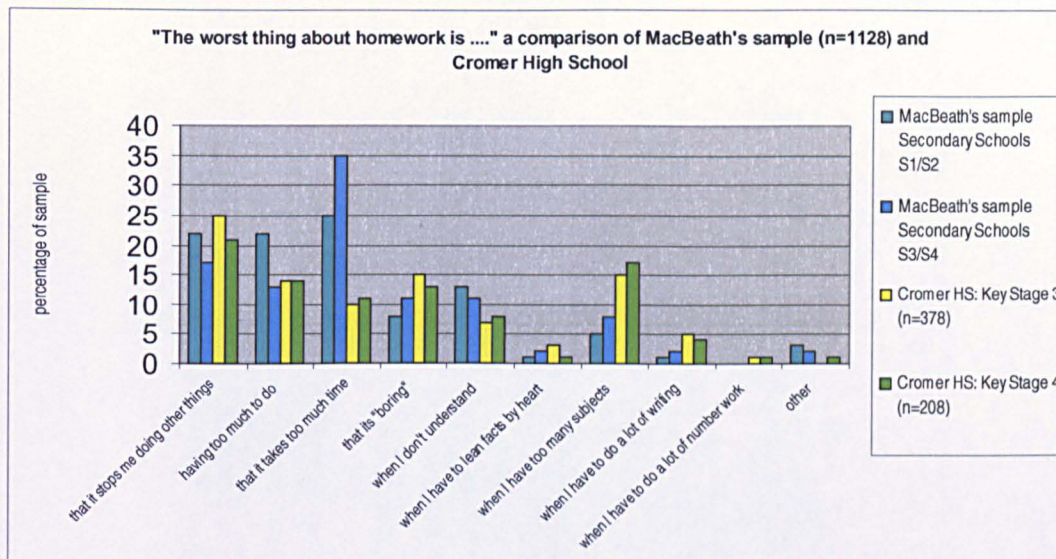
the same thing as the perceived purposes of homework in the philosophies of the sample schools.

Figure 82:



There is more diversity (Figure 83) in “the worst things about homework”. The Scottish samples are emphatic about the excessive amount of time homework takes, whereas the Cromer High School pupils are more concerned about the number of different subjects they are expected to juggle at the same time. Both these do, in a way, reflect the amount of intrusion into the personal time of the pupils. In the areas not affected by quantity or duration, Cromer High School pupils are more critical of “boring”

Figure 83:



homework, whilst the Scottish sample pupils are more critical of homework tasks being set which they “do not understand”.

In Figure 84 the Cromer High School pupils respond more strongly than their Scottish counterparts to the idea that they would find homework “easier if it was more interesting”. This fits in with their perception in Figure 83 that homework tends to be “boring”. The perception of a homework being “boring” will vary between pupils. What is “boring” to one set of pupils is not necessarily “boring” to another set. There are therefore difficulties in comparing these sorts of results between two diverse and unconnected groups of pupils.

Figure 84:

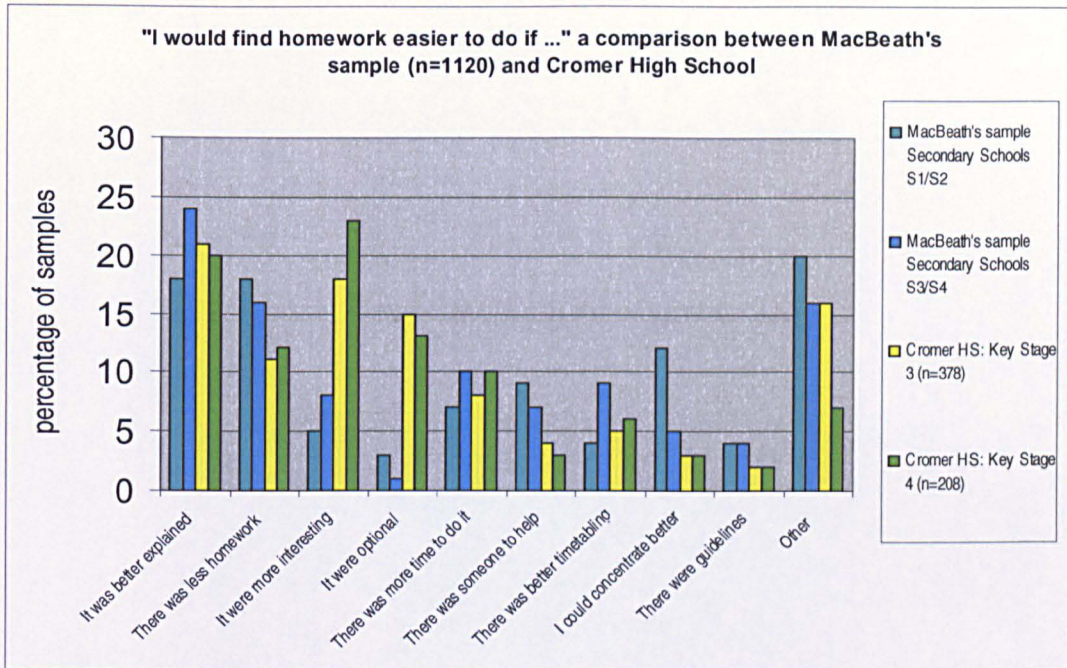
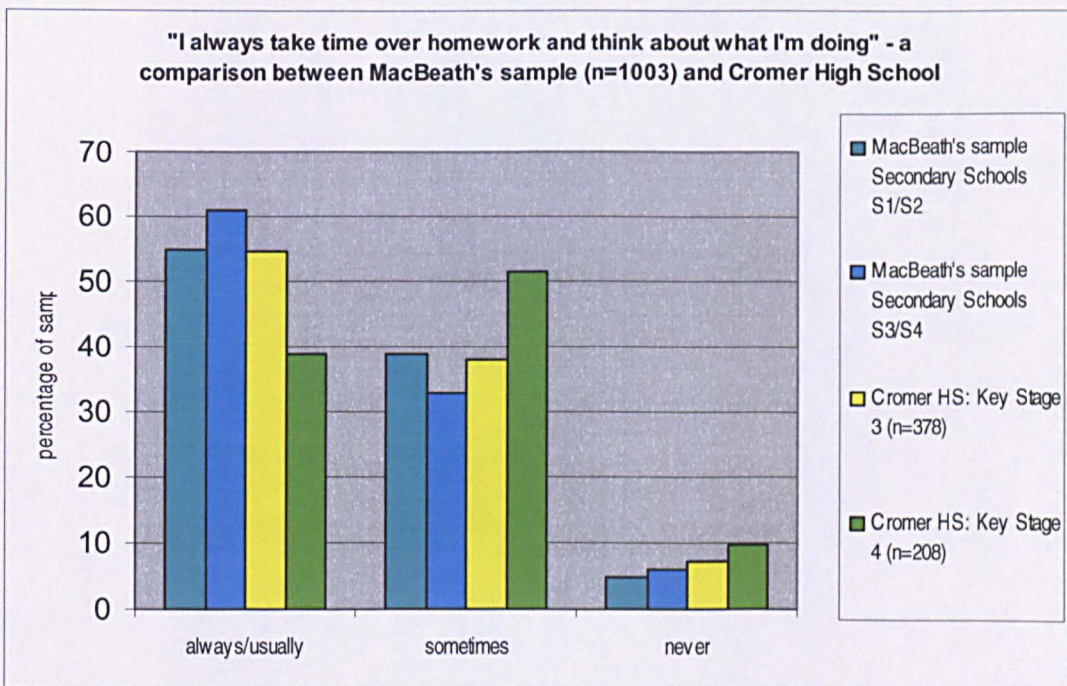


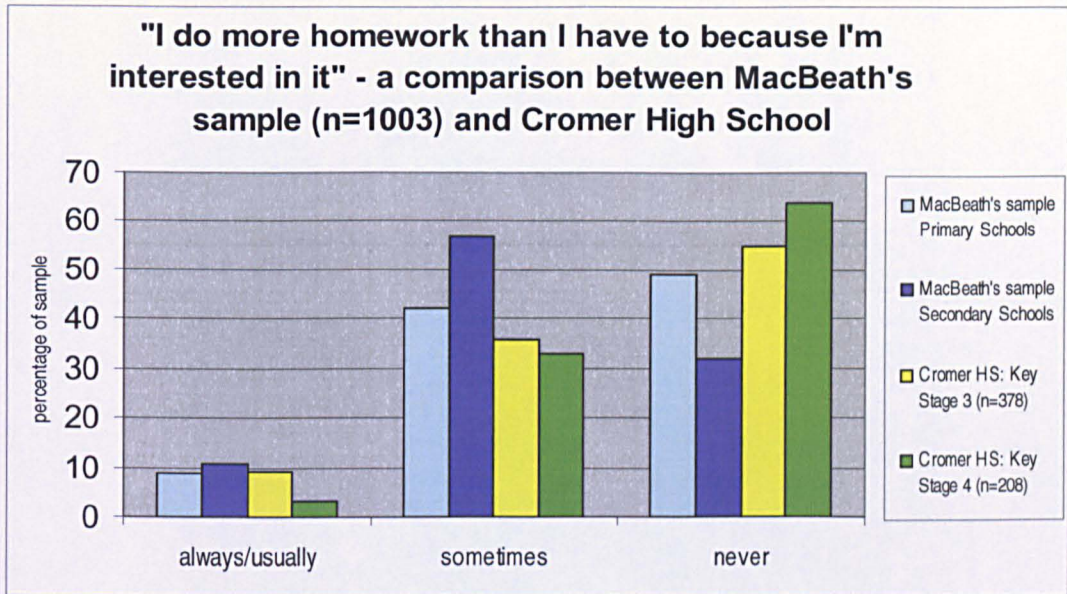
Figure 85:



In Figure 85 the differences between the samples in response to the question "I take my time over homework and think about what I am doing" is not highly important.

Figure 86 shows a clear admission that the Scottish secondary pupils

Figure 86:



are more likely to do, at least “sometimes”, more homework than they have to because they are interested in it, than are their Cromer High School counterparts. This does not differentiate between whether it is the attitude of the pupils concerned, or indeed the quality, challenge and inspiration of the homework tasks set.

Figure 87 shows a correspondence between the responses of pupils and parents concerning the amount of time usually spent doing homework on a typical evening. A greater proportion of the Scottish sample at Secondary level are spending more than one hour, on a regular basis, doing homework, than are their counterparts at Cromer High School.

Figure 87:

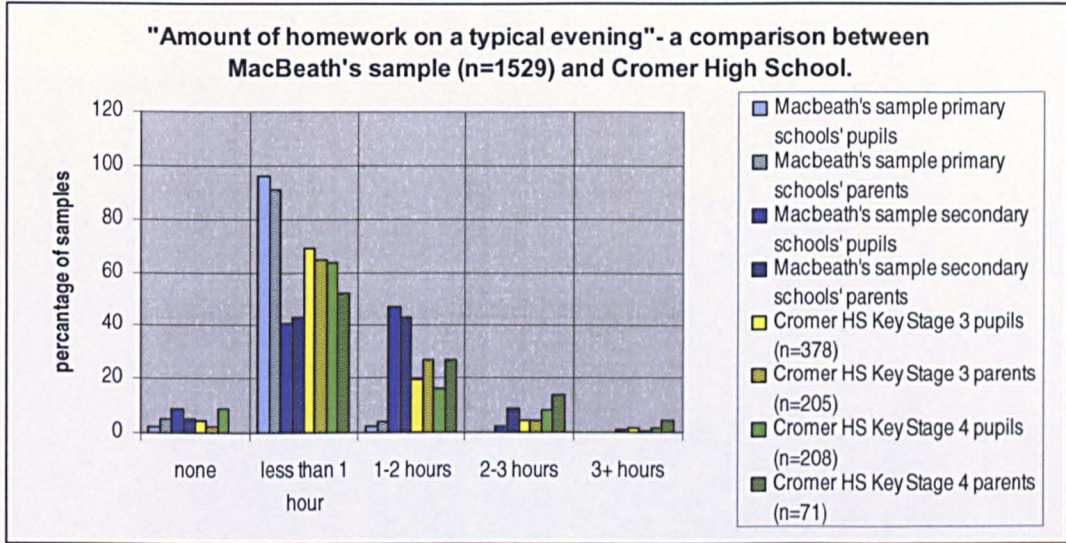


Figure 88 compares the responses of parents in the two samples of the amount of homework their child gets, and whether it is “too much to cope with”. Again, “too much” is not quantified so it is difficult to compare parents’ responses. Excluding the Scottish primary sample, there is general agreement among parents.

Figure 88:

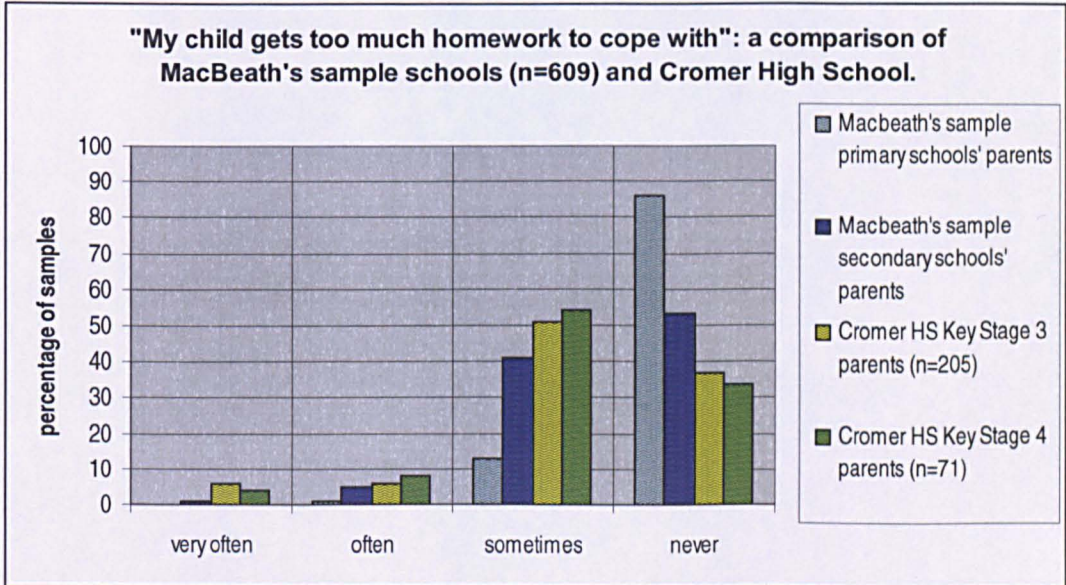
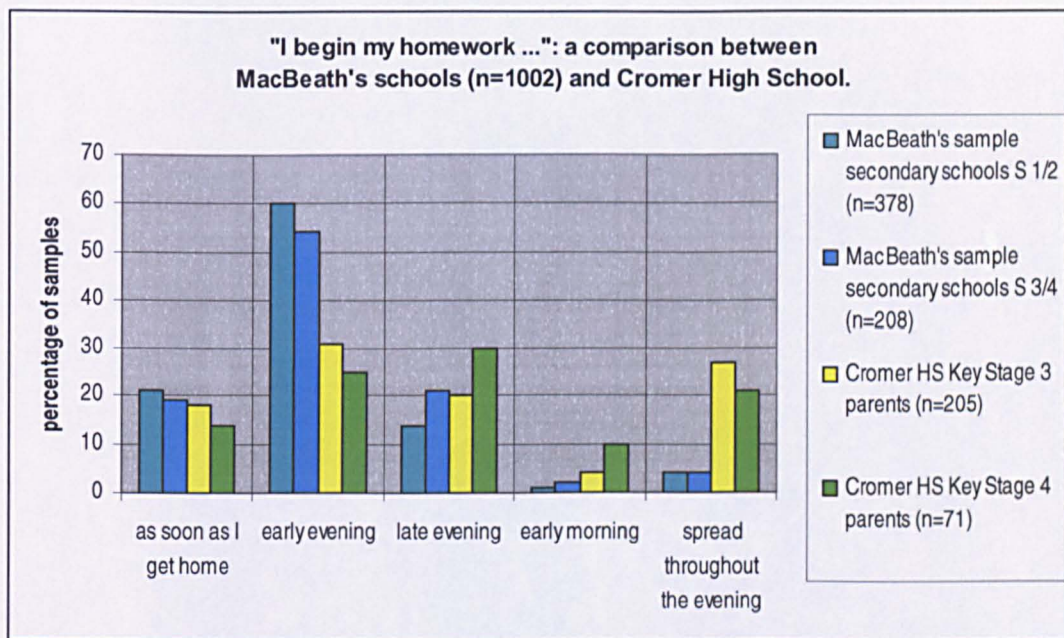


Figure 89 shows considerable contrasts as to when pupils choose to do their homework. A greater majority (55-60%) of Scottish pupils, especially at secondary level are likely to commit time in the “early evening”. The Cromer High School pupils are less likely to make this commitment to early evening, and are more likely to be spread between those who opt for “early evening”, “late evening” or even “spread throughout the evening”.

Figure 89:



Scottish parents (about 95%) reveal that homework is more likely to give them a better idea of what is happening in their child's school than parents of Cromer High School pupils (about 55%). This is in spite of the fact that both samples produce similar responses to the number (Figure 91) of parents who regard it as a good thing for parent-child relationship to talk about homework together.

Figure 90:

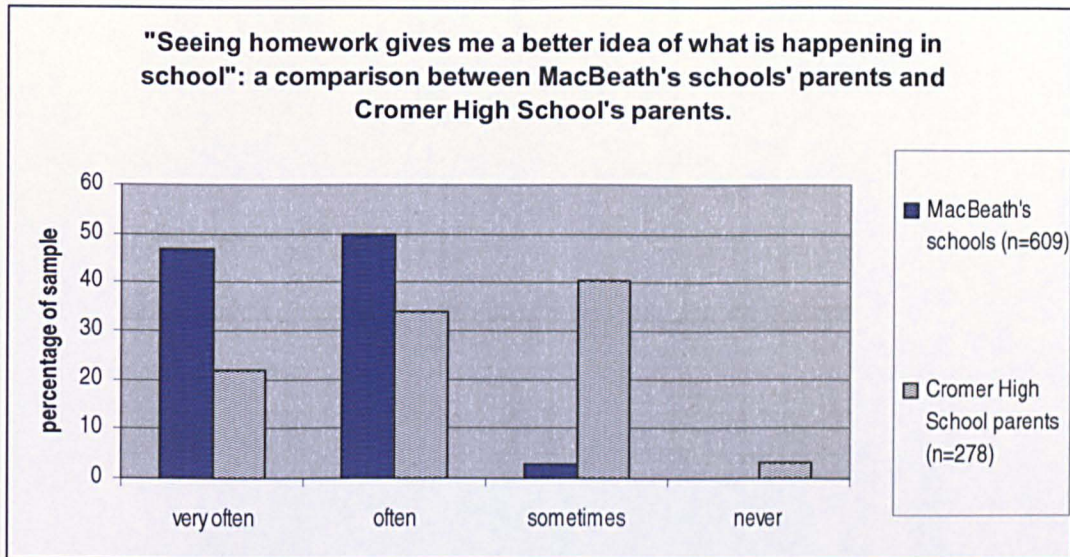


Figure 91:

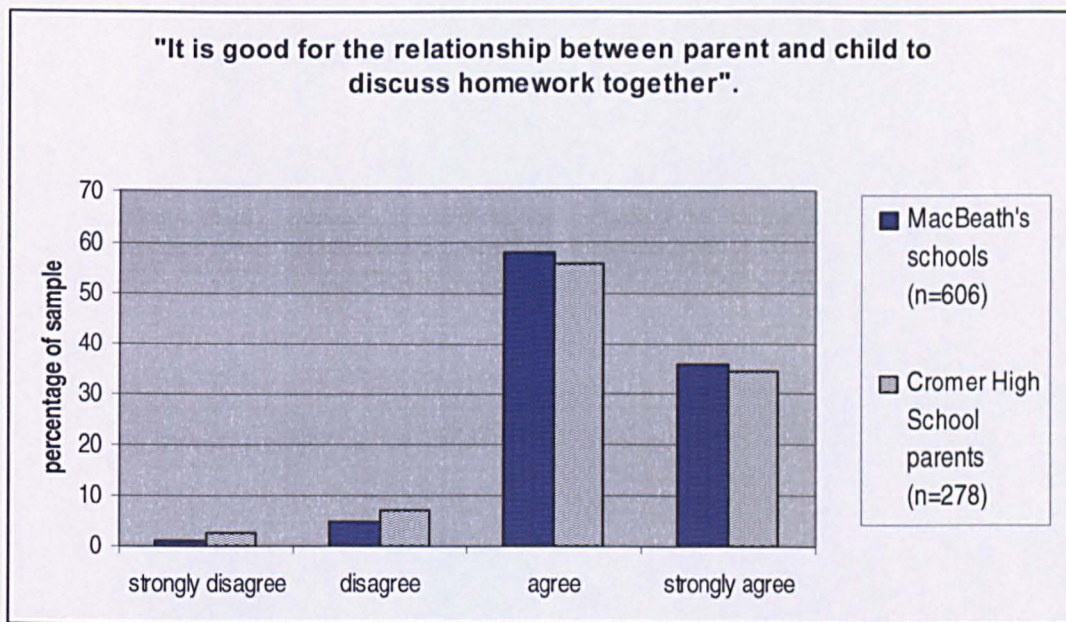


Figure 92:

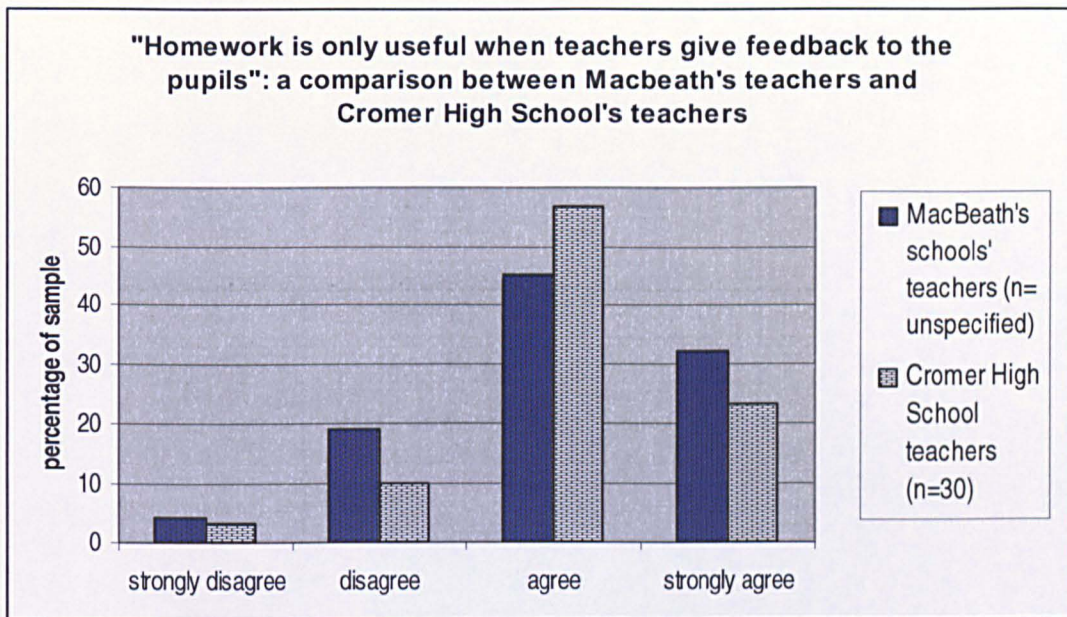


Figure 92 reveals that 80% of Cromer High School teachers agree that “homework is only useful when teachers give feedback”; about 77% of the Scottish secondary teachers hold a similar view.

Figure 93:

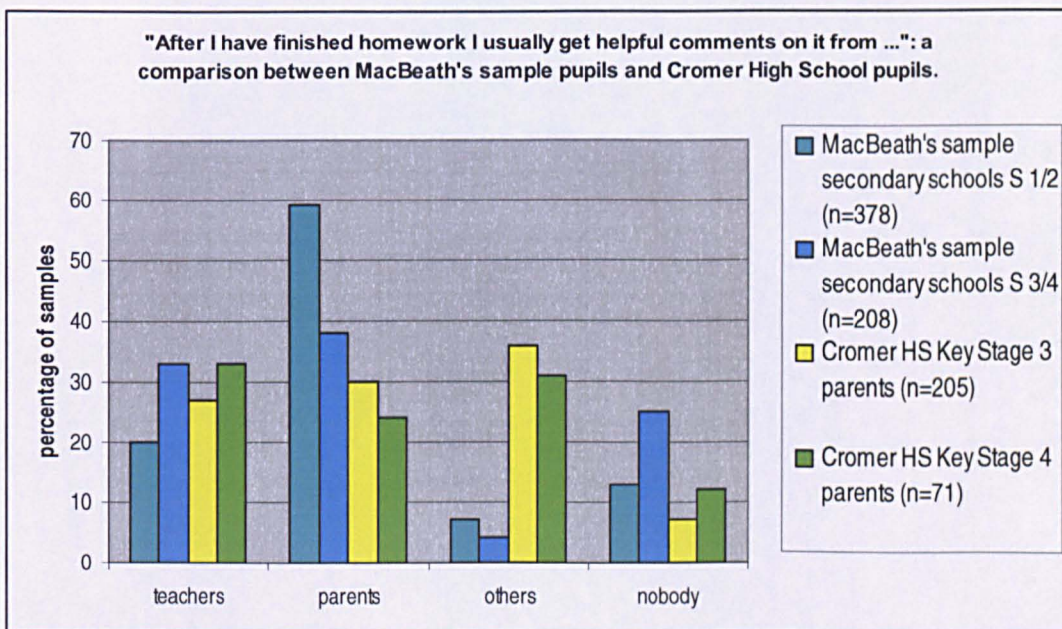


Figure 93 also examines “talking about homework”, and compares the Scottish parent and pupil samples with the Cromer High School samples. The Cromer High School pupils, as we have already seen in Figure 32 also rate siblings and friends as significant people with whom to discuss homework.

5.2 Other issues arising from the Literature Review.

- *Is homework set consistently to all abilities?*

The challenge of homework tasks is a recurring theme in this research. There is some evidence (Tables 9 and 10) to support the view that homework is too often less than challenging for the majority of pupils and is not stretching pupils intellectually. In subjects where pupils are grouped by subject ability there is still need, probably, for further differentiation within the group.

Talented or gifted pupils need to be identified and nurtured.

- *How dependent is the “success” of homework upon parental support?*

Evidence in Figure 78 in this research indicates that in two categories: “they help me with it” and “they do my homework for me” the “significant under-performers” group exceeds, albeit marginally, the “significant over-performers” group, whilst in response to the other four questions the latter exceed the former. These two categories in which the “significant under-performers” group scored more highly are the two areas which actually entail the parents being actively involved in the completion of the homework task. It may be that the “significant under-performers” group requires more assistance.

- *Does homework prevent children from developing a wide range of cultural, sporting and social interests?*
- *Is there evidence to suggest whether pupils join in community activities or*

not?

Figure 44 (and Table 11) indicates that many pupils at both Key Stages participate in a wide range of cultural, (including music, dance, drama and bell-ringing) sporting (horse riding, bikes, skateboarding, walking and fishing) and social activities (going into the town, meeting boy or girl friend and voluntary youth groups). Television is, not unexpectedly, significant in the lives of many pupils, as are computer games to a lesser extent. Paid work becomes more important with older pupils. It is important that such pupils are able to plan and use time wisely to enable a full schedule of activities to take place.

- *Is there any evidence that homework improves results in national tests, especially GCSE?*

There is some indication in Figure 68 that the pupils in the “significant over-performers” group are more likely to spend a greater amount of time each evening on homework tasks than are members of the “significant under-performers” group. Figure 77 indicates that the “significant over-performers” group are more likely (78%), in responses to parental wishes to work at homework tasks in a room with minimal distractions than are pupils in the “significant under-performers” group (62%)

Figure 79 shows that the parents of pupils in the “significant over-performers” group are more like to be involved in verbal assistance with homework. The parents of pupils in the “significant under-performers” group appear more likely to be involved in a more practical hands-on way.

- *How do teachers cope when parents do not support the principle of homework, or homes in which there are limited resources?*

Teachers’ assertion in Figure 11 that resources, *per se*, are not important; the

use of such resources is not a reason for setting homework. Figure 70 indicates that such resources are more available, without exception in any category, to pupils in the “significant over-performers” group than in the “significant under-performers” group. This research did not investigate whether this was related to social class or any other cause. Furthermore determination of causation is not possible from the type of data collected in this study.

- *Is there any evidence that children’s, parents’ and teachers’ positive approach to homework have enhanced the school’s results, especially at GCSE?*
- *Is there any evidence to suggest that homework has contributed to the school’s history of improvement and/or effectiveness?*
- *Does the school’s involvement with YELLIS (University of Durham) indicate that there has been significant value-added for the individual pupil?*
- *Can any such value-added improvement be correlated with known positive approaches (including resources, outcomes, expectations and support) towards homework by the pupil and his/her parent?*

Figure 70 indicates a correlation between pupils in the “significant over-performers” group and a more generous availability of resources at home. Having easy access to such resources may make homework tasks easier to complete.

Figure 71 indicates that 55% of pupils in the “significant over-performers” group claim to learn from homework “always” or “usually”. Only 46% of pupils in the “significant under-performers” group make the same assertion. 5% of this group also claim to never learn anything from homework.

Figure 77 indicates that parents of pupils in the “significant over-performers”

group are more likely to expect their son/daughter to complete homework with minimal distractions.

Figure 78 indicates that the parents of pupils in the “significant over-performers” group may contribute to homework in a verbal way, but are less-likely to be involved in a practical way than are the parents of pupils in the “significant under-performers” group.

- *Does the school have an appropriate Homework Policy which has been conveyed to all staff, parents and the wider community, and which is implemented by all?*
- *How often is the school’s Homework Policy reviewed, in conjunction with all interested parties?*

The school has a clear Homework Policy, but Figures 9 and 10 indicate that not all staff are aware of it, and Figures 24 and 25 shows that certainly only some staff implement it. It needs to be conveyed, in appropriate non-technical language, to parents and to pupils.

- *Is homework monitored and marked?*

Whilst this research (Figures 31 and 32) identified a confusing variety of monitoring and marking, it does not identify whether monitoring and marking of homework is occurring consistently. Perhaps the school needs to review its monitoring and marking procedures and try to attain a sense of consistency, which might be more helpful to pupils.

- *Do Curriculum Directors have oversight of the implementation of Homework Policy within their academic area?*

This was not specifically investigated in the research, although the mere fact that pupils and parents reported (Figures 24 and 25) that homework was not

set on a regular basis in all subjects suggests that such oversight may not be taking place in all departments.

- *Does homework monitoring and marking equip the subject-teacher to move forward with appropriate classroom strategies?*

This was not challenged in this research. The general inconsistencies in marking and monitoring cast doubt whether the subject teacher could necessarily move forward with appropriate strategies based upon the information gleaned from the monitoring and marking of homework.

- *Does homework encourage:*
 - *study skills, self-organisation and self-discipline?*
 - *further acquaintance with subject content?*

The research suggests that in cases where homework is used by teachers as a positive and planned experience, it is likely to encourage these.

- *Do socio-economic flaws unduly overshadow homework?*
- *How can teachers be aware of the idiosyncrasies of individual homes?*

Although the research obtained limited socio-economic information for individual pupils, the analysis of this against the value-added scores showed no discernible pattern. Cromer is predominantly a mixture of holiday makers and retired people; this is shown in Figure 03, and specifically in socio-economic groups B12, B17, B18, G22, G32 and H24. However, Figure 51 did indicate the significance of an appropriate work place environment and the availability of resources in the home; these are doubtless closely allied to the socio-economic situation of the family.

- *Do subject-teachers encourage or discourage family involvement in homework activities?*

Generally, most teachers appear to encourage and value the involvement of the family in homework activities. Some subjects lend themselves more easily to this. There is always the problem of identifying what is the pupil's contribution and what is the parents'.

- *Do teachers specify how long a homework task should take?*

The school specifies an appropriate amount of time to be spent on a particular subject. It also indicates what action parents should take in monitoring it how much time is spent, and what action should be taken by pupils and/or parents regarding pupils who exceed this time. Teachers might wish to reflect how they receive feedback on how long homework tasks take pupils. If it is teacher intuition, is it always correct? Figures 19, 20 and 46 supply information which suggests that the school's recommendations for the amount of homework are not being met.

- *Are parents informed and advised how they can best support their son/daughter?*
- *How can the school advise and support parents regarding homework?*

Figure 59 indicates that many parents would appreciate more information and advice on this topic from the school, but Figure 60 indicates that not many are prepared to commit themselves to formalised evening meetings on this subject. Perhaps the school's termly newspaper could be used as an additional form of offering guidance to parents, in conjunction with meetings between teachers and parents.

- *Is homework, in setting, marking and recording, a realistic burden upon the teacher?*

Many teachers complain about the burden of marking. It will vary between

subjects, and according to the number of teaching groups with which any teacher has contact. A subject department's Homework Policy needs to have this in mind when drawing up a strategy and advising (especially new and inexperienced) teachers.

- *What consistent sanctions are available to the school for the non-presentation of homework?*

Teachers were asked what they would do if "pupils occasionally fail to complete homework" and what they do if "pupils frequently fail to complete homework". There was no apparent consistency as to how teachers deal with these situations. A variety of strategies are employed (but "give extra work" and doing "nothing" were not amongst them). If teachers agree that doing "nothing" is *not* an option, doing "something" presumably always is. Perhaps the school needs to consider what sanctions might be appropriate for when "pupils occasionally fail to complete homework" and for when "pupils frequently fail to complete homework" taking into account that there might be both genuine as well as fanciful reasons why homework has not been completed. A sensible, but consistent policy, used by all teachers may help, at least of the medium to long time-scale, to eliminate the problem of the non-presentation of homework.

- *How do parents have the opportunity to feedback to subject-teachers?*
- *How does the school monitor the effectiveness of the Pupil Planner?*
- *Is there evidence to suggest that the Pupil Planner aids pupils' self-organisation and time planning?*

The introduction of Tutor-Parent-Pupil meetings twice yearly, whilst having many undoubted advantages, relies on Tutors relaying specific subject

information to parents. This is not always realistic or practical. The relaying of information from parents to specific subject teachers is even more fraught with problems. Some teachers use correspondence in the exercise book or Pupil Planner. Teachers write a message to the parents which the pupils are expected to deliver, and return it counter-signed. Figure 37 indicates that about 80% of pupils across both key stages find the Pupil Planner and Homework Diary a useful tool. However, in Figure 43 pupils report that only about 55% of Key Stage 3 parents and about 35% of Key Stage 4 parents check the Homework Diary or use it as a form of communication between the teachers and the parents. The Parents' use of the Pupil Planner needs perhaps to be clarified, encouraged and communicated. Teachers often have a difficult task to monitor its efficient use by all pupils. Persistence by teachers should be encouraged at all times, and whilst 100% may be unobtainable, it is an ideal to aim at.

Summary of the issues arising from the MacBeath and Turner (1990) Research and the Literature Review.

The MacBeath and Turner (1990) research was nearly a decade earlier than the research at Cromer High School was in a different country and society, and with different educational system. In spite of these factors, the general impressions from comparing the results of these two research projects show a broad agreement between their findings. The more significant differences include:

1. Cromer High School parents are more demanding that the school should explain the purpose of homework.

2. The Scottish secondary pupils comments that homework helps them to understand their work better, but that it takes too much time.
3. Cromer High School pupils would like homework to be more interesting.
4. Scottish pupils appear to spend more time on their homework.
5. The Scottish secondary pupils are clearly more likely to do their homework in the early evening.
6. The Scottish parents are more definite in the view that seeing homework gives them a better idea of what their child is doing at school.
7. The Cromer High School teachers are more emphatic in their judgement that homework is only useful when teachers give feedback.
8. The Scottish pupils are more likely to receive helpful comments from their parents; Cromer High School pupils look more towards others people for this support.

Other issues arising from the review of literature, and reflected in this research, include:

1. Homework appears too often to be lacking in challenge for most pupils [see Tables 9 and 10];
2. Parents who feel they have a contribution to make to their child's success at school are most likely to offer support and encouragement to their children. It may be that they feel involved with the policy decisions which the school makes or they may have received advice on ways to help with homework generally and with subject content more specifically [see Figures 43, 58, 59 and 78]. 46.15% of the parents responded to this survey. This may be indicative of the wish of nearly

- half of the parents to be involved with a successful educational experience for their child and to express an interest in homework;
3. There is no evidence that homework prevents pupils from leading a full cultural, sporting and social life [see Figure 44 and Table 11];
 4. There is some evidence that homework helps to produce better results at GCSE [see Figures 67 and 71];
 5. There is an issue concerning homes which lack useful resources for homework [see Figures 55, 56 and 70];
 6. Marking Policies need clarification and implementation, but the burden upon teachers, especially in some subject areas, needs continual monitoring [see Figures 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 73 and 74];
 7. Time spent on homework needs clarification and monitoring [see Figures 45, 46 and 68];
 8. New ways for the School to communicate with the parents need to be continually investigated. Parents appear to demand advice and support [see Figure 58, 59, 60, 61 and 78].

In the next chapter, some of the more significant findings from this research will be considered to provide some practical implications and recommendations for Cromer High School.

6. **Conclusions: Summary, Practical Implications and Recommendations.**

This table presents a brief summary of the main findings for each of the research questions in relation to all three main stake-holder groups.

Research Questions	Main Findings
How do Pupils react to Homework?	<i>Pupils report that Homework is generally easy, but needs to be explained better. Some perceive it to be a waste of time and that there is too much of it.</i>
Are Parents committed to the importance of Homework? (46.15% of the Parents responded)	<i>Parents' understanding of the purpose of Homework is not always in line with Teachers'. However they are aware of the quantity of Homework the child does, and want to be involved in supporting the process.</i>
Are Teachers committed to the importance of Homework as an aid to improving results?	<i>There is a worrying lack of Teachers' knowledge of the school's Homework Policy. There is a confusion over the methods of giving feedback to pupils. The differentiation between Formative and Summative assessments needs to be made clearer to pupils.</i>
Are resources available, especially at home?	<i>Many (but not all) homes are well-resourced. ICT in the home has improved considerably over the time of this survey. A clarification about the use of resources might be useful.</i>
To what extent is there any connection between Homework and academic results?	<i>"Significant over-performers" are spending more time on Homework, tend to have access to more resources at home and have a greater perception of Homework being easy than do the "significant under-performers".</i>
Are there any indications correlating Homework with Pupil value-added results?	<i>There is a significant correlation between the amount of time spent on Homework and the results. There is also a lesser correlation between resources and results.</i>

Key findings: Pupils

Do pupils value the importance of Homework and endeavour to complete all task to the best of their ability?

1. A large majority of pupils report that they would find homework easier if teachers explained it better (Figures 21 and 22).
2. Homework is perceived by a great majority of pupils as being easy (Tables 9 and 10).
3. Pupils are fairly evenly divided whether homework is a waste of their time (Figure 26) or whether they learn anything from it (Figure 27).

4. About half of the Pupils claim that there is often too much Homework; another sizeable group claim that there is sometimes too much (Figure 28). However Figure 45 reports that a majority of pupils are actually spending less time on Homework than the school indicates is required in its Homework Policy.
5. Pupils indicate that whilst they like to receive acknowledgement of a task well done (Figures 34 and 35) they are less certain about how they like to receive advice from Teachers concerning improvements (Figure 31).
6. Pupils are equally divided whether they wish parents to be involved in Homework (Figures 40, 42 and 43). Pupils are also equally divided whether parents have sufficient subject knowledge to be of help (Figure 61).

Key findings: Parents

Do Parents support the school in its policy of Homework and do they feel they can assist their child?

1. Parents' perceptions of the purpose of Homework are not always in agreement with the Teachers' perceptions (Figure 13). A huge majority of Parents believe that the school do more to explain the purpose of Homework (Figure 15).
2. Figures 24 and 25 indicate that, at both Key Stages, parents have an awareness of which subjects are setting Homework. Figure 29 indicates a clear difference of opinion with the pupils whether there is too much Homework; very few parents believe that there is too much Homework.
3. A majority of Parents feel that the school monitors Homework well (Figure 38) and most are involved in advising, assisting and monitoring the child's Homework (Figure 39). Parents feel that this involvement gives them a better idea of what is happening in school (Figure 40) and that it is good for the parent-child relationship for them to be involved (Figure 41).
4. Many Parents seem to have a realistic idea of the amount of time their child is spending on homework tasks each evening (Figure 45).
5. Whilst Parents are broadly in agreement with the child as to which

places are available for in the home for Homework (Figure 51), there is less agreement between Parent and child regarding the ideal place (Figure 49).

Key findings: Teachers

Are all teachers committed to the importance of homework as an aid to improving results? The policy of schools alone is insufficient; it is how the subject departments and the individual teachers implement this policy which may have a greater influence.

1. The inability of all staff, including some reasonably senior staff, to give a résumé of the school's (Figure 09), and their department's (Figure 10) Homework Policy is a concern.
2. Teachers' reasons for Homework, according to this research (Figure 11) are:
 - a. to develop good study habits;
 - b. for reinforcement, review, practice and consolidation;
 - c. for independent work and self-reliance.
3. Teachers need to know that pupils reported that they found 'a good teacher' to be the most important factor in their schooling.
4. Teachers did not consider that enjoyment was a key enabler in getting pupils to complete homework.
5. The Science Department is perceived as successful in the responses to this survey. This is also reflected well within the Ofsted (2000) report.
6. Figure 30 indicates that twenty four of the twenty eight responding teachers maintain that "homework is only useful when teachers give feedback", there is more diversity in the way feedback should be given (Figure 31). The method of supplying this feedback to pupils is an issue highlighted by Ofsted in 2000:

Most work is regularly and accurately marked, although the written comments in pupils' books vary in the extent to which they provide useful guidance for improvement, especially for the higher attaining pupils.

7. Whilst the difference between formative and summative assessment may be obvious to the teacher, pupils may be less than clear about the distinction. Such understanding should not be assumed by the teacher, and the difference between these two assessments should be explained to pupils. When an assessment is being made, pupils ought to know whether it is formative or summative. The difference between formative and summative assessment is often an area of concern for teachers. Formative assessment is a form of assessment which is a part of the learning experience. An essay or a class presentation can be valuable formative process, and may contribute to increasing knowledge as well as for developing other less subject-specific skills of research, communication, intellectual and organisational skills. Formative assessment is not often included in the formal grading of work. Summative assessment is not traditionally regarded as having any intrinsic learning value. It is often undertaken at the end of a block of work in order to produce grades that are an indicator of the student's performance. The traditional unseen end of module examination and GCSE examinations are often presented as forms of summative assessment.

Key findings: Resources

Are the resources available to the young person, especially those at home, adequate to support the homework tasks?

1. Parents (according to Figure 12 and 13) appear to consider the use of reference books and resources by pupils as a purpose of Homework. In

contrast Teachers do not consider the use of reference books to be a reason for setting Homework (Figure 11).

2. Figure 56 indicates the considerable quantity of resources available at home to pupils; this is quite similarly reported by both pupils and parents. The results, achieved by some 16 year-old pupils, within the greatest value-added category, are by those who do have access to more resources at home (Figure 70).
3. Parents and Pupils report the provision of resources in the home (Figure 56). Many homes are very well equipped. The level of computer and internet availability at the time of the survey was surprisingly low, but this was re-surveyed in the autumn of 2004 and the figures had risen considerably (Figure 57). Reference books are available at home although teachers do not always value them. Figure 11 revealed that teachers placed no emphasis upon using reference books. This seemed to be a very glaring contradiction between the home and the school. Figure 70 revealed that, without exception, the "significant over-performers" value-added group had more access to resources than those in the "significant under-performers" value-added group.
4. A surprisingly large percentage of pupils (Figure 51), supported by the parents' survey, has their own "sole-use" bedroom, and yet Figure 52 suggests that perhaps 20% fewer pupils are taking advantage of what might be regarded as a potentially ideal and dedicated work space. However, the "sole-use" bedroom has the disadvantage that it is less easy for the parents to monitor how the child is coping with the homework tasks; the use of the computer also needs to be monitored so

that time is not misused on inappropriate access. However, monitoring of the child and the computer are issues which can be addressed by the parent; if access to inappropriate internet sites is a problem during homework time, it will probably be a problem at other times as well. The problem needs to be addressed. The “sole-use” bedroom may have the complications of parental supervision of the use of the internet or parent-pupil discussion about homework tasks. However the opportunity of dedicated space for undisturbed homework is also an asset offering freedom from younger siblings and the ability to leave work open until another time. The appropriate venue for homework is one which should be chosen for positive reasons, and may vary according to the task.

Summary of Main Recommendations

Recommendations for Pupils

1. The amount of time pupils spend on homework needs to be monitored to discover whether teachers are setting an appropriate amount and whether pupils are spending an equally appropriate amount of time completing the task. The Homework Planner could be used as a tool for pupils and/or their parents to record time spent on a homework task in order for this to be communicated to the teacher.
2. Members of the “significant over-performers” group are reported as being more likely to spend more time on homework tasks. This should be reported clearly to pupils and their parents because this research shows clearly that those pupils who are members of the “significant over-performers” group, exceeding their predicted grades for GCSE clearly spend more time doing homework than those pupils who are “significant

under-performers". The message to pupils is clear – you will enhance your chances of attaining higher grades if you are prepared to spend time doing homework.

3. Encouraging and enhancing the public recognition of good work, including homework. Pupils like the public recognition of good work (Figures 34 and 35).
4. Encouraging the refinement of a second attempt at a homework task (Figure 37), especially in situations when such a revision might enhance public examination results.
5. Encouraging and enhancing the use of the Student Planner (Figure 38), including the record of homework.

Recommendations for Parents

1. Parents should be given suggestions by the school as to how they can best help pupils to complete homework.
2. Parents need to be encouraged to talk regularly with their child about school in general, but homework tasks in particular; guidance may be needed as to how to do this without being perceived as an interferer.
3. Parents need to realise there may be appropriate roles for other siblings, friends and other adults to help with homework tasks.

Recommendations for Teachers

1. School and Departmental Policies should appear on the staff agenda frequently. Heads of Departments have a responsibility to ensure that all members of their department understand and implement the policy.
2. Teachers should be encouraged that pupils regard them as the most valuable resource.

3. Teachers should encourage and enthuse pupils to develop a thirst for education. When an assessment is being made, pupils ought to know whether it is formative or summative. Perhaps the school and subject departments need to respond to this. It may be easier to “add up marks” and simply give a score, but pupils seem to want to know at what level they are working. They are less keen on written feedback. This demands a lot of teachers’ time. If it is going to be used, again there is a need for further pupil education to explain its purpose. If pupils are not going to read the comments it is a waste of everybody’s time. Talking to a whole class enables teachers to share the experiences (albeit, perhaps anonymously) of different pupils, and their ways of undertaking the homework. Marking and feedback require regular review by the school and subject departments.
4. The School needs to review very specifically the demands of homework in the light of Figure 72; in almost all subject areas more pupils reported homework as “easy” than as “difficult”. 46.3% of the “significant under-performers” reported that homework was “easy” whilst 20.2% reported it as “difficult”. 48.8% of significant over-performers” reported that homework was “easy” whilst 19.6% reported it as “difficult”. The whole-school sample was reported in Tables 9 and 10 showing a similar distribution between “easy” and “difficult” amongst pupils at both key Stage 3 and Kay Stage 4. Whilst the division of homework into the two categories of “easy” and “difficult” is simplistic, more gradation of categories could have complicated the process of completing the Survey by some pupils. The difficulty of homework is a perception which is

subjective to the pupil. Homework which is too easy offers little challenge and is perceived as a waste of time, whilst homework which is so difficult that pupils might find the challenge overwhelming. The challenge of homework of an appropriate standard of difficulty may not only help to raise potential standards, but also help to raise the profile of the importance of homework in the minds of pupils.

Recommendations for Resources

1. It might be appropriate for the school to give guidelines on essential and optional equipment for each curriculum area. To some extent this is already done with PE kit and Technology overalls; perhaps this should be methodically extended across the curriculum.
2. The school needs to review how socially disadvantaged pupils with a lack of resources might be assisted.

Recommendations for the School

1. Encouraging the development and use of the Homework Club, in its infancy at the time of this survey, especially for those pupils who might benefit from it the most.
2. Giving advice to parents regarding the most appropriate venue for pupils to undertake homework, including the monitoring of pupil access to the internet. The inadvisability of watching television, by most pupils, and the detrimental effect it can have on learning, should be explained to pupils and parents.
3. Continuing to monitor the under-achievement of boys (Figure 65) and promote strategies to rectify this.

It is hoped that these recommendations will raise questions which will be

considered by this case-study School. Some may require further in-house monitoring and research, and the School may already be tackling some of them. As pupils (and indeed teachers) change, new attitudes and approaches will change some of these, but these should not be left to chance. Issues relating to homework need to appear constantly on the school's agenda

7. Conclusions.

Pupils are dependent upon so many variable factors regarding their progress through the five years in school. Figures 21 and 22 report that many pupils believe they would find homework easier, and presumably more palatable, if teachers “explained it better” and if “it was more interesting”. The inference of this is that teachers perhaps do not always explain what is required and that homework tasks are, at least at times, less than interesting. Siblings, if they are older, are useful for sharing ideas with. If siblings are younger they can interrupt and impede progress. The more siblings there are within a family, the more likely it is that the child will be required to share a bedroom; this will afford less opportunity for time alone for homework, even if it is wanted by the pupil.

Parents’ attitudes towards education in general, and homework in particular, can have a huge effect on the attitude of the child. The family’s socio-economic well-being may affect progress; resources at home, the availability of a suitable working environment and the financial ability to afford educational equipment and activities within the family may contribute, or not, to the educational progress of the child.

The pressure of time to complete all aspect of the examination syllabus applies to both the teacher and the pupils. The need to complete the syllabus may mean that the teacher and the class will move on to a new area of the syllabus before a teacher and/or the pupils are ready to move on. Homework can be used effectively to support the contents of the examination syllabus and is a part of what is taught within the classroom. For homework to be most effective its relevance needs to be apparent to the pupil and it should be positive and purposeful. It may be preparation for what is to be done, it may enable skills to be practiced, it may enable a pupil to develop a topic in greater depth or it may reinforce what has already been done. Teachers are aware of the variety of purposes of homework, and which may be appropriate to their

particular subject area and to the work being currently undertaken. Clarity of the link between the classroom topic and the homework has to be identified and implemented by the teacher.

7.1 Time limitations for Cromer High School.

This research, by necessity, has been over a lengthy time span of more than five years to enable the value-added results of all five year groups to be obtained. Whilst it has been advantageous to have this five year sample of results, it does mean that this research is already becoming history rather than news. With the change of a complete five cohorts of pupils (and their parents) as well as a change of teachers, and not least senior management within the school, background factors have changed. Aspects which were true at the time of this research may well have altered, if not considerably, at least slightly. The school was at the time of the research, was, and still endeavours to be, an improving school. The governors, headteacher and teachers strive to raise the aspirations of pupils and their achievements. So much has changed and is changing, and the passing of time will cast a haze over this research. Nevertheless, it is hoped that some of the issues raised in this research will still be pertinent topics for the school to revisit and to consider how they have developed, this will help the school to decide its future policy in the area of homework, and how this policy should be pursued.

7.2 Personal reflections.

This research has reconfirmed that there is no such thing as an “ideal structure” in something that involves so many different people. There can be no “fit-for-all-purposes” blueprint for homework nationally, but rather only

general principles. These ought to be enshrined and developed within the school's Homework Policy and reviewed often with contributions by all parties concerned, not least the pupils' representatives (perhaps through the School Council), as well as parents, teachers and governors. Homework was, and doubtless still is, a topic which is controversial for some people. A number of parents and teachers (and probably pupils too) may have strong views about it, whether in favour or against. Realistically total agreement is unlikely ever to be achieved. Teachers should have the opportunity through formal channels within the department and the school to express their own individual views about homework. However, once a policy has been agreed within the school it needs to be rigorously and professionally adhered to by everyone. Pupils should not be able to perceive dissent amongst teachers with this, or indeed any other school policy.

The research, rather than simply answering questions, has created many more.

7.3 Recommendations for future research.

There is a number of areas which perhaps warrant further investigation, not specifically at Cromer High School, but in a broader context:

1. How pupils study alone, including how they organise their study and manage the time-factor, on a short term and medium term basis.
2. The role of resources in the home: and whether they are significant in the learning process.
3. The continual development of the use of ICT for homework, especially how the use of the intranet and internet can be developed is an area of exciting growth. With so many pupils now having access to computers and the internet at home, whether it is possible to develop homework on the school's intranet. The setting of homework (or at least a confirmation of what has been set ought to be possible. As all teachers

- have their own personal desk-top computers linked in to the school's network, the publishing of homework on the school's intranet ought to be possible.
4. Homework topics on the intranet, including video and audio clips which can be referred to for homework, should be happening.
 5. Publishers of school books ought to be encouraged to also prepare parallel resources which schools can use on their own intranet pages as homework material.
 6. . Provision for the (few) pupils who do not have appropriate ICT facilities at home needs to be reviewed. There should be a national strategy to enable all pupils to have equal opportunity of access to ICT, including the internet, at home. Like school meals, it could be means tested.
 7. The workspace used by pupils for homework needs further investigation. How can pupils (and their parents) be encouraged to use the most appropriate facilities available?
 8. The role of the parents in homework appears to be important. How can this be transferred into "good practice", and how can this be communicated to parents?
 9. Further investigation into the relationship between the time factor in homework and individual improvement, is required. Is there an optimum time factor for homework tasks at different ages, and how might this be successfully communicated to pupils and their parents?

Homework is at times controversial; it can be a vibrant activity to enthuse in the pupil a desire for an education in its broadest sense, and a thirst for learning which will extend far beyond the formal learning traditions of schools, colleges and universities. Homework can be an important part of learning to learn, of taking responsibilities for one's own individual learning and can be important for the development of the individual and of society.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Letter of authorisation from Cromer High School



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CROMER HIGH SCHOOL AND LANGUAGE COLLEGE

**Chair of Governors
Cromer High School & Language College
Norwich Road
Cromer
NR27 0EX**

Chair of Governors
The Parents

Dear Richard,

Thank you for the copy of the letter you sent to Ron Munson (Headteacher) on the 17th February 2005, regarding your PhD studies at the University of Hull.

Ron has asked me to write to you to formally authorise the school to be identified in your case study; we are both very happy this to happen. We look forward to receiving the results of your finished work and wish you all the best for the completion of your dissertation.

With all good wishes,

**Tim Bennett
Chair of Governors**



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Headteacher: Ron Munson B.Sc., M.A.

Deputy Headteacher: Glyn Hambling B.Ed., M.Sc.

Business Director & Clerk to Governors: Gillian Kent M.B.A.



Homework and School Improvement Survey for all pupils.

This survey forms a part of a Research Study being undertaken by Mr Baker at the University of Hull, School of Education. He wishes to reassure you that you will NOT be identified by name either to anyone else at Cromer High School or to the University of Hull.

It should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Please do not discuss your answers with anyone else. **PLEASE BE AS TRUTHFUL AS POSSIBLE IN YOUR ANSWERS.**

Mr Baker will also wish to talk further with some randomly selected pupils, but such conversations will be confidential to him, and treated anonymously in his report.

Should you have any questions concerning the confidentiality of this survey, please do speak with him. It is hoped that, as a result of this work, the school will be able to offer greater support to all pupils to help them achieve their very best.

THANK YOU for giving your time to complete this survey.

Please indicate your Year group []

and whether Male or Female male [] female []

Please indicate your home postcode: (e.g. NR27 0EX) NR _____

Your "Q" or Admission Number Q _____

A1 Place five of the following in order of importance (1 = most important, 5 = least important) for what you consider to be the main purposes of homework

to "fix" things in my mind	[]
to help me learn more	[]
to finish unfinished work	[]
because it is part of a good education	[]
to help me to work alone/unsupervised	[]
as preparation for the next lesson	[]
as a punishment	[]
to see if I understand what has been done in the lesson	[]
so my parents see what I am doing	[]
other (please specify)	[]

*

**A2 I know the reasons why homework is set by teachers.
(tick one only)**

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| always | [|] |
| usually | [|] |
| sometimes | [|] |
| never | [|] |

**A3 I would find homework easier to do if ...
(tick three statements TRUE for you)**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| teachers explained it better | [|] |
| there was less to do | [|] |
| it was more interesting | [|] |
| it was optional | [|] |
| I could choose the type of homework | [|] |
| there was more time to do it | [|] |
| there was someone to help | [|] |
| if it was timetabled in a better way | [|] |
| I could concentrate better when working alone | [|] |
| we were given "How to do Homework" guidelines | [|] |
| if there was more space in the Homework Diary | [|] |
| if I had more time in class to write homework down | [|] |
| Other (please specify) | [|] |

*

**A4 For each of the following subjects which you currently take
- tick those which are TRUE**

- In Art, homework is
- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|------------------|-----|
| mostly easy | [] | or | mostly difficult | [] |
| fixing things in my mind | [|] | | |
| practising things I find difficult | [|] | | |
| finding out new facts | [|] | | |
| something enjoyable | [|] | | |
| further practice at skills | [|] | | |
| opportunity to work at my own pace | [|] | | |

- In BIS, homework is
- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|------------------|-----|
| mostly easy | [] | or | mostly difficult | [] |
| fixing things in my mind | [|] | | |
| practising things I find difficult | [|] | | |
| finding out new facts | [|] | | |
| something enjoyable | [|] | | |
| further practice at skills | [|] | | |
| opportunity to work at my own pace | [|] | | |

In English, homework is

mostly easy	[]	or	mostly difficult	[]
fixing things in my mind	[]			[]
practising things I find difficult	[]			[]
finding out new facts	[]			[]
something enjoyable	[]			[]
further practice at skills	[]			[]
opportunity to work at my own pace	[]			[]

In French, homework is

mostly easy	[]	or	mostly difficult	[]
fixing things in my mind	[]			[]
practising things I find difficult	[]			[]
finding out new facts	[]			[]
something enjoyable	[]			[]
further practice at skills	[]			[]
opportunity to work at my own pace	[]			[]

In Geography, homework is

mostly easy	[]	or	mostly difficult	[]
fixing things in my mind	[]			[]
practising things I find difficult	[]			[]
finding out new facts	[]			[]
something enjoyable	[]			[]
further practice at skills	[]			[]
opportunity to work at my own pace	[]			[]

In German, homework is

mostly easy	[]	or	mostly difficult	[]
fixing things in my mind	[]			[]
practising things I find difficult	[]			[]
finding out new facts	[]			[]
something enjoyable	[]			[]
further practice at skills	[]			[]
opportunity to work at my own pace	[]			[]

In GNVQ, homework is

mostly easy	[]	or	mostly difficult	[]
fixing things in my mind	[]			[]
practising things I find difficult	[]			[]
finding out new facts	[]			[]
something enjoyable	[]			[]
further practice at skills	[]			[]
opportunity to work at my own pace	[]			[]

In History, homework is

<i>mostly easy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>or</i>	<i>mostly difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>fixing things in my mind</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>practising things I find difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>finding out new facts</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>something enjoyable</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>further practice at skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>opportunity to work at my own pace</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>

In ICT (Information Technology), homework is

<i>mostly easy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>or</i>	<i>mostly difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>fixing things in my mind</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>practising things I find difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>finding out new facts</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>something enjoyable</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>further practice at skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>opportunity to work at my own pace</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>

In Mathematics, homework is

<i>mostly easy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>or</i>	<i>mostly difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>fixing things in my mind</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>practising things I find difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>finding out new facts</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>something enjoyable</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>further practice at skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>opportunity to work at my own pace</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>

In Music, homework is

<i>mostly easy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>or</i>	<i>mostly difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>fixing things in my mind</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>practising things I find difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>finding out new facts</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>something enjoyable</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>further practice at skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>opportunity to work at my own pace</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>

In Physical Education, homework is

<i>mostly easy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>or</i>	<i>mostly difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>fixing things in my mind</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>practising things I find difficult</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>finding out new facts</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>something enjoyable</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>further practice at skills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>opportunity to work at my own pace</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>

In Religious Education, homework is
 mostly easy [] or mostly difficult []
 fixing things in my mind []
 practising things I find difficult []
 finding out new facts []
 something enjoyable []
 further practice at skills []
 opportunity to work at my own pace []

In Science, homework is
 mostly easy [] or mostly difficult []
 fixing things in my mind []
 practising things I find difficult []
 finding out new facts []
 something enjoyable []
 further practice at skills []
 opportunity to work at my own pace []

In Spanish, homework is
 mostly easy [] or mostly difficult []
 fixing things in my mind []
 practising things I find difficult []
 finding out new facts []
 something enjoyable []
 further practice at skills []
 opportunity to work at my own pace []

In the Technologies, homework is
 mostly easy [] or mostly difficult []
 fixing things in my mind []
 practising things I find difficult []
 finding out new facts []
 something enjoyable []
 further practice at skills []
 opportunity to work at my own pace []

B1 *I prefer it when my teacher ...*
(tick one only)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>gives me a letter grade (e.g. B+ or C)</i> | [|] |
| <i>gives me a number grade (e.g. 18/20)</i> | [|] |
| <i>gives me a written comment</i> | [|] |
| <i>speaks to me personally</i> | [|] |
| <i>speaks to the whole class or group</i> | [|] |
| <i>no preference</i> | [|] |
-

B2 *The School requires you to use a Pupil Planner containing a Homework Diary; do you find it*

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <i>useful?</i> | [|] |
| <i><u>not</u> useful?</i> | [|] |
-

C1 *I enjoy homework* (tick one only)

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| <i>always</i> | [|] |
| <i>usually</i> | [|] |
| <i>sometimes</i> | [|] |
| <i>never</i> | [|] |
-

C2 *I learn from homework* (tick one only)

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| <i>always</i> | [|] |
| <i>usually</i> | [|] |
| <i>sometimes</i> | [|] |
| <i>never</i> | [|] |
-

C3 The good things about homework are ...
(tick THREE statements TRUE for you)

- that it is an opportunity to work on a subject I like []
- that it helps me understand/learn []
- that it lets me finish work []
- when I don't get much/any []
- when I can do it []
- when I have to learn facts by heart []
- that it can be interesting/fun []
- that it keeps me occupied []
- that it helps me catch up []
- that it allows me to practice skills []
- nothing []
- that it gives a good excuse for not doing chores []
- that it helps my parents help me []
- Other (please specify) []

*

C4 The bad things about homework are ...
(tick three statements TRUE for you)

- that it stops me doing other things []
- having too much to do []
- that it takes too much time []
- that it is "boring" []
- when I don't understand []
- when it is too difficult []
- when I have to learn facts by heart []
- when I have too many subjects on one night []
- when I have to do a lot of writing []
- when I have to do a lot of number work []
- Other (please specify) []

*

C5 Were you expected to do homework regularly when you were

- An Infant (Years 1,2) Yes []
- A Lower Junior (Years 3,4) Yes []
- An Upper Junior (Years 5,6) Yes []

C6 I like to have a "good homework" recognised by my teacher with a Merit Mark (or the like)
(tick one only)

- Yes []
- No []

C7 *If I "mess up" a homework, I like to be given the chance to have another go to improve my mark or grade ... (tick one only)*

Yes	[]
Sometimes	[]
No	[]

E1 *The amount of homework for different subjects should vary (tick one only)*

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

E2 *I am usually set homework in the following subjects ... (tick as many as appropriate)*

Art	[]	ICT	[]
BIS(Year 10/11 option)	[]	Mathematics	[]
English	[]	Music	[]
French	[]	Physical Education	[]
Geography	[]	Religious Education	[]
German	[]	Science	[]
GNVQ (Year 10/11 option)	[]	Spanish	[]
History	[]	Technologies	[]

F1 *I just do homework to get it over as quickly as possible (tick one only)*

always	[]
usually	[]
sometimes	[]
never	[]

F2 *I take time over homework and think about what I'm doing (tick one only)*

always	[]
usually	[]
sometimes	[]
never	[]

F3 *I do more homework than I have to because I am interested in it (tick one only)*

always	[]
usually	[]
sometimes	[]
never	[]

F4 Most homework is a waste of time (tick one only)

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

F5 I get too much homework to cope with (tick one only)

very often	[]
often	[]
sometimes	[]
never	[]

F6 How many different subjects of homework do you normally get set on each night of the week. Write in the number of different subjects you normally get set on each night of the week. LOOK AT YOUR HOMEWORK PLANNER IF YOU LIKE.

Monday	[]
Tuesday	[]
Wednesday	[]
Thursday	[]
Friday / weekend	[]

F7 Amount of time spent doing homework on a "normal" or typical evening
(tick one only)

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| none | [|] |
| up to 15 minutes | [|] |
| 16-30 minutes | [|] |
| 31-60 minutes | [|] |
| 1-2 hours | [|] |
| 2-3 hours | [|] |
| 3-4 hours | [|] |
| more than 4 hours | [|] |
-

F8 What do you normally do after school (between 2.35 p.m. and bedtime)?
Tick the three which are most important for you.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| watch TV/videos | [|] |
| meet/play with friends | [|] |
| sports | [|] |
| listen to music | [|] |
| clubs | [|] |
| look after pets | [|] |
| music lessons (instrumental) | [|] |
| read | [|] |
| jobs in the home or garden | [|] |
| drama | [|] |
| dancing | [|] |
| part time (paid) work | [|] |
| computer games | [|] |
| other (please specify) | [|] |
-

*

F9 I do my homework ...
(tick one only)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| as soon as I get home from school | [|] |
| in the early evening (before 8 p.m.) | [|] |
| in the late evening (after 8 p.m.) | [|] |
| in the morning | [|] |
| spread throughout the evening | [|] |
-

G1 Things that help you learn
Tick the three, which are most important for you.

computer	[]
drawing	[]
good teachers	[]
sharing ideas	[]
talking to adults	[]
friends	[]
making things	[]
music	[]
number work	[]
TV	[]
reading	[]
research	[]
writing	[]

G2 I normally do homework ...
(tick any that apply)

with nobody else	[]
with mother's/father's help	[]
with friend's help	[]
with brother's / sister's help	[]
by copying someone else's homework	[]

G3 I have access to the following resources at home:
(tick as many as appropriate)

Calculator	[]
CD ROM	[]
Encyclopaedia	[]
English Dictionary	[]
French Dictionary	[]
German Dictionary	[]
Holy Bible (Good News or N.I.V.)	[]
Internet	[]
Library Membership	[]
Spanish Dictionary	[]
PC/Word Processor/Printer	[]
World Atlas	[]
Writing and Drawing Equipment	[]
other (please specify)	[]

*

G4 I would be interested in taking part in a regular after school "Homework Club" in which school facilities (adults, computers, LRC etc) were available in school to help me with my homework..

(tick one only)

most afternoons	[]
some afternoons	[]
occasionally	[]
never	[]

H1 The types of activities for homework should vary (tick one only)

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

I1 I am able to study in the following places:
(tick all those places available)

own bedroom	[]
shared bedroom	[]
family living room	[]
kitchen	[]
study/workroom	[]
other (please specify)	[]

I2 I usually study in the following place:
(tick one only)

own bedroom	[]
shared bedroom	[]
family living room	[]
kitchen	[]
study/workroom	[]
other (please specify)	[]

**I3 My choice of the "ideal" place to study would be
(tick one only)**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Alone in a quiet room | [|] |
| Whilst others are talking in the same room | [|] |
| Whilst the television is on in the room | [|] |
| With radio/CDs/music cassettes playing | [|] |
-

**I4 My parents expect me to study
(tick one only)**

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Alone in a quiet room | [|] |
| Whilst others may be talking in the same room | [|] |
| Whilst the television is on in the room | [|] |
| With radio/CDs/music cassettes playing | [|] |
-

**J1 What support and help do your parents give to you?
(tick as many as appropriate)**

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| they see my homework | [|] |
| they talk about what I am doing | [|] |
| they help me with it | [|] |
| they do it for me | [|] |
| they check my homework diary | [|] |
| they leave me to get on with it | [|] |
-

**J2 Seeing homework gives my parents a better idea of what is happening in school
(tick one only)**

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| very often | [|] |
| often | [|] |
| sometimes | [|] |
| never | [|] |
-

**J3 In many subjects my parents do not have enough knowledge to help me
(tick one only)**

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| strongly agree | [|] |
| agree | [|] |
| disagree | [|] |
| strongly disagree | [|] |
-

J4 *I enjoy discussing my homework with my parents (tick one only)*

<i>strongly disagree</i>	[]
<i>disagree</i>	[]
<i>agree</i>	[]
<i>strongly agree</i>	[]

J5 *After I've finished homework I usually get helpful comments on it from (tick all those statements which are TRUE for you)*

<i>the teacher</i>	[]
<i>my parent(s)</i>	[]
<i>older brothers/sisters</i>	[]
<i>my friends</i>	[]
<i>others</i>	[]
<i>nobody</i>	[]

Richard Baker *Thank you.*
May 1999

A1 Tick the **THREE** statements which you consider to be the main purposes of homework :

- reinforcement / consolidation []
(fixing in the pupil's mind what has been taught)
- practice with weaknesses/difficulties []
- using reference books etc. []
- something enjoyable []
- further practice []
- opportunity to progress further at own pace []
- other (please specify) []

*

A2 Schools should do more to explain to pupils the purpose of homework (tick one only)

- strongly agree []
 - agree []
 - disagree []
 - strongly disagree []
-

B1 What monitoring, support and help do you give to your daughter/son? (tick as many as appropriate)

- I see homework []
 - I talk about what s/he is doing []
 - I help him/her with it []
 - I do it for him/her []
 - I leave him/her to get on with it []
-

B2 I consider that generally the School monitors, supervises and checks homework well. (tick one only)

- strongly disagree []
 - disagree []
 - agree []
 - strongly agree []
-

D1 I would appreciate guidance from the school on how I can best help my daughter/son with her/his homework (tick one only)

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

D2 Parents should be given more information about the purpose and content of homework (tick one only)

strongly agree	[]
agree	[]
disagree	[]
strongly disagree	[]

E1 The amount of homework set should vary (tick one on each line)

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
i according to age	[]	[]	[]	[]
ii according to subject	[]	[]	[]	[]
iii according to ability	[]	[]	[]	[]

E2 The homework activities should vary (tick one only)

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
i according to age	[]	[]	[]	[]
ii according to subject	[]	[]	[]	[]
iii according to ability	[]	[]	[]	[]

E3 I know that homework is set at least once each week for my daughter/son in the following subjects...

(tick as many as appropriate)

Art	[]	IT (Information Technology)	[]
BIS (Year 10/11)	[]	Mathematics	[]
English	[]	Music	[]
French	[]	Physical Education	[]
Geography	[]	Religious Education	[]
German	[]	Science	[]
GNVQ (Year 10/11)	[]	Spanish	[]
History	[]	Technologies	[]

F1 **On a typical evening how much time does your daughter/son spend on homework?**
(tick one only)

none	[]
up to 15 minutes	[]
16-30 minutes	[]
31-60 minutes	[]
1-2 hours	[]
2-3 hours	[]
more than 3 hours	[]

F2 **My daughter/son generally gets too much homework to cope with**
(tick one only)

very often	[]
often	[]
sometimes	[]
never	[]

F3 **I think that time spent on homework could be better used on other activities** (tick one only)

never	[]
sometimes	[]
often	[]
always	[]

**G1 My daughter/son has access to the following resources:
(tick as many as appropriate)**

Books	[]	Internet	[]
Calculator	[]	Library Membership	[]
CD ROM	[]	Mathematics equipment e.g. (protractor, compass etc)	[]
Encyclopaedia	[]	PC/Word Processor/Printer	[]
English Dictionary	[]	Spanish Dictionary	[]
French Dictionary	[]	World Atlas	[]
German Dictionary	[]	Writing/Drawing Equipment	[]
Holy Bible	[]		
		other (please specify)	[]

*

G2 I would value the opportunity for my daughter/son to take part in a regular after school "Homework Club" in which school facilities were available.(tick one only)

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

**I1 My daughter/son has available, for study, the following places:
(tick all those available)**

own bedroom	[]
shared bedroom	[]
family living room	[]
kitchen	[]
study/workroom	[]
other (please specify)	[]

*

**I2 My daughter/son usually studies in the following place:
(tick one only)**

own bedroom	[]
shared bedroom	[]
family living room	[]
kitchen	[]
study/workroom	[]
other (please specify)	[]

*

I3 ***In my view it is acceptable for my daughter/son to study ...***
(tick as many as appropriate)

<i>In a silent room</i>	[]
<i>Whilst others are talking in the same room</i>	[]
<i>Whilst the television is on in the room</i>	[]
<i>With radio/CDs/music cassettes playing</i>	[]

J1 ***Seeing homework gives me a better idea of what is happening in school*** ***(tick one only)***

<i>very often</i>	[]
<i>often</i>	[]
<i>sometimes</i>	[]
<i>never</i>	[]

J2 ***In many subjects, I consider that I do not have enough subject knowledge and skill to help my daughter/son.*** ***(tick one only)***

<i>strongly agree</i>	[]
<i>agree</i>	[]
<i>disagree</i>	[]
<i>strongly disagree</i>	[]

J3 ***It is good for the relationship between parent and daughter/son to talk about homework together*** ***(tick one only)***

<i>strongly disagree</i>	[]
<i>disagree</i>	[]
<i>agree</i>	[]
<i>strongly agree</i>	[]

J4 ***I would be interested in a "Parent Education Course"-a course which would give advice to the parent on how to support assist child more effectively with school and homework.(tick one only)***

<i>Yes</i>	[]
<i>No</i>	[]

Thank you for your assistance.
Richard Baker ***May 1999***

Homework and School Improvement Survey for members of the teaching staff at Cromer High School

This Survey forms part of a Research Study being undertaken by Richard Baker at the University of Hull School of Education. He would be very grateful if you could find the time to complete it during the next few days. It should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. Please do not discuss your responses with other colleagues.

When completed please return to Richard Baker's pigeonhole in the Staff Room in the envelope provided and marked "confidential".

He wishes to reassure you that you will not be identified either to Cromer High School or to the University of Hull, in spite of the fact that he might be able to deduce from the answers exactly who you are. If you have any concerns, please do speak with Richard.

Richard Baker may wish to talk further with some individual teachers, parents and/or pupils, but again such conversations will be confidential, and made anonymous when reported.

It is hoped that as a result of this work the school will be able to offer even greater support to all pupils in the School.

THANK YOU for giving your time to complete this form.

What is your **MAIN** teaching subject?

[_____]

Are you (tick one only)

A member of the Senior Management Team and/or Strategic Planning group	[]]
A member of the Middle Management Team	[]]
A member of none of these	[]]

Have your own children been in Secondary Education, either in past years, or at the present time? (tick as appropriate)

Yes-at Cromer High School	[]]
Yes-but not at Cromer High School	[]]
No	[]]

Are you able to give a résumé of this School's Homework Policy? (tick one only)

Yes	[]]
No	[]]

Are you able to give a résumé of your Subject Department's Homework Policy? (tick one only)

Yes	[]]
No	[]]

A1 My THREE main reasons for setting homework are ...
(Tick **THREE** only)

to comply with Homework Policies	[]
as a link between home and school	[]
something enjoyable to enthuse pupils	[]
to involve parents	[]
to develop good study habits	[]
as reinforcement/review/practice/ consolidation	[]
extension activities	[]
curriculum enrichment	[]
using reference books etc.	[]
as independent work/self reliance	[]
for diagnostic purposes	[]
practice with weaknesses/difficulties	[]
to enable unfinished work to be finished	[]
to prepare for future class work	[]
other (please specify)	[]

*

A2 Schools should do more to explain the purpose of homework to pupils
(tick one only)

strongly agree	[]
agree	[]
disagree	[]
strongly disagree	[]

B1 Homework is only useful where teachers give feedback
(tick one only)

strongly agree	[]
agree	[]
disagree	[]
strongly disagree	[]

C1 I usually give feedback by... (tick as appropriate)

	key stage 3		key stage 4	
letter grade (e.g. B+ or C)	[]	[]
number grade (e.g. 18/20)	[]	[]
written comment	[]	[]
speaking personally to pupil	[]	[]
speaking to the whole class	[]	[]

C2 I like to recognise “excellent homework” with a Merit Mark (or the like)
(tick one only)

Yes []
No []

C3 If a pupil “messes up” a homework, I like to give them a chance to have another go to improve the mark or grade... (tick one only)

Yes []
Sometimes []
No []

C4 Pupils should never be punished for not completing homework
(tick one only)

strongly agree []
agree []
disagree []
strongly disagree []

C5 What do you do if a pupil occasionally fails to complete homework?
(Tick not more than THREE)

give another chance to complete []
do homework in school []
use persuasion []
inform parents []
detention []
verbal reprimand []
note it on report []
give extra work []
report to Pupil/Curriculum Director []
nothing []
other (please specify) []
*

**C6 What you do if a pupil frequently fails to complete homework?
(Tick not more than THREE)**

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| give another chance to complete | [|] |
| do homework in school | [|] |
| use persuasion | [|] |
| inform parents | [|] |
| detention | [|] |
| verbal reprimand | [|] |
| note it on report | [|] |
| give extra work | [|] |
| report to Pupil/Curriculum Director | [|] |
| nothing | [|] |
| other (please specify) | [|] |
-
-

F1 I believe homework is a waste of time (tick one only)

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| strongly disagree | [|] |
| disagree | [|] |
| agree | [|] |
| strongly agree | [|] |
-
-

F2 How much notice do you usually give pupils between setting the work and expecting it to be handed in?

Key Stage 3: (tick one only)

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| One day | [|] |
| 2 to 3 days | [|] |
| 3 days to 1 week | [|] |
| a week or more | [|] |

Key Stage 4: (tick one only)

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| One day | [|] |
| 2 to 3 days | [|] |
| 3 days to 1 week | [|] |
| a week or more | [|] |

**H1 Which types of homework are "preferred" for your subject?
(please tick not more than THREE to indicate those most frequently used)**

memorising/learning	[]
completing class work	[]
preparation for the next lesson	[]
to check pupils' understanding	[]
to give opportunity for skills practice	[]
reading	[]
copying	[]
drawing pictures/diagrams/maps etc	[]
other (please specify)	[]

*

**H2 The amount of homework time for different subjects should vary
(tick one only)**

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

H3 The homework activities should vary (tick one only)

strongly disagree	[]
disagree	[]
agree	[]
strongly agree	[]

**I1 Do you believe that pupils are capable of doing homework ...
(tick as many as appropriate)**

In a silent room	[]
Whilst others are talking in the same room	[]
Whilst the television is on in the room	[]
With radio/CDs/music cassettes playing	[]

J1 *Parents should be given more general information about all aspects of homework.
(tick one only)*

<i>strongly agree</i>	[]
<i>agree</i>	[]
<i>disagree</i>	[]
<i>strongly disagree</i>	[]

J2 *I think it would benefit pupils if a "Parent Education Course" was organised to share with Parents ideas how they can help their children with homework..(tick one only)*

<i>Yes</i>	[]
<i>No</i>	[]

X *Do you have any concerns about research such as this being carried out with Parents, Pupils and Teachers? (tick one only)*

<i>Yes*</i>	[]
<i>No</i>	[]

**If YES, would you put your "concerns" into words in this space:*

Thank you for your assistance.

Richard Baker May 1999