

Improving A Good School:  
Multi-Stakeholder  
Perspectives  
- England and Hungary



Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at the University of Leicester

By

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Department of Education

University of Leicester

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# **Improving a Good School, Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives - England and Hungary**

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**By**

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## **Abstract**

**This research asks the stakeholders of two case study schools to give personal perspectives on whether their school is good and how it can be improved. One case study school is an international middle school in Hungary and the other is a middle school in the south of England. Both schools follow the National Curriculum in England and Wales. The stakeholders studied in each school are the governors (directors in the case of the international school), the senior management team, teachers, students and parents. The SMT were interviewed, surveys were adopted for the other stakeholders.**

**The literature review finds that stakeholder views are not a focus of many school effectiveness and improvement studies. Governors and senior management team (SMT) views on school improvement are seldom investigated. Studies that involve the full range of stakeholders are rarely seen.**

**The results of the stakeholder surveys at the two schools revealed common experiences and contrasts between schools and between stakeholders. At both schools, governors are noted as being followers and do not make the school accountable, the SMTs revealed lack of cohesion and the head and principal did not appear to be aware of the problems. Problems between the senior management and staff are also clearly portrayed by both teachers and senior staff.**

**Whereas similarities in school improvement issues between the stakeholders of a school were common, the priorities for improvement were different. What parents and students perceived as priority areas did not agree with other stakeholder priorities. This pattern was replicated in both schools.**

**The research finds that some problems appear to be hidden from inspections. The accuracy of Ofsted inspection report statements that declare the two schools as good is, therefore, questioned. The study concludes by proposing a new definition for a good school. It responds to the findings in the literature review by adding a stakeholder specific school effectiveness list to contrast existing ones (for example, Sammons et al 1995) and provides a process model for school improvement with stakeholders at its centre.**

## **Acknowledgements**

**This thesis is dedicated to Professor Tony Bush for his inspiration and guidance, and to my wife Firoza for her infinite patience.**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### **The International Interest in School Effectiveness and Improvement.**

The Coleman Report (Coleman et al, 1966) is often described as the precursor to school effectiveness studies (Reynolds et al 1994b, p.29, Stringfield and Herman 1996, p.159 and Silver 1994, p.78). Coleman et al's (1966, p.22) conclusion that 'differences between schools account for only a small fraction of differences in pupil achievement' led the media at the time to report that schools made no difference and teaching methods were not important (Silver 1994, p.79). The impact was such that by the 1980s, American school researchers were working in the classroom and studying processes affecting learning (Stringfield and Herman 1996, p.162). The early 1990s, however, experienced flawed studies and criticisms (Stringfield and Herman 1996, p.163), culminating in a significant reduction in American school effectiveness studies (ibid.). Stringfield and Herman (1996, p.163) report that the current renewal in American school effects research is due to the continuing interest in school improvement studies.

Hopkins et al (1994, p.3) define school improvement as:

'all theories and studies concerning strategies for educational change that enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change.'

Creemers and Reezigt (1997, p.401) define school effectiveness as:

'all theories and research studies concerning the means-end relationships between educational processes and outcomes....aiming at explanations for differences in student achievement between schools and classrooms.'

Studies in school effectiveness have become an international phenomenon. In Taiwan, effectiveness research has been going on since 1984 (Reynolds et al 1994b, p.33). This contrasts with Hong Kong where it is still rare to use the school as a unit of research (Reynolds et al 1994b, p.27). In Canada and Australia (Reynolds et al 1994b, p.26 and p.29), school improvement studies have eclipsed school effectiveness studies. In Eastern Europe both movements are very new and limited to quantitative school improvement studies such as Monitor 95 (Vari, 1997). In Norway and Netherlands school effectiveness research has been going on since the early seventies (Reynolds et al 1994b, p.28 and Scheerens 1992, p.59) and most of the studies are surveys (Reynolds et al 1994b, p.28 and Scheerens 1992, p.65).

In the late 1970s the need for international collaboration was recognised (Van Velzen 1987, p.12). Informal alliances began (Papadopoulos 1987, p.xi) and efforts culminated in the establishment of the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) in 1982 (Van Velzen 1987, p.12). Supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the ISIP united the fourteen OECD countries listed in Table 1.1 (Reynolds et al 1996b, p.ix and Hord 1987, p.17). According to Reynolds et al (1996b, p.ix), ISIP was the foundation of the school improvement movement.

**Table 1.1 Countries included in the ISIP.**

Australia	The Netherlands
Belgium	Norway
Canada	Sweden
Denmark	Switzerland
France	United Kingdom
Italy	United States
Japan	West Germany

Although now disbanded (Van Velzen 1987, p.17), the international links established by ISIP continue through the Foundation for International Collaboration on School Improvement (FICSI) and the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) (Reynolds et al 1996b, p. ix).

Reynolds et al (1994b, p.218) comment that only at the first ICSEI 1988 conference did overseas researchers appreciate that the Netherlands contained the world's largest concentration of school effectiveness researchers. Both Scheerens (1992, p.59) and Scheerens and Creemers (1996, p.181) confirm that educational research was well established in the Netherlands at the time. The early Dutch studies, however, were only loosely related to school effectiveness (Scheerens and Creemers 1996, p.181 and Scheerens 1992, p.59). Scheerens (1992, p.59) adds that all Dutch 'school effectiveness' research was carried out in 1984 and onwards. Scheerens (1992, p.65) also points out that patterns found in foreign studies are not always found in Dutch studies such as the link between leadership and achievement. Scheerens (1992, p.65) suggests that the Dutch may use different variables to their British and American counterparts and may have different theoretical concepts.

In contrast to the Dutch approach, British studies such as Mortimore et al (1988) appear to adopt more sophisticated methodologies (Reynolds et al 1996c, p. 138) such as observation. British government interest in school effectiveness research findings, and the foundation of Ofsted, which has commissioned work on school effectiveness (Reynolds et al 1996c, p.134), may also have elevated British school effectiveness research. Ofsted inspection criteria include checklists, which, according to Reynolds et al (1996c, p.134), are influenced by school effectiveness research. They (Reynolds et al 1996c, p.135) also point out that the Dfee are sponsoring national conferences on school improvement and

teacher effectiveness. Such national support for the effectiveness and improvement movements in Britain can only be compared with the Netherlands and the USA.

Amongst others, Reynolds and Creemers (Reynolds et al 1994b and 1996b) continue to lead the movement for an international perspective in school improvement arguing that without it,

- ill advised transplanting of policies is occurring from one country to another (Reynolds et al 1996b, p.219),
- we will not understand why some policies travel better than others to other countries (p.219),
- the full range of variables in classrooms will never be known (p.220), and
- we will not be able to provide a sensitive theoretical explanation for effective approaches (p.220).

### **School Improvement and its Links with School Effectiveness.**

Slee and Weiner (1998, p .1) observe that school improvement is a term that arose out of the school effectiveness movement. They describe it as the 'operational branch of school effectiveness research'(ibid.). White and Barber (1997, p.52) add that school improvement is to do with making less effective schools more effective. They also add (ibid.) that 'if the schools are to be improved they are to be made better'. An obvious statement but there are some weaknesses to both comments. White and Barber (1997) make a number of assumptions when using the term 'less effective schools' to describe the application of school improvement. This immediately negates the application of school improvement to good schools. This study challenges this notion and argues that school improvement is applicable to schools of all standards. White and Barber's (1997) other statement suggests that school improvement is concerned with making schools better. This study modifies this statement by asking whom should the school be better for? The teachers, the SMT, the students, or, is the motive political such as the head seeking improvement for Ofsted?

This study echoes Slee and Weiner's (1998, p.5) comments about school effectiveness and restates them in the context of school improvement:

- Who is school improvement for?
- What is school improvement for?
- Who gains from school improvement?

Slee and Weiner (1998, p.5) argue that the school improvement movement is:

- Riddled with errors.
- Excluding.
- Normative and regulatory.
- Bureaucratic and disempowering.

### **Improvement and Inspection: The Ofsted Role**

Ofsted (1998) have the responsibility for inspecting all schools in England and Wales:

‘Ofsted's remit is to improve standards of achievement and quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting and informed independent advice.’

Ofsted's (1998) criteria for inspection, therefore, may be considered as significant for all schools in England and Wales.

Gray and Wilcox's (1995) survey of chief inspectors and advisors revealed that improvement through inspection is dependent on a number of factors. Three factors identified as inhibiting school improvement were:

- the characteristics of the staff,
- the characteristics of the inspectors, and
- the inspection and review process itself.

Factors identified as facilitating school improvement were:

- partnership and collaboration,
- the inspection and review process itself,
- support and follow up, and
- the characteristics of the staff.

The factors are listed in order of significance. The response of the management appears to be the key to inspections contributing to improvement.

There is no statutory role for Ofsted concerning international schools, but teams of Ofsted inspectors are often invited to visit and inspect these schools. A British School in Hungary, for example, contracted The Peak Education Partnership to provide an Ofsted team for inspection in 1998 (Holmes, 1998).

### **British International Schools**

Studies on school improvement in the UK focus on 'home schools', that is, local education authority, grant maintained, or voluntary aided schools. However, there are many 'British' schools abroad, which are modelled on the British education system and offer the English National Curriculum and GCSEs (ECIS, 1998).

Black and Armstrong (1995, p.27) define international schools as:

'schools that are independent of any national system of education, and that offer a curriculum which is different from that of the host country.'

The aim of international schools is normally to offer an education to children whose families live abroad (Grant et al 1995, p.502). The students at British schools, however, are not exclusively British. St. Paul's School in Brazil for example has eight nationalities, and the British School of Paris has thirty (ECIS, 1998). Nor does one nationality always dominate as shown by the ECIS International Schools Directory (ECIS, 1998).

Although there is relatively little international school based research (Hayden and Thompson 1995, p.390), the ECIS directory does list over 750 international schools world-wide and publishes 'The International Schools Journal' (ISJ) which focuses specifically on views, ideas and research about international schools (ECIS 1998, p.xiv).

## **The Study**

The present study was conducted in two middle schools, a British school in the south of England and a British international school in Hungary.

### **The British School**

‘Cornerstone School’ is a 9-13 middle school, deemed secondary, in the south of England.

It is a mixed, non-selective state school with approximately 506 pupils and twenty-two teachers. The management structure of the school is:

- A senior management team comprising a headteacher, deputy and senior teacher.
- Heads of year with responsibility for pastoral issues.
- Heads of department with responsibility for academic affairs.

Most teachers tend to have some responsibility in the school - either a head of year or head of department, or, in a few cases, both.

Ofsted deemed the school a good school in 1994 (Ofsted, 1994) and again in 1999 (Ofsted, 1999). The latter inspection took place after the research period. The schools' PIMS (Performance Indicators in Middle Schools) and key stage two National Curriculum test results are average for its county. Its intake from the heart of a large town comprises a social and economically deprived housing estate. Cornerstone's pupils mostly come from five feeder schools and after Cornerstone, move onto one of four upper secondary schools. A comprehensive schools link, in the form of scheduled ‘Area’ Liaison Meetings for heads of departments and others for heads of schools, exists for lower, middle and upper secondary schools.

Close by is a church voluntary aided middle school. A handful of students are occasionally lost to the church school whilst at the same time other students move from the church school to Cornerstone.

Many of the staff have been at the school a long time, some for almost twenty years. A small number of new staff have been recruited and the movement of staff tends to be from this group of staff.

Year five and six pupils are mainly taught by the class teacher but the pupils experience specialist teaching in physical education, science, French, and technology. Specialists teach most of the subjects in years seven and eight. The school staff appear to be flexible and often move between year groups and key stages. It is common for students in years 7 and 8 to experience at least one subject taught by a non-specialist or second subject teacher.

The pupils mainly come from the locality, although one or two pupils do commute from another large town nearby. The pupils are almost exclusively British, white with no recent immigrant intake. A number of the pupils have an Italian heritage.

The school has its own Dyslexia Unit. Dyslexic students come from around the county and are integrated into the classrooms when appropriate. These students always have a personal assistant and work is differentiated for them.

The school agreed to be one of the case study schools because the head felt that the research would be of benefit to his school. The staff too wanted to see the results of the surveys when they had been collated. On completion of the research, the findings of the study were discussed with the head and a summary document provided for circulation in the school.

### The International School

The second school in the study is an international school in Hungary, Eastern Europe, modelled on the British education system. The case study school is in Budapest and for the

purpose of this study it will be called 'The British International School of Budapest' or 'BISB'.

BISB was founded by a group of four people, two British, and two Hungarian, in 1992.

The founders wanted to create an opportunity for parents to send their children to a British style English-medium school. Furthermore, more British families were beginning to arrive to work in the business sectors with the end of communism.

The school began with a small group of sixteen primary pupils and in September 1998 had a total pupil population of 230. Other English Medium schools in Budapest include a well established American International School, a Christian School, and an International School not affiliated to any particular country or religion. After moving location to accommodate the increasing numbers, the school is now situated on three sites close to the centre of Budapest. Site one, a nursery school, site two accommodating reception and key stage one, and site three, the site of interest, accommodating key stages two and three, that is 8-14, which will be referred to as 'British International Middle School' (BIMS).

The management structure of the school is:

- A senior management team comprising a Principal (a founder), a vice principal of BISB who is also head of BIMS, another vice principal of BISB who is also head of the key stage one school, the key stage two co-ordinator and the key stage three co-ordinator.
- Subject co-ordinators

The SMT appears rather cumbersome. Most teachers have a post of responsibility.

During the 1996/7 and 1998/9 academic years, the SMT invited Ofsted teams to inspect the school. Being 'private', the school meets the expenses and fees of the Inspectors. The school was deemed a good school by both inspections. The school is not involved in any value added external assessment, such as Performance Indicators in Middle Schools (PIMS), but it does follow the national curriculum in England and Wales and the students sit the end of key stage tests. Both key stage two and three test results have been very high.

At BIMS, key stage two pupils number approximately ninety and key stage three students number twenty-five. However, numbers fluctuate during the year. A few students may move to, or from, other Budapest schools during the year. Mainly, the movement is associated with relocation of parents. The trend is an increase in numbers from one year to the next.

The students at BIMS have a broadly similar experience to a British middle school – this was an important factor in choosing the school for the study. The staff are all relatively new and the specialist staff recruited for key stage three have a big involvement in key stage two in terms of planning schemes of work and specialist teaching. Much like the UK middle school, years three, four, five and six are mainly class based with some specialist teaching and key stage three students experience mainly specialist teaching. Like their counterparts in the UK, it is common for at least one subject to be taught by a non-specialist or second subject teacher. Some specialist teachers are timetabled across sites so that the music specialist teacher, for example, will do an hour at the nursery and the PE specialist will do an afternoon at the key stage one school.

The students at BIMS are from over fifty nationalities and distribution of nationalities is as shown in Figure 1-1.

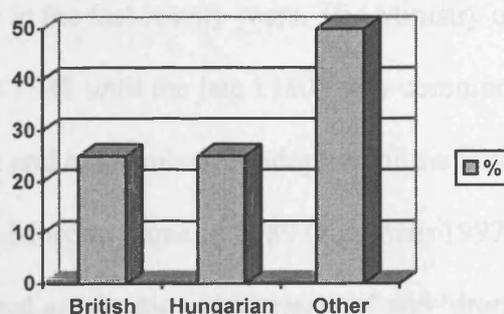


Figure 1-1 Nationalities of students at BIMS

25% are British, 25% are Hungarian and the rest are from a wide range of countries including Slovenia, USA, Nigeria, Brazil, and Russia.

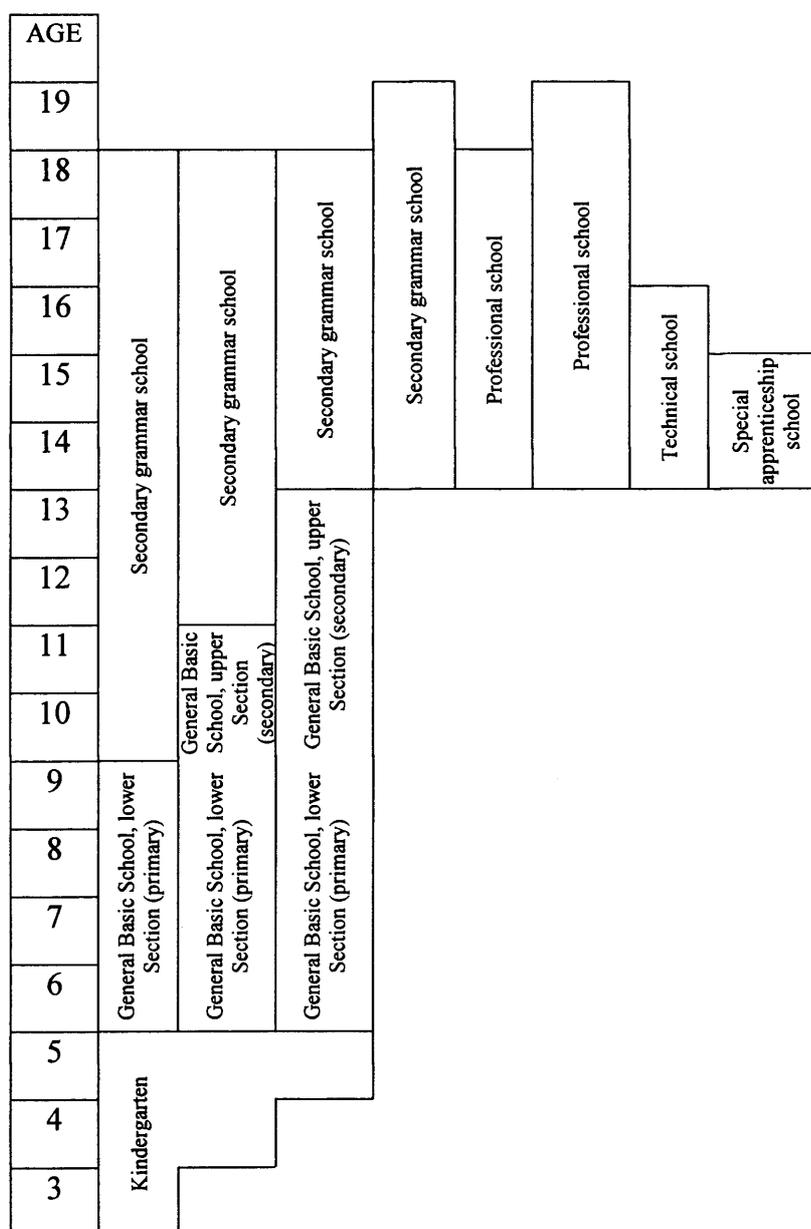
One main difference between the two schools is class size. Cornerstone has classes of approximately thirty and BIMS classes vary at around fifteen in key stage two and are as low as six in year nine. BIMS has a policy not to exceed twenty. One of the reasons for the small number in year nine was the insecurity amongst parents about where the students will go for their year ten and eleven. The school therefore planned, and introduced, year ten (four students) in September 1998 and years 11 and 12 in September 1999.

Budgets are a key factor in the running of both schools. Funding of Cornerstone is by local government and funding of BIMS is by student fees. At approximately £6000 a year, BIMS student fees are sometimes paid by the parents but usually paid by an employer as part of their contract. A few parents do make special requests to the Principal for a reduced fee or scholarship. There may be up to three students in the middle school on scholarships at any one time. Hungarian Students' fees are subsidised by the local government by 25%. The fees are fed entirely back into the school. The school is a non-profit foundation.

### **The Hungarian Education Framework**

The International School forms part of the Hungarian education system, which has experienced many changes in the last twenty years. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1996, p.19) note that from 1948 until the late 1980s only communist ideology was allowed into the classroom and a 'submissive' adoption of the Soviet education example took place. The break with Moscow came in 1989 (Kaufman 1997, p.25). With democracy came restructuring, described as 'drastic transformation' and 'dramatic changes' (Ministry of Education and Culture 1996, p.19), of the Hungarian school system culminating in the 1993 School Education Act that introduced the 'National Core Curriculum (NCC)' –

which includes core subjects with attainment targets. Unlike the British National Curriculum, however, the Hungarian Core Curriculum is a minimum, or a foundation on to which schools are expected to add local educational aspects (p.20). International schools must provide a basic Hungarian studies element in their curriculum for Hungarian students. The Hungarian education system accommodates a variety of types of schools and is represented in Figure 1-2.



**Figure 1-2 The Hungarian Education System.**

**Rearranged from Ministry of Culture and Education (1996 p.13)**

The transfer to secondary school in Hungary is at the age of ten, England usually being at eleven. A variety of secondary school options exist for a Hungarian student, each providing a different type of curriculum and qualification. There are also General Basic Schools which start at the age of six but cater for children up to eleven or thirteen and might be considered as being closest to the British 'middle schools'. BIMS, being 8-14, does not fit into any one of the Hungarian models, but may be closely compared with the typical 9-13 British model.

### **The Broad Aims of the Thesis.**

The phrase 'school improvement' might assume the improvement of a poor school. There is a need to provide a positive, constructive approach to school improvement for a good school. This study aims to provide such an approach, which has at its centre the 'stakeholders' of the school.

As well as studying a UK school, the study has introduced an overseas element by targeting an international school. With limited research being undertaken in international schools, a further aim of this study is to make a contribution to knowledge about British international schools. The study also intends to provide a comparison between British international and UK schools that have different contexts but broadly similar curricular aims.

### **The Specific Purposes of the Thesis**

The specific aims of the thesis are:

- i. To review the characteristics of a good school for use as benchmark criteria.
- ii. To investigate the governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and student's perception of a good school.
- iii. To compare the perception of a good school of different groups from a school population.

- iv. To compare the perception of a good school of like groups from UK and International school populations.
- v. To investigate the governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and student's perception of how their school might be improved.
- vi. To compare the opinions of different groups within a school population on improving the school.
- vii. To compare the opinions of like groups, UK and International, on improving schools.

This study surveys different groups, or stakeholders, within the school population and compares perceptions about whether their school is, or is not, a good school. It will also compare what reasons are given and ask how each group considers school improvement to take place.

The stakeholders involved will be:

governors,  
the senior management team\*,  
teachers,  
parents, and  
students.

*[\*The senior management team will involve the headteacher and other senior teachers named by the head. The members of an SMT normally vary between schools.]*

It is evident from the literature review (see chapter two) that school improvement studies from all the various stakeholder perspective are not common. Again, the study hopes to begin the process of looking at school improvement from the perspectives of the schools' stakeholders.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions involved in this study can be divided into four categories as follows:

#### **What is a Good School?**

1. What is a good school according to literature?
2. Do all of the school populations agree that their school is a good school?
3. What reasons do various school populations give for identifying their school as 'a good school' or as 'not a good school'?

4. How do the reasons compare with the published lists?

How should the school improve?

5. What are the various school populations' perceptions of school improvement in their school?

6. How similar or different are the views of improving a school between different groups of the school population?

7. How do the various groups' perceptions of school improvement in their school compare with literature on school improvement?

UK and International School population differences.

8. Do like groups from home and international school populations hold common views on why their school is a good school?

9. Do like groups from home and international school populations hold common views on school improvement in their school?

Implications and generalisability of findings.

10. What are the implications of, and how generalisable are, the findings of this study for school improvement in British and international schools?

**Summary**

School improvement is an established term. Reynolds et al (1996b) might be leading the debate from an international perspective but the international school is neglected in this debate. School improvement from all the various stakeholder perspectives also appears to be a neglected area of research. Comparing a British with an international school is again a rare event. This study hopes to make a significant contribution towards research in these areas.

# Chapter 2

## The Literature Review

The aim of the literature review is to appraise school improvement and school effectiveness research in order to understand the characteristics of a good school and how it might be improved. The review is designed to provide a benchmark for the discussion of school improvement arising from the analysis of the data collected.

### **Improving a Good School - The Academic Research Perspective**

#### Definitions

##### *School Improvement*

ISIP define school improvement as:

‘a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively’. (Van Velzen et al 1985, p.48)

Hopkins (1987, p.1) observes that the definition is abstract and in 1994 (Hopkins et al 1994, p.3) provided an alternative:

‘all theories and studies concerning strategies for educational change that enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change’

This definition focuses on theories, strategies, and internal conditions (Hopkins 1995, p.266). The significant difference from ISIP is that Hopkins (1994) includes ‘theories’ in

the definition. Creemers and Reezigt (1997, p.401) and Hopkins (1995) adopted the Hopkins et al (1994) definition in their work.

### School Effectiveness

Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum (1957, p.535) define organisational effectiveness as:

'The extent to which any organisation as a social system, given certain resources and means, fulfils its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and without placing undue strain upon its members.'

That Bollen (1996, p.2), adopted it almost forty years later may counter the arguments that it is a dated definition. Bollen (1996, p.2) justifies his adoption by arguing that the definition is an 'organisational approach to effectiveness' and allows one to relate school improvement and school effectiveness.

Goldstein (1997) approached the term from the perspective of exploring differences within and between schools. He suggests school effectiveness is 'obtain[ing] knowledge about relationships between 'explanatory' and 'outcome' factors using appropriate models' (Goldstein 1997, p.369).

The contrast between these two definitions would support Cameron and Whetten's (1983) and Scheerens' (1992) observations that there are many diverse approaches to school effectiveness and it cannot be described 'in a straightforward manner' (Scheerens 1992, p.4). Cuttance (1985, p.13) agrees and adds that school effectiveness is a term used in literature as an 'omnibus' description to cover all the various effects in schools. Cuttance (1985, p.13) describes three frameworks for the study of school effectiveness, organisational, institutional and exemplary schools frameworks. Scheerens's (1992, p.5) alternatives are economic rationality, the organic system model, the human relations approach, bureaucracy and the political model. Both Cuttance (1985) and Scheerens (1992)

appear to be in agreement that school effectiveness has various perspectives and their contrasting frameworks only confirm this view.

### Concepts

The assumption that underlies school effectiveness studies is that schools exhibit many types of effects (Cuttance 1985, p.13) and there is a need to measure those effects for which performance indicators are needed (Sanday 1990, p.15). Bollen (1996, p.14) describes the basic concept behind school improvement as ‘a process, not an event’ – suggesting that a time element is involved. He distinguishes improvement and effectiveness by suggesting that effectiveness deals with characteristics of a measurable nature while improvement focuses on processes (p.17). Bollen (1996) elaborates by using the word *practical* to describe school improvement.

Reynolds and Stoll (1996a) have tried to distinguish effectiveness and improvement traditions.

School effectiveness	School improvement in the 1980s
Focus on schools	Focus on individual teachers or groups of teachers
Focus on school organisation	Focus on school processes
Data driven with emphasis on outcomes	Rare empirical evaluation of effects of changes
Quantitative in orientation	Qualitative in orientation
Lack of knowledge about how to implement change strategies	Concerned with change in schools exclusively
More concerned with change in pupil outcomes	More concerned with journey of school improvement then its destination
More concerned with schools at a point in time	More concerned with schools as changing
Based on research knowledge	Focus on practitioner knowledge
Limited range of outcomes	Concern with multiple outcomes
Concerned with schools that are effective	Concern with how school become effective
Static orientation (school as it is)	Dynamic orientation (school as it might be or has been)

**Table 2.1 Effectiveness and improvement.**

From Reynolds and Stoll (1996a)

In doing this, however, Reynolds and Stoll (1996) imply that effectiveness and improvement are separate and different. Bollen (1996, p.17) and Creemers (1994, p.9) have linked improvement and effectiveness together by suggesting that in education, effectiveness research knowledge is transferred to practitioners in improving schools. Creemers (1994, p.9) clarifies that effectiveness studies have only recently begun integrating school and instructional effectiveness. Bollen (1996, p.16) adds that effectiveness knowledge offered by research requires much modification and translation before application at school level. Cuttance (1985, p.26) concludes that effectiveness criteria can be generalisable between groups, schools and education systems.

#### School Effectiveness and School Improvement: Main Findings

In the early 1990s, Sammons et al (1995) were commissioned by Ofsted to review school effectiveness research findings. Sammons et al (1995) produced their 'eleven factors for effective schooling'. The review of school effectiveness studies by Sammons et al (1995) does not suggest a consensus. Two issues identified by Mortimore et al (1988), the role of the deputy and 'maximum communication between teachers and pupils' as being key factors for effective schooling, are omitted by Sammons et al (1995). The issue of staff stability, important to the OECD (Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development) International Report (1989), is also omitted. On the other hand, there are issues such as maximising learning time and pupil's rights and responsibilities, included by Sammons et al (1995) but omitted by Mortimore et al (1988). The Sammons et al (1995) list presents items which are statistically more prevalent amongst school effectiveness studies. They could, therefore, be accused of neglecting context and omitting key issues which may warrant inclusion in their list based on merit but omitted because the issue has not been studied extensively enough.

Table 2.2 compares Sammons et al (1995) with four other effectiveness lists to reveal how varied lists can be. Each effectiveness list has been derived from very different perspectives. Ralph and Fennessey (1983) may be dated but it provides a good contrast in that it focuses almost entirely on academic achievement and includes an element of value added. Hargreaves (1995) considers school effectiveness and improvement by first questioning the school culture. OECD (1989) provides an international perspective. Finally, Ofsted's (1997) characteristics of effective schools, reported in the Literacy Task Force (1997, p.18) and in the Guardian newspaper (Anon 1997, p.4), are valuable in that Ofsted are influenced by school effectiveness studies (Reynolds et al 1996c, p.134 and Literacy Task Force 1997, p.18). Table 2.2 compares the five models.

It may be argued, from Table 2.2, that there is relatively little agreement and very few common elements in the various lists. Rather than suggest that the eight items with higher frequencies should be the key elements in an effective school, the comparison shows that each model is unique and Fidler (1996, p. 20) argues that more work needs to be done in this area. There are additional points, however, not considered by Fidler (1996). The differences in the various lists may appear as a result of:

- ❑ different contexts of the schools,
  - ❑ different needs of the schools,
  - ❑ different approaches to the research,
  - ❑ different purposes of the research.
- (Proudford and Baker 1994, p.34)

Proudford and Baker (1994, p.22) argue that understanding the school context, and the way in which it relates to theoretical models, helps explain whether student commitment and learning:

- precedes a list,
- is caused by the list, or
- 'intermingles' with the list.

Table 2.2 Common Elements between the Various School Effectiveness Models

Sammons et al (1995)	Ralph and Fennessey (1983)	Hargreaves (1995)	OECD (1989)	Ofsted (1997)	Frequency match
Professional Leadership			Positive leadership	A well-informed headteacher who .... Sets high expectation and provides consistent leadership.	3/5
Shared vision and goals		Commitment to a shared vision. Teachers have clear purpose and direction.	A commitment to clear and common identified goals School wide values Collegiality		3/5
A learning environment			Maximum use of learning time		2/5
Concentration on teaching and learning	The school should produce high achievement in basic academic skills that are not narrowly curriculum specific	Mutual classroom observation, professional discussions, shared problems and good practice, innovation and reflection.		A strong climate of academic achievement and the use of regular homework.	4/5
Purposeful teaching					1/5
High expectations		Policies create consistent environment and expectations for teachers.		High expectations of what children are able to achieve.	3/5
Positive reinforcement					1/5
Monitoring progress				Effective arrangements to monitor children and the school as a whole.	2/5
Pupil rights and responsibilities					1/5
Home-school partnership			High level of parental involvement and support	Effective systems to communicate with parents ..... [and] ways in which parents can help the school and especially their own child to achieve .... goals.	3/5
A learning organisation		Reconciles school development with professional development.	Staff development	A systematic school approach to the professional development of teachers and other staff...	4/5
				Targets for each child, including those with SEN.	1/5
			Staff stability		1/5
				Systems to ensure money spent on books and other reading material is used wisely	1/5
			Support of the responsible education authority.		1/5
		Curriculum continuity and progression.			1/5
	Those high achievement levels should persist over time.				1/5
	The achievement levels should be demonstrable and consistently high for more than a single year group				1/5
	Achievement gains ought to be characteristic of the whole school rather than individual grades				1/5
	All these characteristics should exist even after the social economic profile of the student population.				1/5

Fidler (1996, p.20) issues a 'health warning' about such lists and maintains:

- Their validity is limited in that they consist of 'universal' statements that do not necessarily go beyond the point that they have been identified by research.
- Such lists are not identical and therefore more work in this area still needs to be done.
- Lists need to be critically appraised and undergo professional scrutiny.
- The factors in the lists may or may not be responsible for effective schools.
- The strengths of the factors are unknowns.
- The lists are arbitrary - lists derived from American schools cannot be contextualised in the UK.
- Lists look at the past rather than the future.
- The factors in lists are not precise and do not provide guidance.

The question about whether the studies from the 1980s are valid and have application in the late 1990s is another issue. Publications from the 1990s such as Reynolds and Cuttance (1992) and Fidler (1996), both describe studies from the 1970s and 1980s, such as Mortimore et al (1988) and Rutter et al (1979). This might support the view that dated studies are valid and have application in the 1990s – the limitation might be that they are useful only as a reference point. That some studies are referenced very regularly would also suggest that some dated studies are considered key or vital in the understanding of school effectiveness, Mortimore et al (1988) being one such study. Sammons et al's (1995) list is representative of a number of school effectiveness studies but cannot be considered comprehensive or representative of all studies. In its raw form, the list is of limited value. However, it forms an important benchmark in as much as it is a collection of studies and includes issues supported by many researchers. The list can also be broken into three themes allowing a thematic as opposed to point by point discussion as shown in Table 2.3.

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Comments</b>	
1.	Aspects of Management and Leadership	Professional Leadership	Firm and purposeful A participative approach The leading professional	
2.		Shared vision and goals	Unity of purpose Consistency of practice Collegiality and collaboration	
3.	Aspects of Classroom Instruction, Standards and Assessment.	A learning environment	An orderly atmosphere An attractive working 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	High expectations all round Communicating expectations Providing intellectual challenge	
7.		Positive reinforcement	Clear and fair discipline Feedback	
8.		Monitoring progress	Monitoring pupil performance Evaluating school performance	
9.		Personal, Pastoral and External Factors	Pupil rights and responsibilities	Raising pupil self-esteem Positions of responsibility Control of work
10.			Home-school partnership	Parental involvement
11.	A learning organisation		School-based staff development	

**Table 2.3 Themes and characteristics of school effectiveness**

From Sammons et al (1995).

In Table 2.4, Sammons et al's (1995) characteristics have been used to match research studies to allow comparison between key international interests. Outside the UK, two main sources of school effectiveness and improvement research appear to be the USA and the

Netherlands. Where an item on the list is supported by research then the study has been included as a reference.

Theme	Characteristic	Supported by:		
		UK	Netherlands	USA
Aspects Of Management And Leadership	Professional Leadership	Mortimore et al (1988) and Rutter et al (1979).	Van de Grift (1990)	Anderson et al (1992) Durland and Teddlie (1996) Crone and Teddlie (1995) Wimpleberg (1993)
	Shared vision and goals	Rutter et al (1979) Mortimore et al (1988)	*	Crone and Teddlie (1995)
Aspects Of Classroom Instruction, Standards And Assessment.	A learning environment	Mortimore et al (1988) and Rutter et al (1979).	*	*
	Concentration on teaching and learning	Bennet (1978) Rutter et al (1979) Mortimore et al (1988) Alexander (1992) Galton and Simon (1982) Smith and Tomlinson (1989)	Scheerens (1992) Creemers (1992)	Rosenshine and Furst (1973) Brophy and Good (1986)
	Purposeful teaching			
	High expectations	Tizard et al (1988) Mortimore et al (1988)	Scheerens (1992) Creemers (1992)	*
	Positive reinforcement	Mortimore et al (1988) Rutter et al (1979)	Creemers (1992)	*
	Monitoring progress	Hopkins (1987) Mortimore et al (1988)	*	*
Personal, Pastoral And External Factors	Pupil rights and responsibilities	Rutter et al (1979) Smith and Tomlinson (1989) Reynolds and Skilbeck (1976)	*	Anderson et al (1992)
	Home-school partnership	*	*	*
	A learning organisation	*	Scheerens (1990)	Stringfield and Teddlie (1988)
<b><i>Other Items not Included by Sammons et al (95) :</i></b>				
	The curriculum & adapting external programs	*	*	Anderson et al (1992) Stringfield and Herman (1996)
	Consistency, stability and teacher recruitment	*	Bosker and Scheerens (1989)	Stringfield and Teddlie (1988)

*\* no significant study could be found in this area of research.*

**Table 2.4 Some key international studies which feature characteristics listed by Sammons et al's (1995)**

The final two items in Table 2.4 appear to be significant areas of research in the USA and the Netherlands and therefore have been included.

The comparison chart reflects that American studies and those in the Netherlands tend to have a different focus. Each of the themes are discussed below.

### Aspects of Management and Leadership

A number of studies including Southworth (1998), Teddlie and Springfield (1993), Mortimore et al (1988), Rutter et al (1979), and Reynolds and Skilbeck (1976) support the importance of leadership and a shared vision as a key factor in effective schooling. Teddlie (1994 p.100) suggests that whereas a large number of elementary school US studies (for example, Teddlie and Springfield, 1993) identify the principal as the most important leader, this does not necessarily transfer to the secondary school where it may be 'impossible' for the principal to be an expert in and monitor all areas. Hargreaves (1995) does not mention professional leadership as a key factor although he describes shared vision which implies leadership. In contrast, Ralph and Fennessey (1983) do not mention professional leadership choosing instead to focus on academic outcomes only. Mortimore et al (1988), described by Scheerens (1992 p.119) as 'the most advanced effectiveness study so far', lists the role of the deputy as key in school effectiveness. Only Southworth (1998) recognises this issue and it has not been reproduced by other studies. Two possible explanations might be that Mortimore et al (1988) and Southworth (1998) are primary school studies where the deputy's role may be more significant than in secondary, or, little research has been done to follow up this aspect of schooling. Scheerens (1992, p.135) suggests that the latter is likely to be the reason. Scheerens (1992) gives very few examples of Dutch research in the field of Leadership. This field appears to be of greater interest in the USA and the UK.

### Aspects of Classroom Instruction, Standards and Assessment.

There is a greater amount of research in this area compared to the other two themes. Numerous studies (such as Mortimore et al 1988, Rutter et al 1979, Galton and Simon 1982, and Hopkins 1987) have each supported the view that classroom practice is a key indicator in effective schooling. Mortimore et al (1988) amongst others (for example,

Rutter et al, 1979), describe structured sessions and intellectually challenging teaching as evident in effective classes. Rutter et al (1979) report that consistency amongst teachers promoted effectiveness in secondary schools. Mortimore et al (1988) support Rutter et al (1979) and add that teacher continuity and a flat management structure, where everyone had their say, promoted effectiveness.

In the Netherlands, Scheerens (1992) relates high expectations to pupil achievement. He also adds structured teaching and an increase in effective learning time to the list.

Creemers (1992, p.59) points out the value of corrective feedback.

In the USA, Teddlie (1994, p.111) argues that teacher effectiveness studies have developed separately, 'almost totally independently' from school effectiveness research. Springfield and Teddlie (1988) offer selection and recruitment as key factors in teacher and school effectiveness, this was supported by the OECD's (1989) listing of staff stability as a key indicator.

Another OECD study (Hopkins and Stern, 1996) listed various characteristics of quality teachers from an international perspective. These included commitment, teamwork and knowledge of methodologies but also added two further items not mentioned by other studies, reflection and love of children.

This is a key area of research and is not limited to one particular country but of equal interest to all. The conclusions of studies from various countries appear to be transferable across countries. The literature also suggests that there is considerable sharing of findings across the countries (Reynolds and Cuttance 1992, Scheerens 1992 and Reynolds et al 1994a).

### Personal, Pastoral and External Factors

There is relatively less interest in this area. Rutter et al (1979) and Smith and Tomlinson (1989) are two studies that stress the need to raise student self esteem if improvement is to occur. Mortimore et al (1988) report that parental involvement has a positive influence on pupils' progress. Creemers (1992) supports the view that the involvement of parents can be beneficial to the school but argues that it is dependent on socio-economic backgrounds, which means that 'involvement is absent where it is most needed' (Creemers 1992, p.94). Davies and Ellison (1995, p.12) argue that school based research is valuable in allowing schools to have research based in their school allowing management to improve their practice and allowing researchers to 'disseminate good practice and contribute to school improvement' (ibid.). Bell and Day (1991, p.21) emphasise that 'development through learning is central to the purposes of everything that is done in schools in the name of education'. Southworth and Conner (1999, p.120) argue the case that the term 'learning and teaching schools' should replace the existing notion of a learning school since these schools will focus on the quality of teaching as well as learning.

The critical aspect of any study of this type is that the research is very much in context and that generalisations may not be appropriate. Davies and Ellison (1995) argue that the purpose of school-based research is to create a climate of continuous improvement where information is fed into school development plans. However, they point out the dangers of reporting back findings from school-based research in that micropolitical groups could use negative information to pursue their own agendas.

Although there is less research on these factors, there are transferable findings and shared conclusions across countries.

### Value Added Research

In contrast to the search for factors associated with school effectiveness, the second type of academic research on effective schools involves 'value added' (Fidler 1996, p.21). This type of research is mainly found in the UK (ibid.). The Department for Education and Employment (Dfee) (Benton 1996, p.1) define value added as:

'what schools add to their pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding between one age and another'.

The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (SCAA) (1997, p.3) interpretation of value added is more practical:

'indicators that look at the progress made by pupils over a given period'.

The SCAA approach is to measure and compare progress of one school against the average progress made by a larger sample. This approach involves a regression line or line of best fit on a scatter graph of pupil achievement from which progress is measured. The technique is termed Residual Gain Analysis (RGA). Fidler (1996, p.24) is astute in his observation that this approach is flawed and will always have effective and ineffective schools regardless of how much improvement all the schools make. Fidler (1996, p.25) considers this a contradiction on school effectiveness and school improvement models. There also appears to be a contradiction in the definitions offered by SCAA and the Dfee. If SCAA limits the measure of progress made to certain tests or exams, then the Dfee position of value added being knowledge, skills and understanding has not been addressed. Research into value added increased after the publication of school exam results in the UK press. In their raw form the press were able to organise the results into a league table of schools (Reynolds et al 1996c, p.134). There was mounting criticism (Goldstein 1997, p.1) and many debates as to the validity of such a league table. Arguments (Benton 1996, p.1)

for the inclusion of a value added element to the league tables have been voiced and the government has commissioned work in this area (SCAA, 1997). Gray (1995, p.89) supports the value-added framework by arguing that value added approaches are based on school effectiveness techniques such as Reynolds and Cuttance (1992) and Scheerens (1992).

The Value Added National Project commissioned by SCAA (1997, p.7) proposed five findings:

1. National Curriculum test results provide the best basis for value added measures, being objective, standard external and common to all.
2. The RGA provides the most robust way of summarising value added data and the more sophisticated methods such as multilevel modelling do not produce anything different or additional to the RGA approach.
3. Combining results for all subjects in one school is misleading. Measure for value added varies considerably between subjects.
4. Value added feedback is useful for school improvement.
5. Value added measures have many variables:
  - A mobile student population.
  - Pupil absence.
  - Middle schools spanning part key stages.
  - Small cohorts.
  - Atypical student populations such as single sex schools.
  - Further work on the variables is necessary if measurements are to be published.

Goldstein (1997 p.1-3) is critical of the findings and notes that SCAA:

- is neglecting the debates in the value added field;
- is oversimplifying matters;
- is misleading by reporting a single value added score ;
- is assuming a straight line RGA relationship for comparison;
- is ignoring the reliability debate of value added scoring;
- is working on the premise that schools do not change, whereas in fact they do, and therefore is not considering the year on year context of data comparisons;
- is oversimplifying the complex realities of children's performance.

That there are so many weaknesses, debates and wide ranging criticisms of the value added approach, only confirms that it is still a relatively new area. It is, therefore, not surprising to read that Rea and Weiner (1998, p.25) see the notion of value added as 'just another descriptor of urban education with a limited view of education consisting of targets and

tests'. They question the validity of excusing certain schools for poor assessment results based on the background of the children. Rea and Weiner (1998, p.26) argue that improvement of assessment results should be approached through school effectiveness and improvement projects.

Unlike school effectiveness and school improvement models, value added measurements appear to have as their motivation a government drive to publish school results. The outcomes of value added research may therefore not be entirely applicable, or useful, to school improvement as the SCAA commission report suggests.

### **School Effectiveness and School Improvement – Stakeholder Perspectives**

#### **Good and Improving schools - The Governor Perspective.**

No studies have yet been identified which have sought governor views on what is a good school. It is interesting that Sammons et al (1995) made no reference to the role of governors on effective schooling. Two studies that consider the link between governors and standards are Creese and Bradley (1997) and Pugh (1991). Creese and Bradley (1997) found very few instances where governors gave a positive lead to the staff. They found that in general, governors were happy to follow the lead of teachers and had very little impact on standards. Governors respected headteachers and teachers as professionals and they were trusted to inform the governors on relevant matters. They make some recommendations (Creese and Bradley 1997, p.114):

- 1- Team building activities undertaken by governors.
- 2- Joint working groups of staff and governors.
- 3- Enhancement of the role of teacher governor.
- 4- Systematic monitoring of the school by governors.
- 5- Staff and governors involved in development planning.

Beckett et al (1991, p.145) also suggest that the foundation for forming a partnership between governors and staff is the production of a joint statement of aims. They regard this as 'the starting point of effective school management' (ibid) if major decisions are going to be made by the governors (Beckett et al 1991, p.143).

Pugh (1991, p.220) states that on all evidence available, governors do not want to run schools but be partners with the schools and learn from them. An HMI Report (HMI DES, 1992) praised governors for doing tasks well but remarked that governors failed to appreciate that they had anything to do with the quality of the school. This supports both Creese and Bradley (1997) and Pugh (1991). The studies appear to suggest that governors do not want to lead or take the initiative in school improvement programmes. Creese and Bradley (1997) insist that future studies will have to investigate governor perspectives on school improvement in view of the role of governors in England and Wales.

#### Good and Improving schools - The SMT Perspective

Few studies have investigated the SMT's view on school improvement and very little is available. One study that does consider headteachers' views on school improvement is Sammons et al (1997). A number of heads in the study indicated that conflict within the SMT was a major hurdle impeding the progress of the schools (Sammons et al 1997, p. 135). The study combined heads' and heads of departments' views on school improvement and these will be discussed in the next section. The findings of Sammons et al (1997) support Wallace and Hall (1994) who argue that SMT effectiveness is directly linked with teamwork within the SMT.

In Southworth (1999, p.71), the heads involved in the EPSI (Essex Primary School Improvement) programme provided views that school improvement was context specific to each primary school. The same study (Southworth, 1999 p. 77) suggested that the heads

were adopting a 'formal' model for school improvement that included a clear focus, monitoring, using data and action planning.

Fidler (1996, p.34), suggests eight possible tools that an SMT has available as school improvement vehicles:

1. Organisation Development.
2. Organisational Learning.
3. Quality Assurance.
4. Basic Process re-engineering.
5. School Based Review.
6. School Inspections.
7. Human Resource Management Initiatives.
8. Consultancy.

It could be argued that Fidler (1996), in suggesting 'Quality Assurance' as a vehicle, implies that parents, students and other 'clients' of the school are involved in school improvement. Fidler also lists school inspections as a school improvement vehicle for the SMT. However, according to Ouston et al (1996), 74.1% of headteachers found their inspection moderately valuable and only 19.4% found it very valuable. There may be a number of reasons as to why headteachers would describe the inspection process as useful:

- The head's school was deemed a good school, which provided the school with greater prestige.
- The head and SMT were praised for their management.
- Heads may be assuming that only the Ofsted approach to inspection is the correct approach and therefore it has to be useful.
- Heads may use the inspection report to support changes they wanted to make anyway.

There may also be the argument that only heads experiencing a critical inspection are likely to be critical of the inspection process. If that is the case, the validity of a heads' comment that the schools inspection was valuable is questionable.

That Ouston et al (1996, p.118) found heads who said that they had learned nothing new, and others who felt that 'the inspectors failed to share their values and priorities' (ibid.), suggests that the inspection process may not always be appropriate. This may support the

view that there are alternative motives for a head indicating that the inspection process is a useful one.

The SMT perspective of a good school is, however, still missing from literature. This study will go some way towards redressing the balance.

### Good and Improving Schools - The Teacher Perspective.

Davies and Ellison (1995) surveyed teachers, parents, and children through a predetermined list of thirty items in the form of a questionnaire. They adopted this approach in order to allow a three-year comparative cycle to be put into operation. Their findings related to parents and students will be discussed in sections. The teachers involved in the study revealed that:

- they had a very high workload.
- they were concerned about so much change they were being expected to put into place all the time.
- they did not always feel that the pastoral systems supported the students.
- (some) were not always valued.
- (some) were concerned with the top-down management style.

These data appear to be limited but the survey sought opinion on a predetermined set of questions and the study may have been unable to ascertain a more comprehensive list of teacher concerns.

Sammons et al (1997, p. 119) had almost identical findings although their perspective came from heads of departments. Their survey revealed that a heavy workload, including GCSE, Local Management of Schools (LMS) and National Curriculum, was seen as the biggest barrier to departmental effectiveness. Bell (1992, p.154) lists six factors in his 'force field' model described as 'restraining forces' to improvement;

- Staff shortage.
- Low morale among teachers.
- Shortage of resources.
- Low self esteem amongst key staff.
- Lack of awareness of problem.
- Pessimism about future career.

Sammons et al (1997, p.135) reinforced Wallace and Hall's (1994) view that the heads of departments saw a strong cohesive SMT as a major factor in contributing to the effectiveness of the school.

Teachers' concern about 'so much change' might imply resistance to change and would confirm Fidler's (1996) position that school improvement must be considered together with the concept of the management of change.

### Good and Improving Schools - The Student Perspective.

Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996) argue that students' views about schooling may be the most important foundation for improving schools but this perspective is missing in the movement to improve schools.

Wallace (1996) finds that an understanding teacher prepared to listen makes a big difference to many students. Uncaring teachers, working from worksheets, are identified with the worst kind of lessons. Many pupils do not understand the purpose of homework. Pupils do not see it as being fairly implemented (Wallace 1996, p.29).

Chaplain (1996, p.130) finds that students expect teachers to have a general interest in the students' welfare, teach competently and have good professional social skills.

Rudduck (1996, p.143) found that students wanted to work hard and achieve but there were two problems preventing this from happening:

- peer group pressure, not to be seen to be working hard, and
- some students were just disorganised and needed guidance.

Teachers who helped students by setting up revision clinics and guided students who were overwhelmed with the demands of key stage four were much appreciated (Rudduck 1996, p.143).

Day (1996, p.159) finds that students attach great importance to work experience and that most students find regular assessment to be a motivator and a focus. Year eleven students

find the partnership they have with the teachers very rewarding. She asks why this partnership is not fostered lower down the school (Day 1996, p.169).

Entwistle et al (1989) have compared British pupils' motivation and approaches to learning with those of Hungarian pupils. They believe that student perceptions about their school are the most direct influence on what a parent comes to believe about the school.

Measuring student perceptions, they argue, provides valuable information for the consideration of staff and governors. They suggest that students perceive their schools in very similar ways in England and Hungary despite the contrasting educational and social systems. Additionally, British students perceive their schools as being more formal and perceive that their teachers are shown greater respect compared to their Hungarian counterparts.

The main weaknesses in Entwistle et al's (1989) conclusions are that the study has focused only on the students, although there was some triangulation in the form of tutor comments, and through questionnaires that presented questions in different ways. The conclusions, however, could not be validated or compared with alternative perspectives, say those of teachers or parents.

Mac an Ghail (1992) argues that students have 'disappeared' from the educational map. He suggests that the absence of a student perspective in school limits the implementation of innovation. He may be arguing that students must be involved in school decision making to allow successful implementation of school policy.

Coleman et al (1993) found that the key factor leading to a student valuing school and collaborating with the school was positive communication with the parents. This has large implications in terms of how often schools communicate with parents and how the

communication takes place. A typical school might have two or three parent interview sessions and two progress reports over a year. If this is not enough, as implied by Coleman et al (1993), then schools need to consider how they will establish more regular contact with parents about their children.

In Davies and Ellison's (1995) study, the students revealed that they:

- wanted to develop reading and numeracy,
- were concerned about levels and appropriateness of work undertaken,
- were concerned about bullying and behaviour,
- thought there was a lack of communication,
- the sanction system was unfair. It sometimes targeted groups and not individuals,
- were not involved enough in decision making.

The main weakness of the Davies and Ellison (1995) study is that it involves responses to predetermined questions in a questionnaire and therefore the issues related above may not be the issues that students feel are important but come from responses to questions asked by the researchers.

#### Good and Improving Schools - The Parental Perspective.

Woods (1993) studied to what extent schools altered their perception or definition of school effectiveness to reflect parental opinion. His study suggests that the changes that a school might put into place to improve stem mainly from the competitive climate in education. This would imply that schools have responded to improvement for the sake of improvement. He further found that the 'school knows best' attitude exists side by side with the consumer response model which he terms 'we're in the business of giving parents what they want'. Woods (1993) admits that the former is more dominant. Schools are beginning to develop planned ways of obtaining parent feedback that might influence development plans. However, Woods (1993) adds that while schools are enthusiastic about

promoting the school, they are less active in trying to find out what parents want from the school.

In Davies and Ellison's (1995) study, the parents revealed that they were primarily concerned about:

- lunchtime arrangements,
- homework,
- not enough parent involvement,
- discipline.

Ofsted are also interested in what parents think about their schools and they have designed a questionnaire for parents (Ofsted, 1995b) for use during inspections. However, Ofsted does not state the purpose of the questionnaire other than to seek 'views expressed by parents' (Ofsted 1995a, p.24). From the wording of each of the statements it might be supposed that the statements reflect some of Ofsted's perceptions on the characteristics of a good school. That parents are asked to comment on the items might also suggest that Ofsted consider them as of particular importance to parents. Ofsted will report that parents are happy or not happy with the school on the strength of the responses to the statements alone. Ofsted may, therefore, consider the eleven items as characteristics of a good school according to parents. The items are shown in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5 Characteristics of a good school from the Ofsted (1995b) parent questionnaire.**

The school encourages the parents to play an active part in the life of the school
It is easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)
The school handles complaints from parents very well
The school gives parents a clear understanding of what is taught
The school keeps the parents well informed about their children's progress.
The school enables children to achieve a good standard of work
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons
Parents are satisfied with the work that their children are expected to do at home.
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on the children.
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour.
Children like school.

Of Davies and Ellison's (1995) points, all except 'lunchtime' are included in the Ofsted (1995) questionnaire.

The research questions that result from the above are:

- Do the statements in the Ofsted questionnaire represent what parents consider a good school should be?
- Do the statements represent what Ofsted believe parents consider a good school should be?
- Do the statements represent what Ofsted believe that parents should consider a good school should be?

Ofsted's interpretation of the use of, and responses to, the parents' questionnaire needs further investigation to clarify how Ofsted perceives the purpose and content of the questionnaire. This is not part of the current research design but another study needs to ask Ofsted to clarify the issues above. To place the questionnaire in context, Ofsted is required to make overall judgements of a school on a list of set criteria for a specified list of inspection areas (Ofsted 1995a). These are shown in Table 2.6. The criteria for each of the inspection areas are described in detail in the Ofsted (1995a) Inspection Handbook. It might be assumed that fulfilment of these criteria suggests a good school.

**Table 2.6 Ofsted inspection areas (Ofsted, 1995a).**

<p><b>Educational Standards Achieved by Pupils at the School</b>          Attainment and progress          Attitudes, behaviour and personal development          Attendance</p> <p><b>Quality of Education provided</b>          Teaching          the curriculum and assessment          pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development          support, guidance and pupils welfare          Partnership with parents and the community</p> <p><b>The Management and Efficiency of the School</b>          Leadership and management          staffing, accommodation and learning resources          the efficiency of the school</p> <p><b>Curriculum Areas and Subjects</b>  <b>Inspection Data: Pupils, teachers, classes and financial</b></p>
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### **The Matrix**

A matrix (Figure 2-1) has been created allowing direct comparison amongst the various school populations. The matrix (Figure 2-1) clearly shows the limited literature in the area of school improvement from the perspective of governors, the senior management team and, to some extent, teachers in that the data shown in the teacher matrix come mainly from heads of department. There is a growing, if not already large, literature base in the area of student and parental perspectives but governors and the SMT, in particular, appear to be neglected in this area of research.

Hinds and Holt (1994) found that governors did not appreciate they had anything to do with quality, but, if the governors were studied in the light of school improvement, rather than quality, it is possible that governors have opinions. There is, therefore, a need for research into SMT and governor perceptions of school improvement as it is likely to provide different perspectives and will balance the research looking at teacher, parent and student opinions. The matrix (Figure 2-1) also displays the wide variety of interests regarding school improvement amongst the various school populations. Whereas this might be expected considering the background of each school population, the questions that arise are:

- When school improvement is planned - who is it planned by?
- Who is school improvement planned for?
- Have the various interests of all the school populations been taken into consideration?
- Does the school development plan reflect the needs of the whole school community?

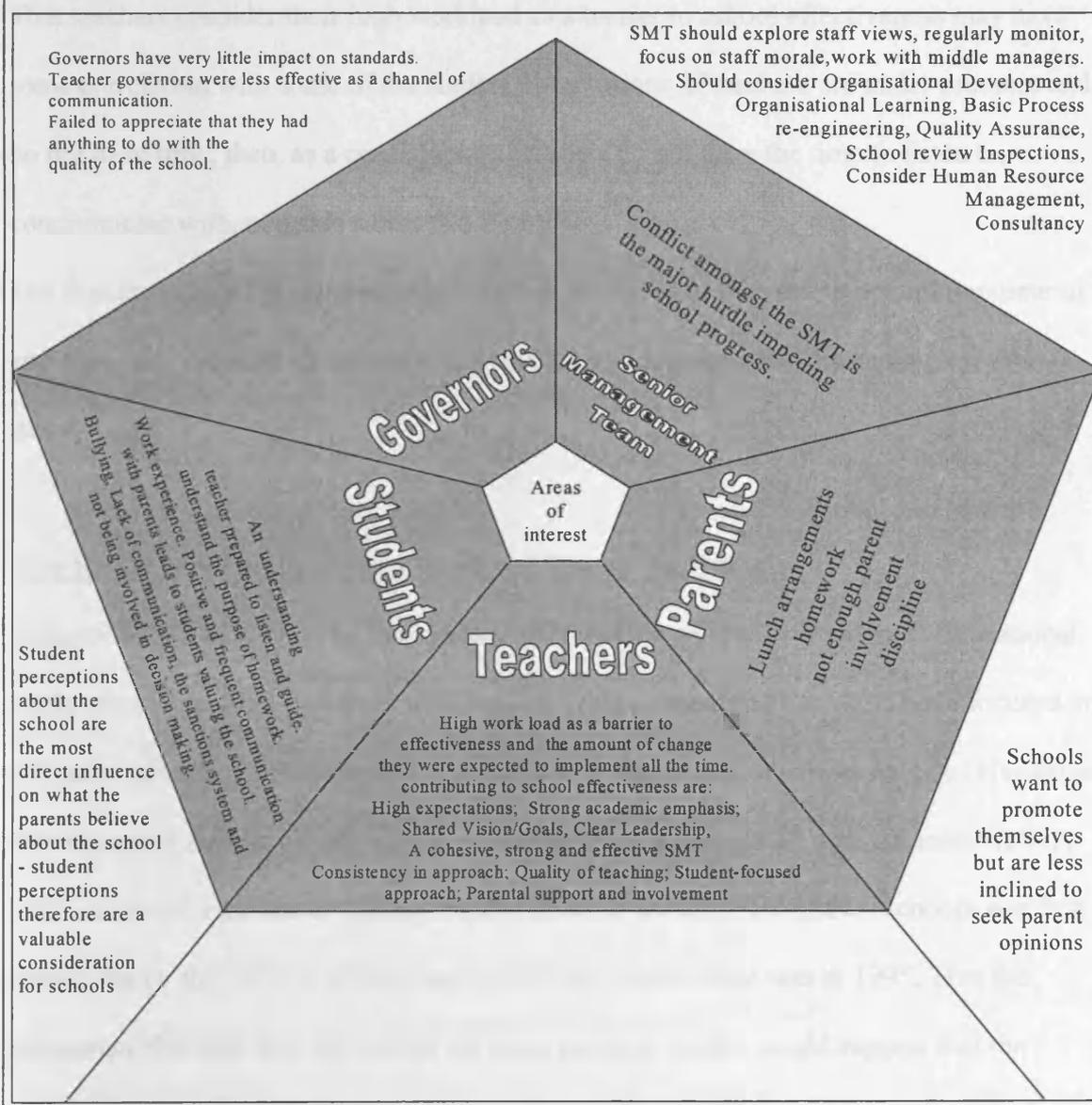
If a school development plan is primarily from the teacher and SMT perspectives, then Woods' (1993) observation of 'school knows best attitude' is still dominant.

## Matrix displaying issues relating to school improvement from the perspectives of various school populations

### CODE OF TEXT IN THE MATRIX:

Text in shaded area – Areas of interest according to school population revealed by studies reviewed

Text outside of shaded area – Observations from Literature Review discussions



**Figure 2-1 Matrix displaying school improvement issues from various stakeholder perspectives according to existing research studies.**

The matrix (Figure 2-1) further shows the close relationship between student perceptions of school and parent perceptions of school. Students want teachers to communicate more with them and parents. Likewise, parents want to be more informed if not more involved. The observation that parents' perceptions of a school is so highly influenced by the students (Entwistle et al 1989) would support Rudduck et al (1996) who argue that students' opinions may be the most important foundation for improving schools.

That teachers consider their high workload as a barrier to school effectiveness may have some correlation with some of the student observations. If teachers are under pressure and do not have time, then, as a consequence, teachers do not have the time to listen to, communicate with, or guide students.

The matrix (Figure 2-1) allows an insight into the needs of the various school populations and how each is linked to the other. This matrix will be applied to the findings in this study.

### **The Hungarian Perspective on Good and Improving Schools**

Hungary joined the IEA (The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) in 1968 (Krolopp 1997, p.2). Studies sponsored by the IEA have focused on a number of areas, such as science, in Hungary. A more comprehensive study of Hungarian education was not carried out until the mid eighties (Lannert 1997, p.68). Lannert (1997, p.67) notes that assessment of the standard of achievement in Hungarian schools was first carried out by the NIPE in 1986, then in 1993 and the last time was in 1995. That the Hungarian National Institute carries out these national studies would suggest that the government interest in school improvement is significant. This interest may be linked to the modernisation of the Hungarian education system started in 1989 and supported by the

recent introduction, since 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998, of the new National Core Curriculum (Lannert 1997, p.22). The last NIPE national study, Monitor 1995, looked at achievements in reading, mathematics and information science in Budapest and other cities, towns and villages in Hungary.

The last IEA study was the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) begun and completed in the early 1990s (Vari, 1997 preface). TIMSS involved a comparative study of 41 countries but a more comprehensive study of nine Eastern European countries, listed in Table 2.7, was compiled by Vari (1997).

**Table 2.7 The nine Eastern European countries involved in TIMSS**

Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Romania
Russian Federation
Slovak Republic
Slovenia

The aim of TIMSS (Krolopp 1997, p.1-4) was to:

- learn more about science and Maths education;
- measure student achievement in these areas;
- determine the reasons behind the student achievements in these areas; and
- measure the similarities and differences between countries in a region going through a period of transition in school structure and curricula.

Krolopp (1997, p.12) observes that the teaching in Hungary is rather 'academic' which may not be consistent with her other observation that teachers are free to adopt their own teaching approaches (ibid). This might imply that the 'academic' approach to teaching may be considered normative in Hungary and therefore adopted by choice.

Krolopp (1997, p.13) adds that teachers in Hungary have 'extremely' low socio-economic status that matches their salary. Whether this has ramifications in terms of the amount and type of research carried out in the field of education in Hungary is a question that should be considered separately. It might be suggested that if teaching is of such low status then research is likely to be limited in that field.

Vari (1997, p.171) found 'striking' and 'remarkable' similarities between the school backgrounds in the various Eastern European countries. These included class sizes of 25, which appear relatively low, but are averaged across each country, high turnover of staff due to the unstable economic conditions, evidence of differentiation, insufficient computers and a National Curriculum. Vari (1997, p.170) found, however, that despite the similarities, the achievements between the countries were very different, Hungary being in one of the higher achievement groups in both maths and science. As a comparison, England appeared in the middle achievement group in Mathematics and Hungary in the higher achievement group in science. On analysis, Vari (1997, p.171) found that students in Hungary (and the other Eastern European countries) were better at answering 'formal' questions and were poor at applying their knowledge. He suggests that this reflects the style of teaching prominent in the schools in these countries. This would support Krolopp's (1997, p.12) observation above.

Vari (1997, p.174) summarises the TIMSS findings and lists a number of factors affecting student's achievement:

- Quality of home background.
- Urban or rural areas (the latter where students often went to earn money or help in the home during school days).
- School discipline.
- Parent values of education.
- 'Feeling' towards a subject.

More interesting, Vari (1997, p.174) finds a number of factors that the study saw as NOT affecting student achievement:

- Gender.
- More homework.
- Extra tuition.
- Teaching style.

The four items above contrast with factors associated with student achievement in the UK and other countries. Ofsted (1997), for example, considers the use of regular homework, and Sammons et al (1995) list teaching style, as indicators of effectiveness, while SCAA (1997) considers gender a variable in the measure of student achievement.

Monitor '95 (Lannert 1997, p.67) found similar results to the TIMSS study in as much as students in rural schools did not achieve as well as students in the towns and cities. One more significant finding was that students in Hungarian vocational schools performed very poorly compared to the general school students (Lannert 1997, p.68). This is significant in that half of Hungary's upper secondary students attend vocational schools. This might suggest that academically weaker students are attending vocational schools.

Lannert (1997, p.68) observes that, although still a leading country, there is a significant fall in standards in Hungary since the 1986 national study. This decline may have more reasons behind it than simply the expansion of secondary education as suggested by Lannert (1997, p.68). The fall of communism and its associated financial support and adoption of a free market may have reduced the funding available to education.

### **Summary**

The review has surveyed a variety of studies that investigate the characteristics of a good school. Some of these studies have been compared with each other and reveal that each model is unique and has been derived from specific contexts.

The chapter has also reviewed studies looking at different school populations' opinions on good schools. The data from these studies have been compared with each other through a Matrix allowing further conclusions to be made. The Matrix demonstrates that various school populations differ significantly in what each considers important when identifying a good school and the areas they consider to be important in improving a good school. The data from the studies of the various school populations also provide benchmarks in themselves when comparing like data. This review has shown that there is very little research data in the area of governor and SMT opinions of good schools.

There are a number of key issues that have arisen from the literature review, which may be summarised as follows:

1. When schools are deemed good (or failing), from whose perspective have they been judged and whose criteria should be used?
2. Are theoretical models of good schools representative of the different school populations?
3. What are SMT and Governors' perspectives on good and improving schools?
4. Are all school interest groups taken into account when planning school improvement?
5. Is staff workload so high that it is a barrier to school improvement?
6. What is the implication of different groups having different interests in school improvement?

The research questions provide a complement to the main aims of the thesis and will be addressed at appropriate points during the study.

This chapter provides valuable benchmark information about how different school populations in previous studies have varied in their opinions about good schools. It has also displayed areas currently void of research, which this study will seek to redress. The possibility of constructing a more comprehensive model that encompasses the interests of the various groups and, which might provide a reference guide for good schools to improve, is considered and proposed in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### Introduction

This chapter considers the research methods, case study, interview, and survey, appropriate for the study and some of the key issues involved in the use and application of the methods.

The aim of the research is to seek the views of various school populations on what a good school is and how a good school might be improved. The research questions involved in this study have been divided into four categories:

#### What is a good school?

- What is a good school according to the literature?
- Do all of the school populations agree that their school is a good school?
- What reasons do various school populations give for identifying their school as 'a good school' or as 'not a good school'?
- How do the reasons compare with the published lists?

#### How should the school improve?

- What are the various school populations' perceptions of school improvement in their school?
- How similar or different are the views of improving a school between different groups of the school population?
- How do the various groups' perceptions of school improvement in their school compare with literature on school improvement?

#### UK and International School population differences.

- Do like groups from home and international school populations hold common views on why their school is a good school?
- Do like groups from home and international school populations hold common views on school improvement in their school?

#### Implications and generalisability of findings.

- What are the implications of, and how generalisable are, the findings of this study for school improvement in British and international schools?

Two schools are studied, one in England and one in Hungary. The selection criteria for the case study schools are derived from the research questions:

- The schools chosen for the study are 'good' schools.
- One school is in the UK.
- One school is a British international school
- Both schools follow the National Curriculum in England and Wales.
- Both are middle schools.
- The SMT agreed to be involved in the study.

Additional considerations included:

- Full access to the stakeholders.
- Cost of visiting the second school. The researcher is based in Hungary. Study of the UK case study school involved special trips to the UK.

The target school populations in both schools are:

- governors (termed directors in the selected international school),
- the senior management team\*,
- teachers,
- parents, and
- students.

*\*The senior management team includes the headteacher, and any other senior teacher identified in the school's management structure as a member of the school's SMT.*

### **A Qualitative Approach**

In seeking to elucidate the opinions of various school populations on their schools' improvement, the study is adopting a qualitative approach. The research strategy in this study involves interviews, surveys and documentary evidence through two case studies. The inclusion of a survey indicates that a quantitative element is also involved.

Charles (1995 p.21) differentiates between qualitative and quantitative research in the following way:

‘...qualitative research explores traits of individuals and settings that cannot easily be described numerically....Quantitative research on the other hand, explores traits and situations from which numerical data can be obtained.’

In identifying quantitative data as numeric and qualitative data as non-numeric, it might be assumed that Charles (1995) is describing two very different approaches. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.41) are advocates of bringing the two approaches together and argue that both approaches can be used in the same study. This study, in seeking opinions, is more qualitative than quantitative and it involves a multi-method approach. Bell (1987, p.50) argues that 'no approach depends solely on one method'. Cohen and Manion (1994, p.233) note that exclusive reliance on one method may 'bias or distort' the reality being studied. The study follows Hammersley (1996, p.167-8) who comments that different types of method provide different sorts of data that complement each other. However, Brannen (1992, p.33) warns that, with multiple methods, there will be tensions between the different theoretical perspectives.

### **Interpretive and Normative**

This study has concern for the individual and efforts are made to understand the subject from within, resisting the viewpoint of the observer. Additionally:

- The researcher is personally involved.
- The meanings of the interview responses are considered and there is less emphasis on the cause.
- Nothing is 'taken-for-granted', and everything is analysed.
- Each comment and issue, no matter how small or large is considered.
- The output of the interview will be non-statistical data.
- The perspectives and opinions are likely to be subjective.

Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 36) define this approach as the interpretive paradigm.

The study is also concerned with medium to large scale research, society and social systems, objectivity, being on the outside, being able to generalise, causes rather than meanings, making assumptions, and is macro-conceptual. These are elements of the normative approach (Cohen and Manion 1994, p.39).

### **Problems with Qualitative Research**

Bryman (1988, p.72) observes that there are problems in the implementation of qualitative research. On the issue of interpretation, Bryman (1988, p.73) asks 'how easy is it to perceive how others perceive?' He considers the view that qualitative research should be driven by theory rather than delaying theory until a later stage, which he suggests qualitative researchers tend to do (Bryman 1988, p.91).

According to Smith (1996, p.191), evaluating the validity of qualitative research is also a growing issue. He suggests four criteria by which a qualitative study may be judged (Smith 1996, p. 93):

- Internal coherence.
- Presentation of evidence.
- Independent audit.
- Triangulation.

Smith (1996) argues that qualitative data should be clearly presented with evidence of triangulation, coherence and be able to survive an independent audit.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.266) argue that there may be biases stemming from the researcher's effects on the participants whilst on the site. Conversely, there may also be bias on the researcher from the school and its subjects. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.266) advise that the informed and aware researcher will side step the two types of bias and complete the study in a matter of days. This has implications in terms of how long the researcher should spend at the school.

Where the researcher belongs to the school being studied, bias may take the form of the school affecting the researcher. The researcher is unlikely to have any impact on the school since he is already present and a part of the organisation. In this case, the researcher has to consider possible bias in the interpretation of data.

This study follows Miles and Huberman's (1994, p.38) advice that the researcher is largely in control of the issues of reliability and validity. They suggest that only the knowledgeable researcher will be able to use the multi-method approach with effect, will be able to resist bias, be refined and economical.

### **Case Studies**

This research involves two case studies. Johnson (1994, p.20) describes the case study as:

'an enquiry which uses multiple sources of evidence. It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.'

Cohen and Manion (1994, p.106) provide a more comprehensive definition and describe the case study researcher as one who:

'...typically observes the characteristics on an individual unit - a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which the unit belongs.'

The two definitions are not exclusive but complement each other and are useful together.

Johnson's (1994, p.22) advantages of case study agree with Adelman et al (1980):

- Coping with complexity.
- Intelligible, non-technical findings.
- Can provide interpretations of other similar cases.

Bell (1987, p.7) describes the main criticisms of case study as being:

'The researcher selects the area for study and decides which material to present in the final report. It is difficult to cross check information and there is always the danger of distortion....generalisation is not usually possible...'

Two schools are involved in this study. Each school may be considered a case study in that like data is collected from the various populations involved in the school.

### Surveys

Johnson (1994, p.13) describes the purpose of surveys as that of 'eliciting equivalent information from an identified population'. Cohen and Manion (1994, p.83) describe the advantages of surveys as being designed to vary in complexity and in scope, for example, a geographical region, a school or a small number of pupils. Johnson (1994, p.18) adds issues of generalisability, comparability, and descriptive power to the list of advantages.

The disadvantages of surveys include numerous pitfalls in question construction (Selltiz et al, 1976). The target population may be difficult to access and difficult to administer (Cohen and Manion 1994, p.86) and they can be time intensive and financially demanding (ibid.). Surveys do not offer opportunities to probe, are unsuitable for sensitive issues and there is scope for bias if the sample is not representative in some way (Johnson 1994, p.18). Additionally, response rates vary and may be low.

Cohen and Manion (1994, p.94) advise that research should 'avoid open ended questions on self completion questionnaires.' Their two reasons being the inability to probe respondents' responses and that open-ended questions are too demanding of most respondents' time. On the other hand, Cohen and Manion (1994, p.277) argue that open-ended questions have some advantages, albeit in the interview setting:

'..[they allow] a truer assessment of what the respondent believes.. [and]..can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought of relationships or hypotheses.'

The arguments have been extended to the questionnaire in the context of this particular study. Since the aim is to investigate the school populations' 'perception', the questions were left open ended so as to allow the subject to make an independent response.

### **Interviews**

Cohen and Manion (1994, p.272) describe the interviewing process as 'the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals.' The interview in this study serves three purposes (Cohen and Manion 1994, p.272-3):

1. It has been used as the principal means of gathering information from key stakeholders having direct bearing on the research objectives.
2. It has been used to suggest one or more new hypotheses and as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships.
3. It has been used in conjunction with other methods to following up unexpected results and validates other research data.

Miller (1991, p. 160) lists fourteen advantages of the personal interview. Among them the issues concerning securing information, recalling relevant material, exploring issues at more depth and greater co-operation. Miller (1991) also describes eight disadvantages, including the costs involved, the time, bias caused by poorly worded questions and data may be inaccurate or limited if the interviewer does not explore the issues or the interviewee does not trust the research to remain confidential and does not elaborate.

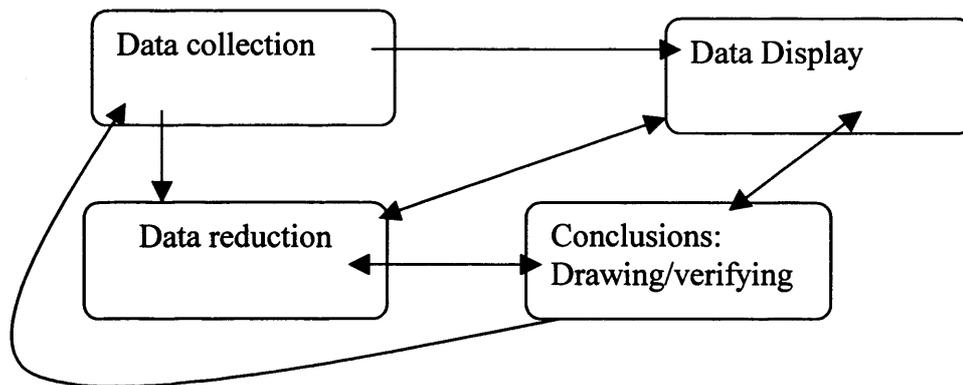
Cohen and Manion (1994, p.272) add that the interviewer is prone to being subjective and biased.

Despite the pitfalls of interviewing, the small population comprising the SMT in this research makes interviews possible, practical and the most suitable approach. Their positions would imply that they should be well informed. Cohen and Manion's (1994, p.283) argument for the disadvantages of interviews is outweighed by the necessity to probe this group and use their responses as an early guide and comparison with the

responses of the other groups.

### Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994 p.12) describe data analysis in the form of a flow model:



**Figure 3-1 Miles and Huberman's (1994) Flow Model of Data Analysis.**

Figure 3-1 shows that data collection may lead to data display or data reduction and conclusions can be drawn at any stage. Analysis of data is implied at all stages of the flow model.

### Data reduction

Data reduction, described by Tesch (1990) as data condensation, refers to 'selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming' (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.10) the research data collected. In this study, the transcripts of the interviews were examined sentence by sentence and responses coded. Similarly, survey data were coded. The coding frame was set up after data collection in accordance with 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and used with both the interview transcripts and survey data.

Silverman (1993, p. 46) presents a simplified model of Glaser and Strauss' (1967)

grounded theory as follows:

- an initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate the data,
- an attempt to saturate these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance,
- developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting.

### Data display

Tesch (1990, p. 64) ascribes the term 'transcendental realism' to the qualitative data analysis approach taken by Miles and Huberman (1984 and 1994). Tesch (1990, p.51)

defines transcendental realism as:

'describing as precisely as possible the range.....of social regularities in social behaviour.'

Berg and Smith (1985, p.364) further elaborate by describing transcendental realism as:

'visual renderings of the ..important variables....and the relationships between them,'.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.11) justify their approach by suggesting that qualitative data has been displayed as extended text in the past which may overload the reader. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.11) believe that their displays of qualitative data are immediate and compact so that 'analysts can see what is happening' and 'justified conclusions' can be drawn. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.11) advise that the data displays should not be separated but integrated into the analysis.

### Drawing and verifying conclusions

Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that conclusions drawn from qualitative data are essentially grounded. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.11) support this view.

Easterby-Smith et al (1994) list seven processes involved in drawing and verifying conclusions:

- Familiarization
- Reflection
- Conceptualisation
- Coding
- Recoding
- Linking variables
- Re-evaluation

These are consistent with Miles and Huberman (1994, p.245-6) although the latter break down the processes into thirteen 'tactics' including 'making metaphors' and 'finding intervening variables'.

### **Development and Piloting**

Three pilots were carried out to test the research instruments.

- Interview pilot of the senior management team
- Survey pilot of the students and their parents
- Survey and questionnaire pilot of the teachers and governors to consider which approach was most suitable.

#### **Interview pilot of the senior management team**

The purpose of the pilot was to test the interview questions and to consider the various ways in which the data could be analysed. The position of the SMT implies that they should be well informed. The senior management team at Cornerstone (case study school in the South of England) agreed to be the pilot study, which was carried out in May 1997, one year before the final research. The pilot confirmed the validity of the approach and highlighted the need for taping and making notes during the interview in case the tape is damaged or the recording machine does not operate.

A semi-structured interview was adopted to allow direct comparison with the groups where a questionnaire is adopted (Johnson 1994, p.45). A statement summarising the aim of the study, to investigate what a good school means to different groups of a school population and how a good school can be improved, formed the introduction to the interview and set the context.

Three key questions were asked – the same questions that formed the questionnaire. The responses to the questions were transferred to the questionnaire format (Appendix One). This allowed direct comparison with the questionnaire responses from other populations. Additional questions formed part of the interview, which explored the responses offered. The researcher obtained permission for full access to the SMT and therefore access did not determine the method.

The pilot provided a wide variety of valuable data and was effective in eliciting a variety of issues and development of various data displays. It was decided that the interview questions were entirely appropriate, and the semi-structured interview instruments did not require modification.

#### Survey pilot of the students and their parents

Unlike the other stakeholder groups, the parents and students comprise a relatively large sample of the school population under study. It was not practical to attempt to contact every parent or student for interview so a questionnaire was most appropriate.

Questionnaires and interview questions were constructed on the lines of Selltiz et al (1976) and Kane (1985).

The pilot was carried out at Cornerstone with one year eight class of students and their parents in May 1997. The student pilot was completed during one of their lessons after permission had been obtained from the Headteacher. The nature and purpose of the study

was first explained to the students and then the questionnaire issued. This ensured a high rate of student return but also made apparent the need to read out questions to the children enabling poor readers to take part. Children with severe writing difficulties had access to support staff who were able to scribe responses. After collection of the student questionnaires, a second coded questionnaire was issued with an attached envelope for each of the students' parents. The codes on both student and parent questionnaires matched so that student/parent set responses could be compared. Questionnaires were also colour coded according to school and population allowing returns and non-returns to be traced back when required. The children returned the questionnaires to school in sealed addressed envelopes marked 'confidential'.

A relatively low (53%) parent return in the pilot led to a follow up discussion with one parent who explained that she did not return the questionnaire because she felt it had nothing to do with the school. This led to a slightly amended approach for the main study. A letter on the school letterhead explaining the study, linking it to the school and the need for returning the questionnaires, accompanied the parent questionnaire.

The pilot questionnaire responses did not exhibit Cohen and Manion's (1994) concerns. The responses were comprehensive and provided considerable scope for analysis. A number of questionnaires provided identification and phone numbers with comments that the respondent would like to follow up responses. These were followed up where appropriate, even if only to provide the respondent with an opportunity to elaborate. However, follow up phone calls or meetings did not provide any significant or new data. Open-ended responses were therefore adopted for the study.

The pilot revealed that some individuals might respond by indicating that the school was 'not a good school' for personal prejudicial reasons rather than objective ones, for example, a personal disagreement with the headteacher, member of staff, or other member of the school. It had been considered that individuals might feel ethically bound to be loyal and give set answers that may even be pre-empted. However, there was no evidence of this in view of the fact that many responses were more critical than expected.

The questionnaire design was very productive in providing varied responses and allowed coding and data analysis to take place. The pilot suggested that the questions were entirely appropriate and did not require modification. Modification of the way in which the questionnaire was introduced to the parents was made through an introductory letter.

At BIMS (second case study school) the letter and questionnaire were translated into Hungarian by the school office staff.

#### Survey and interview pilot of the teachers and governors.

This pilot consisted of two governors at Cornerstone and two teachers at BIMS. It was initiated with a questionnaire and followed up by interview. During the interview, both the teachers and governors commented that the questionnaire was preferred to an interview.

Both teachers specified that it gave them time to reflect and both governors found it more practical and convenient than having to arrange an interview at their home, school or place of work. More significantly the follow up showed that the interview, in the case of teacher and governor, did not reveal any significant additional data to that generated by the questionnaire.

Cohen and Manion's (1994, p283) argument that the questionnaire tends to be more reliable than the interview because the former is anonymous and encourages greater honesty, was confirmed by this pilot. Teachers and governors were surveyed by questionnaire in the main study.

### **Interview and Questionnaire Schedules**

The methods adopted for each school population are given in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Research methods adopted for each school population**

Group	Research method – determined after pilots
Governors	Questionnaire
SMT	Structured interview
Teachers	Questionnaire
Parents	Questionnaire
Children	Questionnaire

The questionnaire schedule, identical for all groups, forms Appendix One. The interviews and questionnaires were administered over a short period of three weeks in May 1998 at BIMS and June 1998 at Cornerstone.

The methods were determined by a number of factors including the sample size, availability of sample and language problems. These and other factors are summarised in Table 3.2. The table highlights a key factor in the study of the governors, their availability. One director of the school in Hungary is resident in the UK. Many of the others in both schools are mobile professionals.

The various populations being targeted check the validity of each other's responses and triangulation is incorporated into the research strategy.

**Table 3.2 Summary of factors determining methodologies adopted**

<b>School</b>	<b>BIMS</b>	<b>Corner-stone</b>	<b>BIMS</b>	<b>Corner-stone</b>	<b>BIMS</b>	<b>Corner-stone</b>	<b>BIMS</b>	<b>Corner-stone</b>	<b>BIMS</b>	<b>Corner-stone</b>
Population	SMT		Governors		Students		Parents		Teachers	
Method	Interview		Questionnaire		Questionnaire		Questionnaire		Questionnaire	
Size of population	4(5)*	3	3(4)**	7(9)***	25	125	21	123	11	20
Sample and percentage (%) selected	4 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	7 (100%)	25 (100%)	125 (100%)	21 (100%)	123 (100%)	11 (100%)	20 (100%)
Availability of individuals	Available		Available but resident at locations either close to the case study school or overseas		Available		Available		Available	
Possible Difficulties	No major difficulties		Language and travelling costs	Travelling costs	No major difficulties		Language	No major difficulties	No major difficulties	
Type of access determined by the Head.	Full access									
Nature of the responses required for the study	Personal opinions									
Nature of the study	Qualitative, Case Study									
Time available	Three weeks for each school									
Financial requirements	Postage, travel – overseas, car hire.									

\*the researcher is the fourth member of the SMT

\*\*the principal is the chair of directors and the member of the SMT

\*\*\*two teachers are governors and are not included in the governor response rate.

### A summary of the aims and their link with the questions

The relationship between the questions and the aims of the study are shown in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3 The relationship between the questions and the aims of the study**

Question	Aims
Introductory question: [1] How would you describe your school ?	None specifically - general question used as a focus.
[2] Please try and give some reasons for your answer:	To investigate the governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and student's perception of a good school. To compare the perception of a good school of different groups from a school population. To compare the perception of a good school of like groups from UK and international school populations.
[3] What aspects of the school do you want to see improved or further improved ?	To investigate the governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and student's perception of how their school might be improved. To compare the opinions of different groups within a school population on improving the school. To compare the opinions of like groups, UK and International, on improving schools.

### Sampling

In both schools, BIMS and Cornerstone, the same populations were selected and a systematic sample strategy (Cohen and Manion 1994, p.87) was adopted. At BIMS (Table 3.2) the population and selected sample were the entire SMT (4), all the governors (3), all the teachers (11), all the students in key stage three (25) and their parents (21). At Cornerstone the population and selected sample were the whole SMT (3), all the governors (7), all the teachers (20), all the students in year eight (125) and their parents (123). The only variation occurs between the student populations at the two schools. With only 25 students attending BIMS key stage three at the time of the study, the entire key stage three student population at BIMS was targeted to provide the most comprehensive data. This is in line with Johnson (1994, p.99) who reinforces that it is the size of the sample that counts. Year eight students at Cornerstone, the most senior, numbered 120. In order to inspire confidence in the sample (Johnson 1994, p. 99), the whole year eight student population at Cornerstone was studied. To sample the entire key stage three section of

Cornerstone would have involved approximately 250 students, 250 parents and both year seven and year eight. Year eight was selected for four reasons:

- They are the most senior year in the school.
- They represent a significant sample size.
- They are likely to be reasonably representative of the whole of key stage three in the school.
- Year seven would be unlikely to provide significant new data.

Sampling within the case is relevant and involves consideration of the following criteria

(Miles and Huberman 1994, p.29):

**Table 3.4 Criteria involved in sampling within the case.**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Which activities?	The study asks the subjects to consider school improvement and therefore activities in the school associated with school improvement will be points of reference.
Which processes?	Opinions about the school, being able to justify opinion and acting on personal opinions, philosophies. Morse (1994, p.301) adds, feelings, beliefs, wishes, problems, experiences, and behaviours.
Which events?	What events have occurred that may help the study understand the participant's view of the school.
Which times?	Which is the best time to conduct the study and also will the time of the study influence the outcome. There is also likely to be problems if separate subjects were studied at vastly different times in terms of the variant experience that may result.
Location	Should the study take place in the school, or would it be more objective if it took place outside of school? Miles and Huberman (1994, p.266) suggest that some of the interviewing should be done off site to reduce the researcher's threat quotient. However, this was not possible.
Role partners	Other members of the groups studied

From Miles and Huberman (1994, p.29)

The study was conducted so that all interviews and questionnaires were carried out over a three-week period and this minimised the possibility of major events influencing interview outcomes. Organised this way, it might be reasonable to assume that all members of the selected samples had relatively common experiences of the events of school life up to that time. Internal consistency could have been increased if the interviews and surveys had been repeated one term later. However, it was decided that this would not have provided any further significant information to that already gained from the first round of research.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996, p.194) argue that researchers need to determine what level of accuracy is expected and how large a standard error is acceptable. In this study where a small SMT population was interviewed, a 100% return is necessary to determine an accurate SMT perspective. In the case of questionnaires, a high return is again necessary for a small sample, but Cohen and Manion (1994, p.99) imply that a 75% return should be a typical target for larger samples. However, surveys such as Woods (1993) experienced a response rate of 66%, Black and Armstrong (1995) 51%, and Hannan and Newby (1992) 46%. Cohen and Manion (1994, p.103) describe Hannan and Newby's (1992) survey return as 'not atypical'.

In this research, ten separate population surveys or interviews, five in each case study, were carried out. This study achieved a 100% response rate from seven categories. The remaining three return rates were 81.8% (teachers, sample: eleven, BIMS), 68.3% (teachers, sample: twenty, Cornerstone) and 50.4% (parents, sample: 125, Cornerstone). This appears to be more than satisfactory in view of the comments of Cohen and Manion (1994) referred to in the previous paragraph.

### **Summary**

A number of issues concerning the study have been highlighted in this chapter:

- The study is essentially qualitative.
- It is both normative and interpretative.
- Awareness of reliability and validity, including the potential for bias in qualitative research, is a key factor contributing to a successful study.
- How far the findings can be generalised will be an issue.
- Sampling is not considered a major issue since entire target populations were surveyed with most providing a 100% return.

The next two chapters report the findings from the two case studies.

# Chapter 4

## Case Study One - The British International Middle School (BIMS)

### Selection and other data

BIMS was chosen as a case study school because it met the criteria required by the research questions:

- It is a British school.
- Its curriculum is built around the English National Curriculum.
- It is an international school.
- It is a middle school.
- It has been deemed a good school by two Ofsted team inspections (1996 and 1998).

The 1998 inspection report (Holmes 1998, p.7) states:

'[BIMS] is a good school; its strengths far outweigh the few areas it needs to develop.'

The attainment at key stage three is very high as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1** 1998 Key Stage Three National Curriculum (NC) Test Results at BIMS

		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC level 5 or above	Total	5	6	5
% at Level 5 or above	School	100	100	100
	National	65	59	56
% at level 6 or above	School	100	100	100
	National	23	36	28
Standards compared with all schools		Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
Standards compared with all similar schools		Above average	Above average	Above average

Compiled from Holmes (1998)

Table 4.1 highlights a unique feature of international schools that administer the English national curriculum tests. The schools are not legislatively required to follow the English National Curriculum and administer the accompanying tests. BIMS has made a policy that its curriculum will follow the National Curriculum in England and Wales and all students, regardless of nationality, will sit the tests unless they are recent arrivals with English as second language and their English is at a poor level. The sixth student in the Table 4.1 above was a new student with Czech as her first language. She was not confident with her English and the student requested that she be allowed to enter the key stage three mathematics paper but not the others. The international school, being free of any legislation concerning the tests, was able to accommodate this request.

The quality of teaching observed by Ofsted indicated that all lessons observed were satisfactory or better.

**Table 4.2 Quality of Teaching observed by the 1998 inspection (Holmes, 1998) at BIMS**

Quality of Teaching	%
Very Good or better	31
Satisfactory or better	100
Less than Satisfactory	0

Classes are small as shown in the table below:

**Table 4.3 BIMS class sizes**

Class	Class size
7	12
8	7
9	6

## The Study

### The Stakeholders

Table 4.4 displays the number of subjects involved in the study and the response rate. The table includes data on gender distribution.

**Table 4.4 Response rate of survey and interviews at BIMS**

CASE STUDY SCHOOL 1 HUNGARY								
Population	Male	Female	Total Number	Male	Female	Total response	% response	Comments
Students - years 7/8/9	12	13	25	12	13	25	100	All students responded
Parents	Data not available		21	2	19	21	100	One parent response was received from each family
Teachers	3	8	11	2	7	9	81.82	The two non-respondent teachers both left at the end of the year
SMT	1 (2)*	3	4 (5)*	1	3	4	100	*The researcher is the other member of the SMT
Directors	2	1 (2)**	3 (4)**	2	1	3	100	**The principal is the chair of directors and a member of the SMT

Sampling was not considered an issue since whole target populations was surveyed. The response rate was 100 percent for four stakeholder groups and 81.8 percent for the teachers.

Siblings in key stage three meant that 21 parent questionnaires were sent out with the 25 students on the premise that one return per family would be received. The parent pilot study had suggested that the mothers, rather than fathers, are more likely to complete the questionnaires. This pattern was repeated in the main study.

### The Senior Management Team

The senior management team at BIMS comprises:

- The Principal.
- Vice Principal - Head of BIMS.
- Vice Principal - Head of Key Stage One school.
- Key Stage Two Co-ordinator.
- Key Stage Three Co-ordinator (the researcher).

All the interviews were carried out at the place of work. The interview took the form of a short general discussion where the research was outlined, the subject was made to feel at ease, and questions to be asked were put into context. Of the interviewees, only the key stage two co-ordinator expressed any anxiety about being taped. In her case, notes were made during the interview, which were then followed up to confirm accuracy. None of the informants indicated that they had been guarded and careful with their responses, suggesting a relaxed, frank and honest interview. Relevant data of the SMT interviewed shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 Relevant data of the SMT at BIMS**

Position	Number of years in post	Number of years in the school	Age	Gender
Principal	6	6	47	Female
Vice Principal - Head of BIMS	1	1 year and 2 terms	35	Male
Vice Principal	1	5	34	Female
Key Stage 2 Co-ordinator	1	1	32	Female

### The Directors

There are four directors.

**Table 4.6 Relevant details of the directors**

Director	Gender	Comments
Director One	Female	Chairperson of the Board of Directors and Principal of BIMS
Director Two	Male	Husband of Director One, original founder, architect by trade, plans and Co-ordinates all school extensions and building works
Director Three	Female	Head of a primary school in the UK
Director Four	Male	Banker

The directors might be considered as being equivalent to school governors in the UK

although there are some key differences:

- Individuals may only become board members at the invitation of the board.
- There is no legislation as to the number and nature of the board of directors. However, Hungarian law determines the practice and procedures for the board of directors.
- There is no teacher representation.
- It is unclear as to how the directors are accountable for the daily running of the school and what their expected role in the running of the school is.

Additional information of the four directors is summarised:

- Director 1 is the principal of the school and the chair of the board of directors. She speaks Hungarian and English.
- Director 2 is an architect by trade and manages school building projects and maintenance. He speaks Hungarian and English.
- Director 3 is relatively new having been invited to become a director by the chair in October 1998. Director 3 is a headteacher of a successful primary school in the UK. On her visits to Budapest for the director meetings, this director will meet with the staff and tour the various school sites belonging to the foundation. Meetings are held twice a year in Budapest. English is her first language.
- Director 4 is a Hungarian businessman. He is not involved in the school in any other way. He speaks Hungarian and English

Since her role is central to the leadership and management of the school, director one will be interviewed in her role as principal of the school. Her responses will then be carried forward as part of the SMT and not as part of the collective body of directors.

### Teachers

The staff at BIMS are UK qualified and usually UK recruited. Recruitment is done through a UK based agency. Interviews are held in London and involve the recruiting agent, the principal and another member of the SMT. Occasionally, local part-time qualified teachers are recruited depending on need.

The majority of the staff is female and may be considered young with limited experience.

There are moves to balance the age range and amount of experience amongst the staff. The

policy of young, generalist rather than specialist, staff was an economic necessity during the first years of the school. The start of the 1988/9 academic year saw the first set of experienced specialist staff who worked across all phases but mainly in key stage three. A 'secondary school development' post was also created with the aim that the post holder would transform the upper end of the school into a full 11-18 secondary school. Staff recruitment is therefore accommodating the future needs of the school which, according to the principal, the school has been able to do for the first time as a result of the growing number of students and the related growth in income. Table 4.7 confirms that ten of the staff at BIMS had been recruited that year.

**Table 4.7 Relevant data of teachers at BIMS**

Teacher	Gender	Age	Length of service
1.	M	40	1
2.	M	55	1
3.	M	22	1
4.	F	41	1
5.	F	25	3
6.	F	28	1
7.	F	22	1
8.	F	25	1
9.	F	24	1
10.	F	25	1
11.	F	23	1

### Students

The school is not selective and students are mixed in terms of gender, ability, and nationality. Being an English speaking school, the entrance policy in the primary section is that students are expected to have some knowledge of English. There is, however, a strong EFL department that supports the children until they are able to manage in the classrooms without further assistance. Students entering key stage three are expected to have a greater level of spoken English. Again, support is provided by the EFL department where needed.

With more than fifty nationalities in the school, the school has adopted a very active intercultural policy.

Classes are mixed ability with a very wide range of ability in one class. A mobile student population means that students may enter or leave the school at any time during the year.

### The Parents

The parents are mainly from an international business background and the firms that appoint them usually pay the school fees. Many of the parents are mobile and few attend parents' evenings. Quite often, the father is employed and the mother is not. The economic circumstance amongst Budapest expatriates usually means that the family will have a cleaner or even a maid. The mother, therefore, may choose to become involved in the expatriate social life in Budapest or/and become involved in the school through the Parent Teacher Association.

A Parent Advisory Group (PAG) also exists which comprises the principal, the two vice principals, the chairman of the PTA and a number of invited parents. The parents are strategically invited to join the PAG based on what they might be able to offer to the school through either their business experience or personal contacts. The PAG meets twice a term and all key events and policies are approved at meetings. The PAG operates in between the formal Board of directors and the PTA. The only link between the PAG and the board of directors is the principal who is chair of both.

The PTA is well represented and the parent forums are very vocal. The PTA consists of an events committee and a finance committee. It is very active and organises the school bazaars and a number of other fund raising activities. The school is able to make requests to the PTA for special items or financial support for special projects. The PTA has recently

funded a printer, digital camera, art and craft equipment, and money towards a key stage three drama production.

### Research Data

Responses to both interviews and surveys were grouped in a coding frame and then placed in the broad categories used by Ofsted (1997) to report on schools, chosen because of their relatively comprehensive nature. Table 4.8 summarises the questions asked and Table 4.9 presents the response data for question one.

**Table 4.8 Questions asked in the interview and survey**

<u>Questions</u>	
1 How would you describe your school ?	
a good school z	not a good school z
2 Please give some reasons for your answer	
3 What aspects of the school do you want to see improved or further improved?	

**Table 4.9 BIMS - Is it a good school?**

Population		Gender/ Total	Raw data (numbers)			Data as a percentage (%)		
			Good	Not good	Total	Good	Not good	Total
	Total	Male	16	3	19	25.81	4.84	30.65
		Female	39	4	43	62.90	6.45	69.35
		Total	55	7	62	88.71	11.29	100
Breakdown of total responses	Directors	Male	2	0	2	66.67	0.00	66.67
		Female	1	0	1	33.33	0.00	33.33
		Total	3	0	3	100.00	0.00	100
	SMT	Male	1	0	1	25.00	0.00	25
		Female	3	0	3	75.00	0.00	75
		Total	4	0	4	100.00	0.00	100
	Teachers	Male	1	1	2	11.11	11.11	22.22
		Female	5	2	7	55.56	22.22	77.78
		Total	6	3	9	66.67	33.33	100
	Students	Male	11	1	12	44.00	4.00	48
		Female	11	2	13	44.00	8.00	52
		Total	22	3	25	88.00	12.00	100
	Parents	Male	1	1	2	4.76	4.76	9.52
		Female	19	0	19	90.48	0.00	90.48
		Total	20	1	21	95.24	4.76	100

The majority of the stakeholders (88.71%) agree that BIMS is a good school. The 11.29% of stakeholders unhappy with the school comprise three teachers, three students, and one parent. As a proportion, more males are discontented with the school (15.78% of male respondents) but their numbers are relatively low (three out of 19 males in total).

Within the SMT, the head of key stage one was categorical in her answer that the school is a good school. The principal, the head, and the key stage co-ordinator were reserved in their judgement.

'There are various aspects of the school that I think are very good but I don't think it is where I want it to be as yet.'  
(Principal)

'Neither at the moment. I would sit on the fence leaning towards a good school. Largely a good school.'  
(Vice Principal - Head of BIMS)

'A good school.'  
(Vice Principal - Head of Key Stage Two School)

'Neither. It has a long way to go. If I had to choose I would verge on the side of a good school.'  
(Key Stage Two Co-ordinator)

When pressed, the uncertain SMT members conceded that the school was a good school.

All three directors indicated that the school is good. 95% of parents are happy with the school. The 5% of parents not happy represent one parent (a male) from 21. The greatest proportion of any stakeholder group who described the school as not a good school was the teacher group (33%).

22 out of 25 students described the school as a good school. Of the 12% of students unhappy with the school, two are female and one male. When the coded questionnaires were matched against each student/parent set, the match revealed no correlation. Table 4.10 confirms that the parents of the three students unhappy with the school identified the school as a good school. This would suggest that the parent and student responses are likely to be independent opinions of the subject rather than dependent on the other.

**Table 4.10 Parent/student sets compared**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Number of sets</b>
A good school	A good school	18
Not a good school	Not a good school	0
A good school	Not a good school	1
Not a good school	A good school	3
	TOTAL sets	22
<b>Breakdown of Data by Gender</b>		
<b>Student</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Number of sets</b>
<b>A good school</b>	<b>A good school</b>	<b>18</b>
Female	Female	9
Male	Female	9
Female	Male	0
Male	Male	0
<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>0</b>
Female	Female	0
Male	Female	0
Female	Male	0
Male	Male	0
<b>A good school</b>	<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>1</b>
Female	Female	0
Male	Female	0
Female	Male	0
Male	Male	1
<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>A good school</b>	<b>3</b>
Female	Female	2
Male	Female	1
Female	Male	0
Male	Male	0

Table 4.11 presents the reasons given for identifying the school as a good school, Table 4.12 lists the reasons given for stating the school as not a good school, and Table 4.13 lists the issues stated for school improvement.

**Table 4.11 Reasons for identifying BIMS as a good school**

\*Numbers represent frequency. Where an individual mentions an issue, communication for example, in different contexts, each context scores one.

Question 2 - Reasons why the school is a good school		Directors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		TOTAL
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	High standards	1		1	2		1				2	7	
	Children want to go to school									1		1	
	Discipline/behaviour	1									1	2	
	Easy Lessons							1				1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>11</b>	
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	Friendly teachers						3	8	1	1	13	
		Individual attention/ monitoring					1	0	0	2	6	9	
		Treated with respect						2	2	0	2	6	
		Happy environment	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	6	
		Good atmosphere	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	5	
		Caring and supportive nurturing				1	0	4	2	3	2	1	13
		Friendly					1	1	0	1	3	6	
		Good relationships between students and teachers					1	0	0	1	1	3	
		Not too strict teachers							1	1	0	0	2
		Responsible pupils							1	0	1	0	2
		Ethos of respect/discipline										2	2
		Bullying dealt with promptly										2	2
		Good relationships between students					1	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Individuality of child developed									1	0	1
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>71</b>	
Teaching	Good teachers	1		1	2		1	8	2	3	16	34	
	Specialist/qualified teaching						1	2	1	2	4	10	
	Enjoy lessons							2	2			4	
	Committed staff						3					3	
	Manageable teaching						1					1	
	Commitment to quality										1	1	
	Children work hard		1									1	
	Good quality of work				1							1	
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>56</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>127</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>42</b>		<b>56</b>		<b>127</b>	

Table 4.11 (Continued)			Directors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
Category			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL	
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	Effective teamwork			1	0	1	3					5	
		Good management		1	1	0	1	2					5	
		Willingness to improve				2								2
		Strong sense of direction	1	1	1	1								4
		Plans for growth/Expansion						1				2		3
		Active PTA						1						1
		Admissions at any time										1		1
		Good communication between school and home										2		2
		Good staff and staffing				1								1
	<b>Sub Total</b>			1	2	3	4	2	7	0	0	0	5	24
	Efficiency	Organised								0	1	0	2	3
		Uniform										3		3
		Transport to and from school							1					1
	<b>Sub Total</b>			0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5	7
	Facilities	Good resources				1	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	6
		Big playground							3	3				6
		Nice dinners							1	2	0	1		4
		Good facilities/building				1	0	0	0	1	0	2		4
		Nice environment							1	1				2
		Large Classrooms								1				1
	<b>Sub Total</b>			0	0	0	2	0	0	7	9	1	4	23
	<b>Total</b>			1	2	3	6	2	7	8	10	1	14	54
	<b>Total</b>			3		9		9		18		15		54
Curriculum areas and subjects	Extra curricular activities								6	4	0	5	15	
	Good curriculum/extra additions						1	2	0	1	3		7	
	Internationally convertible curriculum	1											1	
	School trips							1					1	
<b>Total</b>			1	0	0	0	0	1	9	4	1	8	24	
<b>Total</b>			1		0		1		13		9		24	
School Data	Small classes					1	2	2	3	3	2		13	
	Ofsted/educationalists say it is good	1	1										2	
	Increase in student numbers	1											1	
	Different nationalities					1	1	0	1	0	0		3	
<b>Total</b>			2	1	0	0	2	3	2	4	3	2	19	
<b>Total</b>			3		0		5		6		5		19	

Table 4.12 Reasons why BIMS is not a good school

\*Numbers represent frequency. Where an issue, communication for example, is mentioned in different contexts, each context scores one.

Question 2 Reasons why the school is not a good school			Directors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total
Ofsted model category			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	Does not measure up to Hungarian school standards										1		1
	Classes dysfunctional						1						1
	Students not focused						1						1
	Low student expectations						1						1
<b>Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	Not enough done to develop students self confidence									1		1
		Does not encourage individual creativity									1		1
	Teaching	Foreign language teachers should be native speakers									1		1
<b>Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	Poor management					2	2					4
		Management structure				1							1
		Forced to go out at breaks							1				1
		School day is too long							1				1
		Uniform							1				1
		Not enough immersion into English									1		1
		No guidelines for parents to monitor student performance									1		1
		Too much focus on public relations and not enough on learning					1						1
		Poor communication						1					1
	Low teacher expectations					1						1	
Facilities	Limited resources					1						1	
<b>Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects	No EFL teaching in specialist subjects										1		1
	No activities organised by the school										1		1
<b>Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
School Data	Too small								1				1
	Minority English native speakers										1		1
<b>Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 4.13 Issues for school improvement at BIMS

\*Numbers represent frequency. Where an issue, communication for example, is mentioned in different contexts, each context scores one.

Question 3-What aspects of the school do you want to see improved or further improved?		Directors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Ofsted model category												TOTAL	
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	Address racial discrimination										1	1	
	Better discipline					2						2	
	Standards			2	1							3	
	Bullying							1				1	
	Improve how students behave towards teachers							1				1	
	Target setting and monitoring		1										1
	More motivation amongst students to work					1					1		2
	<b>Total</b>	0	1	2	1	0	3	0	2	0	2	11	
	<b>Total</b>	1		3		3		2		2		11	
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development										1	1	
		<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
	Teaching	History and geog. teaching							2				2
		Improve MFL teaching									1		1
		Improve quality of teaching			2	2	1						5
		More fun activities									1		1
		Quality to be maintained with bigger classes									1		1
		More monitoring			1								1
Wider range of teaching methods					1	1	1				3		
	<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0	2	3	0	2	1	3	0	3	14	
	<b>Total</b>	0	0	2	3	0	2	1	3	0	4	15	
	<b>Total</b>	0		5		2		4		4		15	

Table 4.13 (Continued)			Directors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total		
Ofsted model category			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL		
Management and efficiency of the school	Management	Better communication			3	7		4	1				15		
		Financial management			1	1		2						4	
		Extension of upper school			1						1	1		3	
		Improve management			1	10	1	2		1				15	
		Uniform policy							3	6		1		10	
		Links with other schools										2		2	
		Lower fees									1			1	
		Management of staff			4	4									8
		Keep in check ambitions for the school				1									1
		Stability and staff retention					1	2			1	2			6
		Pressure on staff				2	1								3
		INSET				1	1								2
		Public Relations				1	1								2
		More written reports										1			1
		Relax rules								1	1				2
				<b>Sub total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>75</b>
	Efficiency	Break and Lunchtimes							5	6	2			13	
		Keep to deadlines				1								1	
		School day times							1	1				2	
			<b>Sub total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	
	Facilities	More classrooms							1			1		2	
		A permanent site for the school	2										1	3	
		Better organised building							1		1	2		4	
		Playground							2	3	1	1		7	
		Sports	1				1		2	3		6		13	
		Arts facilities							1			1		2	
		Hall							1	2				3	
		Library				1	1			1		3		6	
		More resources				2	1	4	1		1			9	
		IT facilities						1		1				2	
		MFL facilities and resources										1		1	
		<b>Sub total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>52</b>		
	<b>Total</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>143</b>	
<b>Total</b>			<b>3</b>		<b>43</b>		<b>21</b>		<b>45</b>		<b>31</b>		<b>143</b>		

Table 4.13 (Continued)		Directors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
Ofsted model category		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL	
Curriculum areas and subjects	Study time							1				1	
	Hung and EFL extraction			1								1	
	Ask students what subjects they would like							1				1	
	Better curriculum balance							1				1	
	Better sports curriculum								1			1	
	Reference texts for each subject							1			1	2	
	Introduce community service										1	1	
	Curriculum to include study of a wider range of countries, not just England and Hungary							1			2	3	
	Continuity and progression between key stages		1		2								3
	Introduce drama										1	1	
	Homework policy								1		3	4	
	More languages										1	1	
	More music activities										2	2	
	More non-academic subjects										1	1	
	More out of school activities			1							1	2	
	More PSE										1	1	
	More reading										1	1	
	More school trips							1	4		2	7	
	More sports activities						1		1		5	7	
	More student clubs			1	1			1	1		2	6	
More student project work										1	1		
More tests							1			2	3		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>51</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>51</b>	
School Data	Bigger classes									1	1	2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>	

The size of the class is important to teachers, students, and parents in judging a good school. The directors neglected this issue. The SMT mentioned it in the context of standards but not as a direct link to the school being a good school.

Two teachers and one student saw different nationalities amongst the students as a strength. One parent viewed the issue as a weakness. This issue needs to be explored in view of the international context of the school.

Director two (a male architect) made a very important point in his reply that he relied exclusively on 'educationalists' to inform him of the standard of teachers and the education received by the children. The only director with some insight into the educational aspects of the school was the female director, a headteacher in the UK.

Within the SMT, the principal does not comment on the need to improve management whereas the other three do.

'Management structure. Something I see as a recipe for impending disaster...' (Head of Key Stage One School)

...if we do have staff that are unhappy and disaffected then we have to look at ourselves and say why....whether it is a poorly managed aspect of the school...(Head of BIMS)

I think it has become apparent to [the Principal], and those who work with her, that she needs to step back from direct day to day management of the school and leave that now to the people she has appointed. (Head of BIMS)

Communication within the SMT is poor. The structure of the SMT is not appropriate. There is way too much overlap between the key stage two co-ordinator role and the head of school role. (Key Stage Two Co-ordinator)

'There is too much duplication between the roles because of the lack of communication. There is also an element of mistrust...' (Key Stage Two Co-ordinator)

The tone of the comments, and the discrepancy in views between the principal and the other members of the SMT, is an important issue for exploration.

Some teachers also identified the need for better management, communication, financial management, and stability. A number of teachers agree with members of the SMT that management structure and management roles need defining. One of the teacher issues was that management were trying to do too much too soon. The effects of rapid expansion of the school since its foundation may be another factor that needs examining in order to understand the comment. What is revealing is that many of the SMT and teacher remarks support each other. There are, however, areas of difference. For example, there is a suggestion from teachers that discipline needs to be addressed but the SMT does not see this as an issue.

Having good teachers was significant to male students (66%). Students appeared keen to identify good qualified teachers and friendly caring teachers as the strength of the school. Parents and the SMT agree.

'We have some excellent teachers but we also have some very mediocre teachers..' (Head of BIMS)

The quote shows that the SMT are acutely aware of the variation in quality of teachers.

Additionally, only one teacher recognised that the school had good teachers.

That 22 out of 25 students described the school as a good school would support the view of the SMT that the students were generally happy with the school.

'I would say that one of the main things I would be looking for is that the children are happy, and children are happy within the context of being educated.' (Principal)

Whereas quality of education is considered as the main area for improvement by the SMT, parents and students want to see more extras to the curriculum such as trips, clubs, and more sports. They do not appear to view the curriculum as in need of improvement.

Having already said that a small class size was important to parents in considering a good school, some parents would prefer classes to be larger. This discrepancy appears to have come about from the social arena of the school. With only six students in year nine, there may be some justification in suggesting that the class is too small for adolescent 14 year olds who may be looking for a wider circle of friends.

### **Overview**

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of some of the main outcomes of the data prior to the comparative analysis between the stakeholders and the two case study schools in chapter six.

The section discusses the responses made by each stakeholder. It first considers perceptions of a good school and then discusses school improvement. Tables show the frequency of responses in broad categories and a list of the main issues raised by each stakeholder.

The directors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and children's perception of a good school.

The Directors

**Table 4.14 A good school. Director reasons (BIMS).**

Category	Frequency	Main reasons	M	F	T
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	4	Strong sense of direction	1	1	2
		Ofsted/educationalists say it is good	1	1	2
		High standards	1		1
Management, efficiency and facilities	3	Discipline/behaviour	1		1
		Children work hard		1	1
		Good management		1	1
School data	3	Good teachers	1		1
		Happy environment		1	1
		Good atmosphere		1	1
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	2	Increase in student numbers	1		1
		Curriculum areas and subjects	1		1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

All three directors indicated that the school is a good school. The two male directors were complimentary about the school except that both responses were very limited and, therefore, the male architect director's responses were followed up. His poignant remark that he relied exclusively on 'educationalists' to inform him of the standard of teachers and the education received by the children provides some insight into the function and purpose of the board of directors. The response suggests that the directors have very little involvement in the educational side of the school, they may not be encouraged to be involved, and rely primarily on the chairman of the board, who is also the principal, to run the school.

The only director with some insight into the educational aspects of the school is the female director, a headteacher in the UK. She is flown in especially for board meetings held twice a year when she spends up to two days in the school. As well as relying on the Ofsted judgement that BIMS is a good school, she uses her own measures including good management, strong sense of direction, happy environment, and good atmosphere.

Of the other two directors, the architect director's involvement in the school is in the planning and overseeing of any building work. The other male director has no involvement in the school except his contribution at director meetings.

It appears that the directors have very specific roles and only the female director, being a head of a primary school in the UK, has any involvement in the educational aspect of the school. This, however, ignores the principal who is also the chair of the board of directors. She works full time in the school as an administrator, and advises the board. Her role is pivotal in the leadership and management of the school. The role of the directors is unclear and their involvement in the school is uncertain.

To summarise, although the directors have some valid opinions, their involvement in the school is limited and this may be a direct consequence of the chair of directors being fully involved as the principal of all the foundation schools. Although the structure is working, there is a concern that the directors rely almost entirely on the chair, thereby creating a further concern that the chair of directors has too much autonomy and authority to run the schools as she sees fit. Such a scenario could also imply that she may not be accountable to the board for policies and actions carried out.

#### Senior Management Team (SMT)

Table 4.15 shows that the majority of the comments from the SMT relate to management and quality of education. The SMT are self-appraising but also praise the teachers and the atmosphere in the school. They do not comment on the curriculum or school data such as national curriculum tests and school size.

**Table 4.15 A good school. Senior Management Team reasons (BIMS).**

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
Management, efficiency and facilities	9	High standards	1	2	3
		Good teachers	1	2	3
		Strong sense of direction	1	1	2
		Willingness to improve		2	2
		Good management	1		1
		Effective teamwork	1		1
		Good staff and staffing		1	1
		Good resources		1	1
		Good facilities/building		1	1
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	8	Happy environment		1	1
		Good atmosphere		1	1
		Caring and supportive nurturing		1	1
		Good quality of work		1	1
		Quality planning and teaching		1	1
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	3				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The SMT agrees that the standards of the school are high. This may be interpreted as academic standards across all subjects but also includes standards of behaviour and high expectations.

'Compared to an average school the standards are pretty good.' (Head of Key Stage One School)

'...[it has] high expectations of the staff and the pupils.' (Key Stage Two Coordinator)

However, members of the SMT were cautious and remarked that standards need to be, and could be, higher still.

'...we compare very favourably with UK standards. However, I think there is still room for improvement in many areas...' (Head of BIMS)

'... we should be looking for better than that given the type of pupils we have coming here. Given the class sizes, given the facilities, given the parents' support, we should be looking for excellence across the curriculum. I don't feel we are achieving that consistently in any subject.' (Head of Key Stage One School)

Figure 4-1 compares comments between the various members of the SMT and reveals a different perspective to that expressed in Table 4.15.

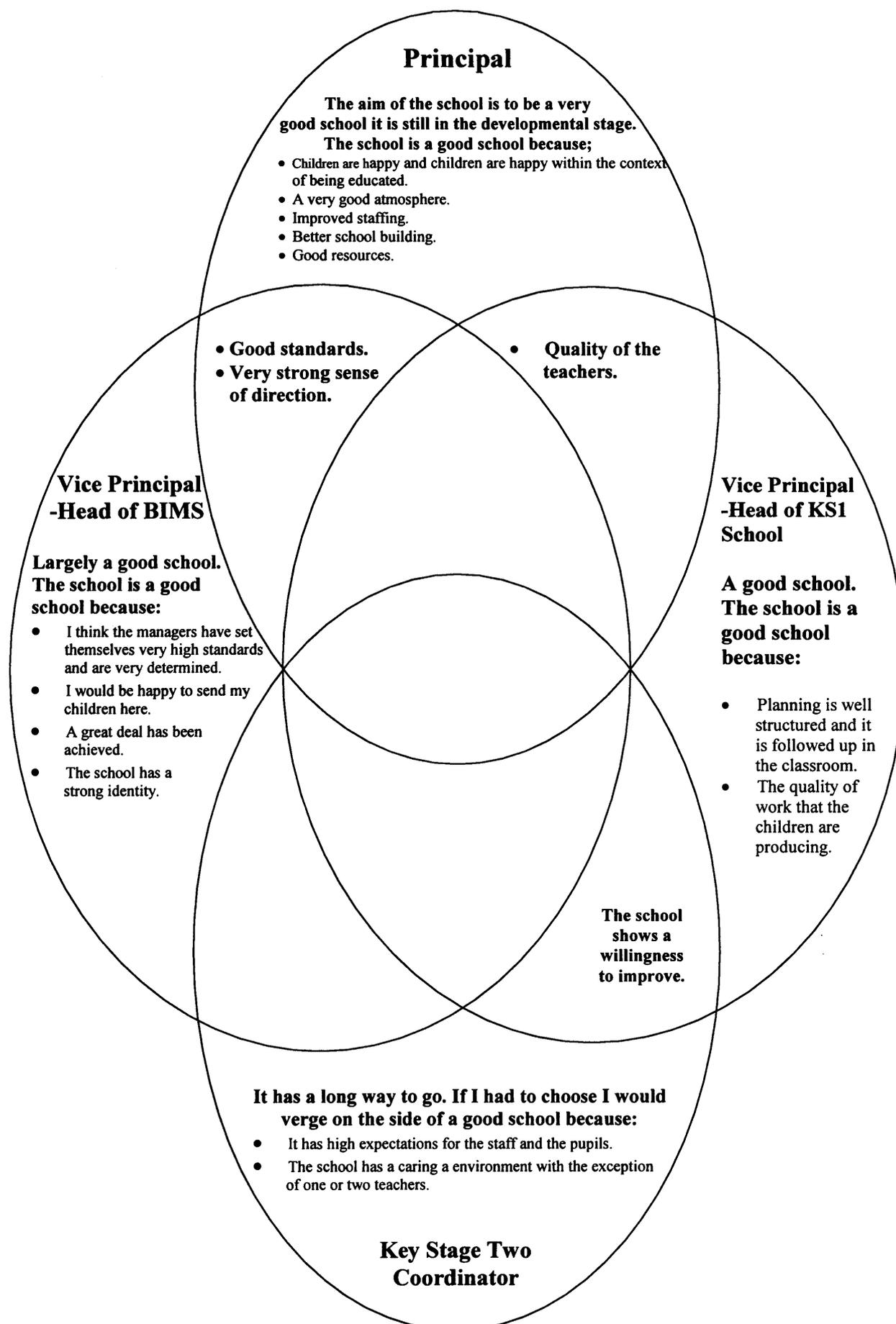


Figure 4-1 A good school. SMT responses compared

Two issues are shared between the principal and the head of BIMS, high standards and a strong sense of direction. One issue was shared between the principal and the head of key stage one, quality of teachers. One issue was shared between the key stage two co-ordinator and the head of key stage one, the willingness of the SMT to improve. No other matches were identified. It was interesting that other members of the SMT did not mention the most important thing for the principal, happiness of the children:

'So they are actually enjoying their education. I think that is very, very important.' (Principal)

More revealing was that fourteen issues were not shared and that there was no issue common to all members of the SMT. It might be suggested that the principal is inherently interested in the whole school and therefore has a wider perspective, and is able to talk about her vision for the school. The head of BIMS, however, is more focused on academic achievement, values, and behaviour. The head of key stage one, who has a peripheral but key role at BIMS, views the school from a very narrow perspective, mainly what is going on in the classroom. The key stage two co-ordinator has a more holistic perception in mentioning the SMT, the staff and the pupils in her judgement of the school.

There were no areas of agreement between the head and head of key stage one, and the head and key stage two co-ordinator. This might support the view that individuals within an SMT see the school from different perspectives that may be linked with their roles. This confirms a previous hypothesis that only an amalgamation of all the SMT responses provides an accurate representation of the SMT perception of why the school is a good school.

A further hypothesis would be that the head or principal alone does not represent the values of a typical SMT. This, however, raises further questions in terms of the shared vision of the school. If the principal and members of the SMT do not share in the vision of the school, then other members of the SMT may not share the clear sense of direction identified by the head and principal at BIMS.

### Teachers

**Table 4.16** A good school. Teachers' reasons (BIMS).

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	17	Caring and supportive nurturing		4	4
		Effective teamwork	1	3	4
		Committed staff		3	3
		Good management	1	2	3
		Small classes	1	2	3
		Happy environment		2	2
		Different nationalities	1	1	2
		Good relationships between students	1		1
		Good atmosphere		1	1
		Friendly		1	1
		Individual attention/ monitoring		1	1
Management, efficiency and facilities	9	Good relationships between students and teachers		1	1
		Good teachers		1	1
		Specialist/qualified teaching		1	1
		Manageable teaching		1	1
School data	5	Active PTA		1	1
		Plans for growth/expansion		1	1
Curriculum areas and subjects	1	Good curriculum/extra additions		1	1
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	1	High standards		1	1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The key category identified as a strength by the teachers is the quality of education provided. Examples such as caring and supportive, nurturing, a happy environment, and committed teachers are quoted. Such a high focus on quality could suggest that teachers do not consider standards as a measure of a good school or that the standards are poor. Since standards are relatively high, as Table 4.1 displays, the former is likely to be the case. Another strong area identified was management. Effective teamwork and good management are examples seen in Table 4.16. Small classes and different nationalities were also identified as strengths.

The greatest proportion of any stakeholder group who described the school as not a good school was the teacher group. The main category identified as a weakness by this group was management. Issues include poor management, too much focus on public relations, not enough on learning, and low teacher expectations. Table 4.17 summarises the reasons given.

**Table 4.17** Not a good school. Teachers' reasons (BIMS).

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
<b>Management</b> , efficiency and facilities	7	Poor management		2	2
		Management structure	1		1
		Too much focus on public relations and not enough on learning	1		1
		Low teacher expectations	1		1
		Poor communication		1	1
		Limited resources		1	1
		Classes dysfunctional	1		1
<b>Educational standards</b> achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	3	Students not focused	1		1
<b>Quality of education</b> provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	0	Low student expectations	1		1
<b>School data</b>	0				
<b>Curriculum</b> areas and subjects	0				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

This highlights a discrepancy in that management is perceived as a strength by many of the teachers as shown in Table 4.16. The disparity with the same issue suggests a variance with the perception of management amongst the school staff. It is likely that different staff are referring to different aspects of management when they refer to management being good or bad.

The nature of the responses from the dissatisfied staff could signify a problem with the management style. There is also a sign of division amongst the staff with some staff supporting the management and others against it. One further hypothesis, which is more difficult to confirm, considers the international setting of the school. If a member of staff is unhappy in Budapest, having left behind family and friends in the UK, it may be possible that the resulting frustration could display itself as an anti school and anti management symptom.

Students**Table 4.18 A good school. Student reasons (BIMS).**

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	<b>42</b>	Friendly teachers	3	8	11
		Happy environment	8	2	10
		Extra curricular activities	6	4	10
		Big playground	3	3	6
		Specialist/qualified teaching	2	3	5
		Different nationalities	2	3	5
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>18</b>	Treated with respect	2	2	4
		Enjoy lessons	2	2	4
		Friendly	2	1	3
		Good resources	2	1	3
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>13</b>	Nice dinners	1	2	3
		Not too strict teachers	1	1	2
<b>School data</b>	<b>6</b>	Effective teamwork	2	0	2
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>1</b>	Nice environment	1	1	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Some of the children identified enjoying lessons as a key issue whilst support and personal development issues and teaching issues were the most important for the majority of students. Students especially identified good qualified teachers, happy environment, and friendly caring teachers as the strength of the school. Other areas of significance were extra curricular activities and the facilities provided by the school. That standards do not appear in the list is significant. The issues important to students cannot be understated and knowledge of them should have some impact on the way students are managed in schools.

That students should consider specialist and qualified staff as an indicator is significant in a middle school. At BIMS the school has provided specialist staff for the first time and the students who commented on this issue may have come from a background of non-specialist teaching either at BIMS or another school. That this issue is noticed is significant in that it has implications for management when organising its staffing.

Table 4.19 summarises the reasons given by the 12% of students unhappy with the school, two being female and one male.

**Table 4.19 Not a good school. Student reasons (BIMS).**

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
Management, efficiency and facilities	5	Poor management	2		2
School data	1	Forced to go out at breaks		1	1
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	0	School is too long		1	1
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	0	Uniform		1	1
Curriculum areas and subjects	0	Too small	1		1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Although the questionnaires were coded and the students could be identified, it is not certain if the three students were a friendship group and were expressing a group opinion. None of them were sitting next to each other during the survey. Only one student identified the small size of the school as a weakness. The issue all three agreed on was that they did not like the way they were 'managed', for example:

'Things don't get done. We were promised a tuck shop. It never happened.' (Student)

### Parents

95% of parents are happy with the school. The 5% of parents not happy represent one parent (a male) from 21. The female member of each family completed all but two of the parent returns. Whereas all nineteen 'mothers' described the school as a good school, half the 'fathers' (one of two) described the school as not a good school. One extension to the study would be to target both parents of a student and investigate if there is a difference in the perception of the school between the parents. However, travelling professionals are an obstacle to extending the study at this type of international school. Table 4.20 analyses the parental reasons for identifying the school as a good school.

**Table 4.20 A good school. Parent reasons (BIMS).**

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	<b>56</b>	Happy environment	3	16	19
		Active PTA	2	6	8
		Friendly	2	4	6
		Extra curricular activities		5	5
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>15</b>	Specialist/qualified teaching	3	2	5
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>9</b>	High standards	1	3	4
<b>School data</b>	<b>5</b>	Effective teamwork	1	3	4
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>4</b>	Different nationalities	2	1	3
		Uniform		3	3
		Good curriculum/extra additions	1	1	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Some parents highlighted issues relating to standards, management, extra curricular activities, small classes and facilities as strengths. The majority, however, focused on other areas, the happy and friendly nature of the school, the extra curricular activities and specialist teaching. These issues are key to parents in determining a good school. An active PTA was also considered a significant influence.

The one parent unhappy with the school mentioned lower standards compared with a Hungarian school, quality issues, and EFL as weakness. He observed that the majority of students were not native English speakers, an implied criticism of the school not replicated by any other parent. Table 4.21 summarises his response.

**Table 4.21 Not a good school. Parent reasons (BIMS).**

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>1</b>	Does not measure up to Hungarian school standards	1		1
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	<b>3</b>	Not enough done to develop students self confidence	1		1
		Does not encourage individual creativity	1		1
		Foreign language teachers should be native speakers	1		1
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>2</b>	Not enough immersion into English	1		1
		No subject handbooks and no guidelines for parents to monitor student performance	1		1
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>2</b>	No EFL teaching in specialist subjects	1		1
		No activities organised by the school	1		1
<b>School data</b>	<b>1</b>	Minority English native speakers	1		1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

In contrast, three parents supported having different nationalities in the school.

The directors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and children's perception of how their school might be improved.

Directors

**Table 4.22** School Improvement. Director perceptions (BIMS).

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
<b>Management</b> , efficiency and facilities	<b>3</b>	A permanent site for the school	2		2
		Target setting and monitoring		1	1
<b>Educational standards</b> achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>1</b>	Sports facilities	1		1
<b>Curriculum</b> areas and subjects	<b>1</b>	Continuity and progression between key stages		1	1
<b>Quality of education</b> provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	<b>0</b>				
<b>School data</b>	<b>0</b>				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The two male directors were only concerned about the school building. Both ideally wanted a school on one site; currently there are three sites around Budapest. Either they did not feel qualified to comment on teaching and learning or they were happy with it. A follow up interview suggested that both possibilities apply. The female director, with a background in education, focused on educational standards and curriculum. She was particularly keen on target setting and monitoring which she felt that the school should be beginning to consider.

However, overall, there is very little that can be gathered from the governors about school improvement. This could be because there are so few of them but if their involvement in the school was significant then a greater number of issues may have been expected. The role of the directors is in question again. Their purpose may be one of accountability but they cannot contribute to the school, or have little knowledge of the school, then they may not be effective in their purpose.

Senior Management Team**Table 4.23** School Improvement. SMT perceptions (BIMS).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Main reasons</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>43</b>	Improve management	1	10	11
		Better communication	3	7	10
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>6</b>	Management of staff	4	4	8
		Improve quality of teaching	2	2	4
		Standards	2	1	3
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>5</b>	Financial management	1	1	2
		INSET	1	1	2
		Public Relations	1	1	2
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>3</b>	Pressure on staff		2	2
		Continuity an progression between key stages		2	2
		More resources		2	2
<b>School data</b>	<b>0</b>	More student clubs	1	1	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

A cluster diagram, Figure 4-2, has been constructed to show the relationships between the responses of the SMT. The only item of agreement is the need for improved communication within the school. Management roles do not appear in the principal's statement but they appear as a very strong issue for improvement in the other three SMT members' responses. This would suggest that there is frustration within the SMT concerning each other's roles, which the principal has not recognised. The head of BIMS and key stage two co-ordinator agree that communication within the SMT is weak. This may confirm a previous hypothesis that vision is not being transmitted from the principal to the SMT and that information is not being carried across the SMT. There may be a further difficulty if the principal has been informed that roles within the SMT are a problem but she has either not perceived it as a problem, or not known what to do about it.

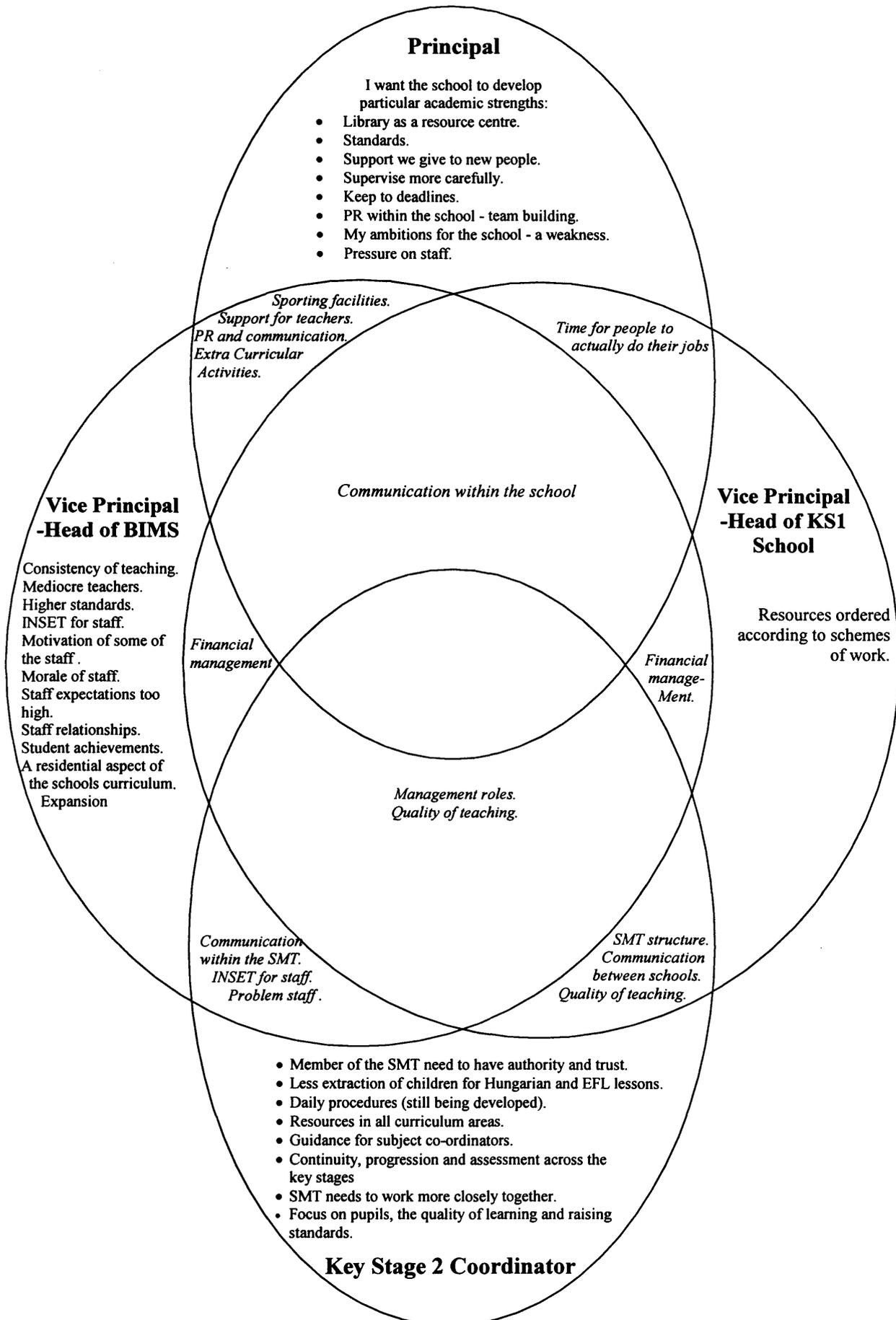


Figure 4-2 Improving the School. SMT perceptions compared.

The three key categories important to the SMT for improvement are management, curriculum and quality of education, with management being a high priority. The key issues, 'management' and 'better communication' appear so high amongst the SMT that it signals a level of discontent which may include some friction within the SMT.

Priority for the SMT is better management including management roles and management structure, communication, quality of teaching, and staff issues. That management of staff appears quite high as a separate factor to 'management' indicates a problem with the staff. If the staff are not being managed well, and the SMT see it as an issue for improvement, then the SMT deserve praise for identifying it but how the staff have been mismanaged needs to be considered. The key stage two co-ordinator has her own perspective:

'There is also an element of mistrust. I am not informed about everything and not allowed to make decisions with my team. There needs to be more trust.' (Key Stage Two Co-ordinator)

She is also candid:

'We have had a number of problems with some staff which I do not want to discuss.' (Key Stage Two Co-ordinator)

The Head of BIMS has another perspective:

'I think we had excessive expectations,' (Head of BIMS)

'[the teachers] lack motivation and they lack morale...' (Head of BIMS)

'...some staff have been very poor.' (Head of BIMS)

Management of staff has been a major problem leading to low motivation and low morale but also there is conflict within the SMT as the key stage two co-ordinator describes how she is not 'trusted' to do her job.

That management is so high on the improvement list leads to a consideration of the principal and her role in the school. If she has a headteacher running the school, her function needs to be examined. The head of BIMS indicates that he has been appointed head but is not allowed to run the school:

'[the principal] has taken over some of the things which, perhaps, through force of habit... she has done in the past,..'  
(Head of BIMS)

'If you work your way through where the problems are, the key problem really has been that there effectively have been two heads [Head of BIMS and the Principal] in one school, which is the route of a lot of confusion.' (Head of BIMS)

The head of key stage one agrees and is less candid:

'I would like to see [the principal's] role much more defined to be administrative and marketing but with no real power over the educational side of the school so that would take that type of interference out of the picture.' (Head of Key Stage One)

'...[The Principal] does things that [the Head of BIMS] should be doing and vice versa. There is confusion and things going wrong from that point of view so I think [the principal] should be out of the picture...'  
(Head of Key Stage One)

Her words include 'interference' and '[the principal] should be out of the picture...' and these signify a major concern.

The head of key stage one also suggests that the principal is not accountable by stating, for example, that:

'I am not sure how much of the financial management relates directly to the school. I just feel that is one area of the school, which appears to be disastrous for the school.' (Head of Key Stage One)

'....A huge amount of money is available. ...the amount of money that has been completely wasted is terrifying. (Head of Key Stage One)

'Virtually every other international school of our size or larger has, as a matter of course, a business manager who is a trained accountant and gets paid accordingly to take on that....We absolutely do not have that in the school.' (Head of Key Stage One)

Again her language is strong and the issue of management appears to focus on the principal. This is clearly an area for improvement.

### Teachers

**Table 4.24** School Improvement. Teacher perceptions (BIMS).

Categories	Frequency	Main Reasons	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>21</b>	More resources	1	4	5
		Better communication		4	4
		Improve management	1	2	3
		Stability and staff retention	1	2	3
		Financial management		2	2
		Better discipline		2	2
		Improve quality of teaching		1	1
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>3</b>	Library	1		1
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	<b>2</b>	Sports	1		1
		IT facilities		1	1
		More sports activities		1	1
		Wider range of teaching methods		1	1
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>1</b>	Pressure on staff	1		1
<b>School data</b>	<b>0</b>	More motivation amongst students to work		1	1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The main issue for improvement amongst teachers is management. Teachers identified the need for better management, communication, financial management, and stability. One of the issues was that management were trying to do too much too soon and have put a lot of pressure on staff. The other main area for improvement was identified as resources.

Management was also the prime reason that teachers indicated for the school not being a good school. Although better management, including communication, is high on the list, the teachers do not state specific management concerns, implying a general problem.

### Students

**Table 4.25** School Improvement. Student perceptions (BIMS).

Categories	Frequency	Main issues	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>45</b>	Break and Lunchtimes	5	6	11
		Uniform policy	3	6	9
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>16</b>	Sports	2	3	5
		Playground	2	3	5
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>4</b>	More school trips	1	4	5
		Hall	1	2	3
		Wider range of teaching methods	1	1	2
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>2</b>	Relax rules	1	1	2
		School day times	1	1	2
<b>School data</b>	<b>0</b>	More student clubs	1	1	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The main areas for improvement according to students are the management of the facilities, efficiency, and curriculum areas. A few students mention the teaching and standards. Students want to see a better playground, sports facilities and a better gym. They want the uniform policy reviewed and rules relaxed. Table 4.25 shows that the issue of most importance to students for improvement is a review of break and lunch times.

Students feel strongly about the breaks and lunchtimes, either they are badly organised and managed or the students are making unreasonable demands. Some students want the use of the building during breaks and lunch. Others complain that there is nothing to do at break and lunch times.

Uniform is also high on the list and some students comment that they do not want to wear the same uniform as the nursery and junior school. The older students inherited the uniform as the school grew. This issue is being addressed at student council meetings.

Sports and playground are related issues. The school does not have sports facilities and the playground is limited in its potential use. The school hires sports halls and areas off site.

Students would like to see better facilities on site. Furthermore, some students mention the climbing frames and other items available for play to the primary children on the site and nothing equivalent for the older students.

That students want more school trips and a wider range of teaching methods may be linked together. That two students should even suggest that alternative teaching methods be considered is very perceptive and mature. The implication behind these statements is that some teaching is monotonous. Two other students mentioned geography teaching, but the implication is general. The students may be asking for greater monitoring of teachers through their statements.

### Parents

Table 4.26 shows that parents focus on management and facilities, the other key areas being curriculum areas and subjects for improvement.

**Table 4.26** School Improvement. Parent perceptions (BIMS).

Categories	Frequency	Main reasons	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>31</b>	Sports		6	6
		More sports activities		5	5
		Stability and staff retention	1	2	3
		Better organised building	1	2	3
		Library		3	3
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>27</b>	Homework policy		3	3
		Extension of upper school	1	1	2
		Links with other schools		2	2
		Break and Lunchtimes	2		2
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>4</b>	Playground	1	1	2
		Bigger classes	1	1	2
		More student clubs		2	2
<b>School data</b>	<b>2</b>	More school trips		2	2
		Curriculum to include study of a wider range of countries, not just England and Hungary		2	2
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>2</b>	More tests		2	2
		More music activities		2	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Parents want to see more extras to the curriculum such as trips, clubs, and more sports. Parents are not too concerned about quality and standards, but they would like to see more improvement in the facilities such as the library and sports areas. This may imply that parents are content with quality and standards or they see other issues as a greater priority. Elements of both are likely to be the case. That sport appears so high in the list indicates the emphasis parents are placing on the non-academic curriculum. Sport is a developing area in the school and parents perceive it as an area in need of major improvement.

Stability amongst staff and links with other schools are other areas they want to see develop, suggesting that staff movement is an issue and the school is isolated. Both these issues may be linked to the nature of international schools. Expatriate staff, like expatriate parents, are mobile. Staff retention could be viewed as a problem if the parents desire staff stability. That so many new staff have been recruited to bring on board more specialist, experienced staff also gives the impression that staff stability is a problem.

The school is a fee paying school and therefore in competition with other schools. Links with other schools are slowly being founded as the school matures. Parents have perceived the school's isolation and want to see it developed.

Additional remarks include parents who would like to see the school extended into a full secondary school. Others advise the school to look at the curriculum and take the focus away from just England and Hungary.

### **Commentary**

One key observation is that a significant issue to one stakeholder does not appear significant to other stakeholders. For example, an important issue for female students was

friendly staff. This issue however, does not appear as a measure of a good school amongst the SMT or teachers. Similarly, other stakeholders do not consider two issues identified by students for improvement, uniform and break/lunchtimes. This diversity of opinion, and whether the school acknowledges it, will be an important consideration in the analysis.

# Chapter 5

## Case Study Two - Cornerstone Middle School

### Selection and other data

Cornerstone was chosen as a case study school because it met the criteria required by the research questions:

- It is a British School.
- It is in the South of England.
- Its curriculum is built around the English National Curriculum.
- It is a Middle School.
- It was deemed a good school by Ofsted (Ofsted, 1994).

The Ofsted inspection report (1994, p.7) states:

‘This is a good school which serves its pupils well’

The attainment at key stage two is average, and below average in science as shown in

Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 1998 Key Stage Two National Curriculum (NC) Test results at Cornerstone Middle School.**

1998 Key Stage Two National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC level 4 or above	Total	136	136	136
% at Level 4 or above	School	65	59	59
	National	65.2	57.9	68.6
Standards compared with all schools		Average	Average	Below average
Standards compared with all similar schools		Average	Average	Below average

Source: compiled from Dfee (1998)

Data for key stage three are not available since the school is a 9-13 school and students transfer to various upper schools at the end of year eight. The data are therefore not directly comparable with the key stage three data from BIMS.

The quality of teaching observed by Ofsted indicated that most lessons observed were satisfactory or better, with around one in ten lessons unsatisfactory.

**Table 5.2 Cornerstone Middle School: Quality of teaching observed by Ofsted (1994)**

	%
Very Good or better	15
Satisfactory or better	75
Less than Satisfactory	10

There are five classes in each year group. Class sizes in key stage three are shown in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3 Cornerstone Middle School class sizes.**

Class	Class size (average)
7	28
8	25

## **The Study**

### **The Stakeholders**

Table 5.4 displays the number of subjects involved in the study and the response rate. The table also reveals the gender distribution in the school.

The two teacher governors first made their responses as teachers. When asked if they had additional comments as a governor, the male teacher governor expressed no further views. The female teacher governor commented on two additional items. For the purpose of this

study, the main responses from both teacher governors will be recorded as teacher responses. The two additional items noted by the female teacher governor will be recorded as a governor response.

**Table 5.4 Response rate to survey and interview at Cornerstone.**

CASE STUDY SCHOOL 2 ENGLAND								
Population	Male	Female	Total Number	Male	Female	Total response	% response	Comments
Governors	3 (4*)	4 (5**)	7	2	4	6	<b>85.71</b>	* One male teacher and **one female teacher are governors and not included in the response rate. One governor did not respond and could not be contacted.
SMT	1	2	3	1	2	3	<b>100.00</b>	Entire SMT interviewed
Teachers	7	13	20	4	11	15	<b>75.00</b>	Five teachers chose not to respond
Student - years 8	61	62	123	61	62	123	<b>100.00</b>	All students responded
Parent	Data not available	Data not available	123	8	57	65	<b>52.85</b>	Lower than expected

Sampling was not considered an issue since whole target populations were surveyed. The response rate was 100 % for two stakeholder groups. The governor response rate was 85.7%, teachers 75%, and parents 52.8%. The parent response was comparable in size to the parent pilot study despite the additional measures taken to improve the response rate.

All the students attending year eight, the oldest in the key stage three section of the school, were surveyed. The pilot study had shown that the mothers, rather than fathers, were more likely to complete the questionnaires. This pattern was repeated in the main study.

#### The Senior Management Team

The senior management team at Cornerstone comprises:

- The Headteacher.
- Deputy Head, and
- Senior Teacher.

All the interviews were carried out at the place of work. The interview took the form of a short general discussion where the research was outlined, the subject was made to feel at ease, and questions to be asked were put into context. All agreed to be taped. None of the informants indicated that they had been guarded and careful with their responses, suggesting a relaxed, frank and honest interview.

Some relevant data about the SMT interviewed are shown in Table 5.5.

Position	Number of years in post	Number of years in the school	Age	Gender
Headteacher	6	6	54	Male
Deputy	13	13	45	Female
Senior Teacher	4	7	41	Female

**Table 5.5 Relevant data of the SMT at Cornerstone**

### The Governors

There are eleven governors.

Governor type	Gender	Comments
Co-opted	Male	Chairman - Manager of local firm
LEA	Male	Local government
LEA	Female	Local government
Co-opted	Male	Director
Co-opted	Female	Businessman
Parent	Female	Housewife
Parent	Female	Teacher
Teacher	Female	Teacher
Teacher	Male	Teacher
LEA		Vacancy
LEA		Vacancy

**Table 5.6 Relevant details of the governors at Cornerstone**

The role of governors in the UK is legislated and can be summarised as follows (Dfee, 1997):

- Deciding (with the head and the LEA if appropriate) the aims and policies of the school, and how the standards of education can be improved;
- Deciding the conduct of the school - that is, how in general terms it should be run;
- Helping to draw up (with the head and staff) the school development plan;

- Deciding (taking account of anything in the LMS scheme and any powers that they may pass to the head) how to spend the school's budget;
- Making sure that the National Curriculum and religious education are taught and reporting on National Curriculum assessments and examination results;
- Selecting the head and deputy head;
- Appointing, promoting, supporting and disciplining other staff in consultation with the head;
- Acting as a link between the local community and the school; and
- Drawing up an action plan after an inspection, and monitoring how the plan is put into practice.
- The articles of government may give other powers and duties to the governing body.
- The governing body are a group. Individual governors have no power except where the whole governing body have delegated a specific power to that individual.

### Teachers

The staff at Cornerstone are UK qualified and UK recruited. Recruitment is done through the local and national press. Interviews are held in the school and usually involve the headteacher, deputy head, and a governor.

Teacher	Gender	Age	Length of service at Cornerstone
1	M	38	6
2	M	42	4
3	M	45	16
4	M	46	17
5	M	40	5
6	M	41	3
7	M	44	12
8	F	36	2
9	F	24	1
10	F	41	8
11	F	52	12
12	F	52	7
13	F	49	9
14	F	23	1
15	F	37	2
16	F	27	5
17	F	38	4
18	F	23	1
19	F	42	2
20	F	23	2

**Table 5.7 Relevant details of teachers at Cornerstone**

Staff have varied experience, a number having stayed at the school a long time. The majority of the staff is female.

### Students

The school is not selective and the students are mixed in terms of gender and ability. A special educational needs (SEN) department targets appropriate students. No EFL department exists in the school on the premise that no EFL students are part of the student population. Classes are mixed ability with a very wide range of ability in one class. A Dyslexia Unit has been established in the school by the local education authority since 1996. Students come to the unit from around South Bedfordshire, and are integrated into the main stream curriculum as much as possible.

### Parents

The parents are mainly from the local town and have varied backgrounds. Some are employed, some are single parents, and other families are supported by one income where, sometimes, the mother is the sole provider. Some parents become involved in the social life in the school through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The PTA is well represented and relatively active. It organises the Christmas bazaar and a number of other fund raising activities. In practice, the deputy head assists the PTA and tends to lead the events. The school is able to make requests to the PTA for special items or financial support for special projects.

## Research Data

The stakeholder responses have been grouped using the same coding frame as Case Study School One. This allows direct comparison of data between the two schools. Table 5.8 summarises the questions asked. Table 5.9 presents the response data for question one.

**Table 5.8 Questions asked in the interview and survey**

<u>Questions</u>	
1 How would you describe your school ?	not a good school z
a good school z	
2 Please give some reasons for your answer	
3 What aspects of the school do you want to see improved or further improved?	

**Table 5.9 Cornerstone - Is it a good school?**

	Population	Gender/ Total	Raw Data (Numbers)			Data as Percentage (%)		
			Good	not good	total	Good	not good	Total
	<b>Total</b>	Male	45	31	76	21.23	14.62	35.85
		Female	93	43	136	43.87	20.28	64.15
		Total	138	74	212	65.09	34.91	100.00
<b>Breakdown of total responses</b>	Governors	Male	2	0	2	33.33	0.00	33.33
		Female	3	1	4	50.00	16.67	66.67
		Total	5	1	6	83.33	16.67	100.00
	SMT	Male	1	0	1	33.33	0.00	33.33
		Female	2	0	2	66.67	0.00	66.67
		Total	3	0	3	100.00	0.00	100.00
	Teachers	Male	3	1	4	20.00	6.67	26.67
		Female	7	4	11	46.67	26.67	73.33
		Total	10	5	15	66.67	33.33	100.00
	Students	Male	31	30	61	25.20	24.39	49.59
		Female	36	26	62	29.27	21.14	50.41
		Total	67	56	123	54.47	45.53	100.00
	Parents	Male	8	0	8	12.31	0.00	12.31
		Female	45	12	57	69.23	18.46	87.69
		Total	53	12	65	81.54	18.46	100.00

Numbers may not total accurately due to rounding in previous calculations.

Although the majority of the stakeholders (65.09%) state that Cornerstone is a good school, just over a third (34.91%) of stakeholders indicated that it was not a good school. This would suggest some disagreement with the Ofsted (1994) report.

Year eight students are split into five classes. The breakdown of student responses per class is shown in Table 5.10:

Class	Gender	A good School	Total	Not a good school	Total	Total number of students
A	Male	3	10	10	15	25
	Female	7		5		
B	Male	8	17	4	8	25
	Female	9		4		
C	Male	8	13	6	12	25
	Female	5		6		
D	Male	4	12	4	10	22
	Female	8		6		
E	Male	8	15	6	11	26
	Female	7		5		
Total		67	67	56	56	123

**Table 5.10 The breakdown of student responses per class at Cornerstone**

Apart from Class A where 60% of the students regard the school as not a good school, the other classes report the school as a good school. Response within classes ranges from 68% to 52% of students identifying the school as good. There is a significant gender contrast in Class A where male students (77%) report the school as not good and female students (58%) report the school as good. There is a reversal in Class C where males (57%) report the school as good and females (54.5%) as not good. This contrast is not replicated elsewhere.

Both the deputy and the senior teacher were categorical in saying that the school is a good school. At first, the head was reserved in his judgement:

'There are warts. There are areas, I suppose the educational term is "areas that require development"... I think [Cornerstone] is an example of a good school....'  
(Headteacher)

'Yes I still believe it is a good school.' (Deputy Head)

'I still think it is a good school.' (Senior Teacher)

The 65.09 % who indicated that the school is a good school comprise all three members of the SMT (100%), five of the six governors, (83.33%), 81.54% of the parents, 66.7% of the teachers, and 54.47% of the students. Students and teachers are the least satisfied stakeholders.

Table 5.11 examines if there is any direct correlation between student/parent set responses. 65 parent/student sets were identified representing all the parent responses received. 42 student/parent set responses agreed in their responses. 35 (83.3%) of these sets agreed that the school was a good school. The other seven (16.7%) of the 42 sets agreed that the school was not a good school.

23 student/parent sets gave different responses to each other. In eighteen (78.3%) of these sets, the students indicated that the school was a not a good school while their parents felt that it was a good school. In five (21.7%) of the sets the students indicated a good school whilst their parents described the school as not a good school. It is interesting that there is greater occurrence of parents stating that the school was a good school when their children had said that it was not than visa versa. The data support the hypothesis that parents and students provided independent opinions and one did not rely on the other.

**Table 5.11 Comparison of student/parent set responses at Cornerstone**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Number of sets</b>
A good school	A good school	35
Not a good school	Not a good school	7
A good school	Not a good school	5
Not a good school	A good school	18
	<b>TOTAL sets</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Breakdown of Data by Gender</b>		
<b>Student</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Number of sets</b>
<b>A good school</b>	<b>A good school</b>	<b>35</b>
Female	Female	14
Male	Female	15
Female	Male	2
Male	Male	4
<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>7</b>
Female	Female	5
Male	Female	2
Female	Male	0
Male	Male	0
<b>A good school</b>	<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>5</b>
Female	Female	1
Male	Female	4
Female	Male	0
Male	Male	0
<b>Not a good school</b>	<b>A good school</b>	<b>18</b>
Female	Female	11
Male	Female	5
Female	Male	2
Male	Male	0

The reasons given by the stakeholders for describing the school as 'a good school' or 'not a good school', are listed in Table 5.12 and Table 5.13 respectively.

Table 5.12 Response to Question 2 - Reasons for identifying Cornerstone as a good school.

\*Numbers represent frequency. Where an individual mentions an issue, communication for example, in different contexts, each context scores one.

Question 2 Reasons why the school is a good school		Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Ofsted model category												TOTAL	
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	High standards	1	1	1				1	6	3	12	25	
	Children want to go to school			1	1				1		7	10	
	Attitudes and discipline				4	2	2	3	2	4	17	34	
	Easy Lessons								1			1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>70</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>70</b>						
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	Friendly teachers						15	27		5	47	
		Individual attention		2		1			2	1	5	11	
		Lots of opportunities		1								1	
		Staff support each other				1						1	
		Good/happy atmosphere		1		2	1	3	4		2	6	19
		Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	1	3				3	6	16	3	13	45
		Parents, welcome/supportive	1	1	1	1						9	13
		Advanced training of SMT				1							1
		Good relations between students and teachers					1		2	4		4	11
		Student council				1				1			2
		Pride in children's work						1		1		2	4
		Charity work							1			3	4
		Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline				1	3	5	5	7	2	9	32
		Absence of bullying/dealt with							3	3		6	12
		Good relations between students								1			1
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>204</b>	
Teaching	Good/committed teachers	2	1		1		4	20	22	4	11	65	
	Specialist/qualified teaching										1	1	
	Enjoy lessons/teaching						2	4	1			7	
	Differentiation								4		2	6	
	Good pupils	1				1						2	
	Homework policy								2	1	2	5	
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>86</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>290</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>290</b>						

Table 5.12 (Continued)		Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
Ofsted model category		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL	
		Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	Effective teamwork			1		1				
Secure, safe environment						1							1
Good SMT						1							1
Special needs										1			1
Good Governors						1							1
Good leadership						3			1		1	6	11
Deals with problems effectively						2						4	6
Good management	1				1	1	1		3		2	6	15
Willingness to improve				1	1							2	4
Clear goals	1						1						2
Community school	1												1
Good ethos and values						3							3
Good, active PTA				1			1		1				3
Good teacher parent contact/communication					1		1				1	4	7
Schedule										2			2
School is popular										1	2	1	4
Good communication	1											1	2
Stakeholders happy with the school				1								1	
	<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>67</b>
Efficiency	Organised								2	1		1	4
	Lunchtimes/breaks								4	3			7
	Uniform							1			2	1	4
	<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>
Facilities	Good resources								7	1		1	9
	Good security								1				1
	Big playground								3				3
	Clean								1	3			4
	Nice dinners									1			1
	Good facilities							13	1	1	2	17	
	Nice environment							2		1	1	4	
Large classrooms							1				1		
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>122</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>53</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>122</b>	

Table 5.12 (Continued)		Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL
Curriculum areas and subjects	Extra curricular activities			1	1	1	7	10	1	10		31
	Good curriculum				1		2	4		1		8
	Sports						6	1				7
	art							1				1
	Homework policy						1			1		2
	School trips						3	1	1			5
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>54</b>
School Data	Small classes									1		1
	High test results		2	1	3		2	2		2		12
	Good size						3	1	1			5
	Popular		1	1	1							3
	Ofsted									1		1
	Students from similar ethnic and social backgrounds									1		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>23</b>

Table 5.13 Reasons why Cornerstone is not a good school

*Numbers represent frequency. Where an individual mentions an issue, communication for example, in different contexts, each context scores one.			Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	No preparation for upper school			1					1				2
	Bullying											2	2
	Bad discipline and policy								2	2			4
	<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	
Quality of Teaching	Support and Personal Development	No individual attention							7		3		10
		Lack of consistency (staff)		1			2				1		4
		Teachers not listening to kids							16	8	2		26
	Teaching	Planning/differentiation					1		1	2	1		5
		Children's work not marked									1		1
		Poor teachers							9	10	10		29
		Not enough praise							3				3
		Too strict							14	8			22
Favouritism							8	3			11		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>111</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>111</b>						
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	Schedule of the day						3					3
		Poor reports/parent evenings									2		2
		Uniform						2	9				11
		Disillusioned staff/no shared vision					1	2					3
		Parents problems not solved									1		1
		Poor communication					1	5	1		4		11
	Facilities	Lack of IT equipment		1					5				6
		Poor buildings and furniture						3	6	7			16
		No drinks machine/tuck shop							3				3
		Poor security								1			1
		Building/grounds too small							3	9			12
		Dirty								7			7
		Lunch/break and supervision							28	16	1		45
		Toilets							4	1			5
Limited resources							1				1		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>127</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>127</b>						
Curriculum areas and subjects	SEN poor		1			2	11	1			4	19	
	Sports and sports facilities							6	2	1		9	
	School trips							8	10	1		19	
	Better curriculum							1	3			4	
	Homework policy							4	6	2		12	
	Poor extra curricular							2	5			7	
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>70</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>70</b>						
School Data	Too small								1			1	
	Too big								1		1	2	
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>					

Of the many issues identified by the SMT as reasons for the school being a good school, one issue is common amongst them, the National Curriculum test results.

'We score high on the SATs.' (Headteacher)

This requires further examination since the 1998 test results, reported in Table 5.1, indicate an average or below average result compared to the rest of England. Other issues are shared between various members of the SMT but not by all.

Students, like parents, indicated that support and personal development were the key issues that make a good school. In second place for students were good and committed teachers.

Governors also highlight support and personal development as the most important factors, then move on to management followed by good teachers.

Teachers, like students, parents, and governors, make support and personal development a high priority in identifying a good school. Another factor, teaching, was also significant. Four teachers mentioned that there were good teachers in the school and two said they enjoyed teaching.

Parents also value support and personal development, educational standards, and good management of the school. Good teaching was the next item on the parent list. One comment from a male parent was that the similar ethnic and social backgrounds of the student population is an indicator of a good school. This comment is worthy of further investigation in a follow up study.

Although the SMT are placing management issues above support and personal development, this is not necessarily in conflict with the other stakeholders. The SMT consideration of management being more important is taken from an angle that reinforces the support and personal development of the school.

'Through assemblies, a strong figurehead of the head, and he very clearly lays down right from wrong.' (Senior Teacher)

A previous quote reinforces this point:

'I believe that the head creates a very good ethos for the school.' (Deputy Head)

All the stakeholders may be considered to be in agreement with each other that support and personal development are most important in identifying a good school.

Whereas they may seem to agree on one issue, they do not on others. Three areas, good teachers, good facilities, and good curriculum are very important to students as indicators of a good school. 'Friendly' and 'good' teachers are vital to students. These are the most recurring issues amongst their responses, and yet they are low on the list of other stakeholders.

Not all stakeholders are happy with the school. 34.9% of stakeholders describe it as 'not a good school'. The figure comprises 16.7 % (1/6) governors, 33.3% (5/15) of the teachers, 45.5% (56/123) of the students, and 18.5% (12/65) of the parents. Both teacher governors indicated that the school is not a good school. Their responses are recorded as teachers and therefore do not appear in the governor data. Whether there is any link between their roles as teachers and governors, and their responses, cannot be assessed. As a proportion, more

males are discontented with the school (68.9% of male respondents) but their numbers are relatively low compared to the females (76 males in total compared to 136 females).

Reasons for describing the school as not a good school vary widely. Students complain of poor teachers and an almost unanimous number mention poor facilities, particularly lunchtime and break-time facilities and lunch supervision. School trips have also been a problem for some students.

Teachers talk of poor communication, lack of consistency, and poor special educational needs (SEN) provision. One teacher governor, a male, described the staff and management respectively as 'lions led by donkeys'. One parent governor's response highlights some of these issues as well and is very defamatory of management, particularly the headteacher:

'Headteacher and some staff are bullies.' (Parent Governor)

'Head, staff and governors have little understanding of equal opportunities.' (Parent Governor)

Parents tended to echo many of the issues above but recurring comments amongst them were that the school had poor teachers.

'Uninspiring teaching skills of *some* teachers.' (Parent)

'Some staff are a law unto themselves.' (Parent)

Table 5.14 lists the issues for improvement stated by the stakeholders.

Table 5.14 Issues for school improvement at Cornerstone.

\*Numbers represent frequency. Where an individual mentions an issue, communication for example, in different contexts, each context scores one.

Question 3 What aspects of the school do you want to see improved or further improved?		Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		TOTAL
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	Better discipline and policy				2			4	3		4	13	
	Calmer/quieter school				1							1	
	Improve Standards		1		1			1		1	1	5	
	Bullying							1	1		3	5	
	Bullying amongst staff										1	1	
	A school culture to learn				1							1	
	Low expectations						1				1	2	
	More motivation/commitment amongst students to work				1							1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>29</b>						
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	Less movement					1					1	
		Long hours - teachers					1	1				2	
		Better pastoral care							29	24		15	68
		More competitive										1	1
		Treat us more like adults								2			2
		More praise							1			1	2
		Education of the whole child				1							1
		More prep for upper school							1			3	4
		Too much stress on preparation for upper school										1	1
		Focus on student-student relationships							1				1
	<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>83</b>
	Teaching	English										5	5
		Music										1	1
		Younger teachers							1	1			2
		Quality of learning				1							1
		Improve quality of teaching		1		1			8	20	1	13	44
		Better planning and policies						3	2		1		6
Homework policy									8	11		19	
Keep up with marking											1	1	
Ability to develop all staff	1											1	
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>80</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>163</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>163</b>						

Table 5.14 (Continued)		Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total	
Ofsted model category		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL	
Management, efficiency, and facilities.	Management	Better/more communication regarding expectations, achievements and work to be done over the year											9
		1						1			7		
		More of a community school											1
		Partnership with parents											1
		Mentoring											1
		Better communication											22
		Link with third world school											1
		The school development plan											1
		Fewer government initiatives											3
		Financial management											6
		School council											2
		Liaison with upper school											2
		Specification of roles											3
		Improve management											24
		Praise and celebration											1
		Uniform policy											50
		Increase teachers salary											1
		The core ethos and values											2
		Management of staff											16
		Exclusion policy											1
		Minimal effective paperwork											1
		School improvement model based only on exams											1
		Inconsistency in practices amongst staff											2
		Shared vision/united staff team											12
		Pressure on staff											6
		INSET and link to appraisal											4
		Parents problems solved											1
		Schedule											11
More security											2		
More teachers											3		
Meetings											1		
Relax rules											19		
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>210</b>	

Table 5.14 (Continued)			Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total		
Ofsted model category			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL		
(Continued) Management, efficiency and facilities.	Efficiency	Break/Lunchtime and supervision							68	37		3	108		
		Lessons should end on time							2	4			6		
		Keep to deadlines					1							1	
		More organised/efficient				1				1				2	
		Introduce Saturday school										1		1	
		School day/lesson times							1					1	
		<b>Sub total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>119</b>		
	Facilities	School meals							6	8		3		17	
		Better Building	1	1				1	1			1	1	6	
		Tidiness				2								2	
		Better maintenance/cleaning	1	1		1	1	4	12	19		4		43	
		Furniture						1	5					6	
		Cloakroom/lockers							2	2		3		7	
		Better organised building/play areas					1	2	3	2				8	
		Bigger building/playground				1	1	3	9	12		2		28	
		Sports							1	3		3	1	8	
		Toilets							12	11				23	
		Better security							1	1				2	
		Limit facilities to local community											1	1	
		Hall						1	3					4	
		Library							1				3	4	
		More resources		1		2	1	5	12	12		3		36	
		Care of school resources				1									1
		Swimming classes and pool		1						3					4
		Drinks machine								2					2
		Warmer								2					2
	IT facilities	1	2		3	2	4	17	3		1	4		37	
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>241</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>570</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>570</b>								

Table 5.14 (Continued)		Governors		SMT		Teachers		Students		Parents		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	TOTAL
Curriculum areas and subjects	More extra curricular Assemblies					1		4	12	1	4	22
	School trips							12	13		6	31
	Special Needs for all including more able	1	1	1		1	7				11	22
	Better differentiation					1					2	3
	Better curriculum							5	8			13
	Better curriculum balance					1		3	2		2	8
	Better sports curriculum							8	5	1	7	21
	More textbooks							1			1	2
	Streaming and setting to be increased							1		1	2	4
	Curriculum to include study of British culture, not just others										1	1
	Continuity an progression between key stages						1					1
	Fewer changes to curriculum	1										1
	Homework policy							2	2	3	8	15
	Maths										1	1
	More languages							2	1			3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>152</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>152</b>				
School Data	Increased funding -LEA	2	1		1						2	6
	Reduce class size/smaller school	1	1		1	1	1	5	1	4	15	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>				

Within the SMT, there are three issues that are common improvement concerns, government external excesses, poor ICT resources, and staff relationships. The other stakeholders may not have mentioned the same specific issues as the SMT but they do share with them the area of 'management' as in need for improvement.

A majority of students, and a significant number of parents, want better pastoral care. Both populations, again, want an improved quality of teaching and an improved curriculum. Specific issues were sports, extra curricular, and school trips. An overwhelming number of students want something to be done about the organisation of lunch and break times, and their supervision at these times. Other comments by students include a cleaner building, cleaner toilets, homework, uniform, and more resources.

The teachers' focus is on special needs and facilities but more prevalent are management issues such as management of staff, management (general), better communication, and shared vision. The governors also focused on management issues including management of staff and communication. Other comments mentioned relate to SEN and facilities, mainly maintenance and resources.

There are some parallels between the issues for improvement and the comments made as to why the school is not a good school. That there are common elements provides triangulation and scope for further examination in the analysis.

## Overview

As in chapter four, the purpose of this section is to provide an overview of some of the main outcomes of the data prior to the comparative analysis between the stakeholders and the two case study schools in chapter six.

The section discusses the responses made by each stakeholder. It first considers perceptions of a good school and then discusses school improvement. Tables show the frequency of responses in broad categories and a list of the main issues raised by each stakeholder.

The governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and children's perception of a good school.

### The Governors

**Table 5.15 A good school. Governor reasons (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main reasons	M	F	T
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	<b>14</b>	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	1	3	4
		Good/committed teachers	2	1	3
		Parents, welcome/supportive	1	1	2
		Individual attention		2	2
		High test results		2	2
		High standards	1	1	2
		Lots of opportunities		1	1
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>6</b>	Good/happy atmosphere		1	1
		Good pupils	1		1
		Good management	1		1
<b>School data</b>	<b>3</b>	Clear goals	1		1
		Community school	1		1
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>2</b>	Popular		1	1
		Good communication	1		1
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>0</b>	Willingness to improve		1	1
		Good Active PTA		1	1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The key area of interest for governors is quality. That the school is caring, supportive and has committed teachers appears paramount. High test results and high standards come

lower on the list and good management is lower still. This priority within the governing body may be significant in that it may be describing the school's values.

The governor who described the school as not a good school gave four reasons. She did, however, elaborate on the SEN and the lack of consistency amongst staff. She was unequivocal about naming the head as the source of the problems.

**Table 5.16 Not a good school. Governor reasons (Cornerstone).**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Examples of comments</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>1</b>	Lack of IT equipment		1	1
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>1</b>	No preparation for upper school		1	1
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )</b>	<b>1</b>	Lack of consistency (staff)		1	1
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>1</b>	SEN poor		1	1
<b>School data</b>	<b>0</b>				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Additional information not shown in the data above is that the two teacher governors also indicated that the school was not a good school. The data does not show here since their responses were made first as teachers and then they were invited to add extra comments as governors. The only additional comment made by one of the teacher governors is the lack of communication and the expectation that the teacher governors would support the head on all matters.

Senior Management Team (SMT)**Table 5.17 A good school. SMT reasons (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main comments	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>17</b>	High test results	1	3	4
		Attitudes and discipline		4	4
		Good leadership		3	3
		Good ethos and values		3	3
		Good/happy atmosphere		2	2
		Parents, welcome/supportive	1	1	2
		Deals with problems effectively		2	2
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>10</b>	Good management	1	1	2
		Popular	1	1	2
		Children want to go to school	1	1	2
		Individual attention	0	1	1
		Staff support each other		1	1
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>7</b>	Student council		1	1
		Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline		1	1
		Good/committed teachers		1	1
		Secure, safe environment		1	1
		Good SMT		1	1
		Good governors		1	1
<b>School data</b>	<b>6</b>				
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>1</b>	High standards	1	0	1

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

High national curriculum test results were a common factor for the SMT in determining Cornerstone as a good school. Having already determined that the test results were average or below the national average, this is a surprising common issue. Either the SMT have been misled or they may be taking into account the intake of the school.

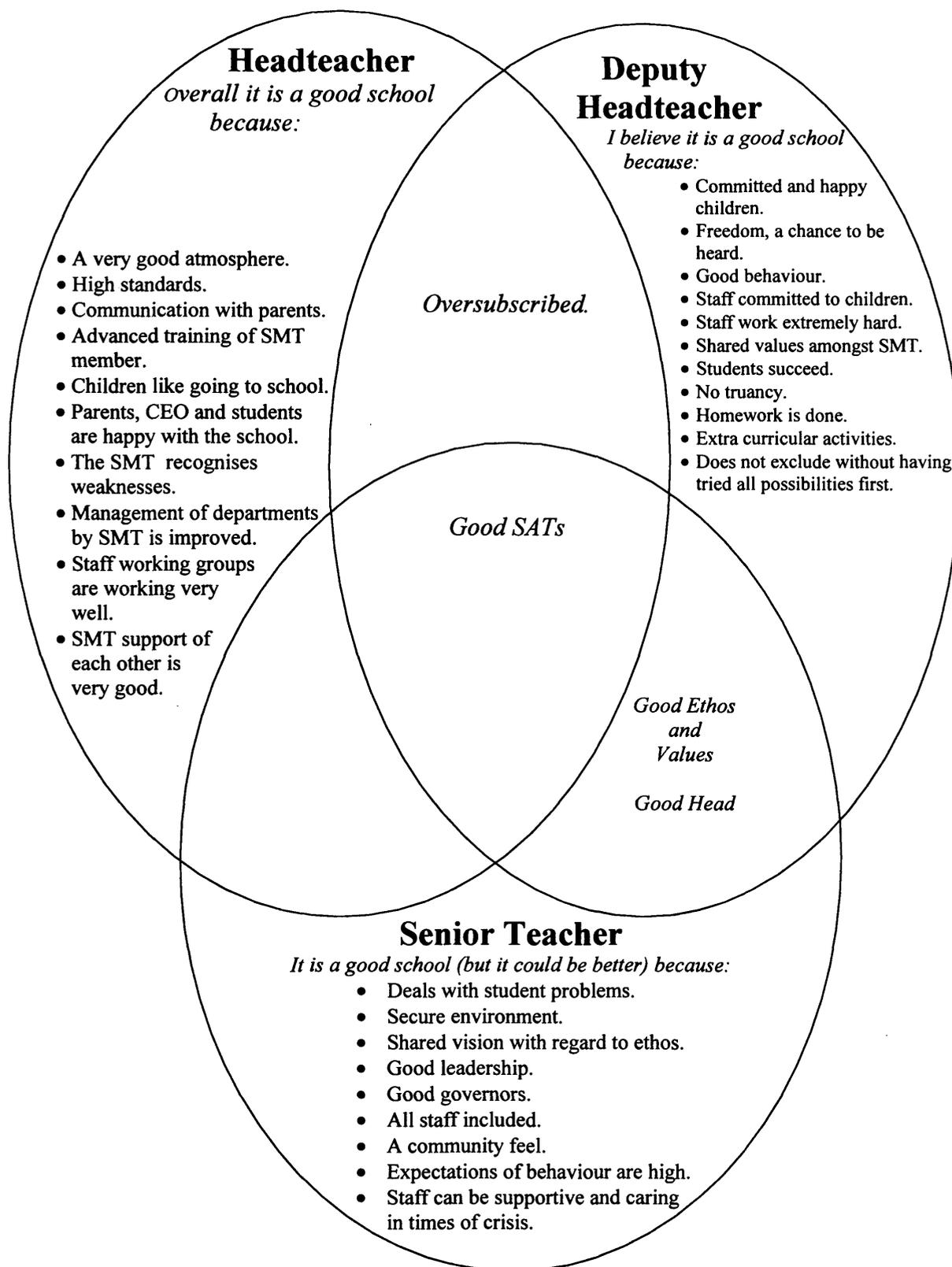
'We score high on the SAT's.' (Headteacher)

'We do moderately well on SAT's.' (Deputy Head)

' There are the quantifiable measures like the SAT results... We have so far been coming up well in the town and think we are the best LEA school at this point.' (Senior Teacher)

Whatever the case, the SMT is more than satisfied with the school test results when the data suggests they should not be.

A comparison of the responses between the members of the SMT provides a slightly different perspective. Figure 5-1 compares their responses.



**Figure 5-1 A good school. SMT responses compared. (Cornerstone)**

Two issues were shared between the deputy and senior teacher. Both issues referred to the head and the ethos and values he inspires in the school.

'..what I believe is the Cornerstone ethos, which is about care, courtesy and consideration for others, being part of that group supporting each other within that group and being tolerant to other people's abilities and limitations.' (Deputy)

'I believe that the head creates a very good ethos for the school. He believes in the same values as I have, that we need to care about our world and we need to care about each other....' (Deputy)

'...our ethos which comes very strongly from the Head.'  
(Senior Teacher)

One issue was shared between the head and deputy and concerned the fact that the school was oversubscribed.

'...we are oversubscribed still. Despite the fact we say to parents please do not apply if you are out of catchment area. We still had fifteen applications we could not find places for.' (Headteacher)

There are however, clear differences in the criteria each member of the SMT use in determining a good school. The head's focus was very much what the various stakeholders thought of the school:

'So parents and pupils think it is a good school...'  
(Headteacher)

The head is referring to a questionnaire that was sent out to parents and students.

With respect to staff he is concerned:

'I do not know what the staff response will be ....I think that teacher morale, nationally, is at an all time low, in my experience anyway.' (Headteacher)

By indicating that teacher morale was low nationally, the head may be seeking reasons why his staff has low morale. This is an admission that low morale is prevalent amongst his staff.

The deputy's focus is more on the students, particularly the pastoral care provided by the school.

'I measure the school by the fact that the kids are happy.'  
(Deputy)

The senior teacher might be described as more attuned to the management style and the culture of the school. She gives good leadership and good governors as examples of how she defines the school as a good school.

'The governors, in some ways, are very good..' (Senior Teacher)

'We always go the extra mile with children, parents and often staff.' (Senior Teacher)

'I still think, despite what the staff think, we have a very public and focused head.' (Senior Teacher)

The latter comment signals the dissatisfaction amongst the staff.

Clearly, individuals within an SMT see the school from the different perspectives that may be linked with their roles. This would confirm that only an amalgamation of all the SMT responses provides an accurate representation of the SMT perception of why the school is a good school.

If there was shared vision, then it may be hypothesised that there should be greater commonality between the SMT responses. This brings into question the degree of shared vision. Figure 5-1 offers some areas where shared vision may exist, for example the ethos of the school emanating from the head, which the head omitted from his response.

### Teachers

**Table 5.18 A good school. Teacher reasons (Cornerstone).**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Main Reasons</b>			
		<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	<b>24</b>	Good rules-ethos respect	3	5	8
		Good/happy atmosphere	1	3	4
		Good/committed teachers		4	4
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>6</b>	Attitudes and Discipline	2	2	4
		Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	0	3	3
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>4</b>	Enjoy lessons/teaching		2	2
		Extra curricular activities	1	1	2
		High test results		2	2
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>3</b>				
<b>School data</b>	<b>2</b>				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The key area identified as a strength by the teachers is the quality of education provided. Particular foci were the good ethos of respect in the school, a good atmosphere and good attitude to work. The three issues are likely to be linked. They also described themselves as good or committed teachers. Management issues were also mentioned but they were widely dispersed in nature from good management to good communication between teachers and parents.

One third (33%) of the teachers, representing the second largest proportion of any stakeholder group, described the school as not a good school. Table 5.19 lists the issues identified for the school not being a good school.

**Table 5.19 Not a good school. Teacher reasons (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main Comments	M	F	T
Curriculum areas and subjects	13	SEN poor	2	11	13
		Poor communication	1	5	6
		Poor buildings and furniture		3	3
Management, efficiency and facilities	12	Disillusioned staff/no shared vision	1	2	3
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	3	Lack of consistency (staff)		2	2
		Planning/differentiation	1		1
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	0				
School data	0				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The key issue in the school identified as a problem area by the teachers is the SEN provision. Management issues, in particular poor communication, lack of shared vision and the poor state of the building, are also significant in frequency. One teacher mentioned disillusioned staff. The issue of SEN and management may be linked together in that this was one area of concern in the Ofsted (1994) inspection and the head had taken a strong lead in trying to put it right. The nature of the comments in Table 5.19 may imply a problem within the staff, or possibly with the management. The mention of 'staff inconsistency' would suggest that the problem might be a combination of both.

### Students

**Table 5.20 A good school. Student reasons (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Examples of comments	M	F	T
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	151	Friendly teachers	15	27	42
		Good/committed teachers	20	22	42
		Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	6	16	22
		Extra curricular activities	7	10	17
		Good facilities	13	1	14
Management, efficiency and facilities	53	Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline	5	7	12
		Good resources	7	1	8
Curriculum areas and subjects	36	Lunchtimes/breaks	4	3	7
		Sports	6	1	7
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	14	High standards	1	6	7
School data	6				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Students especially identified good teachers, friendly teachers, and the caring environment as strengths of the school. Other areas of significance were extra curricular activities and

the facilities provided by the school. The category 'quality of education' is overwhelmingly popular and the foci for students in declaring the school a good school. Management issues were also common but linked mainly to the facilities and resources offered by the school.

The students were the largest stakeholder group unhappy with the school. 45.5% of the students, spread almost equally between the sexes (male 24.39% and female 21.14%), described the school as not a good school. The students were also spread across the five classes as shown in Table 5.13. Table 5.21 lists the student reasons for the school not being a good school.

**Table 5.21 Not a good school. Student reasons (Cornerstone).**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Main Reasons</b>			
		<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>106</b>	Lunch/break and supervision	28	16	44
		Teachers not listening to kids	16	8	24
		Too strict	14	8	22
		Poor teachers	9	10	19
		School trips	8	10	18
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )</b>	<b>89</b>	Poor buildings and furniture	6	7	13
		Building/grounds too small	3	9	12
		Uniform	2	9	11
		Favouritism	8	3	11
		Homework policy	4	6	10
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>48</b>	Sports and Sports facilities	6	2	8
		Dirty		7	7
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>5</b>	No individual attention		7	7
		Poor extra curricular activities	2	5	7
<b>School data</b>	<b>2</b>	Toilets	4	1	5
		Lack of IT equipment	5		5

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The majority of the comments appear to have hinged on the lunch break organisation and the supervision offered by the school. The school employs lunchtime supervisors externally so they are not regular full time staff of the school. Many students commented that the supervisors treated them poorly and they may have to queue up for a long time. That so many students commented on this one issue of lunch times would suggest a genuine concern.

Eighty-nine comments were targeted directly at the teachers. Poor teachers, teachers not listening to children and favouritism were three reasons. The fourth was 'too strict', which may be linked to the other three. The comments did not focus on a particular teacher or come from a particular class. That so many comments were made indicates some cause for concern in this area.

Another fairly common concern was the organisation of school trips. This may have been a temporary event during the year of the study. Normally, every year group is given an opportunity to attend a residential week. Each year group had a separate location. In the year of the study, some changes had been put into place, which meant that some trips did not occur but that different trips would be made available the following year. Year eight, being in the last year of the school, were not going to benefit from the changes and felt they had missed out on the trips.

### Parents

**Table 5.22 A good school. Parent reasons (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main reasons	M	F	T
<b>Quality of education provided</b> (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)	<b>91</b>	Attitudes and discipline	4	17	21
		Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	3	13	16
		Good/committed teachers	4	11	15
		High standards	3	12	15
<b>Educational standards achieved</b> (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	<b>43</b>	Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline	2	9	11
		Extra curricular activities	1	10	11
		Parents, welcome/supportive		9	9
		Good/happy atmosphere	2	6	8
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>40</b>	Good management	2	6	8
		Good leadership	1	6	7
		Children want to go to school	0	7	7
		Absence of bullying/dealt with		6	6
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>14</b>	Individual attention	1	5	6
		Friendly teachers	0	5	5
		Good teacher parent contact/communication	1	4	5
<b>School data</b>	<b>6</b>				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

81.54% of parents describe the school as a good school. Twelve females represent the 18.46% of parents not satisfied with the school.

A significant number of reasons for a good school are quality issues such as caring, supportive and good teachers. High standards, good attitudes, and discipline rate highly. Extra curricular activities are also criteria used by the parents. Management is high profile with fifteen parents mentioning good management and good leadership in the school.

Although the parents exhibit a wide variety of issues in determining a good school they particularly recognise the high standards of behaviour and pastoral care. Some of the parent comments regarding high standards may also be referring to the high standards of care and discipline. The issue of extra curricular activities seems unusual amongst these comments. None of the main reasons in Table 5.22 mention any aspect of the academic curriculum. It seems that parents value the extras that the school offers which are in addition to the curriculum. If this hypothesis is correct then it is a useful perspective when considering school improvement.

The parents unhappy with the school focused particularly on the poor teachers. The other issues were poor communication and SEN. This does not appear to equate with the fifteen parents who thought the school had good teachers. However, as mentioned before, some of the teachers are described as 'poor', 'boring', and uninspiring by the parents. It is possible that in a relatively large school such as Cornerstone, some parents will come across these poor and boring teachers and other parents may not. Opposing views of the teaching staff may, therefore, be formed.

The main issues important to parents in deciding that the school is not a good school are listed in Table 5.23.

**Table 5.23 Not a good school. Parent reasons (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main reasons	M F T		
			M	F	T
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	18	Poor teachers		10	10
		SEN poor		4	4
		Poor communication		4	4
		No individual attention		3	3
		Teachers not listening to kids		2	2
		Poor reports/parent evenings		2	2
Curriculum areas and subjects	8	Homework policy		2	2
		Bullying		2	2
		Too big		1	1
		Sports and Sports facilities		1	1
Management, efficiency and facilities	8	School trips		1	1
		Planning/differentiation		1	1
		Parents problems not solved		1	1
		Lunch/break and supervision		1	1
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	2	Lack of consistency (staff)		1	1
		Children's work not marked		1	1
School data	1				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and children's perception of how their school might be improved

### Governors

**Table 5.24 Improving the school. Governor perceptions (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main reasons	M F T		
			M	F	T
Management, efficiency and facilities	15	ICT facilities	1	2	3
School data	5	Increased funding -LEA	2	1	3
Curriculum areas and subjects	3	Better building	1	1	2
Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching )	2	Better maintenance/cleaning	1	1	2
		Reduce class size/smaller school	1	1	2
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	1	Special Needs for all including more able	1	1	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Although management features most strongly, the governors' focus is on the management of the buildings and resources. The need to increase funding is mentioned by three governors but this is not an issue in the hands of the school since funding is centralised and

determined by local government. There is some agreement that the ICT facilities are poor. The school has one PC computer and fifteen Archimedes systems. Two governors also want to see smaller classes and a wider special needs policy that includes the more able.

*Senior Management Team*

**Table 5.25 Improving the school. SMT perspectives (Cornerstone)**

Categories	Frequency	Main Issues	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>43</b>	Shared vision/united staff team	2	6	8
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>6</b>	Fewer government initiatives		3	3
		Staff, management of	1	2	3
		Specification of roles	1	2	3
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>3</b>	IT facilities		3	3
		Improve management		2	2
		The core ethos and values	1	1	2
<b>School data</b>	<b>2</b>	More resources		2	2
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>1</b>	Tidiness		2	2
		Better discipline and policy		2	2

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Just as the SMT identified many management issues when giving reasons for a good school, they identify many more management issues they want to see improve.

'Long term I would like to have a more united staff.'  
(Headteacher)

'I was really irritated when a whole row of children in assembly shouted out..'  
(Headteacher)

'I also want to see, I have not thought this through, the staff encouraging greater commitment from all the children.'  
(Headteacher)

'If you find confrontation there [between staff] or maybe you do not see eye to eye with the people that you work with.'  
(Deputy Head)

Considering their position, this may seem natural but there also seems to be an element of dissatisfaction with the management. All three members of the SMT want to see a united team of staff with a shared vision. This would clearly indicate that there is division and confirms that staff and management difficulties exist.

The various responses of the SMT are compared in Figure 5-2. The chart displays that the issues of agreement for improvement are excessive government initiatives, ICT facilities, staff relationships, and non-contact time allocations for staff to do their jobs.

'I think that IT is very, very poorly resourced.'(Headteacher)

'I would like to allow staff more time to manage demands of curriculum...manage the behaviour, special needs, the IEPs, and target setting. Finances restrict how much free time they have and therefore the amount of time they have to devote to their teaching and the quality of teaching.' (Deputy)

'I would like some of the staff to be more understanding with other staff.' (Senior Teacher)

'Staff are brilliant with regards to the children but not so good about each other.' (Senior Teacher)

'I do not like the them and us. I do not think the SMT feel as if we are better but staff tend to impose that feeling on us by trying to get one over on you. I do not always feel we are working together and at times people are just being blamed.' (Senior Teacher)

That all members of the SMT recognise the need to improve staff relationships may be seen as a strength in that it is a sensitive issue and none have chosen to ignore it. This issue links back to a previous point regarding the SMT wishing to see a team of staff working together. The comments above, however, tend to describe a deeper divide both between staff and between the staff and the SMT.

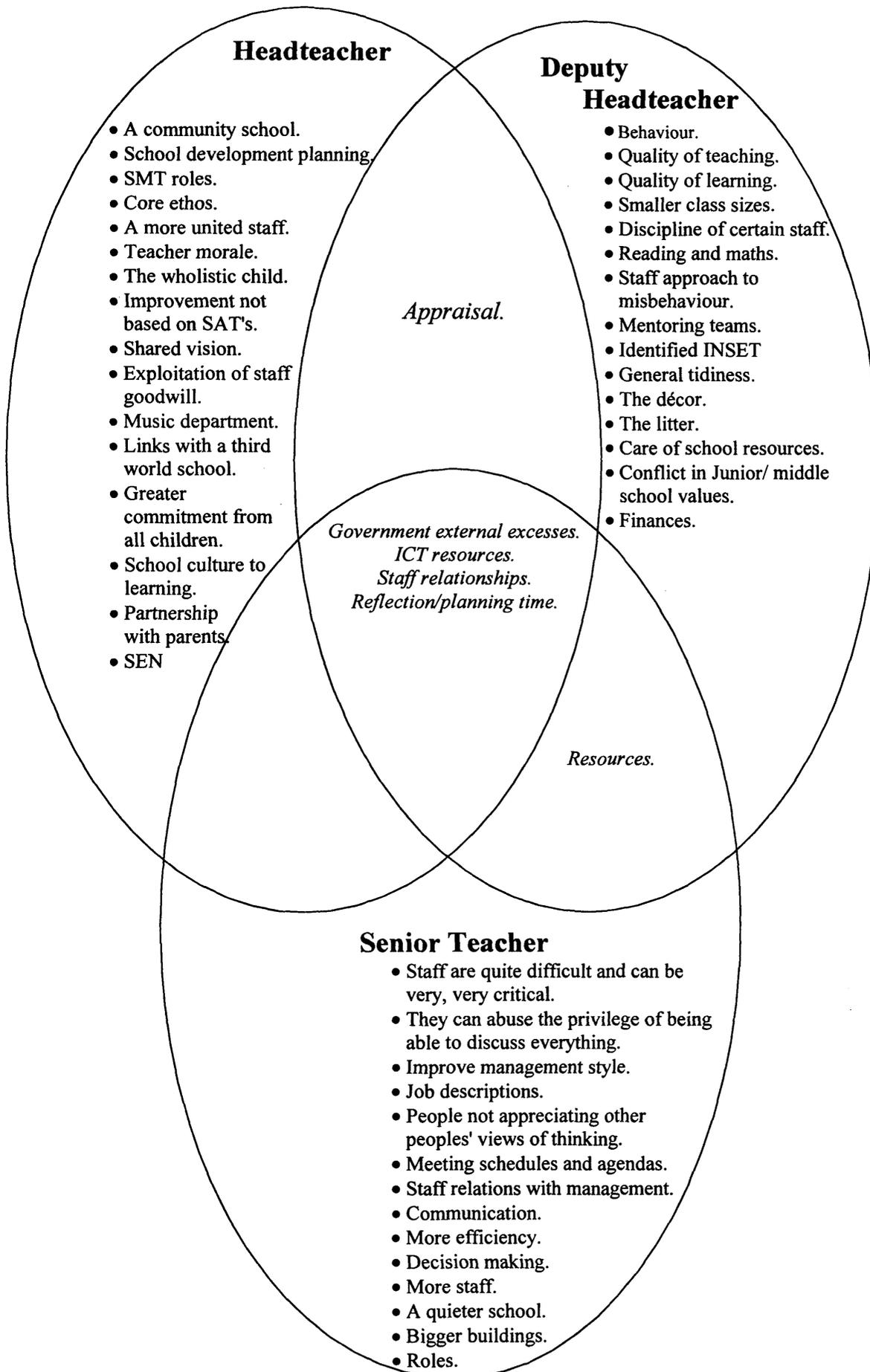


Figure 5-2 School Improvement. Comparing SMT responses.

The senior teacher argues that the management style of the head and SMT is not appropriate, being too collegial, accepting staff who do not meet deadlines and tolerating dissent from groups of staff. This suggestion of a lack of leadership might be linked to poor staff relationships.

'...the same leader in the same school has to use different strategies and approaches. Sometimes [the leader] has to be quite dogmatic and say this, this and this and I want that on my table on Monday, which is quite alien to the culture here. A lot of the weaknesses of the school are to do with the fact that staff can be very, very critical. They can abuse the privilege of being able to discuss everything.' (Senior Teacher)

'There is almost no point in having a management here, the decision making has become very peculiar.' (Senior Teacher)

'The chair, vice chair, head and deputy have been meeting for a series of meetings to address the management structure. To get a clear management structure and definition of roles....because there had been managerial problems of ....middle management not fulfilling their roles...' (Senior Teacher)

The senior teacher is casting doubt on the decision making process and the leadership of the head. The frustration can be read in the second quote where she sees no point in having management in the school. The example she gave was an incident where she was beginning to put together the new literacy policy in the school. She had discussed it with all the heads of department and when she attempted to present proposals to the staff, one staff member, not a head of department, 'hijacked' the meeting arguing that literacy was optional and why should the staff make any changes at all, making it impossible for the meeting to proceed. The senior teacher's position was that the implementation of literacy was a management decision with the heads of department:

'I feel that it was a decision that could have been taken by the various management people.' (Senior Teacher)

She describes the proceedings typical of the way the school is managed:

'Some of the power has definitely become more shared. It is not just the all-powerful head anymore.' (Senior Teacher)

That the governors got involved in the discussion of management structure confirms an earlier observation that the governors are active within the school. That they had to become involved because heads of department were not doing their jobs raises a concern about how much authority the head actually has in ensuring that middle managers fulfil their job specifications.

Conflict within the SMT is another issue raised by the senior teacher:

'There are issues that are going on that may be being discussed between head and deputy which are then not communicated to me... or I have something to say about something ...I started to communicate by memo...' (Senior Teacher)

This issue was only mentioned by the senior teacher, probably because she was the only one perceiving the problem. The head is very complimentary about the way the SMT operates:

'The effect of three of us in the SMT is that there is always one who is bouncing and alive and keeps the rest of us going... We support each other and this support at SMT level is invaluable. I feel less stressed.' (Head)

This may suggest, however, that the head is not perceptive about the senior teacher's concerns.

Time management has been mentioned in different ways by the SMT. The head was specific about his own:

'I spend time doing that, which is urgent....My thinking of the school tends to be when I am walking the dog or being in the garden.....I am consumed by the trivial which no one else is there to do.....our school insists and relies on every level of exploitation.' (Head)

The teaching deputy felt the same:

'If you're in there and classes whiz by you day in and day out and you get to 3.30 and you are exhausted, you really do not have time to devote to the kids and to talk to them as people...' (Deputy)

The head's statement above may be supporting much of the senior teacher's comment. If he is 'consumed with the trivial' on a daily basis there may be a perception of a head not in control of the events occurring in the school and not managing the school. The staff could, if they do not already, exploit the circumstances for their own ends by, for example, not fulfilling their job specifications.

The relationships between staff are poor, between staff and SMT is poor, although there are moves to repair the damage. An earlier quote represents this point very well:

'Finally, on my own I have tried to build bridges with those people on the staff whom I like the least. I do not want to say anymore.' (Headteacher)

The management style is accused of being inappropriate. However, the senior teacher puts things in perspective:

'Fundamentally...across all the bickering, all the antagonism it is a community of people full of bad tempers, personal problems, psychological problems, psychotic even, but a community of problems. Nevertheless, like a family we always come through. Even the people who in the back of my mind seem to be anti, at other times they can be quite supportive and caring. In times of crisis people pull together. If we were threatened from outside, Ofsted, or whatever, just like a good family we would support each other, the children, teachers, and parents. It is only because we have that that we can afford to snipe at each other.' (Senior Teacher)

Apart from the four issues stated, no other issue is shared by the SMT. This again implies a very different perspective to school improvement from each of the various members of the SMT. The deputy is aware of this:

'I would say the senior teacher is still very much into academic standards. I don't know about the head. The three of us each have different areas we are more concerned about.' (Deputy)

### Teachers

**Table 5.26 Improving the school. Teacher perspectives (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main issues	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>80</b>	Improve management	2	13	15
		Management of staff	6	6	12
		Special Needs for all including more able	1	7	8
		Better communication	1	6	7
		More resources	1	5	6
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>12</b>	IT facilities	2	4	6
		Better planning and policies	3	2	5
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>8</b>	Pressure on staff	3	2	5
		Better maintenance/cleaning	1	4	5
		Shared vision/united staff team	2	2	4
<b>School data</b>	<b>1</b>	Bigger building/playground	1	3	4
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>1</b>	Financial management		3	3

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

The main issue for improvement amongst teachers is management. 'Improve management' was a general theme and included many contexts:

'[SMT have] absolutely no concept of problems faced by teachers.' (Teacher)

'[SMT have a] tendency to drag their feet on progress unless it is compulsory.' (Teacher)

'[We need] clear agendas.' (Teacher)

'Procedures and policies agreed jointly, adhered to and reviewed regularly.' (Teacher)

'Senior management, senior management, senior management.' (Teacher)

A common specific issue was how the SMT manage staff.

'...disillusioned staff, all struggling to do their best in their own little areas'.

'...heads of department guided by SMT.'

'Middle managers to be given some time to manage.'

'Morale of teachers heightened.'

'More openness...'

The issue of communication is also high on the list and reflects back on the management issues above. In a previous section, management was also the prime reason that teachers ascribed to the school not being a good school. It may be fair to state that the staff are not satisfied with the management of the school and the way they are managed.

*Students***Table 5.27 Improving the school. Student perspectives (Cornerstone).**

Categories	Frequency	Main issues	M	F	T
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>360</b>	Break/Lunchtime and supervision	68	37	105
		Better pastoral care	29	24	53
		Uniform policy	9	37	46
		Better maintenance/cleaning	12	19	31
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>108</b>	Improve quality of teaching	8	20	28
		School trips	12	13	25
		More resources	12	12	24
		Toilets	12	11	23
		Bigger building/playground	9	12	21
		IT facilities	17	3	20
		Homework policy	8	11	19
		Relax rules	11	8	19
		More extra curricular	4	12	16
		<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>10</b>	School meals	6
Better curriculum	5			8	13
<b>School data</b>	<b>6</b>	Better sports curriculum	8	5	13
		Schedule	7	4	11

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Management, quality of education, and the curriculum are the three key areas for improvement according to students. A specific issue, by an overwhelming majority, is management and organisation of break and lunchtimes. Better pastoral care is another key factor for improvement. The uniform is third on the list, identified mainly by the girls. A cleaner building is wanted and better quality teaching. Another emphasis is on efficiency and management of buildings. These issues are in line with the issues students had listed in indicating that the school was not a good school.

A significant number want the playground facilities improved, better extra curricular activities and a better sports curriculum. This suggests that sport is not a strong area in the school. This conflicts with the group of students who indicated that the school was a good school and listed the sports and the extra curricular activities as some of their reasons. This is obviously an important area for students. Many students think that the sports are adequate, if not good, and just as many feel that they need to be improved.

*Parents***Table 5.28 Improving the school. Parent perspectives (Cornerstone).**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Main issues</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>Management, efficiency and facilities</b>	<b>72</b>	Better pastoral care		15	15
		Improve quality of teaching	1	13	14
		Better communication		12	12
<b>Curriculum areas and subjects</b>	<b>51</b>	Special Needs for all including more able		11	11
		Homework policy	3	8	11
		Better sports curriculum	1	7	8
<b>Quality of education provided (including Support and Personal Development and Teaching)</b>	<b>42</b>	Better/more communication regarding expectations, achievements and work to be done over the year		7	7
		Improve management		6	6
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>11</b>	School trips		6	6
<b>School data</b>	<b>7</b>				

M=Male, F=Female, T=Total

Management, quality of education, mainly better pastoral care, and curriculum are the three main areas for improvement according to parents.

The two main issues of interest appear to be better pastoral care and improvement in the quality of teaching. This is, however, misleading since communication has a higher frequency if points three and seven in Table 5.28 are combined together. Both refer to communication but seven parents were very specific about the type of communication they wanted. They want to know about what type of expectations they should have from their children, what the children had achieved, and what work had been planned for them during the year. Other parents just wrote 'communication', implying a general issue. That six parents want to improve management could be linked with each of the issues listed above, as they were not specific. That some parents want better pastoral care does not correlate with the many parents who indicated that the school was good because of its ethos and pastoral care.

Parents do have a keen interest in the quality of teaching and indicate that they want to see it improve. Some examples were quoted such as marking to be more frequent, and work to

be differentiated. Both of these observations may have come from the parents, but it is possible that their children had influenced them.

### Commentary

The diversity of perspective between the stakeholders is a key issue but there is also some consensus between some of them. Some of the main issues, listed below, provide examples of where diversity and consensus, within and between stakeholders, occur.

- Within the SMT, individuals have different perspectives on good and improving schools, which appear linked with their roles.
- All the SMT described the school as good while 33% of teachers described the school as not good. As a total, there is general agreement amongst the stakeholders (65.09%) that the school is good, but 34.91% of the stakeholders believe it is not good.
- Teachers identified friction between staff and the SMT. The SMT identified some friction within the SMT team. These issues are not identified by the Ofsted report or perceived by other stakeholders.
- Teachers, governors, and the SMT agree that management, particularly management of staff, is a key issue for improvement.
- Whereas a significant number of students and parents want better pastoral care, the SMT do not see this as an issue.
- Extra curricula activities are of prime importance to students and parents but not teachers, governors and the SMT.
- Attitudes and discipline amongst students are significant indicators amongst all stakeholders for identifying Cornerstone as a good school.
- All stakeholders apart from students used high standards as an indicator for a good school.
- All stakeholders apart from teachers want to see the quality of teaching improve.

That so many stakeholders consider Cornerstone as not a good school is puzzling in view of the positive Ofsted (1994) inspection report. The discrepancy between Ofsted (1994) and the findings of this study casts some doubt on the validity of the Ofsted (1994) report.

The Ofsted view, however, was further confirmed by a subsequent inspection at

Cornerstone in June 1999, which states:

'[Cornerstone] is a good school with very good, important features'. Ofsted (1999)

The report identifies no hint of any friction between the SMT and the teachers. This suggests that either the school has resolved its conflicts or confirms the hypothesis that much is hidden during the period of inspection.

The examples above show that each stakeholder group provides a unique perspective and there is diversity of opinion within and between stakeholder groups. This diversity of perspective provides evidence of a variance in the expectations of good and improving schools between the stakeholders, and of the differences in the values which underpin their attitudes. Whether this diversity is significant in the improvement of schools, and how this diversity can be translated into school improvement systems, will be explored in chapters six and seven.

# Chapter 6

## The Analysis

### Introduction

To provide an effective structure to this chapter, the aims of the study are revisited to ensure that they are met. The specific aims of the thesis are:

- Aim 1 - To review the characteristics of a good school for use as benchmark criteria.
- Aim 2 - To investigate the governors, senior management teams, teachers, parents, and students' perception of a good school.
- Aim 3 - To compare the perception of a good school from different groups of a school population.
- Aim 4 - To compare the perception of a good school of like groups from UK and International school populations.
- Aim 5 - To investigate the governor's, senior management team's, teacher's, parent's, and student's perception of how their school might be improved.
- Aim 6 - To compare the opinions of different groups within a school population on improving the school.
- Aim 7 - To compare the opinions of like groups, UK, and international, on school improvement.

Aim one has been met in chapter two while aims two and five have been met in chapters four and five. These aims will be met again in this chapter when the data are compared with the literature. This chapter addresses all the aims but focuses on three, four, six, and seven.

The analysis is split into two parts that have been linked to the aims of the thesis in Table 6.1. Part One analyses each stakeholder group by comparing across both case study schools and with results of studies in the literature review (chapter two). The second part is a comparison of the two case study schools linking the findings to school effectiveness models and other literature from the review (chapter two).

**Table 6.1 Linking the sections of the chapter with the aims of the thesis.**

Section in Analysis Chapter	Aims
<b>Part One:</b> Comparison of like stakeholders from different schools and with models from the Literature Review.	<p>Aim 4 - To compare the perception of a good school of like groups from UK and International school populations.</p> <p>Aim 7 - To compare the opinions of different groups from two separate school populations, one in the UK and on International, on improving schools.</p>
<b>Part Two:</b> A comparison of BIMS and Cornerstone with each other and with findings from the Literature review.	<p>Aim 1 - To review the characteristics of a good school for use as benchmark criteria.</p> <p>Aim 2 - To investigate the governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and students' perception of a good school.</p> <p>Aim 3 - To compare the perception of a good school of different groups from a school population.</p> <p>Aim 4 - To compare the perception of a good school of like groups from UK and International school populations.</p> <p>Aim 5 - To investigate the governors, senior management team's, teachers, parents and students' perception of how their school might be improved.</p> <p>Aim 6 - To compare the opinions of different groups within a school population on improving the school.</p> <p>Aim 7 - To compare the opinions of like groups, UK, and International, on improving schools.</p>

Table 6.2 and Table 6.3 summarise the data from chapters four and five. The numbers in Table 6.2 refer to the percentage of responses received in that category as a proportion of the total. For example, it can be seen that whereas 22.2% of Cornerstone parent responses used standards achieved as an indicator for a good school, only 4.5% of BIMS parents did the same. Likewise, a very similar proportion, 47.5% and 49.4% respectively, of the total number of returns use quality of teaching and quality of support as an indicator of a good school.

Again, the numbers in Table 6.3 refer to the percentage of response received in that category as a proportion of the total possible. As before, like data from each school is compared so that, for example, it can be seen that 11.1% of the teacher responses at BIMS want standards to be improved but only 1% of Cornerstone teacher responses revealed any agreement. Similarly, a very similar proportion, 65.6% and 63.4% respectively, of the total number of responses would like to see management issues dealt with and improved. The tables above offer a summary from which further discussions and comparisons are made below.

Table 6.2 A good school. Comparison across stakeholders and school. Percentages.

Category	Directors	Governors	SMT	SMT	Teachers	Teachers	Students	Students	Parents	Parents	Total	Total
	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>12.6</b>
Quality of Support and Personal Development	15.4	40.0	15.0	22.0	33.3	43.6	31.3	37.7	33.7	36.1	25.7	35.9
Quality of Teaching	15.4	16.0	25.0	2.4	18.2	17.9	21.3	20.4	29.2	10.8	21.8	14.0
<b>Quality Total</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>52.5*</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>49.9</b>
Management	23.1	24.0	35.0	41.5	27.3	12.8	0.0	3.5	5.6	15.5	18.2	19.5
Efficiency	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	2.5	3.8	5.6	2.1	1.6	1.7
Management of Facilities	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	13.1	5.6	3.1	7.1	3.2
<b>Management Total</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>24.4</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects	7.7	0.0	0.0	2.4	3.0	7.7	16.3	13.8	10.1	7.2	7.4	6.2
School data	23.1	12.0	0.0	14.6	15.2	5.1	7.5	2.3	5.6	3.1	10.3	7.4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Numbers may not total accurately due to rounding errors in prior calculations

Table 6.3 School improvement issues. Comparison across stakeholders and schools. Percentages.

Category	Directors	Governors	SMT	SMT	Teachers	Teachers	Students	Students	Parents	Parents	Total	Total
	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone	BIMS	Corner-stone
<b>Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>
Quality of Support and Personal Development	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	2.9	0.0	10.2	1.5	11.5	0.3	5.3
Quality of Teaching	0.0	7.7	8.8	3.6	7.4	4.9	5.9	8.8	4.5	11.5	5.3	7.3
<b>Quality Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>12.6</b>
Management	0.0	23.1	68.4	58.2	48.1	50.0	20.6	14.6	15.2	20.8	30.5	33.3
Efficiency	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8	0.0	1.0	19.1	19.9	3.0	2.2	4.8	5.0
Facilities	60.0	34.6	5.3	18.2	29.6	27.5	27.9	28.8	28.8	16.4	30.3	25.1
<b>Management Total</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>78.2</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>63.3</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>63.4</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects	20.0	11.5	10.5	1.8	3.7	11.8	23.5	14.9	40.9	27.9	19.7	13.6
School data	0.0	19.2	0.0	3.6	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.1	3.0	3.8	0.6	5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Numbers may not total accurately due to rounding errors in prior calculations

### Improving a Good School. Stakeholder Perspectives.

This section compares like stakeholders from the two case study schools with each other and with literature. It compares perspectives of a good school and school improvement required taking each stakeholder in turn. The raw data have been converted to percentage form to allow direct comparison of responses.

#### Directors and Governors

**Table 6.4 A good school and school improvement. Comparison between schools. Directors and Governors. Data as percentage.**

		A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
Category		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)		15.4	8.0	20.0	3.8
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	15.4	40.0	0.0	0.0
	Teaching	15.4	16.0	0.0	7.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	23.1	24.0	0.0	23.1
	Efficiency	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Facilities	0.0	0.0	60.0	34.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>57.7</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects		7.7	0.0	20.0	11.5
School data		23.1	12.0	0.0	19.2
<b>Total responses</b>		<b>100.1*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.9*</b>

\*Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding errors in prior calculations

**Table 6.5 Governors and Directors. Main reasons given for a good school and main school improvement issues stated. BIMS and Cornerstone.**

A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Strong sense of direction	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	A permanent site for the school	IT facilities
Ofsted/educationalists say it is good	Good/committed teachers	Target setting and monitoring	Increased funding -LEA
	Parents, welcome/supportive Individual attention	Sports	Better Building Better maintenance/cleaning
	High standards	Continuity and progression between key stages	Special Needs for all including more able Reduce class size/smaller school

Table 6.4 and Table 6.5 both reveal considerable differences in the foci of the two bodies.

The relatively small size of the body of directors at BIMS limits the scope of analysis, as does the differing role of the two bodies. The governing body at Cornerstone appears more

informed. The directors at BIMS tend to be relying on what the principal says or, in the case of the inspection, what Ofsted says.

The directors at BIMS reflect Creese and Bradley's (1997, p.114) findings that governors are happy to follow the lead of the teachers and have very little impact on standards. But in Creese and Bradley's (1997) study, the chair of the board was not the principal. At BIMS, the chair of the board is also the principal. This more complex structure appears to be creating a scene where the directors are relying primarily on the chair/principal to inform and advise them.

The governors at Cornerstone are more involved in the school through sub committees and more regular governor meetings. Governors at Cornerstone are accountable but they reflected studies such as Creese and Bradley (1997) and HMI (DES, 1992) where governors were happy to follow the lead of teachers and failed to appreciate they had anything to do with the quality of the school. Both teacher governors at Cornerstone were very critical of the meetings, indicating that communication was very poor and they were expected to tow the line with the head.

It seems that, in both cases, the governors and directors are relying on the head and principal to inform them of educational matters in the school. The hypothesis would be that at both schools the governors and directors have no impact on the standards of the school. The issue of the purpose of governors and directors is then raised. If they are just a legal necessity then their purpose needs to be revisited. If their purpose is to be involved in raising standards, then heads and governors need more training as to how both parties can mutually benefit each other and thus the school. Table 6.5 displays the main items identified for a good school and school improvement. The issues listed are broad and

lacking in depth. This may be a symptom of the limited knowledge that the governors and directors have of the school.

There are potential problems in the practice of limiting information primarily to that passed on from the principal or head to governors/directors. Information could be tailored for the governors/directors to suit the position of the head/principal. To suggest that governors/directors should be more involved in the school, and therefore diminish the possibility of being misinformed or only partially informed on various matters, goes against Pugh (1991, p.220) who found that governors do not want to run school but be partners and learn from the school. The situation at BIMS is unique in that the chair and principal could be said to be running the school but there is a clear need for reassessment of the decision making process at BIMS. The principal in Hungary is cautious about involving the directors in the daily running of the school. Her experience of working in an international school in Saudi Arabia led her to express the view that governors tend to take on the role for the wrong reasons. She explained that, in international circles, being a governor is sometimes a political motive. Something they are expected to do if they wish to move up the diplomatic wing. As a founder, the principal has made a conscious decision that she did not want her school to move in that direction. She therefore set up a very unique structure of board of directors and PAG. This cannot, however, gloss over the fact that the directors rely primarily on the chair/principal for information and advice. There are opportunities to manipulate events or information.

One proposal arising from this study is that some compromise should be reached by BIMS, less so for Cornerstone, to involve the directors/governors at the school level. Creese and Bradley's (1997) suggestions are appropriate but do not go far enough:

- Enhance the role of governors,
- Governors to systematically monitor the school, be involved in development planning,

- Joint working groups.

This study recognises the need for both heads and governors to be trained in methods of working together for mutual benefit. A further consideration is that directors and governors are unpaid and therefore the motivations for becoming a governor need to be explored.

A full proposal from this study is:

- Heads need to enhance the role of governors.
- Governors to be trained to systematically monitor the school and be involved in development planning.
- Joint working groups should be established between Heads, teachers, parents, and governors.
- Reasons and motivations for becoming a director or governor to be explored within the body.

It may be hypothesised from the limited evidence of this study that international and UK school governors will have different perspectives on what is a good school. The primary concern of UK school governors is the quality of education. With respect to school improvement, governors focus on broad management issues. They lack both the wider perspective and depth of knowledge in the functions of the school.

The comments cannot be compared with any published lists since none were available at the time of the study. The limited number of responses makes the possibility of any particular pattern too tentative to be considered valid. However, the results obtained in the study may explain why Sammons et al (1995) make no reference to the role of governors on effective schooling. The study does, however, support Creese and Bradley's (1997) comments that research should be carried out which investigates governor perspectives on school improvement in the light of the role of governors in England and Wales. This study does not provide any firm evidence that governors and directors have any effect on school improvement. Indeed, the study may even suggest that governors and directors prefer to be led by the head and have little or no involvement in school improvement. The HMI (DES,

1992) report argues that the head should be accountable to the governors who should be involved in school improvement.

### Senior Management Team

**Table 6.6 A good school and school improvement. Comparison between schools. SMT perspectives. Data as a percentage.**

		A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement required
Category		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)		15.0	17.1	5.3	10.9
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	15.0	22.0	0.0	1.8
	Teaching	25.0	2.4	8.8	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	35.0	41.5	68.4	58.2
	Efficiency	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8
	Facilities	10.0	0.0	5.3	18.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>78.2</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects		0.0	2.4	10.5	1.8
School data		0.0	14.6	0.0	3.6
<b>Total responses</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6.7 SMT. Main reasons given for a good school and school improvement issues. BIMS and Cornerstone.**

A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement required
BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
High standards	High test results	Improve management	Shared vision/united staff team
Good teachers	Attitudes and discipline	Better communication	Fewer government initiatives
Strong sense of direction	Good leadership	Management of staff	Management of staff
Willingness to improve	Good ethos and values	Improve quality of teaching	Specification of roles
	Good/happy atmosphere	Standards	IT facilities
	Parents, welcome/supportive	Financial management	Improve management
	Deals with problems effectively	INSET	The core ethos and values
	Good management	Public Relations	More resources
	Popular	Pressure on staff	Tidiness
	Children want to go to school	More resources	Better discipline and policy

There are some common elements to the responses of the two SMTs. Table 6.6 shows that both focus on management criteria to determine a good school. Quality of education and standards come next. Only 2.4% of the comments relate to the curriculum at Cornerstone, it is not referred to at all by the BIMS SMT. Table 6.7 shows that both SMTs focus on high test results or high standards in describing their school as good and then refer to the good leadership or strong sense of direction.

With school improvement there are also common factors. Table 6.6 shows that both SMTs list management issues as an area to improve and Table 6.7 shows management and management of staff high on the list. That the SMT want management to improve in both schools is a sign of self-reflection and does not necessarily imply poor management skills. More specifically, the item 'improve staff management' in Table 6.7 suggests, and chapters four and five have shown, that at both schools there is evidence of conflict within the SMT and conflict between the SMT and the staff. SMT members at Cornerstone and BIMS raised the question of the management style of the leader. At BIMS, the principal is criticised by both the head of BIMS and the head of key stage one. At Cornerstone the head's management style is criticised by the senior teacher. Conflict between the staff and the SMT has also been exposed in chapters four and five. In addition, Table 6.6 shows that where 25% of the BIMS SMT responses list good teachers as an indicator of a good school, only 2.4% of such comments come from the Cornerstone SMT. This would support the hypothesis that the Cornerstone SMT is not very impressed by the quality of teaching they offer. The BIMS SMT admit that some staff are 'very poor' at their school. This issue demonstrates one reason why staff management, from the SMT perspective, may be an issue at both schools.

It appears that, although the schools are good schools, conflict within the SMT may be a significant factor in limiting the development of both schools. These findings echo Sammons et al (1997, p. 135) who found that conflict within the SMT was a major hurdle impeding school improvement, and Wallace and Hall (1994) who claim that SMT effectiveness is directly linked to teamwork within the SMT.

Neither of the SMTs focused on or used their Ofsted inspection report as an indicator of success. It may be hypothesised that the SMTs of the two case study schools do not view the Ofsted reports as the only tool for improvement. This supports Fidler (1996) who lists school inspection as only one of eight possible tools available to an SMT for school improvement.

The study suggests that SMTs are not taken in by the Ofsted inspection as much as Ouston et al (1996) might imply. Even if an inspection is positive, SMTs do not appear to proclaim it as the sole reason they are a good school. Indeed, both SMTs revealed further weaknesses not identified by their Ofsted report, raising questions about how useful, or accurate, the actual report was. Ouston et al (1996) did not come across this situation and it does, therefore, add an extra dimension to their findings.

There are no other significant studies available for direct comparison with the research.

Although the results are limited in terms of the number of SMTs involved in the study, some hypotheses can be made.

- SMTs appear similar in views, whether they are from a UK or an international school.
- SMTs focus on management issues and high test results/standards when determining a good school.
- SMTs do not consider curriculum issues as a key indicator of a good school.
- SMTs focus more on management issues when considering school improvement.
- Conflict within the SMT may be evident in international and UK schools.
- Conflict within the SMT may be impeding the good schools from improving.
- Management of staff is a major factor for improvement in both schools.

### Teachers

There are surprisingly similar foci for teachers in both the UK and international school.

Table 6.8 shows that both teacher groups use quality of education criteria, particularly support and personal development issues, in determining a good school. Some of the main

indicators for teachers in both schools are caring, nurturing, a happy environment, and committed teachers. Cornerstone teachers are happier with the standards at their school than BIMS teachers.

**Table 6.8 A good school and school improvement. Comparison between schools. Teacher perspectives. Data as percentage**

		A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
Category		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)		3.0	10.3	11.1	1.0
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	33.3	43.6	0.0	2.9
	Teaching	18.2	17.9	7.4	4.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.8</b>
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	27.3	12.8	48.1	50.0
	Efficiency	0.0	2.6	0.0	1.0
	Facilities	0.0	0.0	29.6	27.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>78.5</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects		3.0	7.7	3.7	11.8
School data		15.2	5.1	0.0	1.0
<b>Total responses</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100.1*</b>

\*Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding errors in prior calculations

**Table 6.9 Teachers. Main reasons given for a good school and school improvement issues. BIMS and Cornerstone.**

A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Caring and supportive nurturing	Good rules-ethos respect	More resources	Improve management
Effective teamwork	Good/happy atmosphere	Better communication	Staff management.
Committed staff	Good/committed teachers	Improve management	Special Needs for all including more able
Good management	Attitudes and discipline	Stability and staff retention	Better communication
Small classes	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	Financial management	More resources
Happy environment	Enjoy lessons/teaching	Better discipline	IT facilities
Different nationalities	Extra curricular activities	Improve quality of teaching	Better planning and policies
	High test results	Wider range of teaching methods	Pressure on staff

In the case of school improvement, Table 6.8 shows that teachers in both schools converge on management as a major area for improvement.

Table 6.9 shows that management and communication are high on the list of both teaching staffs. Whereas financial management appears relatively high on the list at BIMS, it is missing from the Cornerstone list where only one comment regarding financial management was made. This may be due to the differing financial natures of the two

schools, BIMS being funded by student fees and Cornerstone by local government.

Alternatively it may be due to a lack of accountability at BIMS and therefore questions regarding where the money is being spent may be the issue. The only comment at Cornerstone came from a teacher governor who suggested that too much money is spent on supply teaching.

The UK and international school findings are very similar and some of the issues reflect Davies and Ellison (1995).

**Table 6.10 Comparison of teacher data from the current study with Davies and Ellison (1995)**

<b>Issues raised by teachers in Davies and Ellison (1995)</b>	<b>Comments from this study</b>
They had a very high workload.	Mentioned by one teacher at BIMS and five teachers at Cornerstone.
They were concerned about so much change they were being expected to put into place all the time.	Not mentioned by any teachers
They did not always feel that the pastoral systems supported the students.	Mentioned by two teachers at Cornerstone in the context of lack of consistency amongst staff.
(Some) were not always valued.	Implied through management issues stated by teachers in both schools, e.g. better communication (both schools), disillusioned staff (Cornerstone), improve management (both schools).
(Some) were concerned with the top-down management style.	Implied through statements such as better communication (both schools) and improve management (both schools).

It is interesting that high workload, implementing new initiatives, and poor pastoral systems were not major issues for the teacher body studied and yet they were high focus issues in the Davies and Ellison (1995) study. The weakness of their study was the research instrument, a predetermined list of thirty items in the form of a questionnaire. The Davies and Ellison (1995) list does not appear representative of teacher concerns across all schools. The limitation of preconceived lists such as Davies and Ellison (1995) is very evident. Sammons et al (1997, p.119) also came up with heavy workload as a barrier to improvement. However, the issue was not so high profile at BIMS or Cornerstone. Cornerstone teachers did list pressure on staff as an element they wish to see improve,

BIMS staff did not mention this issue except that it was implied in the comment 'improve management'. BIMS may have dealt with the problem of overload more effectively than Cornerstone or, more likely, the smaller classes at BIMS may mean that this is not an issue.

Another item of interest is that BIMS staff want to improve the quality of teaching. This is intriguing in that it comes from teachers. This would suggest a number of possibilities. One could be that the focus on quality has not been there. This is most likely since the school is in a pioneering stage where an almost complete new set of staff have been employed, all of whom had to set up new curricula throughout. The focus, therefore, may have been on setting up rather than implementing. The other possibility is that the focus of the management may not have been quality but something else, possibly setting up structures. Again, this may support the notion of a rapidly growing changing school but could imply questionable priorities. That the Cornerstone evidence, Davies and Ellison (1995), and Sammons et al (1997), did not raise this issue could suggest that it may be more of an international school issue than a UK school symptom. Alternatively, the BIMS culture may be more open to self-criticism and reflection and teachers may be more comfortable in admitting that teaching quality needs improving.

That the teacher perspective on good and improving schools is fairly similar is rather surprising. Even with two schools in such different environments, with such different clients, teachers are experiencing the same difficulties and have very similar views on why their school is a good school.

### Students

Table 6.11 shows that students at both schools measure a good school on the quality issues, particularly social and personal development, although quality of teaching is also very

important to them. Table 6.12 confirms that issues like a friendly, happy environment are high on the list. Amongst the issues, extra curricular activities appear in both student lists as a major issue in determining a good school. Table 6.11 shows that both student groups rate management issues as high in determining a good school. The issues are mainly concerned with the management of facilities of the school. Both student groups rate management of lunch and break times as the highest priority. Uniform is another issue as are more school trips.

**Table 6.11 A good school and school improvement. Comparison between schools. Students. Data as a percentage.**

		A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
Category		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)		1.3	5.4	2.9	1.8
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	31.3	37.7	0.0	10.2
	Teaching	21.3	20.4	5.9	8.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>19.0</b>
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	0.0	3.5	20.6	14.6
	Efficiency	2.5	3.8	19.1	19.9
	Facilities	20.0	13.1	27.9	28.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>63.3</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects		16.3	13.8	23.5	14.9
School data		7.5	2.3	0.0	1.1
<b>Total responses (%)</b>		<b>100.2*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100.1*</b>

\*Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding errors in prior calculations

**Table 6.12 Student. Main reasons given for a good school and school improvement issues. BIMS and Cornerstone.**

A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Friendly teachers	Friendly teachers	Break and Lunchtimes	Break/Lunchtime and supervision
Happy environment	Good/committed teachers	Uniform policy	Better pastoral care
Extra curricular activities	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	Sports	Uniform policy
Big playground	Extra curricular activities	Playground	Better maintenance/cleaning
Specialist/qualified teaching	Good facilities	More school trips	Improve quality of teaching
Different nationalities	Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline	Hall	School trips
Treated with respect	Good resources	Wider range of teaching methods	More resources
Enjoy lessons	Lunchtimes/breaks	Relax rules	Toilets
Friendly	Sports	School day times	Bigger building/playground
Good resources	High standards	More student clubs	IT facilities

A common factor is the identification of teaching as an issue to be improved. At BIMS there was a focus on wider teaching styles. Subjects specifically mentioned were humanities but included some generality in the comment. This may imply a saturation of one particular style of teaching across the teachers. At Cornerstone the wording was 'quality' or 'better teaching', implying that some or many of the lessons were not satisfactory to the students. This issue is a contrast to the other issues listed by the students. The findings have been compared with Wallace (1996) and other studies in Table 6.13.

**Table 6.13 Comparing student issues from this study with other research.**

Wallace (1996)	Chaplain (1996)	Rudduck (1996)	Davies and Ellison (1995)	Student comments arising from this study
An understanding teacher prepared to listen	Have good social skills		Lack of communication	Very important in both schools
Students dislike working from worksheets.	Students expect teachers to be competent			Important in both schools
Homework				A low priority issue
		Peer groups do not encourage students to work hard	Concerned about bullying and behaviour	Some concern in both schools
			Want to develop literacy and numeracy	Not mentioned at either school
			Want work to be differentiated	Mentioned by a few students at both schools
			Discipline policy unfair	Mentioned by a few students at Cornerstone
			Are not involved in decision making	Student council mentioned at Cornerstone

The findings support Wallace (1996 p.29) and Chaplain (1996) that an understanding teacher, prepared to listen, makes a big difference to students. Wallace (1996) also found that uncaring teachers, working from worksheets, are identified as the worst. There is no substantial evidence to suggest that this is the case at either of the schools. The students support Chaplain (1996) who found that teachers are expected to be competent, have an interest in the students' welfare, and have good social skills. Rudduck's (1996) finding that upper secondary school peer groups did not encourage students to work hard has not featured amongst the student comments. It is possible that this may be more of an upper secondary than a middle school symptom. Wallace (1996) found homework to be another

big issue amongst students. This does not appear in Table 6.12 as it was a minor issue in this study. Students at both schools want a better distribution of homework during the year so that larger homework projects, coursework, and assessments do not fall during one particular period.

Teachers at both schools were described as 'good' by male students and 'caring, supportive and friendly' by female students. This would suggest a good quality of education being received by them. Significant is the absence of the bullying issue. The responses indicate that the students felt content with the school and that their education was not being hindered by the behaviour of other students in the school.

Davies and Ellison's (1995) findings do not match very well with the student responses in this study. Davies and Ellison (1995) listed six issues. Students:

- wanted to develop reading and numeracy;
- were concerned about levels and appropriateness of work undertaken;
- were concerned about bullying and behaviour;
- thought there was a lack of communication;
- the sanction system was unfair in that in one particular school it targeted groups and not individuals;
- were not involved enough in decision making.

The students in this study did not mention the first issue at all. The other issues were low frequency. The weakness, as already mentioned, is that the Davies and Ellison study used a predetermined questionnaire and therefore the issues they list above did not emanate from the students but were simply ranked by them.

Table 6.13 highlights that research studies of student opinions do not have a lot of common ground. The research instruments may have been the influencing factor. If it was argued that students vary in perceptions according to the environment they are in, then this study

challenges the argument. That the two case study student populations have so many common areas in defining a good school or listing issues for improvement is surprising. This is supported by Entwistle et al (1989) who compared British pupils' motivation and approaches to learning with those of Hungarian pupils. They too found that students perceive their schools in very similar ways in England and Hungary. The common areas found in this study may not, therefore, be easily attributed to the institutionalised nature of a British school. That student issues and perspectives may transfer across countries and nationalities could be a significant hypothesis in this study.

### Parents

**Table 6.14 A good school and school improvement. Comparison between schools. Parents. Data as a percentage.**

		A good school	A good school	Improvement required	Improvement Required
Category		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)		4.5	22.2	3.0	6.0
Quality of education provided	Support and Personal Development	33.7	36.1	1.5	11.5
	Teaching	29.2	10.8	4.5	11.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>
Management, efficiency and facilities	Management	5.6	15.5	15.2	20.8
	Efficiency	5.6	2.1	3.0	2.2
	Facilities	5.6	3.1	28.8	16.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>39.3</b>
Curriculum areas and subjects		10.1	7.2	40.9	27.9
School data		5.6	3.1	3.0	3.8
<b>Total responses (%)</b>		<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100.1*</b>	<b>99.9*</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding errors in prior calculations

Table 6.14 shows that parents at both schools focused on quality issues to determine a good school. A happy environment, friendly, and caring staff are examples of high priority (Table 6.15).

**Table 6.15 Parent reasons given for a good school and school improvement issues.  
BIMS and Cornerstone.**

A good school BIMS	A good school Cornerstone	School Improvement BIMS	School Improvement Cornerstone
Good teachers	Attitudes and Discipline	Sports	Better pastoral care
Individual attention/ monitoring	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	More sports activities	Improve quality of teaching
Specialist/qualified teaching	Good/committed teachers	Stability and staff retention	Better communication
Extra curricular activities	High standards	Better organised building	Special Needs for all including more able
Small classes	Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline	Library	Homework policy
Good curriculum/extra additions	Extra curricular activities	Homework policy	Better sports curriculum
Friendly	Parents, welcome/supportive	Extension of upper school	Better/more communication regarding expectations, achievements and work to be done over the year
Uniform	Good/happy atmosphere	Links with other schools	Improve management
Caring and supportive nurturing	Good management	Break and Lunchtimes	School trips
	Good leadership	Playground	

Cornerstone parents identified good management and good leadership, particularly the ethos and values imparted by them. This issue is not significant at BIMS. Both sets of parents put good extra curricular activities high on the list. This contrasts with the high standards and shows that parents expect to see a balance in the school.

Whereas good teachers are identified at Cornerstone, specialist and committed teachers are identified at BIMS when parents considered a good school. Although there is a slightly different focus, the general principle is the same. BIMS parents clearly appreciate that specialist staff have been appointed to the school for the first time.

High priorities at Cornerstone are better pastoral care and better quality of teaching. Some of the current responses came from parents who had indicated the school was not a good school, but not all. That so many parents saw them as strengths when determining Cornerstone as a good school suggests a dichotomy. There may be links here with the ten percent of lessons deemed unsatisfactory by Ofsted. Whatever the case, the quality of education is a greater priority to parents at Cornerstone than BIMS.

Homework is another parental concern at both schools. Again the inconsistency in getting homework is the main worry although some parents comment that they would like more.

These findings can be compared with Davies and Ellison (1995) in Table 6.16.

**Table 6.16 Comparing parent comments with Davies and Ellison (1995)**

<b>Davies and Ellison (1995) Parents concerns</b>	<b>Comments from current research</b>
Lunchtime arrangements	Mentioned by a few parents at both schools
Homework	Mentioned by one parent at BIMS and eleven parents at Cornerstone
Not enough parent involvement	A few comments from Cornerstone parents, none from BIMS parents
Discipline	A greater concern to Cornerstone parents.

The parents in this study mention all the four concerns found by Davies and Ellison (1995) in their survey of parents. Whereas the issues were key in the Davies and Ellison (1995) work, the issues are overshadowed by others in this study. Discipline does not feature as a significant problem in either school and could be related to the 'good school' category in which both schools have been placed.

Ofsted's (1995b) parent questionnaire provides another benchmark with which the data from this study can be compared. This is carried out in Table 6.17. Actual data from Ofsted inspections of both schools could not be obtained. The chart succeeds in displaying which Ofsted criteria are relevant and which have not been mentioned by parents at either school. Parents' actual responses shown in Table 6.15 do not match the Ofsted list, raising questions regarding the origin and validity of the Ofsted list. Ofsted need to justify why parents should consider the items on the Ofsted list to the exclusion of others.

Table 6.17 Comparing the contents of the Ofsted (1995b) parents' questionnaire with the parent data.

<b>Statements from the Ofsted parents questionnaire</b>	<b>BIMS - related comments. [ ] number of comments</b>	<b>Cornerstone - related comments. [ ] number of comments</b>
The school encourages the parents to play an active part in the life of the school	Apart from 'active PTA', not mentioned	'Parents welcome and supportive'[9]
It is easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	Not mentioned	Parents problems not solved[1]
The school handles complaints from parents very well	Not mentioned	Parents problems not solved[1]
The school gives parents a clear understanding of what is taught	'good communication between school and home'[2];	Better/more communication regarding expectations, achievements and work to be done over the year[7]
The school keeps the parents well informed about children progress.	'no guidelines for parents to monitor student performance'[1];	Better/more communication regarding expectations, achievements and work to be done over the year[7]
The school enables children to achieve a good standard of work	'high standards'[2]	High standards[15] Improve standards[2]
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	'extra curricular activities'[5] 'Good curriculum and additions to the curriculum'.[4] 'More trips, clubs, extra curricular activities needed'.[9]	'extra curricular activities'[11] better sports needed [8]
Parents are satisfied with the work that their children are expected to do at home.	Improve homework policy[3]	Good amount of homework[1] Improve homework policy[11]
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on the children.	Good relations between students and teachers[2] Ethos of respect and discipline[2]	Good relations between students and teachers[4] Ethos of respect and discipline[11] Better pastoral care needed[15]
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour.	Good discipline/behaviour[1]	Good discipline/behaviour[21] Improve bullying[3]
Children like school.	Children want to go to school[1]	Children want to go to school[7]

## Overview

In deciding a good school, the categories that appear paramount to almost all the stakeholders are 'quality of education' and 'management'. The agreement across stakeholders at the two schools is striking with regard to these two categories.

Educational standards rank lower in the list although not all stakeholders agree. Governors at BIMS and parents at Cornerstone rate it highly whilst students at both schools give it a low rating. Diversity of opinion is reflected with the curriculum category. Some stakeholders do not rate it at all whilst others give it mid importance in determining a good school. School data scores low in terms of importance at both schools except by governors at BIMS who use the data as an indicator.

In Table 6.18, reasons for a good school and issues for improvement were combined across all stakeholders and the top fifteen issues listed.

**Table 6.18 BIMS and Cornerstone. Reasons for a good school. Top 15 issues across all stakeholders. From data as a percentage.**

BIMS	Cornerstone
Good teachers	Good/committed teachers
Good management	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly
Strong sense of direction	Good rules-Ethos of respect/discipline
Small classes	Attitudes and Discipline
High standards	High standards
Effective teamwork	Good/happy atmosphere
Caring and supportive nurturing	High test results
Happy environment	Good management
Friendly teachers	Extra curricular activities
Extra curricular activities	Friendly teachers
Good atmosphere	Parents, welcome/supportive
Ofsted/educationalists say it is good	Individual attention
Specialist/qualified teaching	Good teacher parent contact/communication
Different nationalities	Popular
Individual attention/ monitoring	Children want to go to school

There are many similarities. Most of the issues are quality and management issues. Both schools rank good teachers as the best indicator of a good school. A caring and supportive school is second in both schools. High standards and high tests results appear sixth and seventh in the ranking at Cornerstone whilst high standards appears third at BIMS.

Management appears in both lists as do extra curricular activities.

It seems very clear that, across stakeholders and schools, there are many popular reasons for describing a school as a good school. However, they cannot be considered common across all the stakeholders. Nor are the priorities the same.

**Table 6.19 BIMS and Cornerstone. Issues for school improvement. Top 15 issues across all stakeholders. From data as a percentage.**

BIMS	Cornerstone
Sports	IT facilities
A permanent site for the school	Staff, management of
Improve management	Improve management
Better communication	Special Needs for all including more able
More resources	Better maintenance/cleaning
Continuity and progression between key stages	Break/Lunchtime and supervision
Break and Lunchtimes	Shared vision/united staff team
Target setting and monitoring	Improve quality of teaching
Stability and staff retention	More resources
Staff, management of	Increased funding -LEA
Uniform policy	Reduce class size/smaller school
Playground	Better pastoral care
Library	Better communication
Pressure on staff	Bigger building/playground
Improve quality of teaching	Better Building

Again there are many similarities between the two schools regarding school improvements.

Improving management is very high in both lists. Quality of teaching is important. Break

time and lunchtime organisation is a surprisingly common issue between the two student populations.

Many of the issues, such as ICT facilities and sports, are specific to the schools and more of these might have been expected than are experienced in this study. One issue, which appears to be missing from both lists, is raising standards. It could be argued, however, that many of the issues listed for improvement are ultimately focused towards raising standards.

### **BIMS, Cornerstone and School Effectiveness Studies.**

This section compares the schools with each other and with school effectiveness studies. The five categories used in the data displays throughout this study have been taken from Ofsted (1995a). They are standards, quality, management, curriculum, and data (Table 6.20).

**Table 6.20 Ofsted inspection areas.**

<b>Educational Standards Achieved by Pupils at the School</b>
Attainment and progress
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Attendance
<b>Quality of Education provided</b>
Teaching
the curriculum and assessment
pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
support, guidance and pupils welfare
Partnership with parents and the community
<b>The Management and Efficiency of the School</b>
Leadership and management
staffing, accommodation and learning resources
the efficiency of the school
<b>Curriculum Areas and Subjects</b>
<b>Inspection Data: Pupils, teachers, classes and financial</b>

(Ofsted 1995a)

A number of school effectiveness studies were discussed in chapter two, and these studies provide issues for each of the five categories. Table 6.21 collates the issues, from the school effectiveness studies, into the five categories and lists one or more of the studies

where they were found. The table provides a useful reference with which the data from the stakeholders will be compared.

**Table 6.21 School effectiveness issues within the five categories from various studies**

Category	Issue	Study
Standards	High expectations	Sammons et al (1995) Hargreaves (1995) Ofsted (1997)
	High achievement	Ralph and Fennessey (1983), Ofsted (1997)
	Monitoring progress	Sammons et al (1995)
Quality	A learning environment	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989)
	Concentration on teaching and learning	Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995)
	Purposeful teaching	Sammons et al (1995)
	Pupil rights and responsibilities	Sammons et al (1995)
	Positive reinforcement	Sammons et al (1995)
	Targets for each child, including those with SEN.	Ofsted (1997)
Management	Professional Leadership	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989), Ofsted (1997)
	Shared vision and goals	Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995), OECD (1989)
	Staff stability	OECD (1989), Bosker and Scheerens (1989)
	Home-school partnership	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989), Ofsted (1997)
	Systems to ensure money spent on books and other reading material is used wisely	Ofsted (1997)
	A learning organisation	Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995) OECD (1989), Ofsted (1997)
	Support of the responsible education authority.	OECD (1989)
Curriculum	Curriculum continuity and progression.	Hargreaves (1995)
	The curriculum	Anderson et al (1992)
Data	None	None

No issues reflected the data category and therefore it appears empty in the above table.

This may be surprising considering that it is a key category in the Ofsted (1995a) inspection of schools.

Data from Table 6.2 and Table 6.3 have been replicated in the relevant sections below.

### Educational standards achieved.

**Table 6.22 Reasons for a good school in the category of Educational Standards. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	15.4	8.0	15.0	17.1	3.0	10.3	1.3	5.4	4.5	22.2	7.8	12.6

**Table 6.23 School improvement issues in the category of Educational Standards. Percentage response.**

	Directors	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Educational standards achieved (including attainment, attitude and behaviour)	20.0	3.8	5.3	10.9	11.1	1.0	2.9	1.8	3.0	6.0	8.5	4.7

Table 6.22 and Table 6.23 contain data taken from Table 6.2 and Table 6.3 respectively.

The data shows the percentage of responses by each stakeholder in the category of educational standards. The tables allow a comparison between schools and across stakeholders.

There is some correlation between the data for improvement in this category and the data for a good school. This is most transparent at Cornerstone where all stakeholders have listed fewer improvement issues than the number of issues listed for a good school. It seems that Cornerstone stakeholders are happier with the standards achieved.

There is less correlation in the BIMS data where there is a similar proportion of comments relating to a good school and to school improvement issues. When considered separately the SMT and parents quote fewer issues for improvement compared to the number quoted for a good school, the other stakeholders quote a higher number of issues for school improvement. Teachers provide the largest difference in data between the good school and school improvement tables. Teachers appear less happy with standards at BIMS than at Cornerstone.

The difference between the two parent stakeholders is the largest, with a greater interest in this category at Cornerstone. This data could suggest that the international parents have different values to parents in the UK school. If expatriate parents have recently moved house, country, and employment, it is possible that they are less concerned about the academic standards but more with the happiness of the students. Alternatively, it is possible that standards are low at BIMS, are expected to be higher, and therefore fewer stakeholders have used them as a measure of a good school. With BIMS directors and teachers subscribing to the view that standards need improving, the latter argument is more likely.

The particular factors identified for a good school in this section by the stakeholders are shown in Table 6.24.

**Table 6.24 'Standards' factors identified in a good school by stakeholders**

Standards	Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent		
High standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	✓		
Children want to go to school	●	●	●	✓	●	●	●	✓	✓	✓		
Attitudes and discipline	✓	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓	✓	✓		

All stakeholders in both schools, apart from BIMS students, have identified high standards as a factor for a good school. That children want to go to school is an indicator for the SMT, some students and some parents, although this is mainly a Cornerstone indicator. Attitudes and discipline is a significant indicator for all stakeholders although again mainly at Cornerstone.

This does not relate very well with Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995), Ralph and Fennessey (1983), and Ofsted (1997) from whom three factors in this category can be derived.

**Table 6.25 'Standards' factors identified in school effectiveness lists.**

Category	Issue	Study
Standards	High expectations	Sammons et al (1995) Hargreaves (1995) Ofsted (1997)
	High achievement	Ralph and Fennessey (1983), Ofsted (1997)
	Monitoring progress	Sammons et al (1995)

If high standards, as a factor in this study, were equated with high achievement in Table 6.25, this would suggest an agreement between the stakeholders, Ralph and Fennessey (1983) and Ofsted (1997) that this issue is an indicator of a good school. There is, however, a difference in the interpretation of 'standards' between the stakeholders and the two schools. At Cornerstone, parents refer to high standards and the SMT refer to high SAT results. At BIMS, the SMT and directors refer to high standards. It could be argued that the SMT at Cornerstone have a very narrow perspective on standards if we assume that the other stakeholders are referring to standards generally across all subjects. The inference could even include standards in behaviour. The Cornerstone SMT interpretation of standards is more equivalent to the 'high achievement' stated by Ofsted (1997) and Ralph and Fennessey (1983). This would support the case for 'high achievement' being added to Table 6.24. An additional complexity, commented on in chapter five, is that Cornerstone SAT results are not high but average or below average by national UK standards. Critics such as Goldstein (1997) and Benton (1996) argue that test scores are 'fundamentally inadequate' (Cuttance 1992, p.77) for assessing a good school without data on the background of the student intake. The ambiguity in the use of the term 'high standards' remains and needs further investigation before a conclusion can be reached.

The inclusion of attitudes and discipline is a significant factor for stakeholders and is omitted by research studies. Yet, it is part of the 'standards' category for Ofsted inspections (Ofsted 1995a). Conversely, monitoring progress is a key factor in research (for example, Sammons et al, 1995) and the stakeholders omit this. The evidence suggests that 'standards' as a category is seen in a different way by the stakeholders and by school effectiveness researchers.

School improvement issues in this category, stated by the stakeholders, can be condensed as shown in Table 6.26.

**Table 6.26 Standards. Issues for school improvement**

Standards	Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent	Parent	Parent
Improve standards	●	✓	✓	✓	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓
Raise expectations	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓
Better discipline	●	●	●	✓	●	●	✓	✓	●	✓	●	✓

All stakeholders comment on the raising of standards as an issue of improvement but only one teacher and one student commented on raising expectations, again highlighting a different perspective to studies such as Sammons et al (1995), where raising expectations is a key aspect of their school effectiveness list.

At Cornerstone and BIMS, the students and parents focus on discipline. This is surprising considering the high focus the area of discipline received in determining the school as a good school. The SMT, however, do not see this as an issue. This conflicts with a previous

hypothesis that the students are content with the educational standards in the school and their education is not being hindered by the behaviour of others.

### Quality of Education Provided

**Table 6.27 Reasons for a good school in the category of Quality of Education Provided. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone										
Quality of Support and Personal Development	15.4	40.0	15.0	22.0	33.3	43.6	31.3	37.7	33.7	36.1	25.7	35.9
Quality of Teaching	15.4	16.0	25.0	2.4	18.2	17.9	21.3	20.4	29.2	10.8	21.8	14.0
<b>Quality Total</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>49.9</b>

**Table 6.28 School improvement issues in the category of Quality of Education Provided. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone										
Quality of Support and Personal Development	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	2.9	0.0	10.2	1.5	11.5	0.3	5.3
Quality of Teaching	0.0	7.7	8.8	3.6	7.4	4.9	5.9	8.8	4.5	11.5	5.3	7.3
<b>Quality Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>12.6</b>

Except for the SMT, this category is the most important at both schools in determining a good school and for all other stakeholders. There is a strong correlation between Table 6.27 and Table 6.28. Every stakeholder at BIMS rated their schools' quality of support and teaching as high and listed fewer school improvement issues in this category (none are listed by the directors). At Cornerstone, the SMT rate the quality of teaching as a low indicator for a good school. This contrasts with other stakeholders who rate it as a significant issue.

The particular factors identified for a good school in this section by the various stakeholders are condensed and listed in Table 6.29. Pastoral issues, such as a happy atmosphere, friendly teachers, individual attention, and good teachers/teaching are key factors amongst all the stakeholders. Girls differentiated by using the term 'friendly staff'.

Table 6.29 'Quality' factors identified in a good school by stakeholders

Quality	Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent
Happy atmosphere	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual attention	●	✓	●	✓	✓	●	●	✓	✓	✓
Friendly teachers	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good teachers/teaching	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The quality of the teacher seems to play a more influential part in the male students' decisions. At BIMS, eight male students (66%) felt that the teachers were 'good teachers', 29.2% of parent responses noted the high quality of teaching, and three of the four SMT members mentioned the good teachers. At Cornerstone, 10.8% of Cornerstone parent responses that noted the high quality of teaching and only one comment from the SMT indicated good teachers. This might suggest that the Cornerstone SMT either take the teachers for granted or they do not see them as a strength. The collective comments of the SMT suggest the latter to be the case.

These points relate to many of the issues in the effectiveness list Table 6.30.

Table 6.30 'Quality' factors identified in school effectiveness lists.

Category	Issue	Study
Quality	A learning environment	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989)
	Concentration on teaching and learning	Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995)
	Purposeful teaching	Sammons et al (1995)
	Pupil rights and responsibilities	Sammons et al (1995)
	Positive reinforcement	Sammons et al (1995)
	Targets for each child, including those with SEN.	Ofsted (1997)

Pastoral care issues, mentioned by stakeholders, may be equated with pupil rights and responsibilities and positive reinforcement. It would be reasonable to argue that the issue of pastoral care is missing from the effectiveness lists.

Good teachers/teaching, as a stakeholder issue, compares with Sammons et al (1995) and Hargreaves (1995) who identify purposeful teaching and concentration on teaching and learning as factors for effective schools. This also supports other studies, including Mortimore et al (1988), Rutter et al. (1979), Galton and Simon (1982), and Hopkins (1987). The stakeholders appear to agree with the view that classroom practice is a key indicator in effective schooling.

Target setting (Ofsted 1997) was only identified by some parents and some teachers who listed individual attention and monitoring.

School improvement issues can be condensed as shown in Table 6.31:

**Table 6.31 Quality. Issues for school improvement**

Quality	Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent		
Better pastoral care	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	✓	●	✓		✓
Better quality of teaching	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Better planning and better policies	●	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	●		●
Better homework policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	●	●		●

There is wide ranging consensus that better quality of teaching should be a key part of school improvement. At BIMS, two students and one teacher wanted to see a wider variety of teaching methods. The SMT, having mentioned that some teaching was 'mediocre', could be referring to this issue as part of the response. At Cornerstone, this is a high frequency issue for the students and very important to parents. One member of the SMT supports this view, as does one governor. The teachers do not see this as an area for improvement. They do, however, comment on the need for better subject planning and policies. It could be argued that if the planning is not thorough then the teaching is unlikely to be exceptional and therefore there are links in the comments.

Better pastoral care was a stakeholder specific issue, limited to students and parents and essentially at Cornerstone. Most Cornerstone students complain that they are not heard, treated without respect, and often shouted at. Governors, the SMT, and teachers do not see any need for improvement in this area. But, considering the volume of comments on this one issue, the need to address it within the school is apparent. However, Cornerstone has been described as especially caring and friendly and this could be a possible conflict in data. On examination, many of the comments on this issue emanated from students who had said the school was not a good school. Here they were saying that this was an issue they need to see improve.

#### Management, efficiency and facilities.

**Table 6.32 Reasons for a good school in the category of Management. Percentage response.**

Category	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
	BIMS	Cornerstone										
Management	23.1	24.0	35.0	41.5	27.3	12.8	0.0	3.5	5.6	15.5	18.2	19.5
Efficiency	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	2.5	3.8	5.6	2.1	1.6	1.7
Management of Facilities	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	13.1	5.6	3.1	7.1	3.2
<b>Management Total</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>24.4</b>

**Table 6.33 School improvement issues in the category of management. Percentage response.**

Category	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
	BIMS	Cornerstone										
Management	0.0	23.1	68.4	58.2	48.1	50.0	20.6	14.6	15.2	20.8	30.5	33.3
Efficiency	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8	0.0	1.0	19.1	19.9	3.0	2.2	4.8	5.0
Facilities	60.0	34.6	5.3	18.2	29.6	27.5	27.9	28.8	28.8	16.4	30.3	25.1
<b>Management Total*</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>75.5</b>	<b>78.2</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>63.3</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>63.4</b>

\*Numbers may not total accurately due to rounding errors in prior calculations

Table 6.32 shows that this category, management, is very important to managers in identifying a good school. In contrast, as a school improvement issue, Table 6.33 suggests that it rates highly amongst all the stakeholders.

The particular factors identified for a good school in this section by the various stakeholders are condensed and listed in Table 6.34.

**Table 6.34 Management factors identified in a good school by stakeholders.**

Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
		Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent
Management	Professional Leadership/management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	✓	●	✓
	School-parent communication	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓	●	●	✓	✓
	Popular	●	●	●	✓	●	●	●	✓	●	✓
	Teamwork	●	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	●	●	●
	Strong sense of direction	✓	✓	✓	●	●	✓	●	●	●	●
	Ethos and values	●	●	●	✓	●	●	●	●	●	●
	organised	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●
	Good resources and environment	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●

The consensus that management and leadership are a key factor in a good school is striking but so is the stakeholder specific nature of some of the management issues. Teamwork is a key factor amongst SMT and teachers. Ethos and values is restricted to SMT. The popularity of the school, which here is assumed to mean the popularity within the local community, is commented on only at Cornerstone by three stakeholders, the SMT, students, and parents.

There is some overlap between the stakeholder issues mentioned above and the research evidence as shown in Table 6.35.

**Table 6.35 'Management' factors identified in school effectiveness lists.**

Category	Issue	Study
Management	Professional Leadership	Sammons et al (1995) OECD (1989) Ofsted (1997)
	Shared vision and goals	Sammons et al (1995) Hargreaves (1995) OECD (1989)
	Staff stability	OECD (1989)
	Home-school partnership	Sammons et al (1995) OECD (1989) Ofsted (1997)
	Systems to ensure money spent on books and other reading material is used wisely	Ofsted (1997)
	A learning organisation	Sammons et al (1995) Hargreaves (1995) OECD (1989) Ofsted (1997)
	Support of the responsible education authority.	OECD (1989)

Professional leadership (Ofsted (1997), Sammons et al (1995) and OECD (1989)) can be equated with good leadership and management. Shared vision and goals relates to a strong sense of direction. Home-school partnership can also be linked with school parent communication. Ethos and values are missing from the research list as is teamwork. Likewise, financial planning and a learning organisation are missing from the stakeholder responses.

That all the stakeholders, except the parents at BIMS, recognise the need for professional leadership supports Teddlie and Springfield (1993), Mortimore et al (1988), Rutter et al (1979), and Reynolds and Skilbeck (1976), in addition to the studies matched above. Hargreaves (1995) does not mention leadership but implies it in the statement 'shared vision and goals'. It is interesting, however, that the parents at BIMS do not see either issue as relevant in a good school. The size of the sample was low but it is possible that parents in international schools have a slightly different perspective. In the international setting the movement of staff, including leaders, may be dynamic and the issue of leadership may not be seen in isolation. The issue of the lack of staff stability, raised at BIMS by parents, and teachers may illustrate this point.

School improvement issues are condensed in Table 6.36. At BIMS and Cornerstone, the primary issue is that management needs improving. Stakeholders, who identified the schools as good schools, view this as a key issue. At both schools, that teachers and the SMT see management as in greatest need of improvement can be linked to issues such as the need for better communication, pressure on staff, and management of staff. Conflict amongst the SMT is also likely to have a bearing on the issue.

Table 6.36 Management issues for improvement

Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
		Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent
Management	Better management	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	●	✓
	Better communication	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	✓
	Shared vision and teamwork	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	●	●	●
	Organisation of daily school events and facilities	●	●	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Staff stability	●	●	●	●	✓	●	●	●	✓	●
	Better staff management	●	✓	✓	✓	●	✓	●	●	●	●
	Facilities and Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Financial management	●	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	●	●	●	✓
	Environment, including maintenance	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓

If there is so much diversity and lack of cohesion within the SMTs, and between the SMT and the teachers, then it does not appear to be perceived outside the SMT/teacher circle. At BIMS, one of the reasons for the lack of cohesion and communication may be traced to the SMT observation that the SMT structure needs improvement. With the rapid growth of BIMS, expansion issues may not have been considered in setting up the current SMT structure.

At both schools, although students want to see an improvement of the uniform policy, the other stakeholders do not reflect this. Likewise, with breaks and lunchtimes, which students at both schools are concerned about, the other stakeholders are not. That the two issues are so important to the students, and not considered by the other stakeholders for improvement, is surprising and could imply that students' concerns are not taken seriously.

At Cornerstone, all the stakeholders, particularly the students and teachers, want to see better maintenance and more resources. Students want to see cleaner and better toilets. The toilets are exclusive to students and if they are not too clean then it is possible that the

other stakeholders do not notice and therefore do not comment. If this is the case then this issue needs resolving.

The main issues are that management, the facilities the school has to offer, and the lunchtimes, need to be examined for improvement. That the SMT themselves agree that management and facilities are in need of improvement indicates an aware and self-critical SMT.

The nine issues in Table 6.36 correlate with the issues for a good school and also link with the school effectiveness lists above. This provides evidence that issues for a good school and school improvement should be linked in order to provide a more complete school improvement model.

#### Curriculum areas and subjects.

**Table 6.37 Reasons for a good school in the category of Curriculum. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Curriculum areas and subjects	7.7	0.0	0.0	2.4	3.0	7.7	16.3	13.8	10.1	7.2	7.4	6.2

**Table 6.38 School improvement issues in the category of Curriculum. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
Curriculum areas and subjects	20.0	11.5	10.5	1.8	3.7	11.8	23.5	14.9	40.9	27.9	19.7	13.6

Table 6.37 and Table 6.38 suggest that there is less interest in curriculum as a measure of a good school, than there is concern over school improvement issues in this category. One possibility is that the curriculum is weak in both schools. Alternatively, the curriculum category may be a low priority in determining a good school.

The particular factors identified for a good school in this section by the various stakeholders are condensed and listed in Table 6.39.

**Table 6.39 Curriculum factors identified in a good school by stakeholders.**

Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
		Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent
Curriculum	Extra curricular activities	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Good curriculum including additions to the curriculum e.g. trips	●	●	●	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Internationally convertible curriculum	✓	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

The three issues do not compare with Hargreaves (1995) who only lists curriculum continuity and progression. Sammons et al (1995) does not list curriculum as an indicator at all. Table 6.40 exemplifies this point.

**Table 6.40 Curriculum factors identified in school effectiveness lists.**

Category	Issue	Study
Curriculum	Curriculum continuity and progression.	Hargreaves (1995)
	The curriculum	Anderson et al (1992)

At both BIMS and Cornerstone, the issue of primary importance, and identified as good by students and parents, are extra-curricular activities. That students did not mention particular subjects or the range of subjects would suggest that most students are neither concerned about the curriculum nor see it as a strength. Students and parents, therefore, appear to judge a curriculum not on the merits of the subjects but on the 'extras' being offered by the school. It is significant that parents and students should rate the schools highly on their extra curricular activities but the other stakeholders do not see it as strength. This has implications in terms of the shared values of the school.

One Director at BIMS described the English National Curriculum as 'internationally transferable', a comment that needs further study. The director is Hungarian and clearly feels that the curriculum does not disadvantage students moving to or from the school.

School improvement issues in this category have been condensed in Table 6.41:

**Table 6.41 Curriculum issues for improvement**

Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
		Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent
Curriculum	Extra additions to the curriculum	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	✓	✓	✓
	An international perspective	●	●	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●
	Continuity and progression	✓	●	✓	●	●	✓	●	●	●	●
	Extra curricular activities	●	●	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Special needs	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓	●	●	●	✓

At BIMS, the SMT rate curriculum continuity and student clubs as in need for improvement but teachers do not. This position suggests that teachers view improvement from a different or relatively narrow perspective. The vision of the SMT may not have been communicated and shared with the teachers. This may help explain some of the conflicts and difficulties with staff described by the SMT.

At Cornerstone, the SMT made one reference to curricula, the other stakeholders consider it a significant area for improvement. The SMT focus was SEN. All the other stakeholders agree that it is an area for improvement.

It may be surprising that continuity and progression appears as an improvement issue and does not appear in Table 6.39. This again provides some evidence that good school and improvement issues should be combined before comparison with school effectiveness lists, derived from the literature.

## School Data

**Table 6.42 Reasons for a good school in the category of School data. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
School data	23.1	12.0	0.0	14.6	15.2	5.1	7.5	2.3	5.6	3.1	10.3	7.4

**Table 6.43 School improvement issues in the category of School data. Percentage response.**

	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Total	Total
Category	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
School data	0.0	19.2	0.0	3.6	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.1	3.0	3.8	0.6	5.7

School data include figures such as class size, teacher pupil ratio, financial statistics and size of the school. Other comments such as statistics on the background of the children have been included in this category.

The category appears to be an issue of relative importance to directors and teachers at BIMS and also to Cornerstone governors and SMT. The issues in this category for a good school can be condensed as shown in Table 6.44:

**Table 6.44 Data factors identified in a good school by stakeholders.**

		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
		Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent
Data	Small classes	•	•	•	•	✓	•	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Different nationalities	•	•	•	•	✓	•	✓	•	•	•
	Inspection	✓	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	✓

Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder  
• indicates item missing from responses

At BIMS, teachers, students and parents noted the small size of the classes. At Cornerstone, students liked the size of the school and one parent commented that the classes were small. This is probably a comparison with other schools in the area. Neither

SMTs mentioned the issue as a strength. School effectiveness lists do not contain criteria related to this data category. The study data therefore cannot be compared.

At BIMS, two teachers and one student saw the different nationalities of the students as a strength. One parent, a Hungarian, saw the lack of English native speakers in the school as a weakness. Being an international school, more stakeholders may have been expected to comment on the international nature of the school. That it has not been commented as widely as it could have been would suggest either an acceptance of the multinational nature of the school or that it is a sensitive issue which stakeholders do not wish to comment on.

At Cornerstone, one parent saw the similar mix of social and ethnic background amongst the students as a strength. This is important in that it has implications regarding how parents may perceive Cornerstone if it shifted towards becoming a multicultural school should one or more families from other cultures move into the neighbourhood.

School improvement issues are limited to two, class size and increased funding as shown in Table 6.45.

**Table 6.45 Data issues for improvement**

Codes - ✓ indicates mentioned by stakeholder ● indicates item missing from responses		BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
		Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	teacher	student	student	parent	Parent
Data	Class size	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	✓	✓
	Increase in funding	●	●	●	●	✓	●	✓	●	●	●

In addition to the responses that measured small classes as an indicator of a good school, at Cornerstone one or more responses from each of the stakeholders commented that the school class sizes need to be smaller. At BIMS, it may appear as a conflict of data that two parents want to see bigger classes when teachers, parents, and students indicated that small classes were a strength. The desire for larger classes comes about from the parents who

would like to see a greater variety of social interactions amongst the students. Some parents see a small group of 25 students as a weakness for social reasons. Teachers, on the other hand, are seeing it as a strength, possibly in terms of resourcing, individual attention and enabling the children to work at their potential with the support they are able to provide. To reach a compromise on this issue is difficult. This issue is another unique aspect of international schools where classes may be small; at BIMS the smallest class has six children.

At Cornerstone, the governors, the SMT, and some parents comment on the lack of funding available to the school. Some of the teacher responses, such as more resources and smaller classes, imply greater funding is required. This is not an issue in the control of the school. However, there were comments mentioned in the previous section that financial management, at BIMS particularly, is not as efficient as it might be.

### **Summary**

The Sammons et al (1995) model does appear to reflect the various perspectives of the stakeholders. Most of the areas in the Ofsted (1997) list were mentioned by one or more of the stakeholders which might imply a general agreement between the stakeholders and the areas that Ofsted (1997) consider to be important for a good school. This agreement may not be surprising considering that Ofsted is a key influence on schools.

Mortimore et al's (1988) study was not used as a comparison, being replaced with the Sammons et al (1995) model, which was more comprehensive. Mortimore et al (1988 p.261-2) describe the factors in their model as:

'a framework within which.....- headteacher and staff, parents and pupils, and governors - can operate.....[towards] an increase in the school's effectiveness...'

If this statement is extended to the models used above then it asks which group's views the list of factors in the various models actually represents. Table 6.46 presents these data:

**Table 6.46 Stakeholders and Models.**

[x] is the total number of criteria for effectiveness in the models.  Numbers in the table refer to number of matching effectiveness criteria with stakeholder statements.	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone	BIMS	Cornerstone
	Director	Governor	SMT	SMT	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student	Parent	Parent	Ratio of match across all stakeholders (1=complete match)	Ratio of match across all stakeholders (1=complete match)
Ralph and Fennessey (1983) [5]	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.04	0.20
Sammons et al (1995) [11]	8	11	8	11	8	10	7	10	10	10	0.75	0.95
Ofsted (1997) [8]	6	7	6	8	6	6	4	6	6	7	0.70	0.85
Hargreaves (1995) [5]	5	4	5	4	3	5	2	3	3	3	0.72	0.76
OECD (1989) [7]	4	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	5	4	0.60	0.63

Ralph and Fennessey's (1983) model is not representative of any stakeholder perceptions of a good school. This might be expected since their criteria for good schools focus entirely on academic achievement and this study has found that both stakeholders see the non-academic nature of the school as a very important indicator of a good school. The comparison only confirms this view.

Sammons et al (1995), Ofsted (1997) and Hargreaves' (1995) models were particularly representative of stakeholders at both schools but more so at Cornerstone. The models are comprehensive and consider both academic and social aspects. That Cornerstone should show higher match ratios than BIMS may be due to larger populations in the samples at Cornerstone or it could be that Cornerstone stakeholders are more likely to come across

school effectiveness issues and models on courses or in the English media. That the governors and SMT at Cornerstone match Sammons et al (1995) completely, and the SMT at Cornerstone match Ofsted (1997) completely, would suggest that the latter is likely to be the case.

This does not imply that the stakeholders are in general agreement with the areas that Sammons et al (1995), Ofsted (1997) and Hargreaves (1995) consider important for a good school. The models do, however, serve their purpose in allowing a comparison of the data. OECD (1989) may be lower than expected in matching the various stakeholders' viewpoints. Being an international organisation it might be expected that it would correlate more with BIMS stakeholder responses. In fact it is Hargreaves (1995) that provides a complete match with BIMS directors and SMT. Generally, across the board, BIMS stakeholders show a lower match to the various models than Cornerstone stakeholders. This again might argue the case for Cornerstone stakeholders being more aware of school effectiveness criteria and that international school stakeholders have different priorities.

The results above appear to provide a response to Fidler (1996) who argues that school effectiveness lists have very few common elements and there is little agreement between them. The study suggests that schools have elements that match various aspects of school effectiveness lists. Fidler (1996) is correct, however, that each effectiveness list is unique. What the evidence above suggests is that a combination of lists can provide a useful benchmark for schools.

Apart from high achievement being an indicator to all stakeholders at Cornerstone and the SMT at BIMS, a measure of the standards being achieved at schools is a recent innovation through target setting and monitoring (Dfee 1998a). Stakeholders do not appear to use

achievement data as an exclusive indicator. Value added indicators are still being established and the lack of interest amongst stakeholders may support Rea and Weiner (1998) who see school improvement and effectiveness as a better tool to improvement than value added systems.

What the models fail to show are the other main areas that stakeholders value and use as identifiers in a good school. The high profile of pastoral and support issues in determining a good school amongst most of the stakeholders would suggest that the models are limited. The analysis therefore questions the models by suggesting that a more comprehensive approach is needed. School improvement should not be so narrowly focused on raising standards to the exclusion of the more important factors, which, according to stakeholders, are pastoral and managerial.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusions

### Introduction

Chapter six discussed and analysed the various issues of interest to the five stakeholders (governors/directors, SMT, teachers, students and parents) in the two case study schools.

Three key conclusions surfaced on a number of occasions.

- Like parallel stakeholders from different schools have similar opinions of good schools and school improvement.
- School stakeholder opinions overlap with, but do not match, the findings of school effectiveness studies.
- Different stakeholders are likely to have different perspectives on why schools are good and on school improvement. Some of the issues may overlap between stakeholders but they do have different priorities.

Like Mortimore et al's (1988 p.261-2) conclusions, these three points:

'...can provide a framework within which the various partners in the life of the school - headteacher and staff, parents and pupils, and governors - can operate.'

Mortimore et al's (1988 p.262) belief that:

'Each of these partners has some role to play in fostering the overall success of the school, and when each makes a positive contribution, the result can be an increase in the school's effectiveness.'

supports the various issues discussed in chapter six. This chapter develops the key issues from chapter six. Stakeholder models of a good school, and improving a good school, are presented and discussed. The stakeholder perspective on school effectiveness is also produced and analysed through a comparison with published lists. A process model is then

presented which has emerged from the findings of this study. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the factors that may hinder school improvement, and consideration of the significance and limitations of the study.

### **Stakeholder models for good and improving schools.**

#### The stakeholder model for a good school

Neither Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum (1957), nor Goldstein (1997), who define school effectiveness, include any reference to stakeholders in their definitions. In Total Quality Management's (TQM's) (West Burnham, 1997 p.8) terms, a movement which includes stakeholders but calls them customers, a good school would be one that 'meets the customers' requirements' (West Burnham, 1997 p.9).

The data from this study are shown in Figure 7-1 to form a stakeholder representation of a good school. The matrix in Figure 7-1 serves as a model that presents the stakeholders' requirements in determining a good school. It reaffirms an earlier observation that stakeholders can have both contrasting and similar views on why a school is good. It prompts a number of observations:

- Governors rely on the school, particularly the head, to inform them of educational matters and of the nature and status of the school.
- Headteachers use high standards and high test results as key indicators for a good school.
- Teachers, students, and parents use quality of relationship measures as the key determinants for a good school.

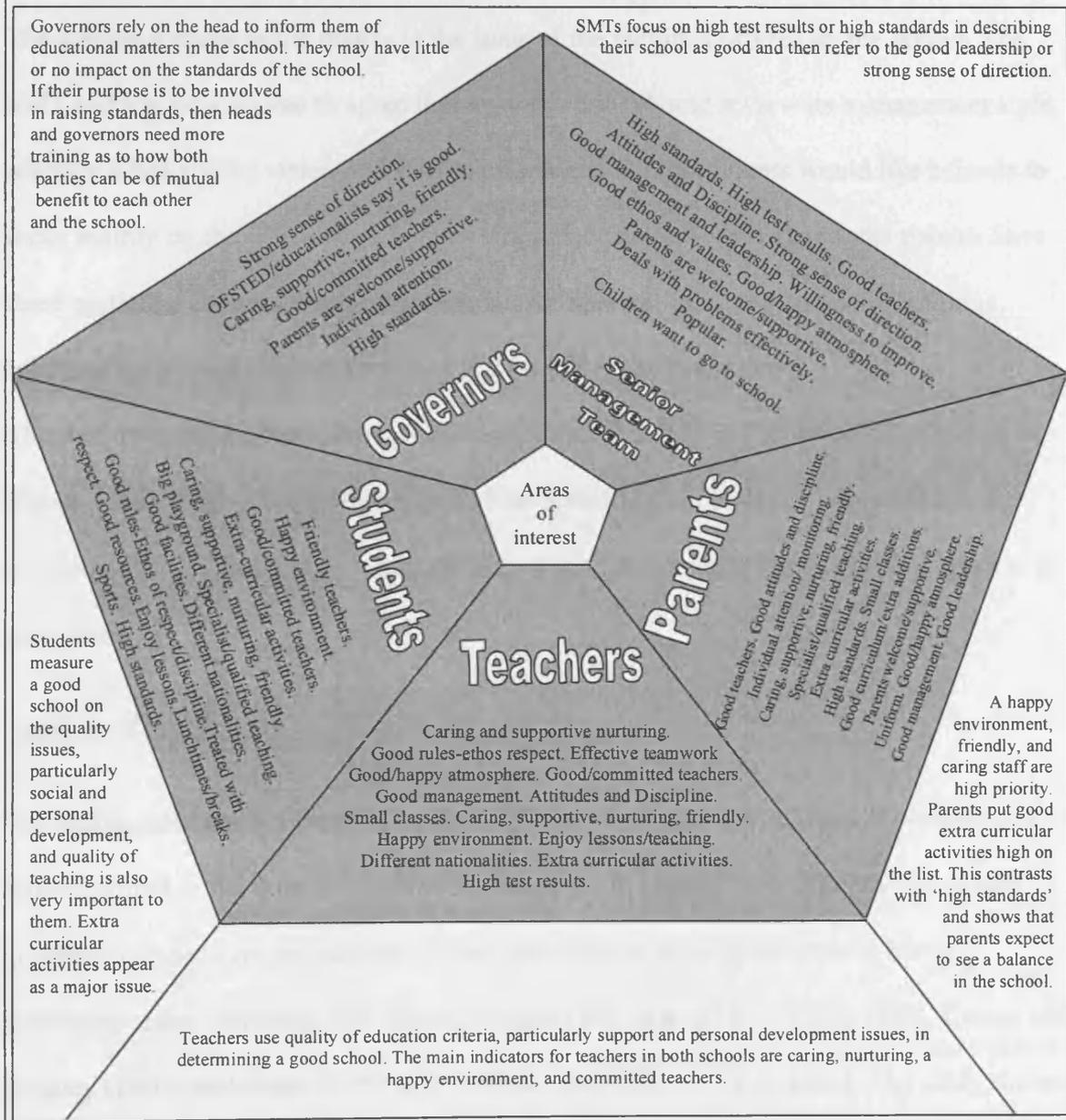
These findings are different from the matrix in Figure 2-1 and do not reflect those of Hinds and Holt (1994), Woods (1993), Entwistle et al (1989) or Rudduck et al (1996). A comparison of Figure 7-1 with Figure 2-1 reveals and emphasises new aspects of stakeholders' perspectives of a good school.

## Stakeholder Perspectives of a Good School

### CODE OF TEXT IN THE MATRIX:

Text in shaded area – Areas of interest according to school population revealed by this study

Text outside of shaded area – Observations from discussion of findings



**Figure 7-1** The stakeholder model of a good school.

### The stakeholder perspective on improving a good school.

Establishing a stakeholder perspective of improving a good school is in accord with, and not precluded by, school improvement definitions such as 'accomplishing educational goals more effectively' (Van Veltzen et al 1985, p.48) and 'enhancing student outcomes' (Hopkins 1987, p.1). Figure 7-2 presents a matrix that exhibits stakeholder views on improving a good school.

The governor focus in the matrix is the issue of the facilities offered by the school. The SMT and teachers appear to agree that a good school should review its management style, whether it has shared vision and staff management. While students would like schools to focus mainly on the efficiency of organisation and pastoral care offered, the parents have three particular issues for improvement, sports, pastoral care, and quality of teaching.

International school parents also want staff stability and retention.

Many of these findings are, again, different from the matrix in Figure 2-1. The matrix in Figure 7-2 highlights the different foci of the stakeholders on school improvement and provides a model that allows comparisons between stakeholder needs, and perceptions, to take place.

### Analysis of the models

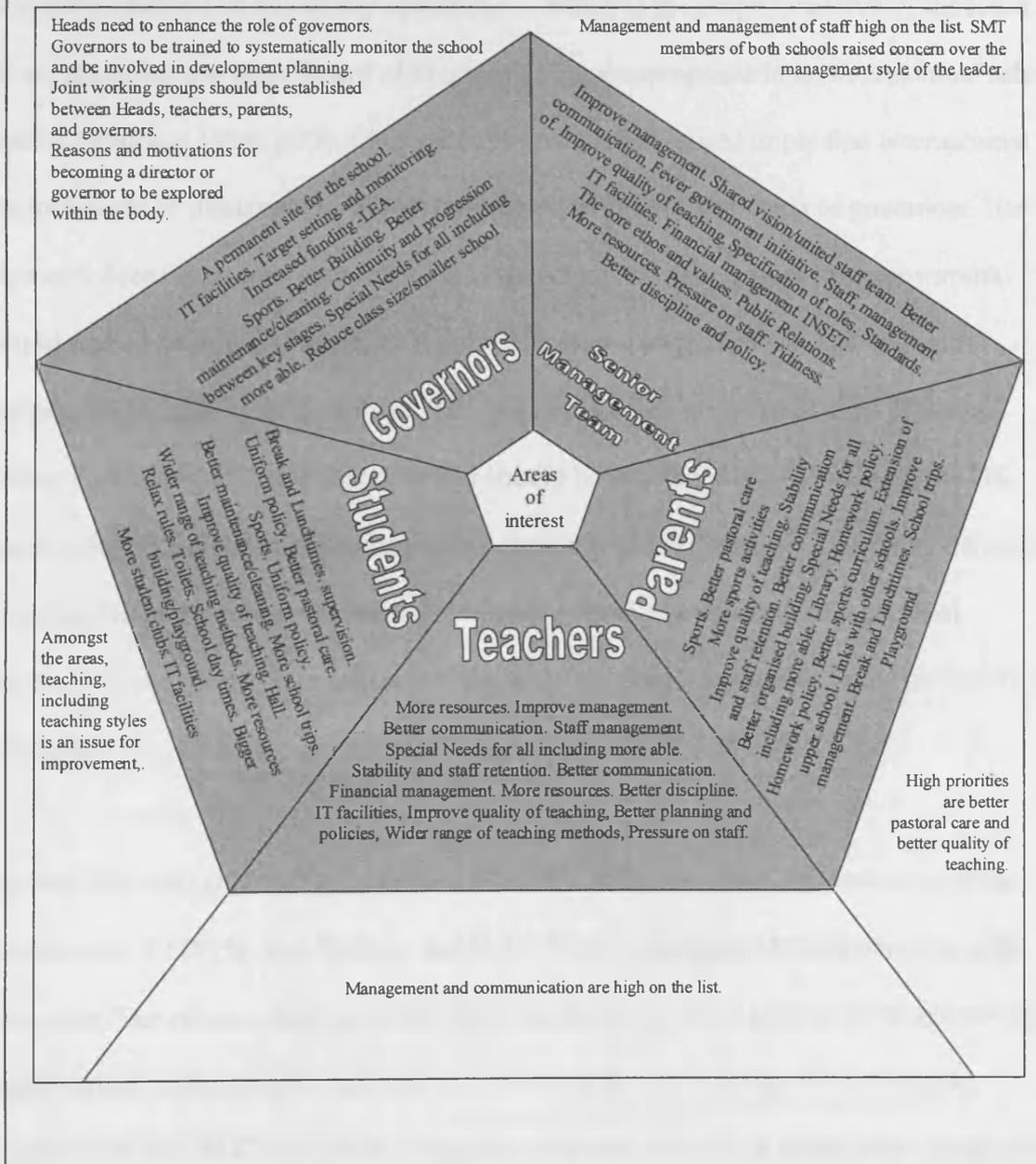
The stakeholder models on good and improving schools provide additional perspectives to those featured in the published literature discussed in chapter two. This study provides governor perspectives on good and improving schools, a dimension that is barely addressed in the literature. The findings support the view of HMI (DES, 1992), Creese and Bradley (1997) and Pugh (1991) that governor roles need to be revisited. The study shows that governors have valid perspectives on school improvement.

## Stakeholder Perspectives on Improving a Good School

### CODE OF TEXT IN THE MATRIX:

Text in shaded area – Areas of interest according to school population revealed by the study

Text outside of shaded area – Observations from discussions



**Figure 7-2 Stakeholder model on improving a good school.**

BIMS, an international school, uses the term 'director' for its board members. Malpass (1994, p.24) suggests that this term is misleading since directors in international schools 'assist, advise and support the work of professionals; they are not appointed to direct operations'.

Malpass (1994, p.25) excludes the issue of accountability and argues that directors will inevitably interfere 'in day to day operations....which is the proper preserve of the Head.' He suggests that the term 'Board of Trustees' is more appropriate in an international school context (Malpass 1994, p.25). Malpass' (1994) argument would imply that international school boards of directors should not be equated with English boards of governors. His approach does not accord with that of HMI (DES, 1992) which argues that governors should make heads accountable, be involved in school improvement, and be jointly responsible for quality in the school. The evidence in this study contradicts Malpass' (1994) views by suggesting that directors should be equated with governors in the UK because they have views and opinions that should feed into the improvement of the school. As a Head of an International School, Malpass' (1994) position may be a personal perspective, showing why headteachers do not want to be accountable to the governors or directors.

The key (and only) comments regarding the SMT and school improvement come from Sammons et al (1995), and Wallace and Hall (1994), who link SMT effectiveness with teamwork. The present study provides SMT perspectives about good schools and school improvement, a previously neglected area of research. The findings are even more significant in that SMT perspectives appear to contrast with those of the other stakeholders in both content and priority. What may be unique is that SMTs perceive good and improving schools from a self critical point of view. Both SMTs, for example, list

management, particularly staff management, as an area for improvement. The SMTs did not list management as a strength but teachers and parents did. This self appraisal by both SMTs may be regarded as a strength in leading their respective schools. The contrast is provided by Aris et al (1998, p.62) who found that, in an ineffective school, the SMT did not see management as poor, 'consequently, little was done to improve the situation.'

A weakness in both schools, however, appears to be the headteacher's and principal's lack of awareness of the views of the other members of the SMT, notably their criticism of the head's and principal's management and leadership styles. With both schools being considered good, however, whether this is a significant issue of concern is unclear. A more likely explanation is that the leadership and management styles have been appropriate in establishing these good schools but now need to be reviewed in the context of improving the good school. The matrix shows that SMTs do not have the same priorities as other stakeholders. This is very significant in the planning of school improvement and corroborates the need for SMTs to supplement their professional perspectives with stakeholder opinions.

Many of the student, teacher and parent views shown in the matrices do match with the studies discussed, including Davies and Ellison (1995) and Sammons et al (1995).

Entwistle et al's (1989) claim that student perceptions about their school are the most direct influence on what a parent believes about the school is disputed as this study finds that student and parent opinions about the school do not necessarily match. In a number of cases students identified their school as not good whilst their parents said that it was good. The hypothesis of the study is that students and parents tend to provide personal and independent opinions about the school. The variance between the issues and priorities

exhibited by the two stakeholders seen in the matrices reinforces this view and challenges any assumption that students and parents have the same opinions about their school.

There was little evidence to support Woods' (1993) view that schools are keen to promote their school but less inclined to find out what the parents want. The SMTs were keen to point out that their school is popular and at both schools they make some attempts to gather parental opinions through PTA meetings and questionnaires.

Although teacher concerns about management, revealed by this study, support the findings of Davies and Ellison (1995) and Wallace and Hall (1994), teacher concerns over pastoral care and communication, expressed here, are not mentioned by other research studies.

### **School effectiveness - the stakeholder perspective**

In comparing this study's research data from the various populations with models of effective schools, that is, Ralph and Fennessey (1983), Sammons et al (1995), Ofsted (1997), Hargreaves (1995) and OECD (1989), it emerges that some issues are important to a particular school population in determining a good school, but the issue does not necessarily appear in the school effectiveness models used. For example, the SMTs value good relationships between staff, teachers consider the 'workload' as an issue and students want caring teachers, none of which appear in the school effectiveness models. Likewise, if all the items listed in the effectiveness models are so important for good schools, then it is interesting that the various school populations do not raise all the issues. By combining the issues in this study listed by the stakeholders for a good school and school improvement, a comprehensive list can be produced. The school effectiveness list in Table 7.1 is constructed from the findings of this study and shows school effectiveness from the stakeholder perspectives.

Table 7.1 The stakeholder approach to school effectiveness

Broad category	Category (based on this study)	Stakeholder focus within the category				
		GOVERNORS	SMT	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	PARENTS
Management	Job descriptions		Specification of roles			
	Documentation			Clear teaching plans and policies		
	Communication		Effective communication	Effective communication		Effective communication Especially regarding expectations, achievements and work to be done by the children over the year
	Leadership and management		Management Management of staff Good leadership Willingness to improve	Good management Staff management Pressure on staff		Good leadership Good management
	Shared vision	Strong sense of direction	Shared vision United staff Strong sense of direction	Effective teamwork		
Staffing and teaching	A learning organisation		INSET			Links with other schools
	Teachers and teaching	Good/committed teachers	Good quality of teaching	Committed staff Wider range of teaching methods Enjoy lessons	Wider range of teaching methods Friendly teachers Good/committed teachers Good quality of teaching Specialist/qualified teaching Enjoy lessons	Good quality of teaching Specialist/qualified teaching Good/committed teachers
	Staff stability			Stability and staff retention		Stability and staff retention
Community	Intercultural			Celebration of different nationalities	Celebration of different nationalities	
	Public relations		Popular Good public relations			
	Home-school partnership	Parents are welcome and supportive	Parents are welcome and supportive School deals with problems effectively			Parents are welcome and supportive
Financial Management	Systems to ensure money spent is used wisely	Appropriate funding	Financial management	Financial management		
External factors	Ofsted	Ofsted/educationalists say the school is good				
	New initiatives		Fewer initiatives			
Academic Factors	High achievement		High test results	High test results		
	High expectations	High standards	High standards		High standards	High standards
	Monitoring progress	Monitoring				Monitoring
	Special Needs	Special Needs for all including more able Target setting		Special Needs for all		Special Needs for all
Pastoral factors	Uniform				Uniform policy	Uniform policy
	Pastoral Care	Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly Individual attention	Good/happy atmosphere Good ethos and values Pressure on staff Attitudes and discipline Children want to go to school	Good rules-ethos respect Good/happy atmosphere Attitudes and discipline Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly	Happy/friendly environment. Relax rules Good pastoral care Caring, supportive, nurturing, friendly Treated with respect Good rules-ethos of respect/discipline	Attitudes and discipline Caring and supportive nurturing Friendly Good pastoral care Good/happy atmosphere Good rules-ethos of respect/discipline Individual attention
	High expectations	High standards	High standards		High standards	High standards
Curriculum	Curriculum	Improve the sports			Sports	Better sports curriculum Homework policy
	Additions to the curriculum			Extra curricular activities	Lots of student clubs Extra curricular activities Lots of school trips	School trips Extra curricular activities More additions
	Curriculum continuity and progression.	Continuity an progression between key stages				
Facilities and Resources	Class size	Small class size Small school		Small classes		Small classes
	Organisation				Break and Lunchtimes School day times	Break and Lunchtimes
	Buildings and facilities	A permanent site for the school Better maintenance/cleaning Better Building	Tidiness		Toilets Big playground Better maintenance/cleaning Good facilities Hall	Library Better organised building Playground
	Resources	IT facilities	IT facilities More resources	More resources IT facilities	IT facilities Good resources	

The categories derived from this study can be compared with the categories collated from school effectiveness studies.

**Table 7.2 Comparison of categories derived from the current study and published effectiveness lists**

Broad categories	Category based on stakeholder responses from this study	Category from school effectiveness studies	
		Category	Study
Management	Job descriptions	*	*
	Documentation	*	*
	Communication	*	*
	Leadership and management	Professional Leadership	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989), Ofsted (1997)
	Shared vision	Shared vision and goals	Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995), OECD (1989)
Staffing and teaching	A learning organisation	A learning organisation	Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995) OECD (1989), Ofsted (1997)
	Teachers and teaching	Purposeful teaching Concentration on teaching and learning	Sammons et al (1995)
	Staff stability	Staff stability	OECD (1989) Bosker and Scheerens (1989)
Community	Intercultural	*	*
	Public relations	*	*
	Home-school partnership	Home-school partnership	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989), Ofsted (1997)
Financial Management	Systems to ensure money spent is used wisely	Systems to ensure money spent on books and other reading material is used wisely	Ofsted (1997)
External factors	Ofsted	*	*
	Fewer initiatives	*	*
	*	Support of the responsible education authority.	OECD (1989)
Academic Factors	High achievement	High achievement	Ralph and Fennessey (1983), Ofsted (1997)
	High expectations	High expectations	Sammons et al (1995) Hargreaves (1995) Ofsted (1997)
	Special Needs		
	*	Targets for each child, including those with SEN.	Ofsted (1997)
	Monitoring progress	Monitoring progress	Sammons et al (1995)
Pastoral factors	Uniform	*	*
	Pastoral Care	*	*
	*	Pupil rights and responsibilities	Sammons et al (1995)
		Positive reinforcement	Sammons et al (1995)
	High expectations	High expectations	Sammons et al (1995) Hargreaves (1995) Ofsted (1997)
Curriculum	The curriculum	The curriculum	Anderson et al (1992)
	Additions to the curriculum	*	*
	Curriculum continuity and progression.	Curriculum continuity and progression.	Hargreaves (1995)
Facilities and resources	Class size	*	*
	Organisation	*	*
	Buildings and facilities	*	*
	Resources	*	*
	*	A learning environment	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989)

There are some categories in the stakeholder school effectiveness list which do *not* appear in the various research lists as shown in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3 Categories in this study but not in the research lists**

Broad categories based on findings from this study	Category based on findings from this study
Management	Job descriptions
	Documentation
	Communication
Community	Intercultural
	Public relations
External factors	Ofsted
	Fewer Initiatives
Academic Factors	Special Needs
Pastoral factors	Uniform
	Pastoral Care
Curriculum	Additions to the curriculum
Facilities and resources	Class size
	Organisation
	Buildings and facilities
	Resources

Similarly, there are categories in the research lists, which do not appear in the stakeholder list as shown in Table 7.4.

**Table 7.4 Categories which appear in the research lists but not in the stakeholder effectiveness list.**

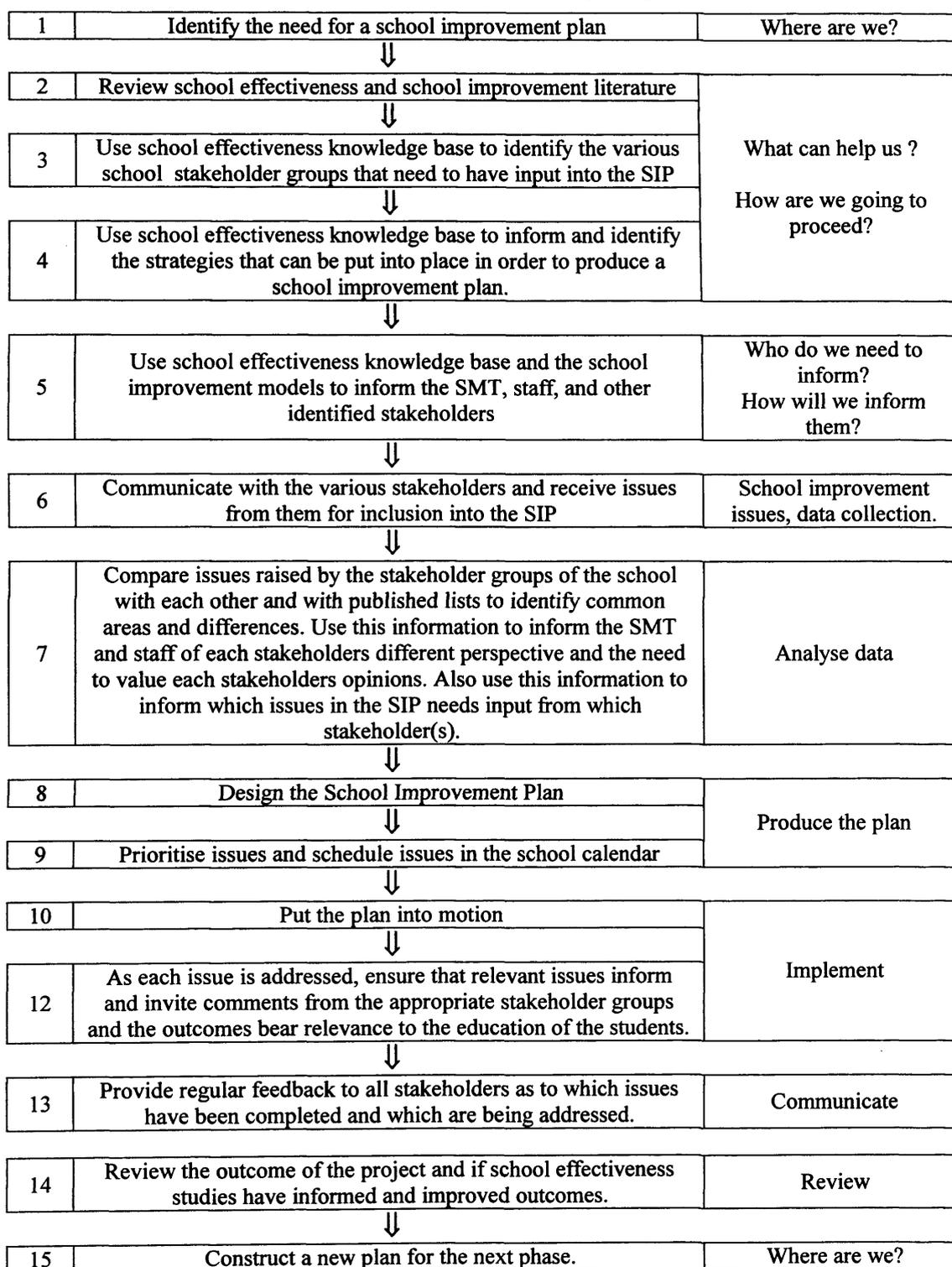
Broad categories	Category collated from school effectiveness studies	
	Category	Study
External factors	Support of the responsible education authority.	OECD (1989)
Academic Factors	Targets for each child, including those with SEN.	Ofsted (1997)
Pastoral factors	Pupil rights and responsibilities	Sammons et al (1995)
	Positive reinforcement	Sammons et al (1995)
Facilities and resources	A learning environment	Sammons et al (1995), OECD (1989)

The stakeholder school effectiveness list derived from the present research clearly provides an additional perspective and complements the published effectiveness lists such as Sammons et al (1995), Hargreaves (1995) and OECD (1989).

### **School Improvement, A fifteen point process model**

Through the findings of the study, a process model for school improvement emerges and is proposed in Figure 7-3.

**Figure 7-3 School improvement, a fifteen point process model.**



The model takes into account:

- the inclusion of stakeholders,
- the need for school effectiveness and school improvement research to inform a school's improvement plan, and
- the necessity for regular communication about the school improvement plan, with all stakeholders.

A school could use the fifteen-point process model and its associated concepts as a foundation and it may be modified to suit the needs and nature of the school. The process model provides a 'deliberate strategy' (Whittington 1993, p.3) for schools, which has emerged from the findings of this study. Fidler (1996, p. 19) observes that 'strategy is concerned with planning a successful future for the school.' The process model has the potential to assist schools because it provides the basis for a systematic approach to school improvement.

#### **Application of the process model. An example of school improvement at BIMS.**

At BIMS (case study school one), the findings of this study were reported to the SMT. School improvement planning began with the SMT being introduced to, and discussing, school effectiveness models. This was a new approach for the school and some of the SMT had not met these models before. The school produced their improvement plan in the following way:

- An INSET day introduced the concept of school effectiveness to teaching and non-teaching staff
- At the same INSET day, staff and non-teaching staff raised, discussed, and presented issues for inclusion in the school's Improvement Plan.
- Parent and student data from this study was fed into the school's Improvement Plan
- Parents were asked to prioritise issues.
- The School Improvement Plan was prioritised, produced, a year plan created, and circulated.

The plan was arranged so that each issue was discussed at the appropriate level by each of the stakeholders at appropriate opportunities. Table 7.5 shows how some issues were recorded to show the route they might take in their consultation and implementation.

**Table 7.5** Routes in the implementation of SIP issues with stakeholders involved.

Broad category	Specific issue	School criteria	Governors	SMT	Full staff (teaching and non-teaching)	Department meetings	parents	Students
Student, academic, and Pastoral factors	Positive reinforcement and feedback	Decided at first meeting or by SMT	⑥	⑤	①	③	④	②
	Communicating expectations	Decided at first meeting	⑤	①	②		③	④

The numbers, e.g. ①, represent the place at which the issue is met first. The numbers could be replaced with dates when they have been planned.

Some issues began at SMT level where success criteria were determined. Other issues started at a different point; e.g. an issue about school communication to parents started at parent meetings and then was fed into school staff meetings before reaching the SMT.

Some issues, e.g. painting the toilets, or a school policy on whether bells should be rung between lessons or not, involved one stakeholder and went no further. Where the issue was potentially extensive, the responsible teacher and headteacher met and agreed what the aims were, how the issue would be developed, which stakeholders would be involved, when, and the time scale. The record of the discussion took the form of Table 7.6.

**Table 7.6** Example of planning an SIP issue, assessment, with stakeholder involvement

Issue	Assessment				
How will it benefit students in the classroom?	Students will understand how their work is marked and assessed				
Secondary Teachers	SMT	Primary school	Students	Parents	Secondary teachers
Where are we? Raise the profile of assessment. Improve assessment techniques by sharing expertise across departments and provide time to reflect on current practice.	To consider which whole school elements of the assessment policy should be in place	To inform the primary school at a staff meeting what has been done in the secondary school and discuss if there is any value in liaising further	Evaluate to see if students understand what their assessments mean. What improvements they would like to see.	Inform parents with a summary of the school assessment policy and ask if and how it can be improved	Summarise input from SMT, students and parents. Produce an assessment policy  Teachers to explain how they assess to students
⇒	⇒	⇒	⇒	⇒	⇒
Target Dates					
Responsibility					
Other needs	Students will be surveyed later in the term to ascertain if they understand how their work is marked and assessed.				

Monthly student council meetings, monthly parent meetings, staff meetings, SMT meetings and PAC meetings were scheduled so that each of the issues could be discussed at appropriate levels. A new 'staff newsletter' was created and the existing parent newsletter was modified so that staff, students and parents were being kept up to date with school improvement issues completed and those currently being addressed.

The process had a number of advantages for BIMS.

- It ensured that the stakeholders, who need to be involved or informed, were involved or informed.
- Everyone knew, through the regular staff and parent newsletters, which issues had been completed and which were being addressed at the moment.
- The reference to school effectiveness research ensured that the School Improvement Plan addressed categories and subcategories that the school might otherwise have neglected.
- Staff were able to plan the route each issue took with the headteacher. Staff were not therefore isolated in their responsibility to develop a particular issue.
- Stakeholders were able to see where, and at what level, their involvement was.
- Monthly parent meetings took on school improvement issues.
- All meetings at all levels have a sharper focus in terms of fulfilling the school improvement plan.

BIMS has been through this process of school improvement only once, so there is still much to review and improve.

### **Factors which may impede the improvement of a good school.**

Some of the issues the study has raised may be considered as factors that could impede the improvement of schools:

- Lack of definition of the purpose and accountability of governors.
- Conflict within the SMT.
- Lack of accuracy of Ofsted reports.
- Heavy reliance on the outcomes of Ofsted inspections.
- Some problems may be symptomatic of the British school system.

### **Lack of definition of purpose and accountability of governors.**

The effectiveness of governors and directors in the improvement of the school is an issue the study has raised. If the governors/directors rely exclusively on the head's and Ofsted's

judgements of the school, then there is an implied assumption that the head knows best and a perspective that the only recipe for a good school is that stated by Ofsted. Sammons et al (1995) imply that the lack of involvement of governors and directors in schools means that they do not impact on school improvement. Yet, the first three items listed by Dfee (1997) as responsibilities of governors are:

- Deciding (with the head and the LEA if appropriate) the aims and policies of the school, and how the standards of education can be improved.
- Deciding the conduct of the school - that is, how in general terms it should be run.
- Helping to draw up (with the head and staff) the school development plan.

If it is the responsibility of governors to decide, with the head, how standards can be improved, then this research shows that it is not happening. It is unlikely that governors and directors can carry out their primary role of being accountable for what is happening in the schools to teachers, students, and parents.

### Conflict within the SMT

This study found that SMTs exhibit various conflicts both within the team and with their staff. This supports Wallace and Hall (1994) who also found division between SMTs and other staff. Whether these conflicts are an expected and useful part of the management process, or whether they have hindered school improvement in the schools, is a matter of debate. That the conflicts exist in both good schools may suggest that the former is more likely, although there is no evidence to support the hypothesis. Both SMTs judge a good school on its standards and leadership. Both SMTs see management as the primary focus for school improvement. Similar views are apparent between the two case study SMTs, but so are similar conflicts within each SMTs. The issues that arise are:

- Being consumed by petty daily issues.
- A contrast between willingness to improve and a lack of willingness to identify more sensitive problem areas. In both SMT case studies there was evidence that a status quo, for example with regard to mediocre or poor teaching quality, was perceived as unavoidable and acceptable.

- Hidden conflicts. Some conflicts are not approached, such as conflict within the SMT. Either this is done to avoid rocking the boat or is done as a political face saving manoeuvre. At worst, the conflicts are well hidden and the head may not perceive them.
- Management of staff is a major concern.

The key issue amongst the four points above is that although the willingness to improve is present, the SMT still need to '..acquire knowledge about ways of improving which will enhance its capability and harness its basic productivity.' (Fidler 1996 p.30). The process model (Figure 7-3) and the stakeholder models (Figure 7-1, Figure 7-2, and Table 7.1) may be seen as tools which seek to address Fidler's (1996) observation.

#### Lack of accuracy and heavy reliance on the outcomes of Ofsted inspections.

This study raises concern over the findings of Ofsted inspections. The Ofsted reports (Ofsted 1994 and Ofsted 1998) appear to be narrow in describing both case study schools as good schools. The present study suggests that school stakeholders hide many issues, or the inspectors do not perceive them during their short presence in the school. If Ofsted inspections are 'illegitimate' (Lonsdale and Parsons 1998, p.110), then the SMTs' and governors' reliance on Ofsted inspections to give the school credibility, to the exclusion of other measures, is inaccurate and invalid.

The findings of this study would suggest that Ofsted should not have a monopoly in determining whether a school is good or not. The Ofsted report and its findings should be seen in the context of stakeholder opinions. In their current form, Ofsted inspections command so much authority that schools may see no other option but to hide their weaknesses during an Ofsted visit. This, however, devalues what Ofsted are trying to do, that is, 'promote school improvement...and to inform parents and the local community about a school's strengths and weaknesses' (Ofsted 1993, p.17).

This study provides some evidence that the current Ofsted approach is limited. The findings of the research suggest that the Ofsted inspection report can be a hindrance to school improvement. The study does not, however, go as far as Lonsdale and Parsons' (1998, p.110) position that 'it is official deceit [for Ofsted] to claim an improvement agenda'.

Some problems may be symptomatic of the British school system.

There is a possibility that some of the problems identified by the study are symptomatic of a British school. The nature and character of the management structures, pastoral networks, and curriculum, may be some of the factors that enhance the difficulties encountered.

Perhaps this is what Harber (1992, p.169) means when he concludes that 'the existing styles of management and administration for schools and classrooms are not suitable for the late 20<sup>th</sup> century anyway.' The idea may also be supported by Proudford and Baker (1994, p.26) who found that 'the process of moving in a particular curriculum direction [results in] unintended as well as intended outcomes .... and new and different problems arise'. If so, the study needs to be extended to other national schools, say American or Australian, to see if there are differences between the stakeholders opinions of the various national schools. Certain changes may not be possible in English schools because they are bound by legislation. However, some changes can still occur within the context of legislation. Hargreaves (1995, p.41), for example, suggests that:

'school culture should be a target for change, on the grounds that....it will exercise an improving causal influence on other variables, and eventually on student outcomes....'

British international schools have more options. They are not bound by any legislation in terms of structure, curriculum, or culture. At BIMS, for example, its curriculum structure has not been restricted to the National Curriculum Guidelines in England and Wales. BIMS has introduced modern foreign languages from key stage one upwards and is planning to

introduce community service programmes and mother tongue studies into the secondary section of the school.

Management structures and methods of working, however, may be restricted and limited by normative expectations, for example, a bureaucratic mode and structure (Beare et al 1989, p.90), of staff and management at British international schools. Such structures and methods could be the cause of the some of the symptoms identified in this research.

### **Limitations and proposals for future studies.**

An early issue to arise in this study was one of non-returns from the parent population at Cornerstone. Only 52.85% of Cornerstone parents returned their questionnaire. A related issue is that the female member of the household generally completed the questionnaire. Like this study, Woods (1993) did not investigate the outcome by gender of the parent response. How the parent issues might have changed with a higher return, and if both the male and female parents had been targeted, are research questions for future investigation.

Support staff, including secretarial staff, lunchtime supervisors, and maintenance staff, were not involved in this study. There is very little research in this category. A future study needs to extend the models to take into account these stakeholders.

Although comprehensive, the stakeholder models (Figure 7-1 and Figure 7-2) and the process model (Figure 7-3) have been proposed from the findings of one school in the UK and one international school. Future studies need to collect data from more UK and international schools to widen the database. As an extension, the study could also be repeated over time to see if perspectives change and any trends develop.

Many stakeholders welcome the different nationalities in international schools but some stakeholders in UK and international schools see the diversity as a disadvantage. One or two parents in both schools would like to maintain or develop a majority English background for the student population. Some parents see Cornerstone as a good school *because* it has a majority of white students. Some parents in the international school context would like to see a greater English proportion in their student population. Both these views may be minority opinions but the implied lack of tolerance of other ethnic groups amongst this minority parent population may be more than just ignorance and be a potential problem area if it is not addressed.

The International Schools Association (ISA) Pilot Project (Thomas 1996, p. 26) has amongst its aims for international education:

- The equality of human beings.
- The richness of human unity through diversity.
- The need to educate responsible citizens respectful of other cultures and languages.
- The interdependence of human societies and the need to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Thomas (1996, p.26) describes the values embodied in these aims as 'international humanism'. He reports that 26 schools in sixteen countries (one school in the UK) are involved in the pilot which involves the sharing of good practice, promoting reflective practices amongst students, and assessing professional development needs. If both UK and British international schools considered this type of approach, they may minimise future potential problems from the likes of the minority parents described above. At the same time, the schools would be seen to be responding to the critical views from writers such as Richardson (1997, p.43) who view school improvement with 'contempt' since he considers it divorced from issues of multi-ethnicity and anti-racism.

The area of 'international humanism' and school improvement is a potential area of further study with the aim of benefiting both UK and British international schools.

### **Significance of the study**

Rudduck et al (1996) believe that reforms have 'persistently neglected' students. This thesis extends Rudduck et al's (1996) statement and argues that school improvement and effectiveness studies have neglected all school stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, senior management teams, governors, and non-teaching staff. Education is clearly a major area of interest, and concern, to all stakeholders involved in both UK and international school settings.

This research shows that school effectiveness studies, which should inform school improvement, are unlikely to be met or used by the school unless it actively engages in academic improvement, through staff management training or setting up learning systems. The references to school effectiveness in the process model (Figure 7-3) is one attempt to address this. The evidence of the research is that school improvement based on SMT and teachers' opinions, which ignores academic research and other stakeholders' opinions, will be narrow, and limited in both scope and effectiveness.

School effectiveness and improvement are issues of concern to both national and international schools. The current research shows that there is much in common between the perceptions of stakeholders in British schools across nations, such as the UK and Hungary. It provides evidence that perspectives on school improvement are not limited by the nationality of the stakeholders nor is school improvement the domain of national schools. School effectiveness and improvement in international schools are important areas of research if these schools are to develop, improve, and be globally recognised as centres of education for young people.

The study has added five significant aspects that have gone beyond previous research.

- It has sought and analysed opinions about good and improving schools from stakeholders that have previously been missing from research. These include directors, governors, the senior management team, and teachers.
- The study has introduced the international school into the fold of school effectiveness and school improvement research.
- It has added a school effectiveness list, derived specifically from the stakeholder perspective, that can inform school improvement in both UK and international schools.
- It provides stakeholder school effectiveness and stakeholder school improvement models, which may be used to inform a school's improvement strategy.
- The study proposes a process model for school improvement with stakeholders at its centre.

This study demonstrates that the incorporation of stakeholder perspectives into school improvement models and processes is essential if a good school is to be improved effectively. This conclusion is not new. Mortimore (1988, p.262) reached the same view. It is, therefore, even more surprising that so little research has targeted directors, governors, senior managers, and teachers. Including stakeholder perspectives within a revised effectiveness list more appropriately and comprehensively informs improvement of good schools. It contrasts with other effectiveness lists, such as Ofsted (1997) and Sammons et al (1995), and provides a new approach to effectiveness. The process model emphasises the need to include stakeholders and effectiveness and improvement literature in school improvement planning. The findings are not exclusive but applicable to both national and international schools.

The Ofsted inspection reports of both the schools did not identify several of the weaknesses addressed in this study, implying that less improvement is necessary in these schools than the author suggests. This can be regarded as a significant conclusion. Despite all the flaws and weaknesses identified in this thesis, Ofsted regards the two schools as

good, leading to consideration of the issue of what is a 'good school' and to a search for an appropriate definition. An appropriate definition of a good school is the one provided by Lightfoot (1983, p.311):

'I am urging a definition of good schools which sees them as whole, changing and imperfect - goodness cannot be measured by a single indicator of success or effectiveness...a more holistic notion, not the discrete additive elements.'

This research extends Lightfoot's (1983) definition and proposes that good schools have flaws and weaknesses, but school improvement will only take place in good schools where the school:

- has identified its areas for improvement without the involvement of external agencies;
- is aware of the hurdles it faces in implementing any school improvement plan;
- uses school effectiveness and school improvement research and literature to inform the school's improvement;
- is aware of the needs and perspectives of the school from all its various stakeholders;
- faces up to and addresses issues which may be sensitive. It does not ignore them in order to avoid conflict within and between stakeholders.
- does not rely exclusively on the judgements and conclusions of external inspection agencies.

### **Summary**

The broad aim of this study has been to provide an approach to school improvement with the school's stakeholders at its centre. The study has focused on many facets of school improvement, including finding out what a school's stakeholders think about their 'good' school, and how a good school can be improved. Studying a British international school and a UK school has also provided this research with new areas such as the international school stakeholder perspective and a comparison between a British school and a British

international school. The complexities of school effectiveness (Scheerens 1992, p.4 and Cuttance 1985, p.13) and school improvement, for example, Reynolds and Packer's (1996, p.184) remarks that 'school improvement has deep psychological, as well as educational, effects upon schools...', suggests that a complete and coherent perspective on school improvement may not be attainable. Reynolds and Packer (1996, p.184) argue that 'multi-paradigmatic programmes' may be the way forward. This research contributes to such an approach.

This research has provided more data for the international school effectiveness and improvement movements, but Reynolds and Packer (1996, p.184) believe that 'the international school effectiveness and improvement movement has major intellectual and organisational tasks ahead...'. One of the challenges this study provides is that school improvement is a relevant and major field for all good schools. This disagrees with White and Barber (1997, p.52) who ascribe school improvement only to 'less effective schools'. Maden and Hillman (1996, p.312) support the view that:

'It would be wrong to create a subspecies of ...improvement studies for schools serving disadvantaged areas. It is clear that most of the improvement processes described here apply to all types of school and areas.'

Reynolds and Packer (1996, p. 185) identified these diverse views as:

'tensions between those....who believe that effective schools should help disadvantaged populations particularly, and those who see the drive for effectiveness as something that should extend across all social categories.'

Another challenge, less contentious, is that school improvement is a domain of both national and international schools.

It may be a genuine concern that the data in this study were shared with a researcher in confidence, not with the school for open discussion. The concern would be that the stakeholder responses might not have been as outspoken had they been for the latter. Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996, p.177) argue that, if conditions are right, students would be prepared to share their opinions with teachers. This thesis extends their hypothesis and suggests that all stakeholders welcome opportunities to share their opinions with others in the school. The underlying principle of the process model described in Figure 7-3 is that conditions will be created by the school where all stakeholders will feel able to impart their opinions and know that their perspectives will be valued. This condition, or culture, has to be identified by schools as one of its success indicators at the outset of school improvement planning. This may be one aspect expected by Maden and Hillman (p.356) when they argue that schools need to consider what is meant by 'success'. As a contrast, Maden and Hillman (1996, p.357) also ask schools to identify what the 'odds' are at the planning stages of school improvement. Although the context of Maden and Hillman (1996) is one of disadvantaged communities, the argument can be extended to the area of 'hurdles' to school improvement, which have been discussed in this chapter. Maden and Hillman (1996, p.359) argue that success should be calibrated in light of the odds, or hurdles, the school faces in bringing about improvement. In spite of the hurdles that may face schools, Reynolds and Packer (1992, p.185) believe that school effectiveness and school improvement fields are best placed for 'rapid intellectual progress'. The main reason for this belief must be that at the heart of school effectiveness and school improvement (Maden and Hillman 1996, p.363):

' is...the need...[for] processes which lead to achievement of a goal: the learning of pupils.'

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## **Appendix One**

Letter to parents and form for use as a questionnaire and to record interview responses

## School Letterhead

Dear Parents,

Over the last two years I have been studying at Leicester University in the UK for a Doctorate in Education. My research interests include how schools can be improved. As part of my studies I am conducting surveys in England and Hungary to ascertain views of school improvement from different populations.

Could I please ask for your help, and time, in completing the enclosed questionnaire. All your responses will be confidential and therefore you are not asked to write your name on the paper and only I, as the researcher, will have access to your responses. Naturally as the data is gathered, analysed and the thesis is written, there will be many findings that will be of benefit to the school in aiding its own improvement to take place. Your responses are therefore very important for both myself and the school.

[The Headteacher] has very kindly given permission for the study to be carried out at the [name of school]. For this I am very grateful.

I thank you in advance for your time in completing the questionnaire.

Yours faithfully,

Yunus Sola MBA

School Name

**University of Leicester - Doctorate of Education Research Project**

I want to know your opinions about what makes a good school and how it can be improved.

You do not need to write your name. Your answers will be confidential.

Thank you in advance for answering the questions.

Please tick the correct box <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are you .....	female <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/>
1 - How would you describe your school ?	
a good school <input type="checkbox"/> not a good school <input type="checkbox"/>	
2 Please give some reasons for your answer:	
a..... b..... c..... d..... e.....	
3 What aspects of the school do you want to see improved or further improved?	
a..... b..... c..... d..... e.....	

Please place the questionnaire in the envelope provided,

seal the envelope and return it to the school. This is to further ensure confidentiality.

Thank you once again for your time.