

**GUIDANCE IN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS**

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Summary

Chapter 1 Introduction

Background

- In 1993 the SOED commissioned the Centre for Educational Sociology to undertake a study of guidance in secondary schools. Guidance has become an established part of the Scottish education system since its formal introduction in 1968 but there has been little research on its effectiveness since the early 80s at a time of major changes in schools and in pupils' post-school destinations.

The guidance system

- All local authority secondary schools have a structure of promoted guidance posts comprising Principal Teachers and Assistant Principal Teachers (PT(G)s and APT(G)s). Guidance teachers retain a subject teaching role. Typically guidance staff are managed by a member of senior management. The recommended minimum time allocation for guidance staff is 40 minutes per week for every 15 pupils but in practice, guidance teachers' time allocation varies between and sometimes within schools.
- There are two main options in how schools organise their guidance provision. In a vertical system, guidance teachers are responsible for a caseload of pupils from each of the year groups S1-S6; in a horizontal system, guidance staff relate to a separate year group(s).
- A Certificate in Guidance and several other relevant qualifications are available but the Certificate is not a mandatory qualification for guidance teachers and the extent to which guidance staff hold the Certificate varies across regions.
- The basic aim of the guidance system is to ensure that each pupil knows and is known personally and in some depth by at least one member of staff. Guidance staff are responsible for the personal, curricular and vocational guidance of a caseload of pupils. Their everyday work includes: dealing with a range of individual casework about behavioural, personal, family or health issues; monitoring attendance; review of progress; advising on subject choice; and involvement in the design and/or teaching of Personal and Social Education provision.
- Guidance is seen as a whole-school responsibility in which all staff have a role, especially register teachers. The pastoral role of non-guidance staff is sometimes more structured within a system of First Level Guidance.

Chapter 2 The research

- The central aim of the study was to examine the guidance needs of pupils and their parents, the organisation of guidance provision and the effectiveness of this provision in meeting their needs. Variation in need was a key issue: the extent to which guidance needs varied between schools and whether this was reflected in the way in which guidance was organised in them. While the research as a whole covered all aspects of guidance - personal, curricular and vocational - a specific aim was to review the management of Careers Service work in the schools and also links with local employers. In practice, work on employer links was limited, reflecting the nature of the relationship between guidance and employers.

Research methods

- On the basis of the methodology suggested by the SOED, the research was based on six schools across four regions. They were chosen through discussions with HMI, guidance advisors, review of documentation and analysis of data from the Scottish Young People's Survey. Selection was based on: the type of guidance structure; the socio-economic composition of the school roll; school size; staying-on rates; attainment; type of location; denominational/non-denominational; multi-cultural; and local labour market. The aim was to select schools that were *illustrative* of different types of schools and guidance provision with the intention that other schools would recognise elements of their own situation in one or more of them and be able to relate the issues discussed to their own context. The selection emphasised a bias towards good practice since this would be more likely to illustrate how issues might be tackled.
- The identification and measurement of guidance needs and the evaluation of guidance provision are difficult tasks. The approach of this study was to focus on the perceptions and experiences of both the consumers of guidance (pupils and parents) and the providers of guidance (guidance teachers, other relevant staff and careers officers). This enabled comparison of the perceptions of each of the groups against the others, comparison of their perceptions with the guidance practice in the schools, and a judgement of the situation in the project schools against regional and national policies and statements about good practice in guidance.
- In the first year of the research 110 interviews were held with guidance teachers, other school staff and careers officers and 18 group discussions with S2, S4 and S5 pupils (193 pupils in total) at which they also completed questionnaires on an individual basis. The second year of the research involved a survey of parents and guidance. This had two elements: a postal questionnaire was sent to half of the parents of S3 and S5 pupils (720) in the project schools which achieved a 42% response rate; and interviews with 29 parents to explore further their awareness, opinions and experiences of guidance. For the study of guidance in the upper school, nine staff were interviewed and 40 S5 pupils took part in group discussions in three of the six project schools. Interviews with 12 key informants provided an additional dimension to the research.

Chapter 3 Profile of school staff

Staff interviewed

- In the first year of the research 48 members of staff were interviewed. Half were in promoted guidance posts, others included the members of senior management with a guidance remit and staff with a guidance-related role such as PSE teaching. They came from a range of subject backgrounds. Overall, they were evenly divided between men and women but the gender balance varied within category of post. Most were over 40 and a third of guidance teachers over 50.
- The majority of guidance teachers had been in their current guidance post for over four years but only a fifth had held a guidance post in another school. Under a third had a national qualification in guidance such as the Certificate in Guidance. Most had undertaken some guidance-related in-service in the previous three years.

Chapter 4 Guidance provision in the Project Schools (1993/94)

This chapter describes the situation at the time of the main fieldwork in the project schools in 1993/94.

The project schools

The project schools were:

- a medium-sized urban school with a large catchment area; the only denominational school; vertical guidance structure.
- a large urban school with a mixed roll; vertical guidance structure.
- a medium-sized urban school with a multi-cultural school roll; horizontal guidance structure.
- a relatively small school in an area of multiple deprivation; horizontal guidance structure.
- a large urban school with a mixed catchment including areas of deprivation; horizontal guidance structure.
- a small remote rural school with an extensive catchment; vertical guidance system.

Guidance in the project schools

- The project schools were evenly divided between vertical and horizontal guidance systems. There were differences between the official time allocation for guidance staff and their actual allocation in half of the schools. In none of the schools did all of the guidance teachers interviewed receive the recommended minimum time allocation: a majority did in two schools, a minority in another two schools, and none in the other two schools.
- One school did not have a PT(G) post, in the other schools the extent of differentiation of the remit of PT(G)s and APT(G)s was variable. Several were trying to increase differentiation, generally, senior management wanted to develop PT(G)s' line management role.
- All of the schools had a timetabled guidance meeting, there were some differences in focus of the meetings across the schools.
- In four of the schools, register teachers were encouraged to take on a more pastoral role but the extent to which they did so was limited. Two schools had some element of a formal First Level Guidance system.
- Two schools had just changed their discipline policy so that in all of the project schools the guidance role in discipline was seen as a supportive rather than a punitive one. Guidance teachers received copies of disciplinary referrals to enable them to monitor pupils' behaviour.
- Four of the schools had a policy of annual interviews with all pupils but only two were achieving this aim. In one school such a policy was seen as unnecessary because guidance staff had weekly contact with their own caseload in PSE. In all of the schools, S2, S4 and S5 pupils had interviews as part of the course choice process. TVEI funding was used in

two schools to resource extra contact with pupils. In addition to scheduled interviews, guidance teachers carried out interviews in response to particular incidents or needs.

- All of the schools had an established P7/S1 transition programme which typically involved visits by senior management, guidance and Learning Support staff to the associated primaries and induction visits of between one and three days by prospective S1 pupils to the project schools.
- The development and implementation of Personal and Social Education was the responsibility of guidance in five of the six project schools and guidance staff taught PSE in all of the schools, In two schools, PSE was totally or mainly taught by guidance staff and in the other schools by a combination of guidance and other teachers.
- The extent of PSE programmes varied across the schools, especially the extent to which a programme existed in S5 and S6. The content of programmes was similar across the schools although one had less emphasis on social education topics in S3 and S4. S5 and S6 was the stage at which there was some choice and differentiation in PSE provision.
- Most careers education, including work experience, was delivered as part of PSE in five of the six schools. In general, education industry link activity happened outwith the PSE programme and did not involve guidance staff.
- The extent to which post-school options, especially higher education, were dealt with within PSE and were the responsibility of guidance teachers differed across the project schools but in all of them senior management played an important role.
- The project schools were at different stages in the implementation of Records of Achievement. In four, guidance took the lead role in the management and co-ordination of RoAs.
- Half of the project schools had a development plan, two were in the process of producing one and the other school had plans to do so. Guidance-related aims were included, or expected to be included, in all of the development plans.
- None of the schools had an established system to assess pupils' guidance needs or to review guidance provision. Development planning was introducing an element of evaluation in that guidance-related targets would be reviewed.

Careers Service

- Careers Service time allocation to the schools depended on the upper school roll and regional Careers Service policy. Three of the six schools had experienced some turnover in careers officers attached to the school. A guidance teacher with a specialist remit as Careers Co-ordinator was the main contact with the Careers Service in three schools, in two others a PT(G) was the nominated contact and in the sixth school, the careers officer liaised with the guidance teacher of the pupil or year group concerned. Four of the six schools had a Service Level Agreement with the Careers Service.
- Careers officers carried out a range of activities in the schools including involvement in S2 subject choice and parents' evenings but the bulk of their time was devoted to interviews with S4-S6 pupils. In five of the schools, careers officers used screening questionnaires backed by referrals from guidance staff to establish priorities for interviews. Typically the pattern was to interview HE applicants first, followed by S5

winter leavers, S4-S6 summer leavers and then S5 and S6 returners. With one exception, the project schools provided the careers officer with profiles for pupils before their careers interview.

External agencies

- Three of the project schools had regular meetings with external agencies and two intended to establish joint assessment meetings. Two schools had a school-based social worker, one of which also had an education welfare officer and access to a specialist day unit.

Chapter 5 *The guidance needs of pupils and their parents*

Identification of needs

- None of the project schools conducted regular, comprehensive reviews of pupils' needs. Staff's views were based on personal opinion and experience. When asked about pupil needs staff focused on the provision made at each school stage and guidance teachers' duties rather than directly on pupils' needs. Although staff identified the same sorts of needs or provision at the various school stages, they also commented on the different levels of maturity within year groups. Staff saw a key role for guidance in linking with the home but had not given much thought to the guidance needs of parents.

Guidance needs

- The most fundamental pupil need identified was for individual attention and to have a consistent relationship with a teacher who knew them. Staff identified a range of needs at each school stage with the exception of S3 where few specific needs were highlighted.
- Deprivation was seen as a major source of variation in pupils' guidance needs within and across the project schools and was seen as having an impact especially on pupils' self-esteem and aspirations. Staff identified few specific needs experienced by middle class pupils. Geographical location was not seen as a major factor in determining particular guidance needs. Staff, however, believed that pupils' needs were changing and increasing due to increased staying-on rates, greater pressure within schools and because of wider changes in society.
- On the whole, guidance provision in the project schools was based on a generalised model of pupil needs. It was difficult to discern the impact of particular pupil needs in the nature and structure of guidance provision in each of the schools. This was perhaps inevitable in the absence of whole school reviews of needs and provision. The two areas where it was possible to see some direct relationship between particular needs and provision was PSE provision and the schools' response to pupils' socio-economic background.

Chapter 6 *Guidance in practice: the teacher perspective*

Guidance for all pupils?

- All of the project schools supported a "guidance for all pupils" principle but most guidance staff believed this could not, on the whole, be fulfilled. They felt that their time allocation and workload made them unduly reactive in their work, forcing them to

concentrate on pupils in trouble or those with obvious problems at the expense of "ordinary" pupils.

- Regular contact by guidance staff teaching PSE to their caseload and annual interviews with pupils were identified as factors improving contact with all pupils. But the effectiveness of a programme of interviews depended on their timing and organisation. Reassurance about confidentiality and privacy was also critical to a successful guidance teacher-pupil relationship. Pupil self-referral to guidance was limited and guidance teachers would have welcomed a higher level of pupil-initiated contact, seeing this as a measure of an effective guidance system.

Time and workload

- In none of the project schools did all the guidance staff in the study have the minimum recommended time allocation of 40 minutes per week for every 15 pupils. Guidance teachers were highly committed to their caseload and most used non-guidance time to see their pupils. A common view was that their guidance role impinged on their work as subject teachers but none favoured the idea of full-time guidance teachers.
- Guidance staff were working under considerable pressure. Senior management and guidance staff pointed to increasing expectations of, and demands on, guidance. Both recognised a need to establish priorities for guidance but there was no consensus about who should do so within the school. Both, however, believed that priorities also needed to be set nationally for guidance as a whole rather than in relation to individual initiatives.

Guidance and other staff

- Contact with Assistant Headteachers, most frequently over discipline, was an important aspect of the everyday work of guidance teachers but lack of communication and consultation about discipline casework was an issue for the majority of guidance staff.
- Guidance teachers felt that subject teachers were more positive about the value of guidance than in the past but that there were still tensions about guidance teachers' time, outstanding issues about status and uncertainty about their role, especially in discipline despite clear policies on this. Guidance teachers also thought that subject teachers could be more active in referring pupils to them and to do so about other than disciplinary matters.

Extended guidance team

- The extent to which register teachers were willing and able to fulfil a pastoral role varied across the project schools. Learning Support and English as a Second Language teachers believed they were in a good position to do so but they may be an under-used resource by guidance teachers. A formal system of First Level Guidance was restricted to two schools; in the others a variety of factors were preventing senior management from developing a formal FLG system.

Personal and Social Education

- Although a majority of guidance teachers supported a leading role for guidance in PSE most saw individual work with pupils as their main task.
- Staff in most of the project schools acknowledged difficulties in the design and delivery of PSE. These related to a lack of training and support for PSE teachers; the use of non-volunteers to teach PSE; class size; the use of inappropriate methodologies; lack of

coherence and progression in the content of programmes; and difficulties in differentiating provision by pupil need.

- The general view among staff was that PSE still lacked status despite developments in recent years. Some felt under pressure to improve the credibility of PSE, for example, by introducing certification but there was only limited support for certification among guidance and other staff involved in PSE.

Records of Achievement (RoA)

- Guidance staff valued the process of (RoAs) but were concerned that their potential might not be realised without resources to allow attention to pupils on an individual basis. More negatively, RoAs were seen as putting pressure on the time available for PSE and increasing the administrative burden on guidance staff.

The management of guidance

- Guidance staff did not think that it was necessarily beneficial for the member of senior management with responsibility for guidance to have experience in guidance although some managers did take this view. But the level of commitment of senior management to guidance was seen as critical to the morale, credibility and resourcing of guidance in the school.
- The involvement of guidance staff in the development of policy and management decisions varied across the schools. The schools were at different stages of development planning but where guidance staff had been involved, especially as a department, their response was positive. The potential of the guidance meeting in the management of guidance was not being realised and in half of the project schools guidance teachers were critical of the effectiveness of guidance meetings in general.
- Efforts were being made to achieve greater differentiation in the work of Principal and Assistant Principal Teachers of Guidance (PT(G)s and APT(G)s) usually by defining extra responsibilities for the PT(G). But a number of guidance teachers did not support senior management efforts to develop the line management role of PT(G)s advocating instead a single level of post in guidance.
- None of the project schools had a comprehensive system for monitoring the everyday work of guidance teachers. The review of development plan targets was the main formal, but very partial, method of evaluation. The majority of guidance teachers did not think they were really accountable to others for their work and the management approach was to emphasise self-accountability. Most guidance staff were not in favour of greater accountability.
- A number of guidance teachers did not keep a systematic record of contacts with their case-load and only one school had a common record-keeping system. Some staff did not accept the contribution of good record-keeping to effective guidance.
- The need for individual guidance teachers to operate as a team was accepted by most staff but the extent to which this happened in practice differed across the schools.

Staff support, training and development

- Under a third of guidance teachers interviewed held a national qualification in guidance. The large majority had had a variety of in-service training but some senior managers

identified a lack of focus and progression in such training. Most guidance teachers had a number of outstanding training needs but time and financial restrictions were identified as barriers to training. The need for greater support in their work, especially when dealing with distressing cases, was noted.

The upper school

- The general view among staff was that the more heterogeneous school roll and increasing complexity of the post-16 curriculum and post-school options required the development of guidance provision in respect of the S5 and S6 subject choice process; careers information and guidance; and PSE. Guidance staff also identified an issue concerning pupils returning to school for whom this was not likely to be the most productive option. Non-guidance staff, in particular, senior management, played a key role in guidance for senior pupils.

External agencies

- There was some feeling among guidance staff that liaison with external agencies could be improved but lack of time for guidance staff to attend Children's Hearings and other meetings was an issue and guidance teachers also believed that the external agencies were over-worked and under-resourced. Contact with social workers was perceived to be particularly difficult. Generally guidance teachers viewed the quality of input from external agencies, especially Social Work, as very dependent on the individuals concerned. Typically teachers felt other agencies had a different perspective on pupils with problems; there were also different expectations and understanding about the exchange of information about pupils and about confidentiality.

Chapter 7 Guidance in practice: the pupils' perspective

Attitudes to guidance

- All pupils saw guidance as necessary and valued having a teacher whose role was to be available for them and whose focus was the individual pupil and not the class or year group. Pupils' opinion and experience of guidance was heavily dependent on the attitude and approach of their own guidance teacher. They were critical of some guidance teachers and had a very clear and consistent view of the qualities of a good guidance teacher as someone who
 - ◆ listened and was understanding
 - ◆ liked children, took time and showed an interest
 - ◆ was fair, listened to the pupils' side and did not label them
 - ◆ was trustworthy and would preserve confidentiality
 - ◆ treated and respected pupils as individuals.
- The majority of pupils felt that "ordinary" pupils had minimal contact with guidance teachers who concentrated on those in trouble or with obvious problems. But most believed that guidance should cater for all pupils. Regular interviews and small group sessions were seen as a good way to ensure a basic level of contact which pupils identified as important to encourage self-referral. Nevertheless, interviews could be a difficult experience for pupils unused to such an event and had to be well timed and conducted to be meaningful for them.

Problems of access

- Guidance teachers were commonly perceived by pupils as inaccessible because of lack of time and large caseloads. A substantial proportion also identified guidance staff's subject commitments as a problem and there was considerable support for the appointment of full-time guidance teachers.

Differences in perceptions

- There was a gap between pupils' and guidance staff's perceptions about the effectiveness of guidance provision, especially about the quality of the relationship between guidance teachers and pupils. The majority of pupils did not think that their guidance teacher knew them well although this view did vary in degree across and within schools. First-hand knowledge of their pupils was seen as a fundamental requirement of the job of a guidance teacher and especially relevant on occasions such as giving advice about subject choice and writing reports on pupils.

Use of guidance

- Around half of the pupils were prepared to approach their guidance teacher with concerns or problems. Their willingness to do so depended on how well they thought their guidance teacher knew them; how approachable and accessible their guidance teacher was perceived to be; pupils' age; the nature of the problem; and concern about confidentiality. On balance, pupils were sceptical that confidentiality would be maintained; this contrasted with guidance teachers' perceptions that pupils were satisfied about this. Pupils' concern about confidentiality was linked to a more general feeling of a lack of privacy in dealings with guidance teachers.

Personal and Social Education (PSE)

- Pupils accepted the need for PSE but their opinion of provision ranged from the very positive to the very negative with the majority view somewhere in the middle. Although there was much similarity in the topics and issues identified by pupils and the actual content of PSE programmes, pupils were not satisfied that the topics were dealt with in a way that reflected their own circumstances and needs. Pupils complained of limited or superficial and impersonal coverage of education, drugs, AIDS/HIV. They also wanted more input on study skills and careers-related issues in PSE. Pupils were particularly negative about the way in which PSE was taught, criticising lack of discussion, an over-reliance on worksheets and videos; large classes; and inappropriate classroom layout.

Subject choice

- All pupils had considerable input at the S2 option choice stage but the majority were critical of some aspects of it, wanting a greater careers input and a longer course choice interview. S4 and S5 pupils contrasted the limited amount of information and advice in choosing their S5 subjects compared with help at S2. S5 pupils wanted more than one interview and more opportunity to discuss the career implications of their choices.

Careers education and guidance

- Post-school options were a major issue for S4 and especially S5 pupils. S2 pupils were also concerned about career ideas at their subject choice. Pupils of all attainment levels felt they were not aware of the full range of possible courses and jobs and found it difficult to assess what would be the best option for them. Target setting and Record of Achievement (RoA) work did not appear to help. Some pupils identified a tension

between the use of RoAs to market themselves to employers and to further and higher education and to help them assess themselves honestly.

- S4 and S5 pupils of all academic abilities wanted more information about careers and courses, especially more detailed information. Help with the practicalities of applications and interviews was also wanted. The timing of careers-related input was identified as an issue by pupils, both in respect of lack of careers provision for S4 leavers and lack of coverage of higher education in S5.

Contact with the Careers Service

- Pupils' awareness of the role of the careers officer varied considerably across the project schools. Waiting times for an interview with the careers officer differed partly reflecting the time available but also the interview priorities. Academic pupils were most likely to be confused about interview arrangements and to feel disadvantaged by the system of interview priorities.
- Opinion of Careers Service provision was generally positive. Pupils wanted greater input from the Careers Service in subject choice and careers education and better access to an interview with a careers officer.

Chapter 8 *Guidance in practice: the parents' perspective*

Support for guidance

- Parents strongly supported the existence of the guidance system. They believed that guidance should be there to support and encourage all pupils but generally saw it as being problem-driven and reacting to pupils in difficulty. Although parents were uncertain about how guidance operated in practice, they had a clear view of the role that guidance should perform, what an ideal guidance teacher should be like and how well the guidance teacher should know their child.

Guidance needs

- Parents wanted to know and trust their child's guidance teacher whom they saw as responsible for his or her welfare in the school, to be able to contact and be contacted by guidance staff at appropriate times, to be kept informed of their child's progress and to be assured of confidentiality.
- Regular information about their child's progress was a critical issue for parents. They wanted more, and earlier, information not only about their child's academic progress but about his or her personal and social development. They requested earlier and more detailed reports, wanted to be alerted as soon as any problems arose but also wanted contact about positive matters as well as about difficulties.
- Parents identified a range of guidance needs of their children: individual support and someone to talk to about personal problems; information and advice about careers and subject choice; help in understanding and dealing with issues relating to drugs, alcohol, sex, and HIV/AIDS; and support in coping with exam and study pressures. Some parents saw a need for guidance to fulfil an advocacy role for pupils within schools. The size and location of the school, the extent of its catchment and the level of deprivation in the area all influenced parents' perceptions of their child's guidance needs.

Satisfaction with guidance

- The majority of parents knew the name of their child's guidance teacher and most of those who had had contact reported that this had been easy to make. Nevertheless, the majority also felt that contact could be improved, including annual reminders about the guidance system and how to use it; guidance staff being available outwith school hours; more opportunity to consult guidance teachers at parents' evenings; and communications sent directly to the home rather than via "pupil post".
- Three-quarters of parents were generally satisfied with guidance provision for their children, judging this on the basis of how well they thought the guidance teacher knew their child and on whether the guidance teacher was approachable and accessible. They were a little less satisfied with guidance provision for themselves.
- Although the majority of parents thought their child was fairly or well known by the guidance teacher, most also believed that the guidance teacher did not give their child enough individual attention. Where guidance teachers had been involved in supporting individual children because of a particular need or problem, their parents were generally pleased with the support provided. Bullying was one area where some parents were critical of the guidance and school response.
- The type of guidance system in schools (horizontal or vertical) did not appear to affect parents' satisfaction with guidance either for their children or themselves but parents did identify some individual guidance teachers as better than others.
- Parents made a number of suggestions to improve guidance including: more interviews and small group work to increase guidance teachers' knowledge of their pupils; full-time, specialist guidance teachers; more resources for guidance; earlier and more detailed information about all aspects of their child's progress; and the opportunity to build up a relationship with their child's guidance teacher.

Aspects of provision

- Parents felt that their child's move from primary to secondary school had been well managed and guidance appropriately involved.
- Parents were overwhelmingly in favour of the range of topics likely to be delivered as part of the schools' Personal and Social Education programmes but they knew little about the actual content and timing of the programme. They wanted more information about this; for some this would allow them to support the school by discussing the issues at home.
- The majority of parents were satisfied with the advice given to their child at S2/S3 and S4/S5 subject choice but made suggestions for improvement, including more consideration of the career implications of subject choice, especially at S4/S5.
- Parents' knowledge of both the school's careers education programme and the careers guidance from the school and the Careers Service was limited. They were much less likely to know about the advice given to their child about post-school options than the advice given about subject choice. The large majority of parents thought that the careers guidance their child received could be improved.
- There was strong support from parents for work experience, in particular, because of the opportunity to test out careers ideas.

Chapter 9 *Careers and the World of Work*

Careers education and guidance

- The content of careers education was variable across the schools, there was little evidence of progression in provision and the need to develop careers education for senior pupils was recognised. Content appeared to be driven by national initiatives rather than closely linked to pupils' needs. Careers officers played a very limited role in the design and review of programmes; their involvement in delivery was more varied.

Careers Service

- The main element of careers officers' work in the schools was interviews with S4-S6 pupils although they were involved in other activities including S2/S3 subject choice and parents' evenings. There was some concern that Scottish Office guidelines might reduce careers officers' input with S2 pupils although this was wanted by both pupils and parents, and that the increasingly tight targets they had to meet in their work might limit their flexibility to respond to pupils' needs.
- There was considerable confusion and dissatisfaction among pupils about the Careers Service interview systems. The time lapse between requesting and receiving an interview because of the system of interview priorities was a problem for some pupils. Both pupils and parents wanted more ready access to an interview even if they were not leaving or did not have a problem with career choice. Some careers officers highlighted conflicting guidance from the Scottish Office about the basis on which interview systems should be designed.
- Pupils seemed unable or unwilling to take responsibility for their career development and they were not proactive in seeking careers information or in initiating careers interview.
- The large majority of pupils who had had contact with the Careers Service were positive, believing that the careers officer had extended their ideas and provided help in finding training, courses or work.

Careers Service/school link

- In the majority of the project schools, the careers officer mainly related to one guidance teacher. This ensured the smooth organisation of interviews and reports but distanced them from guidance staff as a whole. Generally the careers officer was not integrated into the school system. Teachers and careers officers identified communication and trust, clarity about the responsibilities of each, and good personal contact as critical to an effective school-Careers Service relationship. Schools and the Careers Service had started to negotiate and agree their respective responsibilities for careers education and guidance more formally through Service Level Agreements.
- Guidance staff judged the effectiveness of the careers officers by their ability to fit in with the school system, speed of response to teacher and pupil requests for advice and their ability to give realistic advice.

Education industry liaison and guidance

- Education industry liaison (EIL) activities and guidance were largely separate from each other, the main exception was work experience. EIL and guidance were managed in the

majority of the schools by different members of staff and in these schools guidance teachers had little knowledge of, and involvement in, this area.

- There were varied models of organising and delivering work experience, in half of the schools non-guidance staff organised the work experience placements. Four schools certificated work experience via the National Certificate module. Teachers, pupils and parents identified a number of benefits of work experience, especially the opportunity to test out career ideas but careers officers were more critical of its value as a career test. Teachers, careers officers and parents shared concern about lack of variety in placements and the need for better de-briefing and feedback.

Chapter 10 Discussion and issues

Is guidance for all pupils?

Pupils and parents strongly supported the existence of a guidance system. But despite a commitment at school, regional and national level to the principle of guidance for all pupils, in the project schools, guidance teachers were largely reactive in their work, responding to pupils with problems at the expense of "ordinary" pupils. Parents and pupils also perceived guidance as "problem-driven" and pupils especially were not satisfied with the extent and quality of contact with their guidance teacher. Pupils' experience and opinion of guidance varied to an unacceptable extent depending on their guidance teacher.

Issues

- *Guidance needs to move beyond a reactive, problem-driven approach.*
- *Schools need to ensure a consistent, minimum standard of guidance provision for all pupils, irrespective of their particular guidance teacher.*
- *Priorities for guidance should be set at a national, regional and local level.*

The delivery of guidance to all pupils

If the present policy of "guidance for all" is to be delivered, schools need to define what "guidance for all" means and consider what strategies - individual interviews, small group work, teaching PSE and informal contacts - would be most successful in achieving this. The research suggests that a combination of approaches is most likely to be productive but that how each is organised and delivered is also vital to success.

Guidance staff would have welcomed a higher level of pupil-initiated contact than was the case. The accessibility and approachability of guidance teachers were important factors but so too were confidentiality and privacy. There was a difference, however, between guidance teachers' and pupils' perceptions about whether confidentiality would be respected or not and pupils wanted more privacy in dealings with guidance than was recognised by staff.

Issues

- *There is a need to consider and make explicit, what is meant in practice by "guidance for all". National guidelines would provide the basis from which schools could clarify and agree this on a whole-school basis.*
- *What is the role of individual interviews, small group work, PSE teaching and informal contacts in developing the pupil-guidance teacher relationship?*

- *Expectations about confidentiality and privacy need to be clarified and agreed.*

The identification of pupils' guidance needs

There was a lack of any sustained attempt in the project schools to evaluate pupils' guidance needs. None conducted a regular, comprehensive review. Most of the staff interviewed had much relevant experience to draw on but it is important to recognise the limitations of personal experience. Guidance teachers focused on guidance provision and guidance teachers' duties at the various school stages as much as directly identifying pupils' needs. Their response reflected a similar focus in national and regional documentation.

Pupils' guidance needs might be divided into those created by schools' organisational requirements and pupils' own self-generated needs. The guidance system appeared, on balance, to support the smooth running of the school rather than fulfil an advocacy role on behalf of pupils.

Issues

- *There is a need for more systematic and comprehensive assessment of pupils' needs.*
- *Is there currently an over-emphasis on defining provision and needs by stage of schooling that hampers guidance staff from considering individual needs?*
- *What is the correct balance between guidance serving the administration of the school and supporting pupils?*

Provision and needs

Guidance in the project schools was based on a generalised model of pupil needs. There was little evidence of the impact of particular pupils' needs on the nature and structure of guidance provision in each school. Some direct relationship was evident, however, in PSE programmes and in the response to pupils' socio-economic background.

Pupils' socio-economic background was one of the major sources of variation in pupils' needs within and across the schools. Deprivation was seen as having an impact on pupils' needs and this influenced provision in a number of respects. Guidance teachers did not identify particular needs experienced by middle class pupils but they may well have had unmet needs. The attitude of staff to the socio-economic background of pupils reinforced the view of guidance as problem-driven.

Issues

- *The structure and nature of guidance provision in the project schools did not appear to be determined to a major extent by particular pupil needs in each school. Are there particular pupils or groups of pupils whose needs are being overlooked?*
- *Is guidance unduly based on a deficit model which sees provision as compensating for deficiencies in pupils' background? Are alternative models preferable and possible?*

Demands and pressures on guidance staff

Most guidance staff interviewed did not receive the minimum time allocation and the large majority believed that time pressures prevented them from fulfilling their remit. The research indicated a positive relationship between a better pupil:time allocation and the effectiveness of provision. Nevertheless, few guidance teachers kept a record of how they used their time. This is a necessary starting point to establish priorities and calculate a realistic time allocation. Guidance teachers pointed to increased demands on guidance but while the need to establish priorities was recognised by senior management and guidance staff, there was no consensus about who should do so within the school. The piecemeal setting of priorities at a national level for single initiatives was perceived as a problem by staff who wanted a more comprehensive approach taken to the identification of priorities for guidance nationally.

The position of guidance staff within the school system caused them stress. Many were concerned about the negative effect their guidance role had on their subject teaching and department. They felt that some aspects of their work were poorly understood by their colleagues and, more generally, that in a system based on subject departments, their work and skills as guidance staff tended to be undervalued. Nevertheless, although both pupils and parents suggested full-time guidance teachers, none of the staff interviewed supported this idea.

Issues

- *Should guidance teachers continue to have a role as guidance and also subject teachers? Should full-time guidance teachers be considered?*
- *Schools should consider a comprehensive review of pupils needs as the starting point for setting priorities for guidance staff and calculating a realistic time allocation.*
- *Once the appropriate time allocation is identified, attention must be given to ensure that this time is given to guidance teachers.*
- *Attention needs to be given to how guidance teachers can make best use of their time and they should keep a record of their time and activities.*
- *The role of guidance teachers needs to be clarified and communicated to other members of staff.*

Quality and consistency of guidance provision

The majority of guidance teachers thought that their accountability to others for their guidance work was limited and the management approach was generally to emphasise self-accountability. None of the schools had a comprehensive system for monitoring the everyday work of guidance teachers. Most staff were not in favour of greater review of their work believing they needed autonomy to be effective. It is important, however, to distinguish between autonomy and accountability.

Record-keeping about their contact with their caseload was limited and some staff did not accept that good record-keeping can make a positive contribution to effective guidance. Although senior management and most guidance staff acknowledged the need for guidance teachers to work as a team and efforts had been made to achieve a common policy and systems in a number of areas, the extent to which guidance teachers worked as a team varied

across the schools. There was a large degree of acceptance of individualism. The essential issue is whether there is consistency of outcome for pupils.

Issues

- *How can the quality of the work of individual guidance teachers be monitored sensitively?*
- *Standards for guidance practice need to be agreed and regularly reviewed.*
- *What aspects of guidance work need to be agreed and followed in common and what can be variable? What strategies can be adopted to foster a team approach?*

The management of guidance

The management of guidance is a weak area and this partly accounted for the importance of the individual guidance teacher in determining pupils' experience of guidance. Although the selection and training of individuals are important, the majority of guidance teachers could be enabled to be more effective if they were better managed.

Guidance may be a more difficult or, at least, a different management task than that of a subject department. But another critical factor is the attitude of some senior managers and many guidance staff to the contribution of management to the guidance process. There seemed to be a feeling among many staff that more attention to management would detract from the caring, personal emphasis of guidance. At its most extreme, the attitude was that the application of management principles takes time away from pupils and detracts from the guidance process. Senior managers need training in managing guidance but, more generally, attitudes to the management of guidance need to change.

The type of guidance structure, horizontal or vertical, was not a major explanatory factor in differences in the quality of guidance provision across the project schools.

The involvement of guidance staff in the development of policy and in management decisions varied across the schools. Senior management were keen to develop the management role of PT(G)s but guidance staff generally did not favour a hierarchical structure. Development planning seemed to have a valuable role to play in policy-making. Although the guidance meeting also had a potential role in policy-making and management, this potential was not being realised.

Issues

- *How can a more positive attitude to the contribution of good management practices to effective guidance be promoted? Specific training in managing guidance would be helpful for members of senior management with a guidance remit.*
- *Should there be a single level of post within guidance? In particular, should the management role of PT(G)s be developed?*
- *Clarification is required on the roles of senior management and guidance staff in the process of policy development, identification of priorities and decision-making.*

- *The purpose(s) of guidance meetings should be agreed between senior management and guidance staff and consideration given to strategies to run them more effectively.*
- *How can development planning be used to help guidance identify developments and set targets for guidance?*

Communication

Discipline casework was the focus of much guidance-senior management contact but lack of communication and consultation was an issue for many guidance teachers. Most felt that, on the whole, subject teachers were now more positive about guidance but that they were still uncertain about guidance teachers' role, especially in discipline and that they could be more active in referring pupils to guidance. First Level Guidance was restricted to two schools and the degree to which there could be said to be an extended guidance team varied across the schools.

Issues

- *How can the link between senior management and guidance be best organised to enable good liaison on casework?*
- *How can guidance teachers' role in discipline be communicated to other staff? Written policies do not appear to be sufficient.*
- *How can all school staff be encouraged to make appropriate referrals to guidance and how can the contact and co-operation between Learning Support and English as a Second Language teachers and guidance teachers be further developed?*
- *Is further development of First Level Guidance feasible, especially without some increase in resources to give time, support and training to FLG staff?*

Staff support, training and development

A minority of guidance staff interviewed held a nationally recognised professional qualification in guidance although this was seen as desirable by some staff and especially by pupils and parents. Most had had relevant in-service training but this may have lacked coherence and progression.

Issues

- *Should all promoted guidance staff have a recognised qualifications in guidance?*
- *A more focused approach to the identification and planning of staff development to achieve greater coherence and progression is necessary.*

Personal and Social Education

Staff felt that PSE still lacked status in the eyes of pupils and parents. This was not borne in interviews with parents, however, and whether or not pupils valued PSE depended on the quality and relevance of the provision. Some staff felt under pressure to introduce certification to increase the credibility of PSE but there was only limited support for this. In half of the project schools, the nature of guidance teachers' role in PSE had not been fully

resolved and some tension between the expectations of senior management and guidance staff were evident.

Although parents and pupils identified the same range of areas that were included in PSE programmes, pupils were critical of how some topics were delivered and parents lacked information about the content and timing of PSE input. The quality of the content, coherence and progression of PSE provision was very variable and the practical organisation and delivery was a continuing difficulty. While staff were aware of a number of outstanding difficulties, pupils' opinion of PSE was more negative than teachers' estimation of provision.

Issues

- *There is a need to achieve clarity and agreement about guidance teachers' role in PSE.*
- *The role of certification in PSE needs to be considered. Should PSE be certificated and are there elements that would be more appropriate to certificate than others?*
- *If PSE is to meet pupils' needs it will require improvements in methodology and more effort to achieve greater coherence and progression. All staff delivering PSE need more support and training.*
- *There is a need to identify priorities for PSE provision given pressures from national and local initiatives such as Record of Achievement and work experience. Who should set these priorities and on what basis?*
- *How can schools provide parents with more information about PSE and how can they make use of the potential contribution of parents in achieving the PSE aims?*

The upper school

The more varied upper school roll and increasing complexity of the post-16 curriculum and post-school options were seen by staff as posing a challenge for guidance. Pupils felt they had had less preparation for subject choice in S5/S6 than in S2. Senior pupils of all academic levels wanted more careers education and greater contact with the Careers Service, some academic pupils felt disadvantaged by Careers Service interview arrangements.

Different members of staff, including senior management, were involved in providing information and guidance for senior pupils about the S4/S5 and S5/S6 transition and post-school opportunities but it seems that pupils did not experience this as integrated provision.

Issues

- *How can PSE provision be developed to take account of the different needs, aspirations and likely destinations of pupils? The extent of, and criteria for, differentiation need to be considered.*
- *Curricular and vocational guidance for senior pupils should be extended and more integrated approach to its provision developed.*

External agencies

Although effective meetings were seen as one way to improve liaison with external agencies, time to set up and attend such meetings was a problem. Guidance staff believed external agencies were over-worked and difficult to contact but perceived a need for greater support from them because of the increased emphasis on retaining pupils in school. Nevertheless, guidance teachers felt that they and other agencies differed in their attitude to pupils, there also seemed to be different expectations about the exchange of information on pupils and about confidentiality.

Issues

- *How can the awareness and understanding of the respective roles and approaches of schools and external agencies be improved? Expectations about the exchange of information and about disclosure need to be clarified and agreed.*
- *The level and quality of support from individual workers to pupils and school from external agencies appeared to vary. What can be done to identify a base line provision to ensure that some pupils are not disadvantaged by different practices and resources?*
- *What is an appropriate role and level of involvement for guidance teachers in joint agency and other meetings?*

Parents and guidance

We often had to explain the guidance system to parents in the research interviews yet they had been sufficiently interested to volunteer to be interviewed. Parents' satisfaction with guidance related to how well they understood what was happening and more information is also necessary if there is to be a real partnership between home and the school. Although parents were reasonably well satisfied with guidance, they made a number of constructive suggestions for improvement, illustrating the value for schools and the Careers Service of consulting parents.

Issues

- *How can parents be better informed about the guidance system and to be able to get to know their child's guidance teacher?*
- *How can parents' evenings be organised to improve parents' access to guidance teachers and ensure the necessary time and privacy?*
- *How might parents be provided with improved information on all aspects of their child's progress?*
- *There is a need to consider how to respond to parents' needs in a number of areas including: subject choice; PSE; careers education and guidance; and support for their children on settling into classes, study skills and exam pressures.*
- *How can parents be consulted to help schools and the Careers Service review their guidance provision? This research suggests that parents beyond those usually involved in school activities would be willing to contribute.*

- *How far can guidance be expected to respond to parents' guidance needs? Although parents wanted support from school they were prepared to work with the school. How can schools work in partnership with parents?*

Careers and the World of Work

Lack of integration was evident in several aspects: careers officers were not integrated into the school system and guidance provision; integration was lacking in the various elements of curricular and guidance provision for senior pupils; and education industry liaison activities and guidance provision were not linked.

Teachers and careers officers identified a number of factors critical to an effective guidance-Careers Service relationship. It is necessary, however, to consider whether a system that is administratively convenient in organising interviews is also the best way to promote links between all guidance teachers and careers officers.

Issues

- *How can greater integration of education-industry activities and careers education and guidance be achieved and what is an appropriate level of integration?*
- *How can careers officers develop closer links with guidance staff? What model for organising school-Careers Service links would be most effective in achieving this?*
- *Is there a danger that the quantitative output targets for the Careers Service will prove a barrier to greater integration?*
- *How flexible and responsive to local need can Service Level Agreements between individual schools and the Careers Services be in the light of Careers Service business plans and Scottish Office targets?*

Focus of Careers Service work

- Pupils', parents' and guidance teachers' wish for continued and possibly expanded Careers Service input at the S2 stage was at odds with official guidance to Careers Services which focus on the upper school.
- Guidance teachers' and careers officers' perceptions of pupils' awareness of the Careers Service interview system contrasted with pupils' uncertainty about it operated. But the basis on which interviews were organised, did not appear to satisfy the needs of pupils and their parents some of whom felt marginalised by the interview arrangements. Official guidance on interview systems appear to differ in their emphasis.

Issues

- *Is there a need to revise the official priorities set for the Careers Service in the light of pupils', parents' and guidance staff's identified expectations for an input in S2?*
- *How can the Careers Service and schools ensure that pupils and parents are better informed about interview arrangements and how to gain access to the careers officer.*

- *There is a continuing need to evaluate the basis on which Careers Services design their interviewing systems taking account of the desire of pupils and parents for ready access to careers interviews for all pupils.*

Careers education

Greater coherence, progression and differentiation is necessary in careers education and greater links with EIL activities need to be developed. A dilemma for careers education is the extent to which it should reflect pupils' and parents' wishes and how far it should extend and challenge pupils' ideas.

Pupils generally were not able or willing to be active in seeking out careers information and advice.

Issues

- *To what extent should careers education and provision respond to pupils' wishes and how far should it seek to challenge and extend their thinking?*
- *How can pupils be better prepared for their careers interview?*
- *More generally, how can pupils be encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own careers development and become more proactive in seeking out careers information and advice? How can PSE contribute to this? Are wider changes needed in schools before pupils can become more self-reliant and less passive?*

Evaluation of provision

Although a more evaluation-conscious attitude is developing in schools, the lack of evaluation of guidance needs and provision is a major issue. While evaluation should be a normal element of professional practice, a key consideration is how guidance can be evaluated in a meaningful way that enhances practice rather than hindering or distorting it.

Issues

- *How can schools be supported in developing evaluation strategies? Will local government reorganisation mean a loss of advisory support for this?*
- *Is there an increasing gap between the nature of the evaluation of school guidance provision and of the work of the Careers Service? If so, what is the likely impact on the relationship between schools and the Career Service and for Careers Service provision in schools?*
- *How can guidance be evaluated in a way that enhances practice? Is there a need for a greater emphasis on the outcomes of guidance for pupils?*

Postscript: Reflections on Higher Still

The timing of the Higher Still proposals meant that they did not form part of the research brief. Nevertheless, the research findings provide a basis from which to consider the role and position of guidance in Higher Still.

Issues

- *Can the student guidance entitlement be delivered within guidance teachers' present time allocations?*
- *Will Higher Still lead to a re-focusing of the work of guidance teachers, for example, will it change the balance between pastoral and curricular and vocational guidance?*
- *What are the implications of a national policy on a guidance entitlement for senior pupils only? What is the likely impact on younger pupils? Should there be a national policy on a guidance entitlement for all pupils?*
- *Can or should PSE be certificated? Will certificated PSE provision have priority for resources? Are the Higher Still proposals for PSE achievable within current resources given the current stage of development of PSE in the upper school?*

Chapter 1 Introduction

Background

In 1993 the SOED commissioned the University of Edinburgh to undertake a study of guidance in secondary schools. It may or may not have been coincidental that 1993 marked the 25th anniversary of the guidance system in Scotland but the commission reflected the SOED view that there had been little research since the early 80s on the guidance system and its effectiveness in meeting the needs of pupils and parents. Over this time, however, a number of developments have affected schools and pupils such as the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, changes in assessment and greater interest in profiling and records of achievement, the increase in staying-on rates, and the growing complexity of the post-16 curriculum and possible post-16 routes.

The stated aim of the research given in research specification was to “study the guidance needs of pupils and the arrangements made for meeting these needs in a number of contrasting schools” with an emphasis on a qualitative approach (Research Specification: Guidance in Secondary Schools, RIU, SOED, Feb 1993). We elaborate on the aims and methodology of the research in chapter two but it is relevant to note here that a key aspect of the research was the relationship between needs and provision.

Structure of the report

Chapter one gives an overview of the guidance system in Scotland by way of context for the rest of the report and chapter two deals with the research aims and methodology. Chapters three and four give a picture of the schools involved in the research, chapter three focusing on the school staff who participated and chapter four describing the schools and the main features of guidance provision in them. We move on in chapter five to consider how the guidance needs of pupils and parents have been approached in the Scottish guidance system and, in particular, how the project schools conceptualised pupils’ and parents’ needs.

In chapters six, seven and eight we review the operation of the guidance arrangements from the perspective of teachers, pupils and parents. We present these as separate chapters since we believe it is important to convey pupils’ and parents’ views in their own right and in their own terms. The alternative approach of considering teachers’, pupils’ and parents’ views together risks submerging the pupil and parent perspective in a frame of reference largely defined by teachers.

The research coincided with a period of considerable change in the management and activities of the Careers Service, these are outlined in chapter nine, “Careers and the World of Work”. This chapter focuses on careers education and guidance, education-industry links and the school-Careers Service relationship, drawing together data from teachers, pupils, parents and careers officers. The final chapter outlines the main findings of the research, identifying issues that need to be considered.

The guidance system

Development

The Scottish Education Department (SED) memorandum “Guidance in Scottish Secondary Schools” in 1968 marked the formal introduction of structured guidance provision in Scottish schools. The system was further developed with the subsequent SED publication “The

Structure of Promoted Posts in Secondary Schools in Scotland” in 1971 which recommended a fundamental reallocation of the responsibilities of promoted posts, including guidance. A key recommendation of this memorandum was that guidance staff should continue to have a subject teaching role. By 1974 all education authorities had established guidance systems in their schools.

Staffing and time

Under the Scottish system of guidance, principal and assistant principal teachers of guidance, PT(G)s and APT(G)s, are responsible for the personal, social, curricular and vocational guidance of a caseload of pupils. Guidance staff are also, as we have noted, subject teachers. One region has, however, recently appointed full-time guidance staff on a pilot basis. The extent to which the remits of PT(G)s and APT(G)s are differentiated is variable: where the posts are differentiated, it can be on the basis of size of caseload, extra responsibilities, and/or a line management role for the PT(G).

The recommended staffing for guidance is approximately one promoted post for guidance for every 150 pupils (circular 826). The basis for the time allocation for guidance staff is generally accepted as the “Red Book” formula for staffing in secondary schools and assumes an allocation of 400 minutes for every promoted guidance teacher, in addition to 240 minutes of correction/preparation time. The way in which guidance teachers’ time and workload is usually considered, for example by HMI, is on the basis of 40 minutes per week for every 15 pupils. In practice, the allocation of time varies between, and sometimes within, schools; education authorities vary in the extent to which they have a regional policy on guidance time allocations and few monitor the arrangements made by schools.

Structure

Schools in Scotland vary in how they organise their guidance provision. There are two main options: vertical and horizontal. In a vertical system, guidance staff are responsible for a caseload of pupils from each of the year groups S1-S6, sometimes based on a house system; in a system organised on a horizontal basis, guidance staff relate to a separate year group(s). There are a range of possible variations on the two basic models. One of the most common is a rolling horizontal system where guidance teachers move up the school with their year group at the end of each session. Each model has a number of advantages and disadvantages but the more common type of provision in Scotland is a vertical one.

Typically promoted guidance staff are managed by a member of senior management, an assistant or depute headteacher. In the early years of the guidance system, this was likely to have been their sole management remit but over the last decade, it has become common for the guidance remit to be one among others held by the member of senior management.

Training

During pre-service training in Scotland, guidance will only be covered in very general terms by the majority of student teachers. Qualified teachers can take the part-time Certificate in Guidance; a Diploma in Guidance is also available as are other relevant qualifications such as the Certificate in Counselling and units within MEd courses. The Certificate is not a mandatory qualification for guidance teachers. Although the Certificate was originally designed for serving guidance staff, there is increasing uptake by non-promoted staff aiming for a guidance post in the future. The extent to which promoted guidance staff hold the Certificate varies across regions, reflecting each region’s policy. Long-standing members of guidance staff are less likely to hold a national qualification in guidance; their main training is short inservice courses.

Aims and practice

The aims and practice of guidance continues to evolve but the document “More Than Feelings of Concern” published by the Scottish Central Committee on Guidance in 1986 remains the defining document on guidance in Scotland. It identified eight objectives for guidance, the first of which remains the basis of guidance practice “to ensure that each pupil knows and is known personally and in some depth by at least one member of staff”. The other objectives relate to specific areas that guidance should address: pupils’ personal and social development; the response to individual pupil needs; fostering teacher-pupil relationships; links with parents; liaison with support and welfare agencies; and effective record-keeping and communication of information about pupils.

Most guidance teachers are generalists within the field of guidance, dealing with all aspects of provision. There are some “careers co-ordinators” who typically have the responsibility to liaise with the Careers Service; they may or may not deal with careers education, the careers library or work experience. The vocational guidance role of the careers co-ordinator is limited, reflecting the principle that pupils should develop a relationship with their own guidance teacher and that it is within this context that vocational as well as personal, social and curricular guidance is given.

Within their overall remit, the on-going aspects of the work of PT(G)s and APT(G)s in the Scottish guidance system, include the monitoring of attendance; review of progress in school subjects; and advising on subject choice. Although guidance staff historically had a direct role in discipline, schools have now generally excluded guidance from the issuing of disciplinary sanctions and instead emphasise their supportive role. Another common feature of the work of guidance staff concerns Personal and Social Education; most guidance teachers have some responsibility for the design and/or delivery of Personal and Social Education provision for pupils.

A major element of the work of guidance teachers is dealing with a range of individual casework that might concern pupils’ relationship with teachers or their peers or behavioural, personal, family or health issues. Some of these cases might require liaison with external agencies such as Psychological Services, Social Work and the Children’s Panel.

First Level Guidance

Guidance has been defined as a whole school responsibility, in which all teachers have a role to play. Register teachers, in particular, are generally encouraged to take on a pastoral role with their register class in addition to carrying out their administrative duties. More Than Feelings Of Concern argued the need to recognise and structure the extra pastoral involvement with pupils that some teachers take on, and that such staff should be given time, support and training. They adopted the term “First Level Guidance” to describe this, defining it as where staff who are not promoted guidance teachers accept a guidance-related role for a particular small group of pupils. Schools are at varying levels of development of FLG. A sophisticated FLG system is still the exception rather than the rule in schools.

Chapter 2 The research

Aims

The brief for the research was to review the effectiveness of guidance provision in meeting the needs of pupils and parents. Within this, the research was expected to address a number of specific questions:

- what are the curricular, vocational and personal guidance needs of pupils in the schools studied?
- do the guidance needs of pupils vary between the schools studied and if so in what ways? What are the implications for the ways in which guidance is organised in schools?
- how is the interface between vocational guidance and the Careers Service managed? There is a need to identify good practice.
- what links exist with local employers and how do they relate to the vocational and careers guidance offered?
- how effective are current guidance arrangements in the schools studied in the view of pupils, parents and teachers? (Research Specification, SOED)

Given the resources available, we did not think it feasible to include work with employers or parents in the first year of the research and instead proposed a two-stage approach. We suggested that in the first year we would focus on teachers, pupils and careers officers to gain an overview of pupils' guidance needs, map guidance arrangements in the participating schools, consider the effectiveness of provision and identify key issues. We envisaged that this first stage of research would identify areas for more focused study in year two which might include home-school links, employer liaison or the guidance needs of particular groups of pupils. This was the basis on which the research was commissioned.

Guidance includes vocational as well as personal, social and curricular guidance so that the research, in general, was expected to cover this aspect of guidance provision. However, we were also asked to consider specifically the management of the interface between vocational guidance and the Careers Service and school links with local employers and the relationship with vocational guidance. As we have indicated, we felt that work with employers was not realistic in the first year of the research and this was not subsequently identified as an area for study in the second year of the project. In part this was because of recent research on education business links in Scotland (Plotting Partnership: Education Business Links in Scotland, Turner, Lloyd, Stronach and Waterhouse, University of Stirling 1993) but, more importantly, because of the nature of the relationship between guidance and employers and education-industry links. The starting point of our research is the guidance system and our consideration of other features is in terms of their relationship to guidance. As we discuss in the chapter "Careers and the World of Work", we found that education-industry activity (with the exception of work experience) was managed and delivered separately from the guidance system. It would not, therefore, have been productive to undertake a specific study of employers and guidance. Nevertheless, the research did examine the extent to which guidance was involved in education industry liaison activities, their influence on pupils and on the guidance they received.

Methodology

The overall methodology for the research was laid down by the SOED, that the research should focus on a limited number of schools, contrasting in size, socio-economic composition of school roll, and type of location in two or three regions. It was expected that the study would be based on interviews with teachers, pupils, parents, careers officers and employers.

The SOED thought a qualitative approach was necessary because of the complex and multi-faceted nature of guidance work and its interaction with other aspects of school organisation. It was also thought such research would complement the concurrent HM Inspectorate report on guidance based on 250 inspections of guidance departments in secondary schools. This report “Effective Guidance in Scottish Secondary Schools” will be published in early 1996.

Our methodology reflected the SOED brief. The research was, therefore, based on six schools across four regions, chosen to reflect different approaches to guidance and a diversity of pupil needs. The first year of the research involved:

- interviews with promoted guidance staff and senior management and other staff with a guidance role.
- interviews with school careers officers, area careers officers and principal careers officers.
- group discussions (including questionnaires) with S2, S4 and S5 pupils.

The second year of the research included:

- interviews with key informants.
- a postal survey and interview study of parents and guidance.
- a focused study of guidance in the upper school.

These are described further below. Another school agreed to act as a pilot for the research and we carried out teacher and careers officer interviews and pupil group discussions there to test our questionnaires and interview schedules. We also piloted the parents’ questionnaire with two parents’ groups in this school.

The case-study approach

There are advantages and disadvantages in every research method. Clearly one of the disadvantages of a qualitative case-study approach is that it cannot claim to be generally representative of the area or group that is being studied in the way that a large-scale quantitative research can. In the case of this research, a qualitative approach, nevertheless, was a productive one. The reasons relate to the nature of guidance provision and processes and to the difficulty of trying to identify guidance needs and measure the effectiveness of guidance provision.

We found that guidance in the participating schools was a complex process and it was difficult sometimes to get a clear picture of provision. Practice did not necessarily conform to written policies and programmes and different members of staff not only held different views about guidance in the school but sometimes also gave different factual information about

basic elements of provision. As we discuss later in the report, we found that, in the participating schools, guidance was a highly individualistic activity and seemed to us to operate often on a set of unstated assumptions. A case-study approach was therefore valuable not just to get an accurate picture of provision but to understand the ethos and assumptions underpinning guidance in the schools and the attitudes and approaches of individual guidance teachers.

The identification and measurement of guidance needs and the evaluation of provision raise a number of conceptual and technical issues; many of the available quantitative techniques are very time-intensive and each has particular deficiencies and problems (Killeen and Kidd 1991). Given the problematic nature of the various approaches to the identification of needs and evaluation of provision, and in view of the resource constraints of the project, our approach of focusing on the providers and consumers is as reasonable as any other. The interviews and discussions with pupils, guidance and other staff, careers officers and parents enabled us to assess their perceptions of guidance needs and effectiveness, and, in particular, to compare the perceptions of each of the groups against the others. We were able to relate the perceptions of the different groups to the guidance practice actually in operation in the schools and to assess the situation in the project schools against regional and national statements on good practice.

Six schools across four regions took part in the research; this is clearly not a sample. But, as we describe below, we tried to ensure that the schools we selected, while not representative, were *illustrative* of different types of schools and guidance provision. The intention was to explore in a number of differing schools, the nature of pupils' guidance needs, the response of guidance and the effectiveness of this response. It was hoped that other schools would recognise elements of their own situation in one or more of the participating schools and be able to relate the issues discussed to their own context. We also emphasised "good practice" in our selection of schools since we felt this would be more productive in identifying how difficulties might be tackled.

We have found that, on the whole, our findings are in line with several HMI reports and other research such as "Home From School" (MacBeath, Mearns and Smith 1986) and the "Review of Guidance Structures and Processes in Glasgow Secondary Schools" (Inservice Division, University of Strathclyde 1993). Our interviews with key informants and feedback from our Project Committee also indicated that the themes and issues emerging from this research were ones which they thought pertinent to the guidance system in Scotland.

Choice of regions and schools

The choice of regions was arrived at in discussion with the SOED. Considerations in selecting regions were their different regional policies and level of support to guidance and the desire to avoid regions where there had been recent HMI inspections or surveys.

Through discussions with guidance advisors in four regions we compiled a list of 30 potential schools. We used several methods to identify the best possible combination of schools to achieve the maximum coverage of the main variables of interest. We used information from the guidance advisers and from HMI School Inspection Reports and other documentation. We also analysed data from the Scottish Young People's Survey¹ for these 30 schools which gave us a profile for each in respect of pupils' educational experience, post-school destinations and family

¹ SYPS is a biennial postal survey of a nationally representative sample of young people in Scotland. It collects a range of information on secondary education, post-school education and training, the labour market, and family background. We used the 1985, 1987, 1989 and 1991 surveys.

background. The main variables that we were interested in, and based our selection on, were: the type of guidance structure; the socio-economic composition of the school roll; school size; staying-on rates; attainment; local labour market; type of location; denominational/non-denominational; multi-cultural; and involvement in initiatives such as Skillseekers. Our selection reflected a bias towards “good practice” as far as this was possible to identify in discussion with guidance advisers and HMI.

We experienced considerable difficulty in gaining the agreement of six schools to take part in the research. We approached 15 schools in total before securing the involvement of the necessary six. The schools gave various reasons for non-participation but the main reason was lack of time and the need to avoid adding to teachers’ workload. The question of time and teacher workload had a continuing impact on the conduct of the research.

The difficulty in gaining the participation of schools had only a limited impact on the overall balance of the schools in the project, mainly in terms of the type of guidance structure. We had initially planned to select four schools with a vertical guidance system and two with a horizontal system. In the end we had a 3:3 split in terms of vertical and horizontal organisation. Otherwise, despite the difficulties, the schools involved satisfied our original selection criteria, including a perceived bias to “good practice” in terms of guidance provision.

The schools are described in chapter four but briefly they were:

- a medium-sized urban school with a large catchment area; the only denominational school; vertical guidance structure.
- a large urban school with a mixed roll; vertical guidance structure.
- a medium-sized urban school with a multi-cultural school roll; horizontal guidance structure.
- a relatively small school in an area of multiple deprivation; horizontal guidance structure.
- a large urban school with a mixed catchment including areas of deprivation; horizontal guidance structure.
- a small remote rural school with an extensive catchment; vertical guidance system.

The six schools were all through S1-S6 comprehensive schools.

In chapter nine, we discuss the research in relation to the Careers Service but it is relevant here to comment on the Careers Services that were involved in the research. As we have already noted, the focus of the research was the guidance system in secondary schools and our criteria for selecting schools reflected this. Consequently, we did not choose which Careers Services to study but simply worked with the careers officers and Careers Service associated with the participating schools.

Research activities

Teacher interviews

We carried out 95 interviews with 48 members of staff. Just over half were in promoted guidance posts; we also interviewed the member of senior management with the guidance remit and other teachers with a guidance-related role such as teaching personal and social education. We used a pre-interview questionnaire with the main categories of staff to collect basic data about the individual, their guidance role, their experience and training and their views on guidance provision in the school. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed to gain information and views on: pupils' guidance needs; guidance organisation; the effectiveness of provision; and the key issues facing guidance.

Careers officer interviews

We had planned to interview the school careers officer and the principal careers officer but because of some turnover of careers officers in the schools, we also interviewed at area careers officer level. We carried out 15 interviews with Careers Service staff. These interviews covered Careers Service provision in the schools, the relationship with guidance and the impact of changes in the Careers Service on work in schools.

Pupil discussion groups

We carried out three group discussions with S2, S4 and S5 pupils respectively, a total of 18 groups. Altogether 193 pupils were involved (96 boys and 97 girls).

We focused on these three year groups to enable us to consider pupils' guidance needs at important decision and transition points as well as their more continuous guidance needs.

The schools were responsible for selecting the pupils to take part. We asked for groups that reflected the pupil composition of the particular year group in that school. We are confident that the groups were not unduly biased, for example, towards those with more positive attitudes. (The views of pupils reported in chapter seven would seem to bear this out.) In some cases, the groups were made up from pre-existing for Personal and Social Education groups, in other cases, selected from classes such as English and PE.

We chose group discussions as the most effective way to collect data on the attitudes and perceptions of a relatively large number of pupils (nearly 200 in fact) but we were aware from other research we had conducted that pupils might not have a high level of awareness of the guidance needs or to be able to articulate them clearly (Howieson 1992; Howieson and Semple 1993). We were also conscious of the potential disadvantages of the group discussion format.

We therefore added two additional elements to the general discussion: work in pairs and a questionnaire completed on an individual basis. The format of the group discussions was that, after an introduction, pupils worked in pairs to identify aspects of guidance that they felt were important or of concern to them. This helped them to reflect on their guidance needs and experiences and formed the basis for the group discussion; it also provided us with written notes. At the end each pupil completed a questionnaire which collected personal information and pupils' experience of, and views on, guidance in the school (see appendix one). The notes made by each pair and the questionnaires were useful as a check on the views expressed in the groups; they allowed us to learn more about the views of those less comfortable about contributing to a group; and they provided extra information on topics

only briefly covered or not raised in the group discussion. The pupil perspective that we relate in chapter seven, uses all three data sources.

Parents' survey

In the second year of the research we conducted a study of parents' experience of, and views on, guidance. This had two elements: a postal survey and face-to-face interviews. The study focused on the parents of S3 and S5 pupils since these groups provided the opportunity to consider parental experience and opinion of specific aspects of provision at the two key stages of S2/S3 and S4/S5 as well as parental response more generally.

We sent a postal questionnaire to approximately half of the parents of S3 and S5 pupils in the six project schools (720); the final response rate was 42%. We carried out some preliminary analysis of the questionnaires to enable us to select parents for interview; approximately a third of respondents had indicated that they were willing to be interviewed. There were some differences between those who agreed, in principle, to be interviewed and respondents as a whole and these are described in chapter eight. However, in selecting parents for interview we tried to reflect the responses of the parent group in each school. The selection criteria we used included: overall satisfaction with guidance provision; contact or not with guidance; parents' socio-economic status and sex of parent. We interviewed 29 parents, with approximately the same number from each school and a balance of parents of S3 and S5 pupils. The interviews were semi-structured and based on the topic areas of the questionnaires; typically they lasted 1 - 1½ hours.

Upper school study

In the first year of the research, guidance in the upper school was identified as a topic for a focused study in year two. We therefore carried out further work in this area in three of the six project schools. The aim was to examine the curricular and vocational guidance provision for senior pupils in more detail, and, in particular, to explore the needs and opinions of different groups of senior pupils. We interviewed nine guidance staff, members of senior management and careers officers and held nine small group sessions with pupils, involving 40 pupils in total. The pupil groups were organised on the basis of attainment level. We conducted three groups in each school: one composed of pupils taking five or more Highers; another of pupils taking a mixture of Highers and National Certificate modules; and a third of pupils following a mainly modular curriculum.

Interviews with key informants

The final element of our fieldwork in year two was interviews with 12 key informants including guidance advisers, HMI, a social worker, an educational psychologist and careers officers. The purpose of these interviews was to provide an additional perspective on our findings and the opportunity to discuss the implications of the research.

Feedback to schools

When we negotiated their participation in the project, we agreed that we would provide feedback to each school if they wished this. Four of the six schools did so and we were very happy to hold sessions with the guidance staff. We found that staff were interested, in particular, in learning about pupils' opinions about guidance. More generally we are aware that their involvement in the research has had an effect on guidance provision in the schools, especially in three of them. A number of staff interviewed commented that the research had been useful for them because it had required them to reflect on guidance provision and, especially, to stand back and consider their aims and the rationale for their practice. More

specifically, we know that our questions highlighted a number of particular issues which the staff concerned decided they would act upon.

Chapter 3 Profile of school staff

Staff interviewed

In the first phase of the fieldwork we interviewed 48 members of staff in the six schools in the project. Just over half were in promoted guidance posts; we also interviewed members of senior management with a guidance role and some other teachers involved in guidance related areas. Table 3.1 summarises the position and role of the teachers interviewed.

Table 3.1
School staff interviewed

School staff interviewed	Guidance role
2 Headteachers	responsible for guidance
4 Depute Headteachers	1 responsible for guidance 1 involvement in PSE delivery 1 head of senior school; responsibility for PSE and EIL 1 some guidance responsibility
6 Assistant Headteachers	3 responsible for guidance 2 responsible for guidance in part of school 1 responsible for PSE
14 Principal Teachers of Guidance	12 PT(G)s 2 PT(Careers)
13 Assistant Principal Teachers of Guidance	11 APT(G)s 1 APT(Management) Careers Co-ordinator 1 APT(Management) PSE Co-ordinator
4 PSE Teachers	Delivery of PSE programme
1 EIL Co-ordinator	Develop and organise education-industry activities
2 Work Experience Co-ordinators	Organise work experience placements
1 FLG Tutor	Pastoral role with form class and PSE delivery
1 ESL Teacher	Provide support for bilingual pupils
48 in total	

Before our fieldwork began we developed pre-interview questionnaires for the main categories of staff we planned to interview: the member of senior management with responsibility for guidance; PTs and APTs in guidance; Personal and Social Education (PSE) teachers and First Level Guidance (FLG) tutors. In addition to these staff we also interviewed other teachers, for example, the Education-Industry Co-ordinator, who were not asked to complete a questionnaire. Forty one of the forty-eight staff interviewed were asked to do so and 36 returned a questionnaire. This chapter gives a profile of the 36 staff who completed a questionnaire.

Background of staff with a guidance function

Table 3.2 shows the subject discipline of promoted guidance staff (PT(G)s and APT(G)s) and others with a guidance function. It highlights the fact that in the six schools, teachers from across a range of subject backgrounds were involved in guidance, including science, maths, and technology as well as from social sciences and languages.

Table 3.2
Subject areas of staff with a guidance function

Subject	PT(G)	APT(G)	DHT/ AHT	PSE teacher	FLG tutor	All
Chemistry	1	-	1	-	-	2
Biology	-	1	-	-	1	2
Science + Learning Support	-	-	1	-	-	-
Maths	2	2	1	-	-	5
Maths + Computing	1	-	-	-	-	2
CDT + Technology	2	-	1	-	-	3
Home Economics	-	1	-	-	-	2
Business Studies	-	-	2	-	-	2
Music	1	-	-	-	-	1
English	3	-	-	-	-	3
History and Modern Studies	2	2	-	-	-	4
Geography	-	-	1	2	-	3
Geography + Learning Support	-	-	-	1	-	1
French + German	1	3	-	-	-	4
Physical Education	-	1	-	-	-	1
Religious Education	1	-	-	1	-	1
	(14)	(10)	(7)	(4)	(1)	(36)

Overall, the staff we interviewed were fairly evenly split between men and women but there were differences depending on the post (Table 3.3). Six of the seven members of senior management interviewed were men. Within the promoted guidance posts, at PT level there was an even split between men and women but at APT level we interviewed seven men and three women.

In interviews with school staff, a number mentioned the increasing proportion of older staff in guidance and in teaching as a whole. Table 3.3 bears this out: the majority of the staff were over 40 and, of the promoted guidance teachers, a third were over 50.

Table 3.3
Gender and age of staff with a guidance function

	PT(G)	APT(G)	DHT/AHT	PSE teacher	FLG tutor	All
Gender						
Male	7	3	6	3	-	19
Female	7	7	1	1	1	17
Age						
20-29	-	-	-	1	-	1
30-39	3	3	1	1	-	8
40-49	5	5	2	2	1	15
50-59	6	2	4	-	-	12
60+	-	-	-	-	-	-
	(14)	(10)	(7)	(4)	(1)	(36)

Experience of guidance

We wanted to gain an indication of staff's guidance experience, both in terms of how long they had held their present guidance-related post and also whether their experience of guidance, directly as guidance teachers or indirectly as subject teachers, was restricted to their current school.

Table 3.4
Staff with a guidance function: years in post

Years in current guidance post	PT(G)	APT(G)	DHT/AHT	PSE teacher	FLG tutor	All
<1	-	1	1	-	-	2
1-3	4	-	3	3	-	10
4-7	2	4	2	-	1	9
8-10	1	3	-	1	-	5
11-13	2	-	1	-	-	3
13+	5	2	-	-	-	7
	(14)	(10)	(7)	(4)	(1)	(36)

The majority of the PT(G)s and APT(G)s had considerable guidance experience. Most had been in their current post for over four years and half of the PT(G)s had been in post over 11 years (Table 3.4). Six of the seven members of the senior management (DHTs and AHTs) had been in their present post for seven years or less.

We assessed whether or not staff had had some wider experience of, or exposure to, guidance in two ways. Firstly we asked whether or not they had taught in another school (senior management were not asked this in their questionnaire but most had worked in other schools). Secondly we asked whether they had held a guidance-related post in another school. About three-quarters of the teachers (excluding DHTs and AHTs) had taught in at least one

other school and so had at least some exposure to a different guidance system. The APT(G)s were less likely than PT(G)s to have taught in a different school, half had done so. No APT(G)s had held a guidance post in another school; just over half PT(G)s had (five out of nine). The picture for APT(G)s is one of limited exposure to guidance provision in other schools whether as a member of teaching or guidance staff. PT(G)s had more experience of guidance provision elsewhere through their teaching experience but just over half had had no direct involvement in guidance in another school (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5
Staff with a guidance function: experience in other schools

	PT(G)	APT(G)	PSE teacher	FLG tutor	All
<i>Any teaching experience in another school</i>					
yes	11	5	4	1	21
no	3	5	-	-	8
	(14)	(10)	(4)	(1)	(29)
<i>Any guidance post in another school</i>					
yes	5	-	1	-	6
no	9	10	3	1	23
	(14)	(10)	(4)	(1)	(29)

The issue of whether or not it is better for members of senior management (SMT) with a guidance remit to have a guidance background is a matter of some debate and is an issue that we will consider later in this report. We found that three of the seven SMT staff interviewed had previously held a promoted guidance post, in one case within the same school.

Training and qualifications

In terms of the training and qualifications of staff, under a third of the promoted guidance teachers held a national qualification in guidance (Table 3.6). Five of the 14 PT(G)s had the Certificate or Diploma in Guidance. One had both the Certificate in Guidance and the Certificate in Counselling. Two of the ten APT(G)s held the Certificate in Guidance and another in session 1993/94 was part way through the Certificate. None of the other staff had national certification in guidance. Four of the seven staff with national awards and the APT(G) taking the Certificate in Guidance course were employed in the same region. The concentration of training among these staff partly reflected the policy in that region to encourage promoted guidance teachers to undertake nationally recognised training.

Six other promoted guidance staff (4 PT(G)s and 2 APT(G)s) had formal guidance or counselling qualifications either by means of regional certification or units taken as part of another qualification such as an M.Ed. None of the other staff had a formal guidance-related qualification.

Most staff had undertaken some guidance-related in-service in the past three years. Two AHT(G)s had had in-service in Managing Guidance as had two PT(G)s. Staff varied in the extent of the in-service they had been on but there was no obvious pattern in the extent and nature of in-service and the school or region in which they were employed. The courses

attended included: Records of Achievement; JIG-CAL; drug awareness; health and HIV/AIDS; child abuse/ protection; bullying; and sexuality.

Table 3.6

Training and qualifications of staff with a guidance function

	PT(G)	APT(G)	PT(G)+ APT(G)	DHT/ AHT	PSE teacher	FLG tutor	All
National qualification in guidance ¹	5	2+1 on course	7+1 on course	-	-	-	7+1 on course
Diploma in Guidance ²	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Certificate in Guidance ²	4	2+1 on course	6+1 on course	-	-	-	6+1 on course
Certificate in Counselling ²	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Certificated units in guidance	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Regional guidance and social education certificate	2	2	4	-	-	-	4
Regional counselling certificate	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Guidance related in-service (1/2-5 days)	14	10	24	6	1	-	31
	(14)	(10)	(24)	(7)	(4)	(1)	(36)

¹ Defined as either the Diploma or Certificate in Guidance.

² One PT(G) held both the Certificate in Guidance and the Certificate in Counselling.

Chapter 4 Guidance provision in the Project Schools (1993/94)

In this chapter we provide a brief description of the project schools and an overview of their guidance system and provision. All of them were all-through S1-S6 comprehensive schools. We would emphasise that this chapter is historical in character since it describes the situation in the project schools at the time of our main fieldwork element in the first year of the project (January - May 1994). Table 4.1 gives details of the schools; Table 4.2 gives key features of guidance provision in the schools.

The Project Schools

School A

School A was a medium-sized urban school serving a wide catchment area. It was the only denominational school in the project. In 1993, attainment at Standard Grade was slightly below the Scottish national average. It had a relatively large proportion of S5 winter leavers. A high proportion of leavers entered Youth Training; the proportion of pupils who went into higher education in 1993 was around the Scottish average but a smaller proportion entered further education compared with Scotland as a whole and compared with the other project schools.

The guidance system was organised on a vertical basis in which pupils were allocated to one of three houses. An AHT was responsible for guidance and for the promoted guidance staff.

Features of guidance provision in School A included: register classes organised on an all-age vertical basis; a PT(G) with a specific role as Careers Co-ordinator for the school; an annual programme of interviews with all pupils; responsibility for Personal and Social Education² (PSE) being outwith guidance, instead being under the curricular remit of the AHT (Curriculum); enhanced TVEI-funded guidance interviews at S5 and S6 with the aim of raising attainment; and the presence of a school-based social worker.

School B

School B was a large urban school and was the biggest school in the project. A relatively high proportion of pupils returned for a full fifth-year but a smaller proportion stayed on into S6. Pupils' performance in Standard Grade in 1993 was around the Scottish average. Levels of entry to both Youth Training and higher education were above Scottish level figures.

School B had a vertical guidance system with four houses. Register classes were organised on a horizontal model based on year groupings. The structure and management of the school was in a process of change during the period of our research. This had implications for relationships between guidance staff and AHTs although it was planned that the AHT currently holding the remit for guidance would continue to have overall responsibility.

Features of guidance in the school included: the recent introduction of a weekly guidance meeting; a PT(G) with the role of Careers Co-ordinator; the recent development of a PSE programme from S1-S5; and increased resources and improved accommodation for PSE.

School C

² We use the term Personal and Social Education (PSE) to refer to the taught programme encompassing personal, social, health and careers education. These programmes had different names in the project schools; we use the term PSE for all of them.

School C was a middle-sized urban school with a multi-cultural roll. It received a high proportion of pupils via placing requests including from areas of deprivation. In 1993 the attainment of pupils at Standard Grade was slightly above the Scottish average at Credit level and was the second highest among the project schools. A very high proportion of pupils stayed on into S5 and S6 and a larger percentage of leavers entered higher education compared with Scottish figures and with four of the other project schools.

The guidance structure in School C was a rolling horizontal one in which guidance teachers moved up the school with their year group. Register classes were also organised on this basis. Managerial responsibility for guidance, PSE and careers education was in a transitional stage during our research in the school.

Relevant aspects of guidance in School C were: a review of the remits of PT(G)s and APT(G)s; annual interviews with S3 and S4 pupils as a TVEI target; the intention to develop PSE for S5 and S6; and the close relationship of guidance teachers and Year Heads.

School D

A relatively small school, School D mainly served an area of local authority housing in what was classified as an area of multiple deprivation. School D had the lowest staying-on rate of the project schools and a high proportion of S5 winter leavers. Pupil attainment in Standard Grade was substantially lower than average levels in Scotland in 1993. A very small proportion of leavers entered higher education; the school was part of a special entry to higher education scheme. The single biggest pupil destination was Youth Training.

School D had a horizontal guidance structure with guidance teachers moving with their year group from S1 to S6. The headteacher was the manager of guidance in the school but all of the senior management team had explicit guidance commitments.

Notable aspects of guidance in the school included: the central place of PSE in guidance whereby guidance teachers delivered one period of PSE to their own caseload from S1-S6 on a regular weekly basis; the key role of PSE, and therefore guidance, in the school's Development Plan; and the introduction of First Level Guidance in S1 as part of the Development Plan, this included the FLG teacher team-teaching PSE with the guidance teacher.

School E

School E was the second biggest of the project schools. It had a mixed urban catchment which included a substantial number of pupils from a relatively deprived background. Pupils' performance at Standard Grade in 1993 differed from the Scottish average being somewhat lower at Credit level. A high proportion of pupils remained at school for both S5 and S6. In 1993 entry to Youth Training, further education and higher education were around the Scottish level but entry to employment was higher than in Scotland as a whole and in the other project schools.

Guidance was structured on a horizontal basis; in the past whether guidance teachers stayed with their year group until S4, S5 or S6 varied, the new policy was that they should continue through to S6. Register classes were also horizontal. The depute headteacher acted as guidance co-ordinator.

Relevant aspects of guidance in School E included: a recent decision to allocate three extra posts (because of an increase in the school roll) to guidance; a recent change to the remits of PT(G)s and APT(G)s to increase differentiation; the close relationship of guidance teachers

and the relevant Year Heads; and the presence of a school-based education welfare officer and a part-time social worker.

School F

School F was a small remote rural school with an extensive catchment area. A very high proportion of pupils stayed on for both a fifth and sixth year. In 1993, pupils' performance at Standard Grade was well above the Scottish average and the highest among the project schools. A large proportion of pupils from School F in 1993 went into higher education, around the same proportion as from School C.

School F had a vertical guidance structure; register classes were organised on a horizontal basis.

A particular feature of guidance in School F was its staffing arrangements. The school's roll warranted guidance staffing at the level of one PT(G); the school decided instead to create two APT(G) posts for pastoral guidance.

For other APT posts in the school, the policy was to use them on a whole school rather than a subject basis. This meant that in addition to its allocated promoted guidance posts, School F also had an APT PSE Co-ordinator and an APT Careers Co-ordinator.

The headteacher had oversight of the APT(G)s and the depute head had responsibility for the PSE and Careers Co-ordinators. Other features of guidance in School F were: a programme of annual interviews with pupils; and First Level Guidance which was more developed in S1-S3 where register teachers took their own register class for PSE.

The guidance system

Table 4.2 summarises the main elements of guidance and a number of related features in the project schools. Each of the following sections relates to a column in table 4.2.

Structure and management

The project schools were evenly divided between vertical and horizontal guidance systems. School E which was organised on a horizontal basis was considering the possibility of changing to a vertical structure. With the exception of School A, however, register classes were organised on a horizontal basis. In School A, (with a vertical guidance structure) register classes were also vertical.

In four of the project schools, either a depute head or an assistant headteacher had responsibility for guidance and promoted guidance staff. In the other two schools (D and F), the headteacher had oversight of guidance although other members of senior management also had an involvement; in particular in School D, where guidance teachers were responsible to either the AHT (Lower School) or AHT (Upper School) on an everyday basis. In School A, where PSE was not a guidance responsibility, the AHT (Curriculum) held this remit.

Apart from senior management who had a formal role in guidance, a key relationship for guidance teachers was with the AHTs/Year Heads, largely because of their role in relation to discipline.

Schools A, B, D and F had a written guidance policy; School E had a statement of aims, objectives and structure and School C, a description of the role and functions of guidance. The aims and/or objectives of guidance in the project schools are presented in Table 4.3.

Time and caseloads

Each of the project schools was asked to give the official time allocation for promoted guidance staff and each promoted guidance teacher interviewed also noted their own time allocation and caseload. These are given in Table 4.2. The figures exclude guidance teachers' subject non-contact time and also exclude any contact time teaching PSE.

There were differences between the stated official time allocation for promoted staff and the actual allocations of guidance teachers in three of the six project schools (Schools B, C and D). It was apparent that workloads (judged in terms of time allocation and caseload) not only varied across schools but also within schools. In none of the project schools did all of the guidance staff interviewed have the minimum recommended time of 40 minutes per week for every 15 pupils on their caseload. In two schools, C and D, the majority of those interviewed did have the recommended minimum or above but only a minority in Schools A and E and none of the guidance teachers interviewed in Schools B and F received the minimum recommended time.

Virtually all of the guidance staff said in interview that they used subject non-contact time for their guidance work. In the questionnaire they completed, the majority gave their official subject non-contact time of 240 minutes but a small number stated that they had 180 minutes of subject preparation time. The picture in terms of guidance teachers' overall time and workload as both a guidance and subject teacher is a complex one but there appeared to be no general relationship between the amount of time staff were given for their guidance duties and their subject commitments. As a consequence some individual guidance teachers in some schools were considerably worse off than their colleagues.

PT(G) and APT(G) remits

School F did not have a PT(G) post. In the other five schools, the extent of differentiation of the remit of PT(G) and APT(G) varied.

In Schools C and E, there had been relatively little difference in the tasks, and, to some extent, in the size of the caseload of APT(G)s and PT(G)s. In School E, their remit had recently been changed so that PT(G)s were now in charge of a whole year group; had additional responsibilities, for example, for part of PSE; and a line management role with register teachers. APT(G)s were "twinned" and shared a year group with each other. In School C, the intention was that from the next session, PT(G)s were to be in charge of two year groups, twinned with an APT(G) for one of them; would have two more classes than the APT(G) on their direct caseload; and exercise oversight of the APT(G).

In School D, the post of PT(G) and APT(G) was only distinguished by size of caseload; in School A, the PT(G) had a larger caseload and overall responsibility for a house. The remit of the two posts differed in a number of respects in School B with the PT(G) having a larger caseload, responsibility for the PSE programme and supervision of APT(G)s and register teachers.

Guidance meetings

All of the project schools had timetabled guidance meetings; in School D, the meeting was a combined guidance/Board of Studies meeting. The meetings in four schools were chaired by the AHT(G) or headteacher and by guidance teachers in Schools E and F. There were some differences in focus of the guidance meetings across the project schools. In School F, where the meeting was run by the guidance teachers with occasional attendance by the headteacher, there was more of an emphasis on casework. In four other schools, the focus of the guidance meeting was more on whole-school issues although whether these were more administrative, pastoral or policy related differed somewhat across these schools. In School D, the guidance meeting served a number of functions: as a decision-making forum; an opportunity to consider day-to-day guidance issues; and as a medium for staff development.

Register teachers

With the exception of School A, register teachers were organised on a horizontal basis. In four of the project schools, register teachers were encouraged to take on a pastoral as well as an administrative role but the extent to which they did so was limited. In School D, First Level Guidance had been introduced in S1 and FLG teachers were involved in team teaching PSE with the guidance teacher. In School F, register teachers fulfilled a First Level Guidance role, especially in S1-S3 where they taught PSE to their own register class and met with guidance teachers to discuss pupils.

Discipline

In School A, guidance teachers had just been removed from a direct disciplinary role in session 1993/94 and, in School D, guidance teachers were in the process of losing this role as the 1992/93 S1 and S2 year groups moved up the school. In all of the project schools, the guidance role in discipline was seen as a supportive one rather than one which involved the administration of discipline procedures. In all of the schools, guidance teachers received copies of disciplinary referrals to enable them to monitor pupils' behaviour; in School B the policy was for guidance teachers to interview any pupil who had had five disciplinary referrals. In School E, discipline-related matters were discussed at the weekly meetings between guidance teachers and Year Heads.

Pupil contact

Four of the project schools had a policy of annual interviews with all pupils but only two were achieving this aim (A and F). Schools D and E did not have such a policy although the introduction of a programme of annual interviews was under discussion in School E. The view in School D was that a programme of interviews was not necessary because of guidance teachers' weekly contact with their own caseload in the PSE classes.

In all of the project schools, S2, S4 and S5 pupils had an interview as part of the course choice process. In S2, guidance staff did course choice interviews in all of the schools. In S4 and S5, guidance teachers were responsible for the interviews in Schools A, B and C and in the other three schools, senior management was also involved in course choice interviews. In the case of Schools D and F, this was in addition to pupils' interview with their guidance teacher. In School E, the intention was that the AHT conducted interviews jointly with the guidance teacher; in practice, time pressures meant that some interviews were conducted only by the AHT or only by the guidance teacher.

In Schools C, D and E, guidance teachers interviewed pupils before their interview with the careers officer to enable them to complete the necessary report.

TVEI funding was used in Schools A and C to resource extra contact with certain pupils. In School A this resulted in three interviews per session with S5 and S6 pupils and, in School C, annual interviews with S3 and S4 pupils.

In all of the project schools, staff emphasised that, in addition to scheduled interviews they carried out a high number of interviews with individual pupils; these interviews might arise from a particular incident or in response to a difficulty identified by themselves, other teachers, parents or pupils themselves. In such cases, these pupils might well be interviewed more than once. Guidance teachers also noted that they had other sorts of contact with their caseload, for example, in their subject teaching and when dealing with routine administrative matters such as issuing permission slips.

Personal and Social Education (PSE)

The development and implementation of PSE was the responsibility of guidance in five of the six project schools; in School A, PSE was part of the remit of the AHT (Curriculum). Guidance teachers were involved in the delivery of PSE classes in all of the project schools. In School D, guidance staff were wholly responsible for its delivery, teaching their own caseload with the exception of some team teaching with FLG tutors in S1. In School C, PSE was mainly taught by guidance teachers and in the other schools by a combination of guidance and other volunteer staff.

The extent of PSE programmes varied across the project schools. Four of the six schools had a relatively comprehensive programme in place for S1-S5 (Schools B, D, E and F). These schools, with the exception of School B, also had an S6 programme. In these four schools, pupils had 40-60 minutes of PSE per week (ie either 1 or 2 periods depending on the duration of a period in each school). In School C there was no real S5 or S6 programme but in S1-S4, pupils had 55 minutes of PSE. There was no timetabled PSE provision for S1 and S2 pupils in School A where S3-S6 PSE classes were organised on a rotational basis with pupils being extracted from other subjects. In three schools, PSE was taught in full class sizes of around 28-30 (Schools A, B and C).

There was considerable similarity across the project schools in the content of the S1-S4 PSE programmes. School E did have much less of an emphasis on social education elements in S3 and S4 where provision had a more careers-related focus.

S5 and S6 was the stage at which there was some choice and differentiation in PSE provision. In Schools B and E, pupils had some degree of choice in their S5 topics and, in School E, which also had an S6 programme, pupils again had some choice. Schools A, E and F, had some differentiation in S5 to try and reflect pupils' academic level and likely post-school destination. School C, visited again as part of the second year of the research, had by then also introduced an S5 programme designed on a differentiated basis.

Careers Education and Education Industry Links

Most careers education, including work experience, was delivered as part of the PSE programme in five of the six project schools. The main exception being in School C where work experience was separate from PSE provision and had little input from guidance staff. In three of the five schools where work experience was delivered within PSE, the organisation of placements was handled by a senior teacher. Four schools certificated work experience via the National Certificate module.

In general, EIL activities such as Young Enterprise³ and Understanding Industry⁴ happened outwith PSE provision and did not involve guidance staff.

The project schools varied in the extent to which post-school options and, in particular, higher education were dealt with within PSE provision and were the responsibility of guidance. Typically UCAS/HE sessions were held outwith the PSE and run either by senior management or a senior teacher with that designated responsibility. In three schools, FE/HE conventions and careers conventions were organised by non-guidance staff. In School D, liaison with the local university's special entrance scheme was the responsibility of a member of senior management.

Record of Achievement

The project schools were at different stages in the implementation of Records of Achievement (RoAs). Three schools were in their second year of implementation, School B was in the first year and full implementation in the next session (1994/95) was planned in Schools A and F. In four schools, guidance had the lead role in the management and co-ordination of RoAs; there was some guidance involvement in School B and in School A, the precise role of guidance was still to be decided.

School Development Plan

Three of the project schools (B, D and E) had a school development plan; Schools C and F were in the process of producing one for the next session (1994/95); and School A intended to have one in place in session 1995/96. Guidance-related aims were included, or expected to be included, in all of the development plans. Of the three schools with an existing plan, the role of guidance in the plan and the impact of development planning on guidance varied. In School D, guidance had a central role in delivering development plan aims; the intention was to improve pupils' behaviour, attendance and, ultimately, attainment via PSE. In School E, guidance as a department had a number of specific targets to meet such as the production of a guidance handbook and the development of PSE provision. School B's development plan had targets relating to RoAs, work experience and education-industry links but no guidance specific aims.

Evaluation of guidance

None of the project schools had an established system to assess guidance needs, to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance provision and review progress on a regular basis. School D planned a general review of guidance provision, possibly using the HMI Performance Indicators for Guidance and/or regional quality assurance indicators.

The introduction of development planning had had an impact on all of the schools in respect of evaluation. School C had consulted with parents and pupils on various aspects of school provision, including guidance, as part of its development planning process. It was the intention in School A to review guidance provision using the HMI Performance Indicators for Guidance as part of development planning work. In the three schools with a development plan, guidance-related targets were reviewed. But none of the project schools had plans to establish a regular review cycle of their guidance provision.

³ Young Enterprise involves senior pupils developing a business idea supported by employees, often young managers, from industry.

⁴ Understanding Industry is a programme for 16-19 year olds to encourage a better understanding of industry and commerce by their participation in workshop sessions led by practising experts from a range of industries.

Careers Service

Staffing

Careers Service time allocation to the project schools varied depending on the S5 and S6 roll and regional Careers Service policy. In School E, which had the lowest time allocation in relation to pupil numbers, pupils could make an appointment at the careers office if they could not see the careers officer in school.

Three of the six schools (B, C and E) had experienced some changes in careers officers in recent years because of staff turnover and, in School A, the designated careers officer had been absent on long-term sick leave with cover provided by a number of colleagues.

In Schools A, B and F, the Careers Co-ordinator ie the guidance teacher with the specialist remit for careers, was the main contact with the Careers Service. Of the three schools without a specialist careers post within guidance, in Schools D and E, one PT(G) was the nominated contact and, in School C, the careers officer liaised with the guidance teacher of the individual or year concerned.

Activities

Careers officers were involved in a range of activities in the project schools, for example, in all but one school, input into preparation for S2 subject choice; attendance at parents evenings and careers conventions; providing various talks, including, in two schools, on Skillseekers; and the provision of careers information. The extent of their involvement in PSE differed across the project schools. In two schools (A and F), they had little or no input into PSE; in the other four schools they had some involvement, for example, through their input to S2 subject choice and introduction to the careers library. In School E, they played a large part in the S5 and S6 PSE programme including the provision of occupational talks. With the exception of School D, careers officers provided drop-in clinic sessions at lunch time so that pupils could come along to see them without an appointment.

Interviews

The bulk of careers officers time, however, was devoted to interviews with S4-S6 pupils. Apart from School E, careers officers used screening questionnaires backed by referrals from guidance to establish priorities for interviews. Typically in an academic session, the pattern was to interview HE applicants first, followed by S5 winter leavers, S4-S6 summer leavers and then S4 and S5 returners. School E had more of an emphasis on pupil self-referral than the others but guidance staff strongly encouraged those they felt needed to see a careers officer to do so.

All S4 pupils were interviewed by the careers officer in three schools (A, B and F); around three-quarters in School D and in Schools C and E all S4 leavers were interviewed. In Schools A and B where all S4 pupils received an interview, the Careers Service intention was to move towards a more selective system based on pupil and guidance referral.

Before pupils' interviews, with the exception of School F, the project schools provided the careers officer with career profiles for each pupil; in School F, the careers officer had access to pupils' S3 reports. In Schools A, C, D and E, the reports were written by the pupils' guidance teacher and in School B by the Careers Co-ordinator.

Four of the six schools had a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Careers Service; School B was in the process of negotiating its SLA and in School A, an interim one had been agreed in the absence of the school's designated careers officer.

External agencies

Three of the project schools (A, B and E) had regular meetings with external agencies and in each case guidance was represented by the member of senior management with oversight of guidance. Schools C, D and F had no regular meetings with Social Work or Psychological Services and in these schools, most contact with Social Work was on an ad hoc basis by telephone. Two of the schools with no regular meetings, C and D, were planning to set up joint assessment meetings with Social Work and Psychological Services; no real need was identified for such meetings by School F.

Two schools, A and E, had a school-based social worker and School E also had an education welfare officer located in the school full-time. Another resource for School E was access to a day unit staffed by social workers, community education personnel and teachers who also worked in the school itself.

Primary/secondary links

All of the project schools had an established P7/S1 transition programme. Typically this involved visits by staff, senior management, guidance and usually learning support to the associated primaries. In three schools (A, B and C), former pupils of the associated primaries also took part. Five schools held information sessions and/or open days/evenings for prospective parents. In the case of School C which had a high proportion of placing requests, parents of "placing request pupils" attended the open day but not the parents' information session.

All of the project schools organised induction visits for prospective S1 pupils, including "placing request pupils" while they were still in P7. These lasted between one and three days.

The Government's 5-14 Programme had encouraged greater links between the project schools and their associated primaries with primary teachers and subject staff working together on curricular projects for primary pupils.

Chapter 5 The guidance needs of pupils and their parents

Background

Before considering how the project schools conceptualise the guidance needs of pupils and parents, we begin with a brief overview of how the issue has been approached in the guidance system in Scotland. Since the establishment of the guidance system in Scottish secondary schools, national and regional documents on guidance have generally been based on the same sort of definition or description of pupil needs. More than Feelings of Concern (1986) remains the defining national document about guidance in Scotland. It makes clear that guidance should respond to the needs of all pupils, not simply the “problem” ones, and that it should be concerned with all aspects of pupils’ development: personal, educational, social and intellectual.

Pupils needs have traditionally been categorised within the tripartite division of personal, social and welfare guidance; educational and curricular guidance; and careers and vocational guidance. Within this division, different types of need have been identified (eg Grampian Regional Council, 1993):

- *continuing developmental needs* - experienced by all pupils throughout their school career, for example, developing self-awareness, self-assessment and decision-making skills.
- *transition needs* - experienced by all pupils at specific and defined times eg P7/S1 transfer; S2/S3 option choices; post-school transitions.
- *personal needs* - resulting from crises which are likely to be experienced by most pupils at some stage but are generally not predictable, for example, illness, bereavement and family breakdown.
- *specific needs* - needs that are particular to a certain school or area or to only some pupils because of, for example, the level of parental support; social deprivation; physical or mental handicap; and the particular school catchment.

Nevertheless, although they refer to needs, a feature of the national and regional documentation has been a tendency to focus on the guidance provision that should be offered and guidance teachers’ duties or role. Pupils’ guidance needs are as much to be inferred from the recommended provision as they are directly described. This is a point that will be returned to later in this chapter.

More recently, however, there has been increasing emphasis on trying to set out pupils’ entitlements to guidance rather than describing the provision that should be offered. It is argued that “the adoption of such an approach, by firmly placing the basic needs of all pupils to the fore ... serves to concentrate the minds of schools on accurately identifying the guidance needs and entitlements of all pupils” (p.3, Unit B “Managing Guidance”, SOED, Northern College, St Andrew’s College, Nov 1994). Nevertheless, there is some wariness about implementing the entitlements approach, since by specifying pupils’ and parents’ entitlements, expectations might be created that cannot be fulfilled. The growing importance and use of performance indicators and development planning is also giving more emphasis to

the monitoring and evaluation of provision and, within this, identification of pupil and parent needs.

There has been even less of a focus on parents' needs of the guidance system. *More Than Feelings of Concern* states that establishing and maintaining contact with the home is a crucial aspect of the guidance function of the school and recognises the importance of parents. In acknowledgement of the importance of the home-school relationship, it devotes a chapter specifically to communication with the home and how it can best be done. It does not, however, discuss parents' needs of guidance. The HMI Guidance Performance Indicator "Partnership with Parents" also concentrates on the extent and nature of communication between guidance and parents. Parents' needs can be inferred from both documents but are not directly identified in either. The "Home From School" research study (MacBeath et al, 1980), was specifically concerned with parents' expectations of schools, some of which related to guidance. We discuss the issue of parent needs in more detail in chapter eight, *The Parent Perspective*.

Identification of pupils' guidance needs by the project schools

Focus on provision

When we asked staff to identify the pupils' needs to which they felt guidance should be responding, they frequently began by telling us about needs but quickly moved on to telling us about provision and guidance teachers' tasks at the each school stage. In thinking about why they responded in this way, a number of reasons come to mind. At a general level, their response is an example of what seems to us to be one of the underlying characteristics of guidance in the project schools, that is the implicit nature of much that is assumed and carried out in guidance. Guidance practice seems often to be based on a set of unstated assumptions that are assumed to be shared by guidance and other school staff. More specifically, their response may reflect the same tendency found in publications on guidance that we noted in the preceding section. Another reason may be the lack of any sustained attempt to evaluate pupils' needs in the schools concerned. While some staff referred to the range of pupil needs identified in "More Than Feelings of Concern", none of the schools in the project had tried to assess pupils' needs in their own school on a regular and systematic basis.

Limited assessment of needs

Two of the six schools had carried out a survey of pupils' awareness and opinion of guidance but this did not try to assess needs. In five of the schools, pupils' reactions to their PSE programme were sought but the extent of this varied considerably and the evaluations did not seek to identify guidance needs in general.

Asking pupils to identify their guidance needs is, of course, only one method and can only be a partial one. Pupils are likely to experience more needs than those they are able to articulate, that is, to have more than their stated needs. A few staff mentioned that, for example, they routinely monitored their pupils' report cards to pick up on any problems and others stated that they identified needs during their subject or PSE teaching and through liaising with other staff. The latter was often on an informal basis. In those schools achieving a programme of annual interviews with pupils, these provided a potential means of identifying needs. However, none of the schools in the project conducted a regular, comprehensive review of pupil needs. Thus when individual members of staff commented on needs that they felt were particular to their school, or to certain pupils within the school, they were doing so on the basis of personal opinion and experience.

The lack of a team approach in four of the six project schools and the general focus of most of the guidance meetings on administrative rather than developmental issues, compounded the lack of formal evaluations. The situation in the majority of the project schools (in terms of communication within the guidance staff and with senior management) meant there was limited cross-checking and balancing of individual teacher's personal views and experiences. It also meant that individual reflections on pupil needs were less likely to inform the development planning process.

Focus on school stage

Staff's focus on guidance provision at the various school stages may also reflect how the "business" of schools is generally conceived of, that is, schools are concerned with the delivery of stage-related curricula and syllabi. Most guidance staff in the project schools identified a similar range of guidance needs or provision and noted the same sorts of needs and provision at the various school stages. But while stage may be an obvious defining characteristic, guidance staff also commented frequently about the variation in needs within year groups because of different levels of maturity. This illustrates that in considering pupils' guidance needs, there are what might be considered their own self-generated needs, and other needs that arise from external circumstances to do with how the school curriculum is organised and schools' administrative and bureaucratic requirements. The latter type of need is evident in the emphasis of staff's answers to our questions about pupil needs.

Focus on problems rather than needs

Another feature of teachers' responses to our question about pupils' needs is that it was frequently translated as pupils' "problems" rather than their needs. While this is not unexpected, given the focus of guidance teachers' work, this orientation on problems is likely to have implications for the profile and role of guidance in these schools (for example, undermining a more developmental approach) and is likely to reinforce the marginal position of "ordinary" pupils in relation to guidance.

In the following pages we present guidance teachers' and senior management's responses when asked about pupils' guidance needs. Where relevant we include careers officers' comments. To some extent we have inferred pupils' needs from staffs' responses. Overall, we found that we did not obtain neat answers to our research questions about needs but this accurately reflected how staff in the project schools conceptualised the issue.

Pupils' general guidance needs

Several general needs were noted by most staff interviewed. The most fundamental pupil need commonly identified by staff concerned pupils' need for individual attention, to be listened to, to know that they are valued and taken seriously and to have someone to provide a consistent, non-punitive relationship from year to year. This echoes the view of guidance expressed in *More Than Feelings of Concern* that "each pupil knows and is known personally and in some depth by at least one member of staff" and that there should be "maximum possible continuity in this relationship" (p.4, *More Than Feelings Of Concern*, 1986).

Curricular guidance and review of progress was another commonly mentioned pupil need. Staff felt that pupils required regular feedback on performance and curricular guidance provided by someone with an overview of individuals' educational process.

A less frequently identified need focused more on the development of pupils' decision-making skills, that rather than schools seeking to provide pupils with the "right" answers,

pupils needed help to become more aware, to assess issues and to come to their own judgements.

Pupils' guidance needs by stage

S1

At the S1 stage, most staff identified the need to help pupils settle in and adjust to secondary school and to integrate and form new relationships with their peers. Responding to pupils' apprehension about bullying was mentioned by staff in four of the six project schools.

Several staff noted that some pupils found the transition from primary to secondary more traumatic than did others although they could not identify the reasons for this. These pupils and their parents, however, required more support and reassurance from guidance staff in S1.

While all the project schools mentioned a need to help pupils integrate as a group, staff from two schools identified this as a specific issue in their school, in one case because of the large number of primary schools from which pupils were coming as a result of parental requests, and, in the other, the geographically widespread nature of the school catchment area.

Staff generally emphasised that in S1, pupils needed to be informed about the guidance system and to get to know their guidance teacher.

S2

Pupils needs in S2 identified by staff related to residual settling in and peer relationship issues; health education; course/option choice; and behaviour.

Although staff noted that some pupils still needed help in adjusting to secondary school life, this was not a major need. Peer relationships seemed to be more of a concern to staff, for example, bullying, name-calling and peer group pressure. In all of the project schools, staff mentioned that falling out with friends, name-calling and bullying were common reasons for pupils to go to their guidance teacher. A number commented that in the case of reported bullying, the incidents could vary considerably in seriousness.

Staff identified S2 as a time when pupils began to explore their identity and test the limits of what they could and could not do within the school situation. This could result in misbehaviour, poor time-keeping and bad attendance, the main reasons in the lower school for individual intervention by guidance teachers. It was generally felt that boys were more likely than girls to be involved in misdemeanours, especially of the more overt nature.

In all of the project schools, staff saw a need for the PSE programme to help S2 pupils prepare and deal with their developing maturity, for example, in terms of identity, relationships, values and health education (sex education, alcohol, drugs, HIV/AIDS, healthy eating and lifestyles etc).

As we point out in the "Changing Needs" section, guidance staff identified greater pressure on pupils to achieve good grades in S1 and S2 subjects prior to subject choice.

Course choice was, however, generally the predominant need identified by staff for S2 pupils. Although staff acknowledged that because of the national curricular framework pupils were now able to continue to take a broadly based curriculum so that there was less pressure on choosing the right subjects, they nevertheless viewed preparation for, and help with,

option choice as a major pupil need in S2. They identified a need for self-awareness and assessment and for subject and career information.

Option choice is one of the most obvious examples of a pupil need that is essentially an externally imposed need. The system requires Standard Grade choices to be made at this point and it is essential for a school that the option choice process works smoothly to enable timetables and classes to be organised in good time.

S3

Compared to other school years which contain transition points or key activities, staff felt that there were no particular events in S3 which gave rise to specific pupil needs. A number of staff commented that S3 was something of a “flat year” and, as will be discussed later, S3 pupils were the year group that seemed most likely to miss out on individual attention from guidance teachers in four of the six project schools.

As identified by staff, pupils’ needs in S3 were a continuation of S2 in relation to helping pupils as they develop as adolescents. A common comment was that not only do S3 pupils vary enormously in maturity but, as individuals can veer quickly from maturity to immaturity. The sort of behavioural problems that started in S2 tended to continue into S3.

Monitoring of pupils’ academic progress was the other main guidance need in S3 identified by staff. Pupils who were under-achieving or struggling with their subjects needed to be identified.

S4

One set of needs identified in S4 centred on transition needs: the transition to S5 and the transition out of school. For those pupils expecting to continue into S5, the needs identified by staff related to S5 subject choice. Staff emphasised the need for pupils to start thinking about S5 subjects early in S4 but that this was something that pupils tended to ignore till later. Pupils should be helped to make realistic choices based on realistic self-assessment. In several schools, staff felt that pupils tended to take the subjects they enjoyed and were good at rather than thinking about their curriculum as a whole. They needed to be encouraged to think in terms of a coherent curricular package.

For S4 leavers, the needs concerned information and advice about options and practical help with, for example, application forms, CVs and interviews. Although the balance of need varied across the project schools depending on the proportion of pupils staying-on to S5 in each school, overall the emphasis was on curricular guidance and subject choice in most (five) of the project schools.

As staff noted, pupils staying on into S5 were more heterogeneous than in the past so that there were different needs within the S4 pupils continuing into S5. All continuing pupils needed curricular guidance but this was a particular issue for those who did not aspire to a traditional Higher course: how to put together a coherent course especially when the provision on offer might be limited. Intending S5 winter leavers were identified as a group with particular curricular guidance needs, including information about possible FE attendance. The careers officers interviewed tended to focus more on the needs of this group than did teachers.

Inappropriate staying-on into S5 was identified as an issue in five of the six project schools, that is, pupils returning to school with little likelihood of achieving any worthwhile qualifications when further education or training might have been a more profitable option

for them. There was general agreement among staff about the reasons: a combination of parental and peer pressure, a perceived lack of job opportunities, financial considerations, inertia and nervousness about leaving school. Inappropriate staying on relates to the wider question of making realistic and appropriate decisions.

Other identified needs in S4 concerned help with coping with Standard Grade work, and also exam preparation.

In several schools, staff thought that behaviour and attendance problems in S4 tended to be concentrated among the low achievers and those that the school system had failed.

S5 and S6

When we asked about needs in S5 and S6, staff either tended to concentrate on S5 or to talk about the upper school as a whole. This was not related to the proportion of pupils in each of the project schools who stayed on into S6.

One of the most commonly identified needs in the upper school was that pupils required help to find their way through the educational and career options available to them. Pupils were perceived as having major information needs in this respect.

A frequent comment from staff was that not only were pupils in the senior school a more diverse group but that the post-school options open to them were also now more varied. Clearly, pupils in the lower school were equally, or indeed, more heterogeneous, but the differences among pupils in the senior school were much more remarked upon by staff. One reason is that the senior school used to be relatively homogenous but another is that much of the focus of guidance in S5 and S6 was on post-school transitions which are defined in terms of particular educational or qualifications levels. It is worth noting that S5 is the stage at which four of the project schools organised PSE classes on the basis of pupils' qualification level in contrast with mixed groups in the lower school.

Although several staff in two schools identified a need for pupils to have an overview of post-school options rather than think in terms of rigid pathways (a view endorsed by careers officers), teachers were more likely to define pupils' vocational guidance needs in relation to particular routes, for example, that those taking four or five Highers required information about universities, and those of middle academic ability information about FE.

The need to review S5 subject choice and possibly also future career ideas was mentioned in all the project schools but especially in two of them. In these instances, staff also identified a need to re-build some pupils' self-esteem after poor Standard Grade results, especially those pupils from areas of deprivation.

In five of the project schools, information and advice about HE was seen as necessary in S6 rather than in S5 because entry was more common then than from S5. Staff in several schools thought that in S5, pupils staying on for a sixth year should be exposed to as wide a range of career ideas as possible. Several careers officers commented on pupils' ignorance of the range of courses available in higher education, particularly at Higher National Level; their lack of awareness of further education; and also the narrow range of careers they were considering. They also felt that inappropriate staying-on was an even more important issue for S5 into S6 than S4 into S5.

In general, the nature of pupils' requirements for information about post-school options and the timing of this (in S5 or S6) varied according to the academic profile of S5 and S6 pupils in each of the project schools.

Teachers noted a change in individual guidance needs in the upper school away from attendance and disciplinary issues to a variety of personal problems. Staff identified personal problems such as eating disorders and relationship difficulties. It was felt that home or family problems tended to become more of an issue at this stage as pupils were testing their independence. Problems relating to pressure of work and exams were another commonly identified feature of guidance in the upper school.

Variation in pupils' guidance needs

Stage

Stage of schooling was one source of variation although, as we have noted, some of the needs manifested at certain school stages resulted from external circumstances, that is, imposed by the school system rather than being intrinsic needs experienced by young people.

Individual circumstances

Obviously individual circumstances can result in particular needs whether in relation to, for example, particular family circumstances or pupils' health problems. Staff distinguished between particular pupil needs arising from family problems such as the illness or death of a parent and more systematic variation resulting from the socio-economic background of pupils.

Socio-economic background

In discussing pupils' needs with staff, the socio-economic background of pupils emerged as a major source of variation within and across the project schools. We could somewhat crudely characterise the project schools in this respect. In one school, staff did not identify any significant levels of social deprivation and did not point to deprivation as a defining characteristic of pupils' guidance needs. In another school, staff felt that the level of deprivation experienced by a large majority of pupils had a major impact on the ethos of the school and on its guidance provision. In three of the schools, staff identified a substantial proportion of pupils from relatively deprived backgrounds who tended to be the ones with problems (or at least more obvious ones) and who were more likely to be the focus of attention of guidance teachers. The sixth school was particularly varied in terms of the socio-economic background of pupils. It would be classified as a "middle-class" school but had a substantial proportion of its pupils coming from Areas of Priority Treatment and pupils from a wide range of ethnic minorities. This school probably had the greatest in-school variation in pupils' guidance needs among the project schools.

Staff noted that deprivation had an impact on pupils' guidance needs in a number of respects. Lack of confidence, lack of self-esteem and a poor self-image was seen as the fundamental issue. This lack of confidence might manifest itself in attention-seeking or misbehaviour and/or in low aspirations even among pupils of high ability. Staff characterised pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds as tending to have limited ideas about jobs, education and training, and as less likely to achieve their academic potential.

Staff felt that these pupils were more likely to experience low parental expectations and to lack parental support and encouragement in their studies, particularly in the upper school. In general, they believed this reflected parents' own lack of experience of post-compulsory

education rather than a lack of interest and concern about their children's future. Pupils with academic potential were identified as a group that needed support and encouragement to consider higher education and also practical help with the mechanics of the system, for example, in completing UCAS applications. Even where individuals' parents might be supportive, the catchment area of the school could be a barrier to young people realising their potential, for example, in peer group pressure not to achieve or not to consider the FE or HE option.

Two schools identified lack of, or inconsistent, parental backing and support for the school and guidance as an issue, for example, parents not supporting the school's actions when their child truanted. It is interesting to note, however, that staff from the school with most pupils from a poor socio-economic background, did not mention lack of parental support as an issue. Lack of contact with parents was identified as a difficulty but not a lack of backing for the school. We would suggest that this may relate to the position of the school in the local community and the long service of many of the teachers and the headteacher.

Staff in this school, however, did point out that because of the prevailing levels of deprivation and unemployment in the catchment area, that many pupils experienced a structureless life outside of school, had few positive adult role models, especially male, either in their family or in the wider community and little experience of consistent and positive relationships with adults. A particular issue was the impact of this on boys, some of whom might have difficulty relating to male authority figures if they had no adult male in the home. The staff felt that the school, therefore, had to act as a substitute.

Staff in four of the project schools made the general point about the intrusion of family problems or poor family circumstances into school life, for example, pupils coming to school without breakfast, or dirty, or distressed because of family quarrels and unable to concentrate on their school work. Although family break-up is not confined to any social group, staff tended to identify resultant problems more in relation to pupils from a poor socio-economic background. Was this partly a matter of finance? Is it the case that middle-class families had the financial resource that helped to cushion the impact of family break-up?

Drug and alcohol abuse and under-age sex were identified as issues by teachers in three of the project schools which they related to levels of deprivation in the area. While they did not think there was much drug-taking in the school, the effects of drugs were sometimes evident in pupils, for example, when they returned to school on Mondays. Pupils' expectations and norms were also perceived as being influenced by the prevailing attitude to drugs, alcohol and under-age sex in the community. Parents had a particular perspective on how schools regarded the issue of drugs and we discuss this in chapter eight.

There may, however, be a tendency for teachers to perceive of drugs as more of a problem in the schools in the more deprived areas than in the others. Certainly some of the parents interviewed thought this to be the case and it seemed that drug-taking was as prevalent among pupils who attended at least one of the other project schools in addition to those where staff raised the issue.

When we asked teachers about variation in pupils' guidance needs, their answers focused on deprivation at both the family and neighbourhood levels, and, as we have mentioned, issues such as family break-up tended to be raised in relation to pupils from a deprived background. On the whole, staff did not identify particular needs experienced by middle-class pupils although several teachers in one school did mention that middle class pupils were more likely to have emotional problems often associated with the sometimes over high expectations of their parents. This view was supported by the careers officer. This was seen as leading to

problems such as anorexia and bulimia. But this was the exception. It may be the case that staff's answers about the impact of class differences reflect the everyday pressures and priorities of guidance which respond to pupils with the most immediate and obvious problems. In the absence of a comprehensive evaluation of pupil needs, it is not possible to be sure whether middle class pupils have unmet needs.

Ethnic minority pupils

In considering whether pupils from an ethnic minority background had particular guidance needs, teachers in the school with a substantial ethnic minority population made the point that the ethnic minority pupils were themselves diverse and so generalisations should be avoided.

The school in question received pupils from a large number of primary schools not all of which had a significant ethnic minority population. This created particular needs in S1 since some pupils were used to being in a multi-cultural environment while others were not. This added an extra dimension to the integration needs of S1 pupils.

One issue that teachers identified concerned the (mis)behaviour of some of the younger Asian boys which the school felt resulted from tension with, or rejection of, traditional modes of discipline and behaviour. Staff specifically mentioned the inability of some of the young Asian boys to cope with PSE dealing with sex education and relationships.

Several guidance staff commented that the school could sometimes be unaware of the barriers at home or in their community that some ethnic minority pupils had to deal with, for example, the lack of freedom experienced by some bright, motivated Asian girls. At the same time, staff felt that pupils needed the school to acknowledge and work with the differences in other communities rather than confront them.

Parental over-aspiration in terms of education and careers (especially for boys) was raised by some teachers but the Careers Service did not think this attitude was restricted to the ethnic minority population. A more particular issue raised by the Careers Service, was the need to extend the career knowledge of some ethnic minority pupils beyond the businesses and occupations associated with their community.

Geographical variation

Staff identified relatively few guidance needs or issues arising from the geographical location of their school, including staff in a remote, rural location. We earlier referred to a greater emphasis on the integration of S1 pupils in schools in two of the project schools. In one case this was related to the widespread catchment but in the other, it arose from the number of placing requests from a large number of primary schools within a relatively small geographical area.

One school noted that parents had difficulty attending parents evening because of the relatively large catchment but this was not raised by the school with the most widespread catchment; this school reported almost total attendance at parents evenings. Teachers in the first school also mentioned difficulty in generating a feeling of community with pupils and parents.

Parents had a somewhat different perception than that of teachers about the impact of the school's geographical position on pupils. This is considered in chapter eight.

The willingness of pupils in the project schools to travel, for example, for work experience seemed to be related to levels of self-confidence rather than location and staff felt that their confidence was more dependent on their socio-economic background than the geographical location of the school.

Changing needs

All of the project schools believed that pupils' needs had changed and were continuing to do so. In part this reflected a more varied school population within the schools. Two factors were identified as increasing in-school variation. One reason, common to all schools, was the increasing proportion of pupils staying on beyond the statutory leaving age. A second factor, more important to three of the project schools, was the extent of placing requests.

More varied school population

In discussing pupils' needs in the senior school, the more varied composition of pupils emerged as an important source of change within and across the project schools. A point commonly made was that the increase in the number of less academic stayers-on presented a new challenge to the school: in terms of the curricular guidance required (indeed the curricular provision required); in needing different careers information and guidance; and in relation to inappropriate staying-on. Thus, within each school, guidance was increasingly faced with a greater range of pupil needs although the balance of this varied across the project schools depending on the proportion of non-academic returners to S5 and S6.

The proportion of non-academic pupils in S5 and S6 also affected these pupils' experience of school, for example, in the most academic of the project schools, several staff noted that pupils taking a mainly modular course could find themselves "in limbo". The anomalous position of modular pupils was not identified as an issue in the project schools with a less academic tradition.

Although staff in five of the six project schools identified inappropriate staying-on as a problem and gave similar sorts of reasons (parental pressure, inertia, lack of job opportunities, financial reasons), the emphasis on particular reasons differed across the schools. At one extreme, local deprivation was identified by staff as contributing to youngsters' decision to stay-on, whether or not this was the best course of action for them. In this school, staff thought that some pupils perceived school as a safe haven and were reluctant to leave and be confronted by the challenges of their community. (The dilemma facing guidance in this, and to some extent, several other project schools, was how to provide a supportive environment but one which, when appropriate, would encourage pupils to move on.) At the other end of the spectrum, in another school with a strong academic tradition, staying-on beyond the statutory leaving age was the norm and, in this situation, it was very easy for pupils "to go with the flow" and simply return to school as the majority of their peers did.

Increased needs

Staff in all the project schools believed that not only had pupils needs changed over time but that they had increased. One of the reasons given in the memorandum "Guidance in Scottish Secondary Schools" in 1968 for the development of guidance in Scotland, was that "young people are now subjected to stresses which did not affect their predecessors. They have to face the increasing complexity of modern life" (p.4, Guidance in Scottish Secondary Schools, SED, 1968). The staff we interviewed would say that this was more true than in 1968.

Staff identified a range of changes in society adding to pupils guidance needs. Greater tensions in family life with higher levels of unemployment or job insecurity, increased family breakup, and the growing number of one parent families were identified as major changes which have had a severe impact on the pupils concerned.

Pupils themselves were seen to be under more pressure in relation to drugs, alcohol and sex and to be confronted with these pressures at an earlier age so that such problems were now more evident lower down the school.

Staff felt that in a more competitive society, pupils were under growing pressure to achieve at school to be able to progress to worthwhile education, training and employment opportunities. Entry to educational and career opportunities was perceived to be more competitive and staff also thought that the possible routes open to young people were more complicated for them to deal with than before.

School itself was seen as being more pressurised both because of the need for pupils to achieve the highest possible qualifications and also because of changes to the curriculum. Standard Grades were seen as directly contributing to the stress on pupils, especially on the less academic pupils, for example, because of the pressure of producing assignments. Several teachers noted that the pressure now extended to S1 and S2 because of the need to achieve good results to gain entry to the “best” Standard Grade level.

Parents’ needs of the guidance system

Staff were in agreement that a key role for guidance was to provide a link between the school and the home and they identified several general needs that parents have of guidance. Nevertheless, it seemed that staff had not given a great deal of thought to the guidance needs of parents; this is understandable in the day-to-day pressures of school life. It was also not surprising that the tendency was for staff to consider the question of parents and guidance in relation to the needs of the child in question, or of the need of the school for parental support, rather than thinking about the specific needs parents might have of guidance on their own behalf.

The general needs identified by staff centred on the need for parents to have a person to identify with in the school; someone to talk to who knows their child. Guidance teachers in four of the project schools commented, however, that parents found them inaccessible and sometimes assumed that they did not also teach.

In one school, several staff identified a mediating function for guidance, that it could be helpful for parents to have someone to mediate between them and their child in family disputes.

It was generally felt that parents needed to be kept informed about their children’s progress and, in doing this, teachers thought that it was important for parents that guidance staff were honest about their child’s aspirations and future possibilities.

Although communication about progress was seen as a basic parental need, most staff recognised that individual contact with parents usually arose because of behavioural or personal problems. A number identified a need for more regular contact about educational issues and, in particular, to inform parents occasionally that their child was doing well.

We have already noted that the perceived level of parental support for the school and for guidance varied across the schools. In two schools in particular, staff felt that some parents

did not trust teachers or were wary of schools, sometimes because of their own negative experience of education. In these cases, teachers felt there was a particular need for guidance staff to bear the parents' educational experience in mind and not to act as an authority figure. Where the reason for the contact was a behavioural matter, it was seen as important that guidance staff should be non-judgmental and avoid any suggestion of blaming the parent for his/her child's behaviour.

In terms of school stages, parents' needs were identified mainly at the primary/secondary transition. Staff identified a need for information for parents about their child's new school and reassurance and support about settling in, especially where the child was experiencing any difficulty in making the transition.

Several of the careers officers interviewed identified the need to provide careers information to parents, commenting that they generally lacked an awareness of current post-16 educational, training and job opportunities.

Summary

Background

- National and regional documentation has tended to focus on guidance provision and guidance teachers' duties rather than to describe pupils' guidance needs directly. There has also been little discussion of parents' needs of the guidance system in documentation on guidance.
- Recent interest in a pupil guidance entitlement, performance indicators and development planning are giving greater emphasis to the identification of pupils' and parents' needs.

Identification of pupils' guidance needs by the project schools

- When asked about pupils' guidance needs, staff in the project schools focused on guidance provision and guidance teacher's tasks rather than pupils' needs.
- None of the project schools conducted regular, comprehensive reviews of pupils' needs.
- The lack of formal evaluations meant that staff's views about pupils' needs were based on personal opinion and experience, with limited cross-checking of individual views among guidance staff as a whole and little opportunity for such views to inform the development planning process.
- Staff focused on provision at each school stage, identifying the same sorts of needs or provision at the various school stages, but they also commented on the different levels of maturity within year groups.
- Staff frequently spoke of pupils' problems rather than needs. This orientation is likely to have several negative consequences including marginalising the position of "ordinary" pupils in relation to guidance.

Pupils' guidance needs

- The most fundamental pupil need identified was for individual attention and to have a consistent relationship with a teacher who knew them. Others needs included: curricular guidance and review of progress; and for pupils to develop their awareness and judgement.
- S1 needs identified by staff included: adjustment to secondary school; integration with others; reassurance about bullying; and getting to know their guidance teacher.
- S2 needs included: residual settling in and peer relationship issues; coping with their developing maturity; and health education. Course choice was, however, the predominant need in S2 identified by staff. Misbehaviour, poor time-keeping and attendance were the main reasons for individual intervention by guidance teachers in S2.
- Few specific needs were identified for S3 pupils. Monitoring of academic progress and continuing to help pupils' adolescent development were the main areas mentioned by staff. Variation in maturity was noted.

- S4 pupil needs concerned transition needs; coping with Standard Grade work; exam preparation; and inappropriate staying-on was an issue in five of the project schools.
- S5 and S6 needs related to post-16 educational and career options. Staff commented on the greater diversity among senior school pupils and the growing complexity of post-16 options. The focus of individual guidance work in S5 and S6 related to pupils' personal problems rather than attendance and discipline.
- Deprivation was a particular issue in three schools and was seen as having an impact on pupils' guidance needs in a number of respects: low self-esteem and aspirations; low parental expectations; and drug and alcohol abuse. Compared with teachers in the other project schools, teachers in these schools perceived drugs as more of a problem.
- The intrusion of family problems or poor family circumstances into school life was an issue in four project schools.
- Staff identified few specific needs experienced by middle class pupils.

Ethnic minority pupils

- Ethnic minority pupils were diverse so staff felt that generalisations about their guidance needs should be avoided. Specific issues raised by teachers concerned the integration of S1 pupils; the behaviour of younger Asian boys; barriers in the home faced by some ethnic minority pupils; and parental over-aspiration. The latter point was challenged by the Careers Service.

Geographical variation

- Staff identified relatively few guidance needs arising from the geographical location of their school.

Changing needs

- All of the project schools believed that pupils' needs had and were continuing to change, as a result of increased staying-on rates, and the extent of placing requests.
- Pupils needs were also felt to have had increased because of changes in society: greater tensions in family life; pressures relating to drugs, alcohol and sex; the growth of a more competitive society; and greater pressure within schools.

Parents' needs of the guidance system

- Staff saw a key role for guidance in providing a link between the school and home but had not thought much about the guidance needs of parents. They tended to consider the issue in relation to the needs of the child or the school's need for parental support.
- Parents' needs that were identified included the need to have a person to talk to who knew their child and to be kept informed of progress.
- Most staff noted that contact with parents usually arose because of problems and a number identified a need for more regular contact about other, more positive, matters.

Issues

- Is there a need to move away from a focus on guidance provision and guidance teachers' tasks to one that emphasises pupils' and parents' needs?
- There is a need for more systematic and comprehensive assessment of pupils' needs.
- How can more attention and thought be given to parents' needs of the guidance system?
- To what extent should provision and needs be defined by stage of schooling?
- How can schools move away from a focus on problems rather than needs and from a view of guidance as "problem-driven"?
- There is a need to make explicit what is currently implicit in much guidance practice where unstated assumptions are believed to be shared among staff.
- Is guidance based on a deficit model which sees provision as compensating for deficiencies in pupils' background? Are alternative models preferable and possible?
- How far can guidance respond to the increased pressures on pupils and their families because of changes in society?

Chapter 6 Guidance in practice: the teacher perspective

Chapter four outlined the guidance structure and the provision in the project schools with the aim of giving a factual account of guidance and related areas in the schools. This chapter moves beyond this to consider the operation of guidance in the project schools and to consider the views and concerns of staff. This chapter is based mainly on our interviews with guidance teachers, members of senior management and other school staff and therefore reflects their perspective rather than those of pupils, parents and careers officers. We do, however, refer to the views of pupils and parents where teachers made comment about their responses or attitudes. In this and subsequent chapters, we do not identify the project schools by letter since we believe this might compromise the anonymity of individuals interviewed.

We begin by considering guidance teachers' relationship with pupils on their caseload and their views on the extent and quality of their contact with pupils. The management of guidance emerged as a central theme in our interviews with staff and a substantial section of this chapter deals with aspects of management, centering on: the role of senior management and organisational aspects of guidance provision; the extent to which guidance teachers function as a team within a common framework; and the remits, workload and training of guidance staff.

The chapter also discusses staff's views of concerns about various aspects of PSE provision and their involvement in Records of Achievement. We go on to consider their views on guidance at specific school stages, the primary/secondary transition and, in particular, in the upper school. Finally, the chapter deals with the teacher perspective on parents and the guidance system and their contact with external agencies.

Individual pupil contact

Contact with, and knowledge of each pupil as an individual, is at the heart of the guidance system. As noted in chapter four, guidance staff might have had a range of contact with pupils on their caseload: interviews as part of an annual programme of interviews; other interviews initiated by guidance teachers, other teachers, pupils or their parents; contact for routine administrative matters; contact through their subject teaching; and extra-curricular contacts. In the light of these contacts did guidance teachers in the project schools feel that they had enough contact with their caseload, that they knew them and were able to respond to their needs?

Difficulties in assessing guidance-pupil contact

In considering the issue of guidance-pupil contact we encountered several difficulties in our research. One difficulty was that a majority of staff interviewed did not keep a record of the number of their caseload they had interviewed that session. This will be discussed further in chapter ten. A second difficulty was how we and different staff defined an interview. We used the term to mean a structured meeting with an agreed purpose that took place in private, at a specified time between a pupil and his or her guidance teacher. It became clear, however, in discussions with guidance staff that some used the word to cover a much wider range of interactions, including a brief chat in a public area in the school. This raised both a methodological and also a substantive issue. Methodologically, we had to be careful to clarify exactly what sort of contact was being referred to when guidance staff used the term "interview" but we might not always have been successful in this. We would note, however, that when we use the term interview in this report, we mean a structured meeting.

Substantively, the wide definition of “interview” adopted by some guidance teachers highlighted a more general aspect of guidance-pupil contact that was evident to us both from our discussions with staff and also from our observations while in the schools. We were struck by the amount of informal “on-the-hoof” contact that takes place in corridors, the dining-hall and other public areas in the schools. We consider this further later in this chapter.

Dissatisfaction about adequacy of contact

We found considerable dissatisfaction among most of the guidance teachers we interviewed about the adequacy of their contact with their pupils. In a large measure, their dissatisfaction related to the reactive nature of much of their work, in which they felt they were forced to concentrate on pupils with problems so that ordinary or non-problematic pupils were missed out. The general view was that pupils with obvious needs or problems and disruptive pupils were being catered for by the system but most queried whether the majority of pupils would perceive guidance as relevant to them and not just for pupils in trouble or obviously in need of help and support. But the staff interviewed were virtually unanimous that guidance should be providing on-going contact with every pupil and should not focus on the crisis pupil. They expressed a strong level of commitment to their pupils and most used breaks, lunchtimes and subject non-contact time to try and see as many of their caseload as possible and to respond to pupils’ requests.

Time allocation was not the only factor affecting the extent and nature of pupil-guidance contact. The nature of a guidance teacher’s caseload, as well as the number of pupils and their time allocation, also had an impact. This was evident in two schools where a year group with a higher than usual proportion of difficult or problem pupils added to the pressure on the guidance teachers and focused their efforts, more than ever, on the crisis pupil. The impact of these difficult year groups was particularly evident because of the horizontal guidance structure in the two schools.

In two schools staff identified TVEI as helping to improve their contact with pupils by, in one school, funding time for enhanced interviews with all S5 and S6 pupils, and in the other, annual interviews with all pupils in S3 and S4.

Variation in opinion about the quality of pupil contact

The extent to which guidance teachers felt that they knew all of their caseload and the extent of their contact with them varied across the project schools and also within the schools. In two of the six project schools, guidance teachers generally felt that they were reasonably well acquainted with their caseload and that guidance had a fairly high profile among most pupils, in contrast opinion in the other four schools varied. In one of the schools, where guidance teachers were positive about their contact with their caseload, guidance teachers felt their weekly contact with them in PSE classes was an important factor. In the other school, the programme of annual interviews and the small size of the school were seen as the explanation. In both of these schools, pupils in the group discussions were generally positive about guidance and its relevance to more than just the problem pupil.

Factors influencing teachers' perceptions

As we noted above, guidance staff in two schools were reasonably happy with the quality of their contact with pupils but in the other four project schools guidance staff differed in their views about how well they knew their caseload. One of these four schools carried out a programme of annual one-to-one interviews, the other three project schools did not have a timetabled programme of interviews or contact between guidance teachers and all pupils through PSE delivery. The picture is not entirely straightforward but it did seem to be the case that it was guidance teachers with the lowest pupil: time allocation who thought they lacked knowledge of their caseload and felt inaccessible to their pupils. This was particularly marked in one school where all of the guidance teachers interviewed had amongst the lowest time allocation of the guidance staff who took part in the research. Where staff had less guidance time they were more likely to think that their work was particularly focused on problem pupils.

Overall teachers' perceptions were partially reflected in pupils' reactions. Pupils' comments in the group discussions bore out guidance teachers' views to some extent but their reactions were generally more negative, for example, pupils perceived guidance teachers as more difficult to find to talk to than did guidance teachers themselves.

Varying levels of contact

In the four schools which did not interview all pupils each year, the proportion of pupils seen by guidance staff varied across and within the schools and by year group. On the whole, S3 emerged as the year group least likely to have had contact with the guidance teacher. This illustrated that timetabled pupil-guidance contact tends to be organised in response to an external need arising from how the education system operates. In other school years, various circumstances necessitate contact whether to check that S1 pupils are settling in or for subject choice purposes in S2, S4 and S5.

The value of one-to-one interviews

Two of the project schools carried out a timetabled programme of one-to-one interviews with pupils but opinion in these two schools differed about its value. In one school staff views were positive but in the other staff varied in their opinion of the value of the interviews in reviewing progress, in helping guidance teachers and pupils establish a good relationship, and in helping to make guidance relevant in the eyes of all pupils. Several staff believed the interviews useful in picking up problems that would otherwise be missed. The view was also expressed, however, that for some year groups the interviews were mistimed which limited their value. The scheduling of the interviews might also mean much more than a year between interviews and several staff felt that pupils, in the absence of other contact with their guidance teacher (for example, through PSE classes), were not really familiar with their guidance teacher. This view was borne out in the group discussions with pupils in this school, the majority of whom experienced guidance as an isolated series of one-off interviews and did not perceive guidance staff as approachable.

This mixed view among staff of the value of a programme of annual interviews contrasted with the positive view expressed in the other project school implementing a programme of interviews. Here staff thought the interviews helpful in discussing progress, in assisting pupils to identify any difficulties in their school work or relationships, and in providing an opportunity to raise other issues if they wished. In the group discussions at this school, pupils seemed to value their annual interview and there was considerable support for having more than one interview a year.

We cannot be sure about why guidance teachers' attitudes varied between the two schools which had an annual programme of interviews. A number of factors may have an influence. In the school where opinion was positive, guidance staff were more involved in teaching PSE and had more control over the scheduling of the interviews; in the other school, the AHT controlled the interview lists.

We would note, however, that regular contact with guidance staff did not automatically mean that pupils believed that their guidance teacher knew them very well (see chapter seven). Moreover, individual interviews may not be an unproblematic event for pupils. A majority of pupils in the group discussion found interviews a difficult experience. The issue of pupils' ability to cope with, and make the most of, interviews is considered further in chapter seven.

Other contacts with pupils

In a number of instances, when asked about pupil contact, staff responded that while they did not manage the programme of interviews that they would have liked to carry out, they did, nevertheless, interview pupils for other purposes such as subject choice or before their interview with a careers officer. The important issue here is whether such interviews functioned as a general review of pupils' progress and well-being as well as fulfilling their primary purpose. There was the feeling among some staff that, for example, the S2 subject choice interview was too short and pressurised to be a satisfactory substitute for a more comprehensive interview. The pupil group discussions confirmed this view, the majority of pupils felt that their subject choice interview was rushed and lacked time for discussion. It should also be remembered that not all pupils in the project schools had a subject choice interview from their own guidance teacher in S2 or from a guidance teacher at all in S4 and S5.

Earlier in this chapter we referred to the wide definition of the term "interview" used by some guidance staff and the extent of informal pupil-guidance contact, for example, in corridors, the dining-hall and other public areas. While any contact was potentially valuable, and staff felt they should take every opportunity to speak to pupils on their caseload, there is a question as to the degree to which such contact substituted for more formal, and more private, interaction between pupils and their guidance teacher. Guidance staff recognised that such contacts alone were not satisfactory, but there did seem to be a gap in guidance teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the adequacy of this sort of contact, in particular, in the extent to which pupils find being approached by their guidance teacher in public acceptable.

Differences in teacher and pupil perceptions

Guidance staff did seem to under-estimate pupils' desire for privacy (see chapter seven). Confidentiality was another aspect of pupil-guidance contact where there was an apparent difference in perception between staff and pupils. Guidance teachers felt that pupils were aware that confidentiality would be preserved and that they recognised that, in some cases, it would be necessary to involve others. In contrast, pupils in the group discussions, on the whole, were not satisfied that their guidance teacher would respect their confidences. This was linked to the view that teachers discuss pupils in the staffroom. This is a double-edged sword since a number of guidance teachers noted that comments in the staffroom about pupils frequently alerted them to those experiencing difficulties. The different perceptions in respect of confidentiality may be explained by different expectations of what it means. If this is the case, then the boundaries or "rules" have to be more clearly specified and agreed between guidance staff and pupils.

Main focus of contact

So far we have concentrated on guidance teachers' contact with their caseload in general, but, as staff emphasised, much of their time was spent with a sub-section of their caseload. Guidance staff in five of the six project schools identified the monitoring of attendance and the following up of pupils with poor attendance as a major element of their work and as a source of contact with particular pupils. The exception was staff in the small rural school. Contact with pupils because of attendance was particularly marked in S1-S4. Although most staff found dealing with attendance/truancy issues a time-consuming task, a number pointed out that it was often a means of identifying other underlying problems.

Teacher referral

Preference for informal referral

The common view among guidance teachers was that other teachers preferred to approach them about pupils who they think are having problems on an informal basis rather than make a formal referral. Typically guidance staff spoke of being approached in the staffroom or corridor by other teachers. Formal referrals tended to be used when a specific incident had occurred. A number also noted that it was rare for subject teachers to approach guidance staff about changes in pupils' mood or reactions, even informally, and that they were much more likely to bring disciplinary issues to their attention.

Extent of referral

Generally guidance teachers felt that subject teachers could do more in referring pupils to them, both on an informal and formal basis. The degree of feeling varied across the schools and was probably most marked in the largest of the project schools. This may be because informal referral to guidance was more difficult in a large school with a big staff who used different staffrooms. In two other schools, the existence of one staffroom was identified as helpful in facilitating communication between subject and guidance teachers and enabling teachers informally to raise concerns about pupils.

A potentially difficult aspect of subject teacher-guidance teacher liaison mentioned in two schools was the issue of status. This could be a sensitive issue in interactions between a PT in a subject area and an APT(G), for example, where the APT(G) was trying to persuade a PT to consider using a different approach with a particular pupil.

Formal procedures

In five of the six project schools, guidance teachers received copies of disciplinary referral forms to help them monitor pupils' behaviour. In two of the project schools, in response to the need identified by guidance and senior management, a formal referral system for non-disciplinary matters had recently been instituted to encourage subject teachers to alert guidance about other sorts of issues including positive ones. In one school, the system was being used but in the other school the guidance teachers interviewed had received scarcely any referrals by this method. It was felt that this was partly because of the reluctance of subject teachers to raise concerns and, especially, to put their concerns in writing.

Reasons for teachers' preference for informal referrals

Guidance teachers put forward a number of reasons why they thought subject teachers were often reluctant to refer pupils in writing especially if their concern related to changes in pupil mood and reactions. One reason was that where pupils were behaving differently, it could be difficult to describe the problem or why they were feeling concerned, or, the teachers might feel unjustified in doing so in case their concern was unfounded. Another reason related to the individualistic culture of the school. A number of guidance staff felt that teachers tended to believe that they should be able to manage pupils in their classroom and that to identify difficulties with pupils was an admission of failure. Willingness to refer also related to whether non-guidance teachers accepted a pastoral role or not.

Good personal relationships with other members of staff were seen as vital in encouraging subject teachers to approach guidance and for guidance staff to get co-operation from other teachers, for example, if they would like a subject teacher to "keep an eye on" a particular pupil. Guidance teachers identified a number of factors that they felt helped relations with

other teachers: credibility as subject teachers themselves; being accessible to other staff; being seen to act promptly and effectively when issues were raised; and providing feedback about cases and action taken.

Extended guidance team

The extent to which register teachers were perceived as monitoring pupils and alerting guidance teachers to problems varied not only across the project schools but also within the schools themselves. Guidance teachers in the two schools which had First Level Guidance (FLG) noted the value of having FLG tutors who operated as “an early warning system” for them, that because of their regular contact with their pupils they could, and did, notice changes in behaviour and bring these to the attention of the guidance teacher. FLG is considered further later in this chapter.

The Learning Support (LS) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers interviewed as part of the research felt that they were in a particularly advantageous position to refer pupils since they saw some pupils across their different subjects, were in regular contact with them and usually had background information on these pupils. While the LS and ESL teachers noted this role, very few of the guidance teachers interviewed mentioned LS or ESL teachers as a particular source of referral. This may not be a significant omission in all of the project schools, but in one the point was made specifically that the guidance staff tended to overlook the potential contribution of LS in this respect.

In one school, the welfare assistant was involved in guidance related activities such as issuing some permission slips. This school also emphasised the role of other employees such as janitorial and catering staff in preventing bullying, for example, by involving them in anti-bullying in-service.

Pupil self-referral

Extent and nature of self-referral

Pupil self-referral was mentioned as another method of initiating pupil-guidance contact. This was less common than guidance or subject teacher identified problems. Where guidance staff felt they could estimate the extent of self-referral in a year, they commonly stated 10%-15% of their caseload. The reasons might range from relatively trivial (as perceived by the staff), for example, arguments with classmates, especially among younger pupils, to very serious issues such as sexual abuse. A poor relationship or a specific incident with subject teachers was mentioned as a common reason for self-referral. Among younger pupils bullying and falling out with friends were more frequent reasons than among older pupils who were more likely to go to their guidance teacher about careers-related or personal problems. On the whole, guidance staff would have liked to see more pupils approaching guidance themselves since they felt this would be a positive sign that pupils trusted guidance. Nevertheless, several teachers wondered whether pupils trying to cope with problems themselves or with their friends was, in fact, no bad thing but a normal and healthy response. We might note that staff tended to speak of self-referral in terms of pupils experiencing problems.

Reasons why pupils do not self-refer

The reasons why staff thought that only a relatively small proportion of pupils chose to approach guidance included: part of a general reluctance to confront difficulties and a tendency to put things off; a view that because guidance teachers are adults they will not understand; identification of guidance with authority and discipline; the inaccessibility of guidance staff; a feeling that their guidance teacher did not know them; and because guidance was perceived as for pupils involved in discipline problems, they might be labelling themselves as problem pupils in the eyes of their classmates and other teachers by going to guidance.

The types of reasons given varied across the project schools and among guidance staff and it is difficult to point to a general pattern. Two features did emerge however. Staff in the school with the smallest time allocation were more likely to think that their teaching commitments were the main reason pupils did not self-refer. In another school, staff felt that the main reasons were that pupils generally associated guidance with authority and that they did not have on-going contact with guidance teachers despite annual interviews. The pupil group discussions in these schools supported the teachers' views but it should be noted that pupils from other schools also expressed similar opinions.

A number of guidance staff pointed out that they emphasised to pupils that they did not necessarily have to talk to their guidance teacher but could approach the teacher they preferred. This was echoed by pupils in the group discussions although some said that when they did so they were referred on to their guidance teacher. This was less likely to happen with bullying referrals as anti-bullying policies actively encouraged pupils to talk to anyone on the staff.

Pupil attitude to self-referral

The group discussions with pupils bear out teacher views but only to some extent. As we have already noted, a perception which linked guidance with authority and the impact of lack of contact with guidance teachers was not confined to pupils in the schools where guidance staff identified this as an issue. In general, the accessibility and approachability of their guidance teacher; the extent to which they felt their guidance teachers knew them; and the nature of the problem were factors that influenced pupils' willingness to go to their guidance

teacher. Where pupils saw guidance as only intervening when pupils get into trouble, or to service what they saw as school administrative matters such as subject choice, they were less likely to perceive guidance as being there to offer help and support to all pupils, and less likely to say that they would approach their guidance teacher if they were needing some help.

One factor that pupils said affected their decision to approach their guidance teacher which was not mentioned by guidance staff, was whether they thought their guidance teacher would maintain confidentiality. As we have already pointed out, there seemed to be a gap in perceptions between guidance staff and pupils on the matter of confidentiality.

The value of a programme of annual interviews

A general question to be considered is the value of a programme of annual interviews. While a majority of guidance staff supported the principle, in one school carrying out a regular programme of interviews, some staff expressed doubt about the worth of the interviews, at least partly because of their organisation. From the pupil group discussions, it appears that such interviews do not automatically mean a good relationship between pupils and their guidance teachers. A very small number of guidance staff questioned the principle of a programme of annual interviews and a larger number felt that judging guidance by the number of such interviews achieved, would be, at best, only a partial judgement of the effectiveness of guidance.

Discipline

Uncertainty about guidance teachers' role in discipline

In one school, a major reason for the introduction of the formal non-disciplinary referral system was because of confusion among some teachers about the role of guidance in discipline. Although generally guidance teachers were no longer directly responsible for discipline and the application of sanctions in the schools in the project, they were still seen to have a role to play and guidance staff strongly supported a non-punitive involvement in discipline cases. But guidance teachers in all of the project schools noted that there was still uncertainty about their role in discipline. This was despite written statements which typically emphasised their role in investigating the reasons for the incident and in counselling the pupil. Part of the problem was trying to define “discipline” and, frequently, how to disentangle the overt disciplinary misdemeanour from the underlying problems that were being manifested in bad behaviour.

Guidance staff felt they were still expected to have a corrective influence on pupils. Although virtually all the guidance staff we interviewed believed that, in principle, they should not be involved in administering sanctions, a number noted that being seen to “make pupils behave” was important in terms of their credibility with other teachers. In one school, where improving discipline was a key stand of the Development Plan, guidance had a specific role to play in this, for example, in monitoring punishment exercises but also through PSE. There was the explicit intention that the skills and understanding that the PSE classes aimed to develop would alter pupils' attitude and behaviour and lead to an improvement in discipline.

Issues raised

For guidance teachers in two schools, a disadvantage of a less direct role in discipline was that it had reduced their contact with parents. In other schools, the policy was one of the automatic involvement of guidance if the incident necessitated contact with parents. The point was made, however, that guidance teachers should not need “the excuse” of discipline for dialogue with parents but should be in touch about other matters such as achievement.

Although all of the project schools had a formal system to keep guidance teachers informed of discipline referrals, in four of the six schools, guidance staff identified a lack of communication by senior management handling some cases and criticised them for taking decisions about pupils on their caseload without consulting or informing them. They felt this undermined the potential role of guidance in discipline and, in some instances, meant that they were working at odds with senior management in their separate dealings with particular cases.

In one school, senior management identified a potential source of conflict because guidance and the subject department could have very different views about what an appropriate response should be in disciplinary cases. The management position was expressed as being to support the consistent application of rules but guidance teachers might have a wider perspective on the pupils' behaviour and so could be at odds with this position and the expectations of subject staff. The question of whether guidance should play a role in challenging the system was something that parents raised and is discussed in chapter eight. None of the guidance teachers saw part of their role as challenging the school system. The attitude of the majority of guidance staff interviewed was that their role was a neutral and supportive one with pupils although several did acknowledge that they did tend automatically to support their colleagues.

Pupils did not expect guidance teachers to question how the school system operated or indeed, to “side” with them. But they did want their guidance teacher “to be fair” in listening to both sides of an incident. The prevailing pupil view, however, was that guidance teachers took “the teacher’s side” and did not operate in a neutral manner. Guidance teachers’ perception of themselves as being in a supportive role did not appear to be appreciated by most pupils in the group discussions.

Despite changes to discipline policy, there were still unresolved issues concerning the clarification and acceptance of the role of guidance in discipline and in communicating this to other teachers and pupils.

Management of guidance

The relationship between policy and practice

All but one of the project schools had a written guidance policy and all had descriptions of the structure and role of guidance. A number of points emerged from the interviews with staff about the relationship between policies and other statements about guidance with guidance in practice.

One issue concerned the extent to which the aims set out for guidance were achieved in practice.

Two schools with a policy of annual interviews with pupils were not succeeding in meeting this target. There were no plans to change this policy but, at the same time, it did not seem likely that other changes would be made in the near future to enable the policy of annual interviews to be achieved. Staff in one of the schools concerned noted that not meeting the stated policy on interviews led to complaints from parents.

More generally, all the project schools articulated a “guidance for all pupils” principle but a large majority of guidance and other staff interviewed thought that guidance was not able to deliver this. One effect of this disjunction between policy and practice was to make some guidance teachers dismissive of guidance policy. It also had an adverse effect on staff’s morale since they were conscious that they were not fulfilling the stated aims for guidance. In addition, it seems unlikely to help the status of guidance in schools where practice is at odds with policy.

In the light of the perceived inability of guidance to deliver all the tasks set out for them in policy and other statements (for example, about attendance, PSE, child protection and RoAs), guidance teachers in five of the project schools felt strongly that senior management should be setting priorities for guidance that are feasible within current time allocations. In at least two of the schools, the senior management view was that it was the task of guidance staff, especially PT(G)s, to decide on guidance priorities. Several schools had identified a number of targets for guidance as part of the development planning process but this did not address the wider issue of guidance roles and responsibilities. Both senior management and guidance teachers firmly believed that because the extent and range of responsibilities allocated to guidance had increased in recent years, that priorities should be set for guidance at a national level as well as being tackled within schools. While some priorities were set nationally, for example, about work experience, this partial approach was perceived to be part of the problem, that such priorities were set without consideration of their impact on other aspects of guidance teachers’ work. A more comprehensive approach to priority setting at national level was wanted.

Role of senior management

In four of the project schools, guidance was the remit of either an assistant or a depute headteacher; in the other two schools the headteacher took responsibility for the management of guidance although other SMT members also had a role. In every school, the guidance management remit was one among a number of other areas of responsibility. This is in contrast to the position in guidance a decade or so ago when a member of senior management was likely to have guidance as the only management remit. With the exception of one school, guidance teachers did not identify this multiple remit as an issue. In this school, guidance staff commented that the AHT did not have time to manage guidance properly and, in particular, to confront some of the pressing issues facing guidance in the school.

Background of senior management

There was a difference of perception between senior management and guidance staff about whether it was better that guidance managers had a background in guidance themselves. In the two schools where the guidance managers had guidance experience, the individuals concerned thought they had a better understanding of the issues facing guidance and were in a better position to argue the guidance case within the management team. One of the four guidance managers with no guidance background expressed concern about this and did not feel in a strong position to make informed decisions.

But a guidance background did not emerge from the interviews with guidance staff as an advantage. There was little perception among guidance staff that either the management style or effectiveness of the guidance manager related to whether or not the person concerned had a guidance background. Their opinion of the relevant senior managers and their effectiveness in managing guidance seemed to relate to their ability as managers more generally, for example, in their ability to communicate effectively; to organise and delegate; to assess needs and establish priorities; and to facilitate staff development. In one school, the senior manager's guidance background was perceived as a negative factor by guidance teachers who felt it led to interference in their case work. With one exception, guidance managers with no guidance background had as much of an involvement in guidance in the school as those who had previously been guidance teachers, for example, in their attendance at guidance meetings.

Importance of commitment of senior management

The level of commitment of senior management was seen by guidance teachers as critical to the position of guidance in the school. Staff in four of the schools pointed out that the positive attitude of the headteacher to guidance had been an important factor in raising the profile of guidance in the school. As one of the headteachers noted, if senior management was seen to be committed and interested in guidance, this was good for the morale of guidance staff and gave their job credibility in the school as a whole.

The commitment of senior management was also vital in securing resources for guidance. This was noted especially by guidance staff in two of the project schools where guidance was now better resourced, for example, with new accommodation and some administrative help, as a result of the attitude of senior management.

Guidance staff and assistant headteacher contact

Apart from the senior manager with a guidance remit, the relationship between guidance and other members of senior management was also important. Guidance teachers identified their relationship with the AHTs responsible for a house or year group as significant, especially on an everyday basis. The contact was usually through the AHT's role in discipline but also in other areas such as the guidance of senior pupils and PSE. Staff in both vertical and horizontal guidance structures identified a close link with AHTs.

The AHTs' responsibilities were structured in the same way as the guidance system in only one of the project schools where both guidance and the AHTs were organised on a vertical basis. In the other schools the picture was both varied and changing. In the schools with a rolling horizontal guidance system, the AHTs retained responsibility for particular year groups rather than moving on with them. One of the schools with a vertical guidance system had decided to change the remit of the AHTs from a horizontal to a vertical one; another with a vertical guidance structure had taken the opposite decision to change the AHTs' and DHTs' remit from a vertical to horizontal based one. The reasons advanced for the change in each

school were similar: to provide more continuity with pupils and more regular communication between the AHT/DHT and guidance staff. One of the implications of the variety of structures and changes being made was that there was no one organisational model that was clearly better than another.

In one of the project schools, guidance staff had timetabled meetings with the relevant AHT for their year although several noted that meetings were sometimes cancelled because the AHT was too busy. In the others, contact was on a more ad hoc basis. In all of the schools, the focus of the meeting was individual casework rather than wider aspects of policy. As we discussed in the section on discipline, a point of issue for some guidance teachers was lack of communication by AHTs about discipline cases.

The respective roles of guidance teachers and senior management with senior pupils is considered in the section on the upper school.

Guidance staff's role in decision-making

In our interviews with senior management and guidance staff, it was difficult to get a clear picture of how decisions about guidance were arrived at and, in particular, who really made the decisions. In two schools, staff on the whole felt that while issues might be discussed at guidance meetings, decision-making was not truly consultative. In two other schools, the response of guidance teachers was mixed, some were more inclined to feel that they had a real role in decision-making while others were not. In the other two schools, opinions generally were more positive with, for example, staff giving examples of recent decisions where they had had a major input. The involvement of guidance staff in decision-making was related partly to the management style of the guidance manager but also seemed to reflect the way policy was decided and implemented in the school as a whole.

Development planning clearly had implications for the decision-making process in schools. Five of the six project schools either had a development plan in existence or were in the process of producing one during our time in school. In two schools, the approach was for guidance as a department to consider and set guidance-related targets with the relevant SMT member(s). In two other schools, guidance made their input as members of working groups or committees. In the fifth school, PT(G)s had some limited discussion with the relevant SMT member about the targets that had a bearing on guidance. Given the early and varied stage at which the schools were in development planning, it was not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the involvement of guidance. But it seemed that where guidance staff had been involved as a department, their response was positive. This approach meant that guidance teachers as a team reviewed the targets for guidance and had an important role in deciding the focus of developmental work in guidance for the year ahead.

Need to develop the guidance meeting

Guidance meetings were potentially important in a number of respects: as part of the decision-making process; as a medium of communication between senior management and guidance; for the support and professional development of guidance staff; and in relation to accountability. As we described in chapter four, all of the project schools had a regular timetabled guidance meeting. This was a relatively recent development in two of them.

In two schools, a number of guidance teachers commented that they had a different view of the purpose of the guidance meeting than the guidance manager but that it was the concerns of the manager that tended to drive the agenda, for example, in emphasising issues concerning attendance and punctuality.

Guidance staff in three schools were critical of the effectiveness of the meetings, believing that they generally failed to fulfil their stated function of, for example, providing a forum for the discussion of guidance issues or of individual cases. The general view in these schools, shared by the guidance teachers and the guidance manager, was that they ended up focusing on administrative matters. The guidance teachers in these schools generally felt there was considerable scope to manage the meetings more effectively.

Several staff in one of the schools with a horizontal guidance system, noted that sometimes the items covered in the guidance meeting could be irrelevant to them and their year group. This was not raised as an issue in the other two schools with a horizontal structure. This might partly reflect the different view of the effectiveness of the guidance meeting in general in these three schools: opinion in the first school was fairly negative but more positive in the other two schools.

On the whole, guidance staff thought that more of an emphasis on the support and development role of the guidance meeting would be valuable to them, that it would be useful to discuss individual cases and common issues, and to share good practice with their colleagues.

In four of the schools, the relevant member(s) of senior management attended the guidance meeting (in one case, the meeting was a joint guidance/board of studies meeting). A number of guidance staff were somewhat ambivalent about the presence of senior management. On the one hand, their involvement was useful if wider issues were discussed, if they had important information to pass on to guidance teachers and for guidance teachers to relay their views and concerns to them. On the other hand, some guidance teachers felt that their presence inhibited discussion, for example, of the difficulties they might be experiencing with particular pupils in case they might be judged as failing to do their job properly. And, as noted above, the presence of senior management tended to focus the meeting on their concerns rather than those of the guidance teachers.

Quality and consistency of guidance provision

In considering the question of the quality of guidance provision and, in particular, the idea of a consistent minimum standard of provision for all pupils, there are a number of inter-related issues. One is the extent of the autonomy allowed to guidance staff; a second is the extent of their accountability; and a third is whether guidance teachers have common aims, a common approach and follow the same procedures, that is, the extent to which they take a team approach. We would note that we did not assume that a common approach was necessary for consistency of outcome for pupils but were concerned whether all pupils, irrespective of who their guidance teacher was, were assured of a minimum quality of provision. This is relevant to current ideas about guidance entitlements.

A large measure of autonomy

A large majority of the staff interviewed believed that guidance teachers had a large measure of autonomy in their work and that this was necessary because the job required guidance teachers to be relatively self-sufficient and able to adopt the approach that was most efficient for them. There were two areas where guidance teachers in two schools felt that they should have more autonomy. In one, this concerned responsibility for the scheduling of programme of interviews with pupils and, in the other, initial referral to external agencies. In both cases, some guidance teachers thought that this should be their responsibility rather than that of senior management.

While guidance staff generally welcomed a large measure of autonomy in their work, a number mentioned that autonomy could mean isolation and lack of support. We discuss this later, here we focus on the impact on the quality of provision and the related questions of accountability and common approaches.

Lack of accountability

The majority of guidance teachers in four of the project schools thought that they were not really expected to be accountable for their guidance work. In one of these schools, staff did have to carry out a programme of interviews and their progress in doing so was discussed at the guidance meeting but this was seen as the limit of their accountability. In another of these schools, the guidance teachers' targets in the development plan were regularly reviewed but their everyday duties were not.

In the two schools where guidance teachers were more inclined to say they were accountable for their work, the explanation may have been partly related to a combination of the size of the school (these were the two smallest schools) and the "hands-on" approach of the headteacher rather than to any system of monitoring although in one, development plan targets were monitored.

The attitude and approach of senior management in the project schools to the issue of guidance teachers' accountability varied considerably. As we have already noted, two of the headteachers had a "hands-on" style of management and so expected to be consulted and kept informed of guidance activities. In the four other schools, the emphasis was much more on the self-accountability of guidance staff. The view was that they had their remit to fulfil and as professionals should monitor their work in relation to this. There was a difference in emphasis across these four schools. In two, there seemed to be almost a reluctance to manage the performance of guidance staff. In the other two schools, the approach of senior management was to see their role as providing the basis for accountability by setting out duties and standards that guidance staff could monitor themselves against via a guidance handbook and through the development plan.

None of the project schools had any comprehensive procedure or system for monitoring the everyday work of guidance teachers. The review of development plan targets was the main formal, but very partial, method of evaluation. None of the schools had started staff appraisal and had not given much thought as to whether guidance teachers would be appraised in this role as well as in their capacity as subject teachers.

A number of guidance staff had some difficulty answering our questions about accountability, partly, perhaps, because it was an issue that they had not given much thought to, nor was it a feature of their everyday work as guidance teachers. Several strongly rejected the need for any greater accountability. A small number of others thought that their current lack of accountability was wrong in principle and welcomed the idea of monitoring. One guidance teacher, for example, suggested using the HMI Performance Indicators for Guidance as the basis for holding annual reviews with guidance teachers. This guidance teacher believed she would find it valuable to be encouraged to think more about her work and help her to identify priorities.

On the whole, the majority of guidance staff interviewed were not in favour of greater review of their work and more emphasis on accountability. A common response was that guidance teachers needed flexibility if they were to be effective in their work. The view seemed to be that greater accountability would mean more paperwork and that this would take time away from pupils. Most staff did not feel that more emphasis on review of their work would contribute to greater effectiveness in provision.

Lack of record keeping

Related to the question of accountability was record keeping, both in relation to monitoring contact with pupils and also recording of the nature of the contact, for example, what was discussed and any outcome or agreed action. We have already noted that a number of guidance staff did not keep a systematic record of their contacts with their caseload and, for example, could not tell us what proportion of their caseload they had interviewed that year. In only one of the project schools did guidance staff use a common record-keeping system, in the others there was no common policy on recording or a standard system. Guidance teachers generally did not know how their colleagues kept their records and most felt it would be difficult for a guidance teacher to take on a colleagues' caseload. This was borne out in one school where one member of guidance had recently found himself in this position.

There was a tendency among some staff in the majority of the project schools not to accept the contribution of good record-keeping to the effective pastoral care and curricular and vocational guidance of pupils or its use in identifying needs and feeding these back to the school.

The extent of team approach

In two schools, the general view was that guidance teachers did operate as a team. In a third school, staff opinion was more varied but some felt that they were beginning to move in this direction. In the other three project schools, the common response was that there was a lack of a team approach.

Although it was acknowledged by staff that a horizontal guidance structure, where guidance teachers had fewer shared pressure points and common concerns than in a vertical system, could inhibit the development of a team spirit and approach, this did not appear to be the most important factor in the existence or otherwise of teamwork in the project schools. Two of the three schools where staff generally acknowledged a lack of team spirit had a vertical system. The reasons are not obvious. It may reflect the ethos of these schools; more generally it may be linked to the issue of individualism and trust in the school system. A few guidance teachers, for example, identified a need to develop more trust among guidance teachers so they would be more prepared to share views, experiences and difficulties. Their reluctance to do so was seen as part of a more general phenomenon in teaching that we have discussed in relation to subject teacher referrals to guidance: that is the individualistic culture in schools and the perception that each teacher should be able to manage pupils on their own and not have to seek support.

There was not universal support among guidance staff for the principle of a team approach. The value of working as a team was questioned by staff in three of the project schools although they were in a minority. Two of these schools were horizontal and one vertical but the structure of the guidance system seemed to be the main explanation in only one of the schools. In another school, the lack of support for a team approach seemed to reflect the particular view held of the nature of the job, that it is an individualistic job in which guidance teachers get on with "the nitty-gritty" themselves. But a majority of staff saw a need for guidance teachers to operate as a team to try and achieve consistency in the guidance response; to make best use of the variety of skills, knowledge and experience of individual guidance teachers; to lessen the isolation of guidance staff; and to share casework issues.

Common systems and approaches

A general view across the project schools was that guidance staff shared a common philosophy but that they might differ in how they operated, for example, in the extent of their input in a particular case. In all of the schools, there was acceptance of the need for a common policy on issues such as attendance and time-keeping, evidenced, for example, in standard letters to parents. But while there might be a common system in this respect, a number of staff pointed out that how a particular case was dealt with might differ depending on the guidance teacher, for example, when a non-attendance letter might be sent out or the point at which a pupil might be put on a truancy card. One explanation given of the different handling of a case, was that it can simply depend on the time allocation of the guidance teacher rather than any difference in views or attitudes.

In addition to efforts to achieve a common system in areas such as attendance, the other aspect where guidance staff noted effort being made to implement common procedures and understanding concerned S2, S4 and S5 subject choice interviews. Where guidance staff were involved in these, efforts were made by senior management to ensure guidance teachers followed a common set of procedures and offered the same basic advice. Clearly, it was in the interests of the school, as well as the pupils, that the subject choice process followed a common format.

It was perhaps not unexpected that the aspect of guidance where response was thought to vary most was pastoral/personal guidance. Obviously each pupil case was unique and required a particular approach but several members of senior management, while acknowledging this, still identified a need to be clear about the minimum and consistent response appropriate in different types of situations.

In the schools with a vertical system, it was felt that a common approach was more likely within a house than across the school. The lack of a common response was seen as manifesting itself somewhat differently in vertical and horizontal systems. In a vertical system, pupils in the same year might be dealt with differently whereas in a horizontal structure, the difference was from year group to year group. In the former case, inconsistent or, at least, different responses were more obvious to pupils who could see how they had been dealt with in comparison to their classmates. In the latter, variation in approach could become evident when different guidance teachers were dealing with the same family.

Differentiation in the remits of PT and APT guidance posts

One of the project schools did not have a PT guidance post. The decision to have APT rather than PT posts in guidance reflected the use of APTs in this school in general.

In four of the other project schools, efforts were being made to try and achieve greater differentiation in the work of PT(G)s and APT(G)s, partly in recognition of the fact that, in practice, some APTs had similar responsibilities and caseloads as PTs but with a smaller time allocation. The tendency was to define extra responsibilities for PT(G)s rather than simply differentiating on the basis of caseload, and to introduce or increase the PT(G)s management role with APT(G)s and, in two of the four schools, with PSE tutors.

In three of these four schools, senior management and guidance staff held somewhat different views about the posts of PT and APT Guidance. Guidance teachers, both PTs and APTs, tended to think that a single level of post within guidance would be preferable because, in practice, staff at both levels carried out the main guidance duties and that the working relationship was one of mutual support rather than supervision of one by the other. Few of the PT(G)s in these schools supported a role for themselves as line managers. Senior

management in these three schools, however, was in favour of developing the management role of PT(G)s.

The issue of the salary/allowance for APT(G) posts was raised by a number of PT(G)s. They suggested that the level of the responsibility allowance of APT(G)s had become eroded and was now similar to that of senior teachers who carried much lighter responsibilities.

The concern over APT(G)s' salaries was part of a feeling in three schools that some APT(G)s were relatively worse off than PT(G)s in the size of their caseload and their time allocation. This had helped to prompt a review of the remits and workload of guidance staff in two of the schools. But there was a feeling among the guidance staff in one of them that the result might be simply to shift the pressure on to PT(G)s rather than actually resolving the workload issue.

Concern about workload and time allocations

Workload and time were the most pressing concerns for the large majority of guidance staff interviewed. Staff felt that their workload had increased in recent years but, as we have already discussed, no-one was setting out priorities for guidance, and the time for guidance had not been increased. They expressed considerable frustration at not being able to do what they believed was required in their work. As we have discussed, they typically felt that much of their work was reactive and that they did not have the time to get to know the non-problematic pupil. This was particularly true of the staff who had the lowest guidance time allocation.

When we asked staff about the use of their guidance time, few were able to give a detailed response since few kept, or were asked to keep, a note of how they spent their guidance time.

The time allocations and caseload of the guidance teachers interviewed are described in chapter four. Here we would simply point out that in none of the project schools did all of the guidance teachers interviewed have the minimum recommended time (40 minutes per 15 pupils per week) although the majority in two schools had the minimum or above. Virtually all guidance teachers reported using lunch-time and their subject non-contact time for guidance. In three of the project schools, guidance staff complained of lack of protection of their guidance time. This could mean having to cancel interviews with pupils, and, in one school, interviews with parents. The latter was particularly of concern as parents might have travelled a considerable distance to the interview (this was a school with a large catchment) and might have arranged time off work.

Guidance teachers' time allocation and workload varied considerably across schools but also within the same school depending on the staffing levels, timetabling demands, and attitude of the guidance teachers' subject department. Several staff pointed out that their time allocation could also vary from year to year depending on the courses being run in their department. Staffing levels in their subject department were also a factor in determining whether or not some guidance staff could, in practice, have their allocated guidance time. Apart from the extent of a guidance teacher's subject teaching load, a number pointed out that the nature of their subject teaching was also relevant but that this was frequently overlooked by management. It might be the case, for example, that if one guidance teacher had a number of Higher classes then the extent of preparation and marking might be greater than another guidance teacher with the same number of hours of teaching. Another difference was between subjects: where a subject was heavily involved in curriculum development a guidance teacher for that subject area had more subject demands or could not contribute at the same level as other colleagues to subject developments. This could lead to guilt and frustration in relation

to the subject, and less time available for guidance duties than guidance teachers in other subjects.

The large majority of guidance staff expressed tension between their guidance and their subject role. In a number of cases they felt that they were stealing time from their subject to carry out guidance work or, as noted, hampering possible developments in their subject department. Several staff did mention supportive heads of departments, for example, enabling them to attend Children Panel hearings but these guidance teachers were in a minority. Nevertheless, no guidance teacher interviewed favoured the idea of full-time guidance staff. They felt it was necessary to have class contact to be effective in their guidance role. Several suggested a third to a half of a teaching load as a reasonable workload in addition to their guidance work.

A number of guidance teachers contrasted the nature of the work in their subject teaching and in guidance. In guidance, some of the demands were unpredictable, and flexibility in time was needed in contrast with their subject where there were set teaching times to which commitment was required.

A common theme was the need to have flexibility in their time allocation to respond to pupils and that time needed to be available every day rather than clustered into two or three days. Most staff found the beginning and end of the school day particularly busy periods and would have welcomed free or flexible time at these points.

Dealing with late-coming and attendance took up a large amount of guidance teachers' time. In two of the project schools, there was some feeling among guidance staff in one and among senior management in the other, that guidance teachers' role could be organised more efficiently for example, in respect of visiting register classes. In another project school, guidance staff had been given some auxiliary help to complete registers and late slips.

The amount of paperwork and administration that guidance staff had to deal with was identified as a major burden. Staff in two schools did think that the introduction of SCAMP had been helpful in reducing time spent on certain aspects of administration. In one of these schools, further efforts had been made to reduce the administrative demands on guidance teachers, for example, with office staff taking over the collation of school reports. In another school the use of volunteer school helpers (who may be parents) to help with guidance administration had been considered but rejected because of concern about confidentiality. The employment of a clerk or secretary for guidance was suggested by a number of guidance teachers. It was felt that the employment of a carefully selected secretary, rather than the use of volunteer helpers, would not pose the same problems about confidentiality.

Staff support, training and development

Training and development needs identified

Most of those interviewed identified a number of outstanding training and development needs; the exception was several guidance teachers in one of the project schools. Counselling skills were frequently mentioned as was information about the post-16 curriculum and post-school options, Records of Achievement and profiling. Drugs and AIDS/HIV were two other areas where staff identified training needs; in one school a particular aspect of this was how to support pupils who might have parents or relations with AIDS. Managing other staff such as those delivering PSE and FLG tutors was an area that a number of PT(G)s thought that training in would be useful. Less frequently mentioned, but identified by several guidance teachers who strongly supported the concept of the guidance team, was the need for training in team work.

Barriers to training and development

Time, financial restrictions and staff cover were generally identified as barriers to training for guidance staff as well as for teachers delivering PSE and those involved in first level guidance. In two schools, several staff pointed to the impact of the loss of TVEI funding on the amount of in-service organised at a regional level.

In one of the project schools, senior management felt that guidance staff were reluctant to undertake in-service because of their subject commitments and that the consequent lack of contact with, and stimulus from, other guidance staff was detrimental especially because the majority of them had been in post for a considerable time. In two other schools, a number of staff identified the problem of staff cover as a reason for not being able to attend in-service or to do the Certificate in Guidance.

The question of how to pass on the knowledge and expertise of staff who had been on in-service, including the Certificate in Guidance, was raised as an issue by a number of staff in two schools. In these schools, there was no system to pass on experiences to other staff, whether guidance or non-guidance, nor did this happen at the guidance meeting. In another school, there was a “cascade” system for in-service with other staff if any teacher went on a course.

Several members of senior management thought that the training and development of guidance staff in general was not well focused, for example, that there was no systematic identification by senior management or guidance teachers of the development needs in the guidance team and little progression apparent in the in-service undertaken.

Attitudes to the Certificate in Guidance

Several guidance staff felt strongly that all guidance teachers should have the Certificate in Guidance, both because of the value of the process and also as a mark of professionalism. As we described in chapter three, just under a third of the guidance teachers interviewed held either the Certificate and/or Diploma in Guidance. For a number, it was a considerable time since they had been on their course and they did not have very strong recollections of it. Some others were enthusiastic about it, commenting that it had introduced the necessary skills such as counselling, although at a basic level, as well as covering guidance practice. They had found the opportunity to mix with other guidance teachers particularly valuable. Several other guidance teachers without a Certificate said that they would like to do the course but had no time or were simply too tired from their work to do so.

Induction for new guidance teachers

Most of the guidance teachers interviewed had been in post for more than three years. None of the more recently appointed staff had had a formal induction when they entered guidance. Among the difficulties they had encountered as new guidance teachers had been dealing with pupils' personal problems and when and how to refer pupils to external agencies. They were helped by the advice and support of more experienced colleagues but still felt they should have had some pre-entry training and a structured induction programme; a handbook covering procedures such as liaison and referral to external agencies would have been useful. In one school, one of the PT(G)s had recently inducted a new APT(G). (This APT(G) was not one of the guidance teachers interviewed.) In this case the PT(G) organised the APT(G)'s induction which included compiling a guide to procedures and involving him in her interviews and attendance at case conferences and panel hearings. This, however, was at the PT(G)'s own initiative; there was no formal induction in the school for new members of guidance.

Support needs

Apart from staff development as such, the need for greater support in their work was raised by guidance teachers in two of the project schools, in particular. They felt a need for more support, for example, in dealing with distressing cases concerning child protection and more recognition, especially from senior management, of the stress involved. While they could talk to colleagues, pressure of time limited this and these guidance teachers felt that there should be a formal recognition of the need for support and de-briefing from a caring colleague as happens in other professions.

Another aspect that was raised by several guidance teachers in two schools, was that of in-service with other members of staff to help them gain a better appreciation of the role of guidance. Work shadowing a guidance teacher was one suggestion to increase subject teacher's awareness of guidance.

First Level Guidance (FLG)

In 1986, *More Than Feelings of Concern* strongly advocated the development of first level guidance in schools. FLG was defined as where staff who do not have a promoted guidance post accept a guidance-related role in relation to the care of a particular small group of pupils. An important aspect of this role was identified as regular daily contact to enable the teachers and pupils to develop a close relationship and so allow the FLG teacher both to offer encouragement and support to pupils and also to co-operate with promoted guidance staff where appropriate. A subject teaching role with the pupil group was seen as desirable. Although the delivery of PSE has come to be associated with FLG, this is not defined in *More Than Feelings of Concern* as a major component of FLG. The report argued that the role of FLG teachers is of such importance that it should be developed in every school. The recent training document “*Managing Guidance*” reiterates the case for FLG. It argues that one of the fundamental aspects of FLG is to provide a safe and supportive home base and that this has spin-offs elsewhere, including helping the personal growth of pupils which often leads to increased educational attainment. As both documents acknowledge, FLG activity is something that the best teachers have done in the past but they identify several critical differences: that FLG is structured and recognised and that FLG teachers should be given time, support and training.

Attitudes to involvement in FLG

In considering the project schools against these official statements about FLG, we could characterise four of them as being at the early stages of development and two of them in the middle stages (“*Managing Guidance*”, SOED, Northern College, St Andrew’s College, Nov 1994). In the two schools we would place in the middle of the development process, there was a recognition of an enhanced role for register teachers and some delivery of PSE to their register group. In the other four schools, while there was encouragement for register teachers to fulfil a more pastoral role, this was not structured in any way. In two of these schools, staff’s views had been formally canvassed as to whether they would wish and be prepared to undertake FLG. In both cases the response was negative. A number of reasons were suggested for this: that the teachers did not want the extra responsibility; that some felt that they lacked the skills; a perceived lack of time, support and training to take on the role; that some teachers did not want to develop a closer relationship with pupils; and the lingering impact of the industrial action of the mid 1980s which made some teachers reluctant to take on extra duties.

The accepted view in two of the four schools with no formal FLG system, was that general staff reaction to FLG was hostile. It was not clear why but may be related to the intensity of the 80s industrial action in one of them and the history of PSE in the other. There was some feeling in one of these schools, however, that the headteacher’s increased emphasis on guidance as a whole school issue was beginning to have an effect on attitudes and that this was being reinforced by the change to a vertical guidance system, including vertical register classes which meant that register class teachers now have the same pupils from S1 to S6.

In the four schools without formal FLG, the guidance teachers interviewed varied in their opinion, of register teachers’ willingness to go beyond their basic tasks. This may have reflected guidance staff’s individual experience with particular register teachers. A number questioned whether, in the time available to register teachers, that it would be possible to establish a close relationship with pupils but others felt that this would be feasible if the commitment was there, and that much depended on the personality of the teacher.

One of the four schools had organised register classes on an all-age vertical basis with the specific aim of trying to create a supportive “family” unit where older pupils would take younger pupils under their wing. It seemed that this was effective only in some classes and depended considerably on the extent to which the register teachers facilitated older pupils’ support of younger ones.

Barriers to FLG

The senior management in those schools without a formal FLG system all wished to develop one. A variety of reasons appeared to be preventing this and we have already referred to some of them. We could classify the reasons in three ways. One concerns opposition to involvement in FLG in principle, whether because it was seen as asking register teachers to take on extra duties that should be properly resourced within the guidance system or because of a rejection of the personal relationship with pupils necessary to FLG. A second type of reason was more related to practicalities, that while in principle staff might be prepared to support FLG, in practice they did not think they had the skills, and were not confident they would get the necessary support and training, or they were not happy with how FLG was likely to be organised. A third type of reason was identified as resource and timetabling difficulties. One of the four schools, for example, had intended, at least in S1 and S2, to reduce the size of register classes and train the register teachers to deliver PSE to their register groups but this had not proved possible because of staffing constraints. The two schools with some element of structured FLG noted similar difficulties in timetabling FLG, especially throughout S1 to S6.

Benefits of FLG

In the two schools with FLG, staff were positive about its impact. In one school where register teachers in S1, S2 and S3 also delivered PSE to their register class, staff felt that FLG was most successful at this stage, for example, that the younger pupils identified more with their register teacher and that register teachers knew the pupils better. Guidance teachers in this school noted that under FLG, register teachers were more likely to identify pupils needing support and refer them on more. Guidance staff also appreciated being able to discuss a case with someone who knew the pupil well.

In the other school, FLG had been introduced to S1 as part of the Development Plan. The registration period had been extended from five to ten minutes to allow the four FLG teachers more time to build up a relationship with pupils. The involvement of these teachers developed over its first year of operation. The basic requirement asked of them was registration, monitoring punishment exercises and being in the PSE class with the guidance teacher. The guidance teacher negotiated the level of commitment individually with each of the FLG teachers, and this varied. However, by the end of the year, all four had moved to what the school saw as maximum input: the establishment of close personal relationships with pupils, not only monitoring but providing support to pupils with personal problems and team-teaching of PSE.

Reflecting on the experience of FLG in this school, staff identified a number of benefits of FLG in S1: a high level of class cohesion; that the register teacher concerned was more likely to notice and follow up on problems rather than immediately refer on but, at the same time, guidance being alerted earlier if a pupil was needing support; and enabling guidance staff to get to know pupils better in the PSE class because of team-teaching and the ability to split the class up. It was felt that the benefits of FLG were very evident in pupils’ attitude and behaviour. It had not been possible to extend this model of FLG to S2 and staff thought that this had had a negative impact on pupils’ behaviour and class cohesion in S2.

Another point that staff in this school noted concerned the guidance teacher-FLG teacher relationship. It was felt that the success of this varied to a certain extent depending on personalities and also the guidance teachers' workload.

In these two schools with FLG, the reasons for teachers' involvement were seen as: personal interest and commitment to pupils; personal and professional interest and personal fulfilment; and because of interest in gaining a promoted guidance post.

Personal and Social Education

In considering PSE in the project schools, two general points emerged: one was the considerable efforts to develop PSE programmes in these schools in recent years and, parallel to this, a view that a more worthwhile PSE curriculum had evolved over the last decade with a move from a contents focus to one that emphasised skills and understanding. TVEI, in particular, was identified as giving impetus to the development of PSE provision. This is not to minimise differences in opinion about issues such as where responsibility for PSE should lie, or the impact of PSE on guidance teachers' workload, or to ignore issues about the status of PSE, or the various practical difficulties being experienced by the schools. Despite the unresolved issues and practical problems, on the whole, PSE had become a more accepted part of the curriculum and was an area which schools were making greater efforts to implement.

Guidance involvement in PSE

Guidance was responsible for PSE in five of the six project schools and in the sixth school, guidance teachers were involved in its delivery. When we discussed PSE with staff, very few indeed made reference to PSE provision via permeation although official statements about PSE discuss its delivery through a combination of "permeation", "syllabus inserts" and "special courses" (eg Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages, Guidelines for Headteachers Revised Edition 1989, SCCC, Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland, National Guidelines, Personal and Social Development 5-14, SOED June 1993). Our discussions with staff focused on the taught discrete PSE programmes and their views considered here relate to this.

A majority of guidance teachers interviewed supported a leading role for guidance in PSE. They gave various reasons: PSE is concerned with the development of the whole child, as is guidance; that it was part of their pastoral role; that if they delivered PSE to their own caseload it provided the regular contact necessary to develop a good relationship; delivery of PSE gave them an opportunity to see pupils in a different light; that the content of PSE programmes was too important to leave to be covered via permeation; guidance involvement was good for the profile of guidance in the school; and, for some staff, because guidance teachers had special expertise in PSE. But virtually all staff saw involvement in PSE as secondary to their individual contact with their caseload.

In two of the five schools where PSE was part of the guidance remit, opinion among guidance staff was split as to whether PSE should be a guidance responsibility or not. Those who were against this saw it as a non-subject specific activity that had "been dumped" on guidance. Some of those who accepted a guidance responsibility for PSE also perceived it in similar terms but nevertheless felt it was a legitimate role for guidance. Both staff who were negative about a PSE remit and also others who supported it thought that guidance staff had no greater expertise in PSE than subject teachers. They felt that guidance teachers were generally attracted to guidance by the appeal of individual work with pupils and were selected on the basis of their abilities in this respect. Thus some guidance teachers who did accept a role in PSE felt that it should not be the exclusive preserve of guidance and that other teachers should be involved particularly in its delivery.

A minority of staff in the project schools thought that guidance teachers alone should both develop and teach PSE. For several, this was because they felt that in reality, whatever the good intentions of management, it was difficult to maintain a system of volunteer non-guidance PSE tutors, that inevitably others with space on their timetable have to be drafted in and that such "conscripts" were often "just deliverers of bits of paper".

A view expressed by staff in two schools related more widely to the status and position of guidance in schools. They put forward the view of PSE as “the guidance curriculum” that guidance should take ownership of in much the same way as subject departments have their own curriculum. They thought that this would increase the profile and status of guidance in the school and contribute to the process of professionalising guidance and truly establishing guidance as a department. For these teachers, PSE was seen, among other things, as a vehicle for improving the position of guidance in the school structure.

The accepted need for PSE

The large majority, but not all, of the staff interviewed accepted the need for PSE. A minority questioned whether it was really possible to deliver the understanding and skills that PSE was trying to in a class context rather than an individual basis.

In three of the project schools, staff had a stronger or more focused view of the value of PSE than in the other schools, in two of them, this seemed to be related to the level of deprivation in their catchment, and the perceived need to equip pupils with the skills they needed to confront some of the problems they were likely to encounter. In the third school, the focus for PSE seemed to be influenced by a strong commitment to the idea that schools should foster pupils’ confidence, interpersonal and life skills. Expectations of PSE were most explicit in one of these schools where it was a main element of the school’s development plan. In this case, PSE was expected to have a measurable impact on pupils behaviour, for example, in respect of punctuality and attendance, and, ultimately their attainment.

The status of PSE in the curriculum

The question of the status of PSE in relation to subject areas was raised by a number of staff. Although, as we noted at the beginning of this section, the PSE curriculum had developed in the last decade, the general view was that PSE still lacked status in the eyes of many staff, pupils and their parents. This put pressure on those responsible for PSE to try and improve its credibility, for example, by introducing certification. A number of staff also felt that it can lead to an emphasis on content rather than process in an effort to be seen as meaningful as other subject areas which have an accepted body of knowledge to teach. A number of staff identified a tension between PSE and subject areas in this and other respects. They felt that the essence of PSE was the process and the relationship between the teacher and pupils, and contrasted this with the situation in subject areas. However, to achieve credibility (and therefore time and resources) in the school setting, there was a pressure on PSE to be more like other subjects. Thus credibility was at the expense of the intrinsic value of PSE itself to pupils. (It is interesting that process and relationships were not seen as being fundamental in the teaching of other subject areas.)

PSE provision

Little identification of priorities

In general, staff felt that the content of PSE had expanded greatly in recent years in response to a variety of national and regional policies and initiatives. Health education, equal opportunities, work experience and Records of Achievement were examples of new or expanded areas of work for PSE. There was a very strong feeling among guidance staff that as new or extra elements were being added to PSE, no-one at national, regional or school level was prepared to identify areas that should be omitted. This related to the more general question of who should set priorities for guidance.

The development of provision

As we described in chapter four, the extent of PSE programmes varied somewhat across the project schools. One school, in particular, had a less extensive programme although efforts were being made to develop it. It is difficult to identify precisely the motivation or reasons behind PSE developments across the project schools. The impact of national and regional requirements and guidelines, especially stemming from TVEI; the commitment of senior management, the attitude and enthusiasm of guidance staff, and the perceived role of PSE with pupils were all factors that influenced the extent and nature of the PSE programme in each school. But the balance of reasons varied in each school. For example, in two schools, it appeared that the impetus for the development of a more extensive and structured programme had been the appointment of a new member of senior management personally committed to the idea. In another school, the perceived need for PSE for pupils living in an area of deprivation seemed to be a major factor.

Most of the staff interviewed felt that, on the whole, the content of their PSE programme was unsurprising in that it reflected a commonly accepted range of social topics, “old chestnuts” as one teacher remarked; national and regional guidelines; and some attempt to reflect the needs or wishes of their pupils. In two schools, the programme also took into account the extent to which topics were being covered in other subject areas by means of a curricular audit across all subjects. In one of these schools this was done on a three year cycle. In two schools, efforts had been made to find out about PSE in the associated primaries to avoid repetition and build in progression. Staff in three schools mentioned that when the present programme, or parts of it, was being developed pupils had been consulted about the topics they felt should be included. This had usually been done by questionnaire.

Differentiation in provision

In four of the project schools, pupils followed a common PSE programme S1-S4, it was only in the upper school that any of the schools differentiated provision or offered pupils a choice. It is also at this stage that provision varied most across the school. PSE in S5 and S6 is discussed further in the section on the upper school.

There was considerable similarity across the schools in the topic areas covered in the S1-S4 programme, this raised the question as to the extent to which PSE in each school was responsive to the particular needs of their pupils. A number of staff made the point that it was important to have flexibility within PSE lessons to be able to respond to pupils’ concerns or questions. This attitude was most marked in the school in an area of deprivation.

Although there was unanimity that flexibility to respond to pupils’ interests and concerns in a PSE class was vital if a lesson was to be productive, a number of staff expressed concern that flexibility can mean that pupils in different PSE classes received very varied provision. They felt that there had to be a balance between flexibility and the need to ensure that certain aspects were covered with all pupils. But opinion varied as to whether or not all pupils should have a common experience in PSE. It is necessary here to distinguish between criticism of PSE delivery, often by untrained staff, who were seen as sometimes pursuing their own views and efforts to be responsive to pupils’ concerns. Pupils in several group discussions criticised some teachers for following their own hobby horses in PSE classes rather than covering the legitimate content. Several staff suggested that the specification of clear outcomes for each PSE topic with flexibility in achieving this might be the way forward.

Extent of satisfaction with provision

The project schools had made considerable progress in developing PSE in recent years. As a very rough generalisation, the staff of two of the schools were fairly satisfied with provision,

especially in S1-S4, although noting areas for development. In another two schools, teachers thought that provision had developed substantially but identified a number of outstanding issues. Staff in the other two project schools felt that PSE provision still needed considerable development, including in one, the introduction of a timetabled slot for all pupils.

Pupils' opinion of PSE is considered in detail later in this report; here we compare their general response with staff's estimation of PSE provision. We would emphasise that, as with our summary of staff's opinion, any overall estimation of pupils' reactions can only be a somewhat crude generalisation. But it is still useful to examine whether the overall pattern of teachers' and pupils' views in the project schools was similar or not. Three general points emerged from the pupil group discussions. One was that overall pupils had a more negative opinion of PSE provision than did staff. The second point was that their reaction, while more negative, is in line with our categorisation of PSE provision in the schools based on teachers' responses, for example, pupils in the two schools where teachers were fairly satisfied with provision were among the most positive. The third point concerned the importance of the individual teacher delivering PSE quite apart from, for example, the organisation of PSE or the specified content. This was evident from the variation in pupils' opinion within the same school and same year.

We now consider some of the unresolved issues and concerns that staff identified in relation to PSE provision.

The role of non-guidance staff in PSE

We have already considered the question of what role guidance should play in PSE and the various opinions expressed about this. At a more practical level, there were major concerns about the teaching base for PSE and the training and support of non-guidance PSE tutors in four of the project schools. The four schools concerned tried to avoid using non-volunteer staff but three of them experienced difficulty in recruiting enough volunteers. Lack of volunteers was put down to a variety of reasons: timetabling clashes; unease and uncertainty among some teachers at the prospect of teaching PSE because of the topics and methodology involved as well as the nature of PSE with few "right" or "wrong" answers; a lack of preparation time for PSE and a perceived lack of support; the pressure of Standard Grade; and that teaching PSE rather than Higher classes was not useful to promotion prospects in general. In the school with enough volunteers for PSE, it was suggested that this was because PSE involvement was seen as a avenue into guidance. The issue of PSE involvement and promotion depended on whether promotion was being sought within a teacher's subject area or not.

The consequences of not having enough volunteers for PSE varied. In one school, more time was spent on teaching PSE by guidance staff and senior management than was seen as desirable by some members of senior management. In another school, it was a major reason for restricting volunteers to the delivery of a limited unit of PSE to minimise demands on them but, it was recognised that this had the negative effect of restricting the tutors' ability to build up a relationship with pupils. In a third school, teachers with space on their timetable were asked to take PSE classes even if they were not particularly interested.

Lack of training and support for PSE tutors

In four schools, lack of training and support for non-guidance PSE tutors was identified as an issue both by them and also by guidance and senior management. This was largely ascribed to the lack of time of both of the person (usually a guidance teacher) responsible for the particular part of the PSE programme and the PSE tutor but also to the lack of opportunities for relevant in-service. Typically those responsible for PSE and the tutors spoke of

“familiarisation” rather than training, that is, of being shown the materials to be used. In the two other schools, the TACADE Skills for Adolescence package was being used, and here the volunteer staff delivering this had received the TACADE training. In both schools, this was in their own time. In several schools, there had also been a timetabling clash between training offered for PSE and subject-based in-service.

Lack of support and training of non-guidance staff was seen as having a negative effect in several respects. As we noted above it was seen as discouraging volunteers. But, most importantly, inadequate support and training of PSE tutors was identified as having an effect on the quality of delivery to pupils, that a number of PSE tutors were not using the appropriate active or student-centred learning methods, or were uneasy or unskilled at doing so.

In our discussions with staff, the demands of teaching PSE successfully were emphasised to us. It was seen to be demanding both in the nature of some of the topics covered and also the methodologies that should be employed. Yet some staff were being asked to deliver it with little, if any, training. It was also pointed out to us (including by science and maths teachers themselves) that often teachers from a science and maths background found particular difficulty in teaching PSE because they were less used to a PSE type of methodology than were teachers of arts and social science subjects. Lack of support and training was therefore particularly likely to discourage staff from these subjects from volunteering to deliver PSE.

Organisation and development of PSE programmes

Another aspect that could have a major impact on the quality of PSE was its organisation and quality of materials. This seemed to be more of an issue in two schools, that materials were not given out in sufficient time and the materials themselves could be inadequate and required the tutors to develop them when they had no preparation time to do so. This had an effect on both the quality and also the nature of the provision that pupils received. It could mean pupils in one class received quite different input from those in another, not in response to their particular concerns but because of poor organisation. As we noted earlier, staff had different opinions about whether or not pupils should have a common PSE experience. This was a matter of principle. Here the criticism was that because of inadequate organisation and materials, pupils, unintentionally, could have quite different inputs.

Guidance teachers’ expertise in PSE

We have focused on non-guidance staff’s lack of training and its perceived impact on the quality of provision. But from staff’s and pupil’s comments, we should not assume that guidance staff were automatically better able to teach PSE or, indeed, to train other staff to do so. Several non-guidance PSE tutors commented that while there was no time for the guidance teacher responsible to help them resolve difficulties they had encountered, in any case, the guidance teacher had no more expertise in the area than they had themselves. A number of guidance teachers agreed that they had no particular expertise in PSE, that their skills lay in individual work with pupils. The question of training for PSE was not confined to non-guidance teachers. Several guidance teachers and also some pupils made the point that PSE is the one area in school which does not have to be taught by someone with a specific qualification to do so.

One teacher who had recently completed the Certificate in Guidance had found this extremely valuable in helping him use the appropriate methodology in his PSE classes.

Class size

In three of the project schools, large numbers of around 30 in PSE classes compounded other factors affecting the quality of delivery. In these schools, staff were very conscious of the negative effect of the size of the PSE classes which made the use of active learning strategies difficult. A number of staff said specifically that they were aware of sometimes employing inappropriate methods but felt they had little choice given they had perhaps 30 pupils in their class.

Pupils' views on PSE

The impact of lack of training and support and class size was evident in pupils' responses about PSE in the group discussions. A majority were critical of the delivery of PSE. They criticised the size of their PSE classes; lack of, or poorly focused, discussions; an over-reliance on worksheets; and inappropriate classroom layout. Another common criticism was that their teacher was sometimes uncomfortable dealing with certain topics. Such negative comments did not only come from pupils in the four schools which identified a problem about training and support of non-guidance PSE tutors. Pupils' reactions suggested that some guidance teachers have difficulty in delivering PSE. Pupils comments about PSE again highlighted a difference in the perceptions of teachers and pupils.

Impact of PSE methodologies on subject areas

The transfer of PSE methodologies throughout a school is often given as one reason for the involvement of non-guidance staff in PSE so we were interested in the extent to which staff felt they transferred the methods used in the PSE class to their own subject area. Given the intention of Standard Grade developments to introduce more active learning approaches, we were surprised to discover that some staff did not feel it appropriate to do so. They gave several reasons: that it was not suited to their subject, for example, maths or geography; and that pupils had problems coping with more active learning and a more open relationship with their teacher in anything other than a PSE class. Only a minority of those involved in teaching PSE felt they used a similar approach in their subject but those who did so were positive about it. They felt that their PSE experience had improved their listening skills, provided them with a wider repertoire of approaches to draw on as appropriate and improved their relationship with pupils.

Content, coherence and progression in PSE provision

The picture in terms of the quality of the content, coherence and progression of PSE provision is very mixed. Four of the six schools had a relatively structured and comprehensive programme in place for S1-S5 and, to some extent, S6. In a fifth school there was no real S5 or S6 programme and the sixth school had provision from S1-S6 but with limited input for S1 and S2 in particular.

It is difficult to assess the coherence and integration of the programmes. Certainly three of the schools were trying to achieve this although several staff in one of them questioned the success of this. It was striking that none of the non-guidance PSE tutors interviewed in any of the schools knew much about any other part of the PSE programme. Where guidance teachers had a remit for a particular stage of PSE, they rightly concentrated on this but some were not very knowledgeable about other parts of the programme. This was most evident in the school with a horizontal structure where guidance staff were responsible for PSE for one year group only. Only two schools mentioned carrying out a curricular audit to assess the extent to which possible PSE topics were being covered in subjects and to avoid overlap. In one of these schools, such an audit was conducted regularly.

We cannot be definite given the variation in the design and management of provision in the project schools but it may well be that the approach most likely to achieve integrated provision is where one person has responsibility for the whole programme S1-S6 rather than spread the responsibility, and, importantly, that this person is not someone in senior management who has this remit among a number of others. Equally it needs to be someone with sufficient status (and time) to achieve results.

In each of the project schools, staff identified difficulties with particular parts of the programme. These are too detailed and specific to report here. But three more general points emerged from our discussions with staff about the content of their PSE provision. Staff were concerned that the requirements of Records of Achievement and work experience were squeezing out other parts of PSE provision, especially the social education elements. In the case of RoAs, this might have been particularly acute because it was just being introduced in the project schools, its demands on PSE time might later reduce, or at least, be more spread out over pupils' school career.

A second issue concerned how to respond to pupil diversity. There were two aspects to this. One related to pupils' different levels of maturity and seemed to be more of an issue in the lower school, especially in S3. A number of staff spoke about the difficulty of handling certain topics, including, but not only, sex education, in a class where pupils were at very different stages of maturity. A graphic example given was of an S2 class where some girls were still interested in playing with their Barbie dolls while others were going to discos in the city centre. It was not seen as feasible to organise classes to try and reflect pupils' maturity and, as was generally agreed, maturity does not relate to academic level. In the upper school, the issue was more related to pupils' different academic levels because of the close connection of attainment with differing post-school options. Here staff were debating whether PSE provision, at least in relation to careers education, should be differentiated and to what degree.

The third general point was one that we have already referred to, that there was a danger that PSE was too content focused at the expense of developing skills and understanding and the building up of a relationship between the teacher and pupils. Staff identified a number of reasons why this might happen: a desire to show that PSE had a curriculum like other subjects; poorly designed programmes; lack of training of staff; and unfamiliarity or unease with appropriate methodologies.

Records of Achievement

Guidance role in RoAs

The project schools were at different stages of implementation of Records of Achievement as we described in chapter four. It is worth noting that staff generally referred to Records of Achievement rather than the National Records of Achievement which is the correct terminology. This probably reflects the early use of records of achievement in Scotland under TVEI before the introduction of the National Record of Achievement in 1991.

In three of the four schools where guidance had the main responsibility for RoAs, guidance staff felt that their level of responsibility and involvement was too great. A common remark was that RoAs were another case of guidance being expected to take responsibility for an initiative which did not have an obvious subject base. The large majority of guidance teachers, however, acknowledged that guidance should have a role in RoAs because of their relevance to the guidance process. Nevertheless, an outstanding issue is the extent to which RoAs should be a guidance responsibility and where their contribution should lie. A number of guidance teachers, for example, identified the organisational and administrative burden of RoAs, and several spoke of typing pupils RoAs themselves. While it was generally felt that guidance teachers should have a role in helping pupils with their personal statement and in relation to personal background information, their involvement in helping to compile other aspects such as achievements in the curriculum was more debatable.

On the whole, guidance staff valued the process of RoAs. They felt that the RoA process had the potential to increase pupils' self-esteem, to encourage them to reflect on their skills and achievements and indicated the value of other than purely scholastic achievements. Several teachers thought that RoAs could be useful in motivating pupils, in particular, to help them see the need to develop interests and hobbies. But a number of staff were doubtful whether the potential of RoAs in respect of pupils' self-esteem and the clarification of goals could be realised without more individual contact, thinking that it was not possible to achieve such results when RoAs were completed on a class basis.

Production of RoAs

We have already referred to the administrative burden of RoAs identified by some guidance teachers. The production of RoAs clearly made demands on schools' administration. The project schools had responded in different ways. In two, the computing or business studies department was involved so that pupils could input data themselves. In another school the intention was that RoAs should be typed by office staff but this had not happened and S4 RoAs had not been issued. In the fourth school RoAs were typed by office staff or guidance teachers, and in the fifth school handwritten by pupils. In this school, several staff wondered if their pupils would be at a disadvantage, for example, at interviews, because their RoAs would not look as professional as those of pupils from schools where RoAs were wordprocessed or typed.

Impact on PSE

As well as the administrative impact of RoAs, a number of guidance staff also noted the effect of having to make time for RoA work within existing PSE programmes as we discussed earlier. This was generally seen as a negative effect largely because the potential benefits of RoAs had yet to be realised. In one school, however, it was planned to increase PSE time in S3 and S4 to accommodate RoA work.

Pupil reaction

Teachers' views on how pupils regard RoAs were varied. In one school, several staff thought that lower ability pupils in particular could not see the point of RoAs; in another school academic pupils were identified as the group least convinced of their value. Teachers felt that pupils reactions would be substantially influenced by the reaction of further and higher education and employers to RoAs. The inclusion of a question about RoAs on the UCAS application form was seen as beneficial in this respect. In three schools, staff noted that at interview some employers were asking youngsters for their RoA; this was increasing their status with pupils.

The Upper School

Guidance in the upper school was one of the topics that we discussed with staff in the first year of the research. We also carried out some extra interviews with staff and discussions with pupils about upper school issues in three of the project schools in the second year of the project as we described in chapter two. We therefore have information from all of the project schools and additional information from three of them.

A more varied upper school population

Two points were commonly made when we asked staff about guidance in the upper school. One concerned the more varied composition of senior pupils with an increase in the number of less academic pupils staying-on. The other was the increasing complexity of new courses in school as well as the more varied and diverse post-school options. Staff in all of the project schools felt that these changes posed challenges for guidance in relation to curricular guidance; careers information and guidance; and inappropriate staying-on.

A related point that staff generally raised was a need to develop PSE provision, which in the past has had less attention than PSE in S1-S4, to meet the different needs and more varied aspirations of senior pupils.

A number of guidance staff commented that the nature of their individual work was different with pupils in S5 and S6. In contrast to much of their contact with pupils in S1-S4 about late-coming, attendance and behaviour, the focus of work with S5 and S6 pupils was more on vocational and personal matters. Staff noted that the personal issues could be complex and inter-related, for example, that exam and study issues, conflict with parents and relationship problems could all be elements in the difficulty a pupil might be experiencing.

Curricular guidance

Teachers in two schools contrasted the extent of preparation for pupils at the S4/S5 and S5/S6 transitions with that provided at the S2 stage where there was considerable input in PSE before pupils made their subject choice. A similar point was raised by several careers officers, who felt that there was a mistaken tendency in schools to view subject choice in S4 and S5 as a more straightforward matter than in S2 because it appeared to be heavily dependent on pupils' Standard Grade results.

There was, however, a recognition among senior management and guidance staff, of the greater need for curricular guidance for senior pupils. But guidance teachers across the project schools noted that they found it difficult to be able to assess the relative merits of the curricular choices open to pupils in school and to keep abreast of all the changes in post-school opportunities. In one of the project schools, the decision to change to a lower, middle and upper school structure with a head of each, was in response to the changing population of senior pupils and the greater need for curricular guidance. It was felt that the head of the senior school could contribute to this.

The role of senior management in guidance

In the project schools, senior management played a key role in the subject choice process in the upper school. It was senior management rather than guidance who were responsible for parents' information sessions and assemblies to pupils on subject choice. The production of the senior school handbook was also their responsibility. The general view was that the S4/S5 and S5/S6 transition was a task that should be shared by senior management and guidance but the precise roles and extent of their respective involvement, however, varied across the

project schools, for example, in the extent to which senior management were involved in course choice interviews. In three of the project schools, guidance teachers carried out these interviews, in the other three schools, both senior management and guidance teachers were involved. In one of these schools, the aim was joint interviews by the AHT and guidance teachers; in practice, around three-quarters of pupils had a joint interview because of time pressures.

In one school with a horizontal structure, the senior management role in interviews was seen as necessary by guidance and senior management because AHTs had a greater knowledge of the timetable and curricular options than had guidance teachers had and they also had had more opportunity to build up knowledge about further and higher education. This did not seem to be an issue in the other schools with a horizontal structure. In another school, the opposite view was expressed. Here guidance staff carried out the course choice interviews and the senior management view was that guidance staff should interview because they had the necessary relationship with their pupils and it was then a staff development issue to ensure that they had the necessary curricular knowledge to be effective.

In two of the project schools, a particular matter raised by guidance staff was the difficulty caused by the failure of senior management to produce the senior school handbook as scheduled before the course choice interviews. This meant that pupils were not as well informed before the interviews which consequently took longer.

A point at issue in one school was that guidance staff were not involved in course information sessions for the parents of S4 and S5 pupils. Guidance teachers felt that they should be since it involved their caseload and they could, for example, also have spoken about PSE provision.

Transition issues

Both senior management and guidance teachers felt that a key task was to help pupils make realistic choices, to know the demands of the subjects, especially the one year Higher, and ensure they had a real purpose in coming back to school. Staff in five of the six project schools, however, identified inappropriate staying-on as a problem in that some pupils were returning to school with little chance of achieving worthwhile results. The schools were trying to overcome this in various ways: encouraging pupils to discuss other options with the careers officer; giving more information about alternatives such as the guaranteed places scheme in further education and Skillseekers; and generally trying to make the further education option better known. Several staff, however, felt that the further education option was not feasible for all pupils, that some pupils were not mature enough to cope with college and were better returning to school. In three of the schools, pupils could take modules at a local college but this did not seem to have made much impact on their decision to return to school or not. In one school, a timetabling clash with some of the most popular school subjects and the college provision was identified as discouraging some pupils from going to college part-time.

Guidance staff in two schools raised the issue of what was appropriate level of guidance and support for pupils. This was a particular issue in one of the schools because of the level of deprivation in the local area. Here several guidance teachers were uncertain about how to achieve the right balance in supporting pupils in a difficult environment and encouraging them to leave at the right time.

Staff also acknowledged that the question of whether pupils' return to school was an appropriate decision or not was just a matter of their indecision or inertia but was also related

to a lack of worthwhile curricular possibilities for the less academic pupil, despite developments in the S5 and S6 curriculum. In several schools this was seen as a particular problem in S6 since their modular provision was geared to S5 pupils and there was little new on offer for S6 pupils.

The need for academic support

The need to help pupils achieve their academic potential and cope with pressures of work were identified as issues in all of the project schools. One school had responded by introducing enhanced guidance for senior pupils to provide more support and personal contact. As part of this development guidance teachers interviewed senior pupils three times over the year to check progress with subjects and provide support if necessary. An important feature of this extra support was to help pupils deal with pressures in the first few weeks as they settle into their upper school subjects. The hope was that this extra support would ultimately improve performance. One result in the short term had been to increase the level of self-referrals from senior pupils when they were under pressure or having difficulties with courses. The school recognised that to support this guidance initiative, subject staff would need to be involved to encourage confidence building and provide the necessary back-up in subjects.

PSE provision

As we noted earlier in this chapter, three schools had a PSE programme in place for S1-S6, one had provision for S1-S5 and PSE provision in another was focused on S3-S5, being limited in S1, S2 and S6. One of the schools which had not previously had any significant PSE programme in the upper school, was in the process of developing provision in the second year of our research when we went back to it to examine upper school issues in more detail.

Choice and differentiation in PSE

In two of the project schools, pupils had some element of choice in their S5 PSE topics. In one school this meant that, apart from Record of Achievement work, some pupils had not experienced any careers-related activities, for example, careers talks by outside speakers. The view expressed by several guidance teachers was that this was not a problem since most pupils stayed on into S6. (This was not borne out in the official staying-on figures for this school.)

Four of the six schools had some element of differentiation in PSE in S5 to try and take account of pupils' academic level and likely post-school destination. The extent of differentiation varied across the schools. In one, the classes and the PSE programme were constructed on the basis of pupils' academic level with specific provision for each although some opting in was possible. In another school, pupils taking three or more Highers could choose study leave instead of PSE after the core programme had been covered by October. In principle, these pupils could opt into any PSE session that interested them, for example, a particular career talk. It was clear, however, from the group discussions with pupils in this school, that this was not their understanding. They saw study time and the other PSE activities as alternatives, that if they chose study time, they could not then go along to any of the careers talks that interested them.

In a third school, the intention in the revised S5 programme was that pupils would be split for the unit on post-school options on the basis of those intending to enter HE and those with other plans. This was as a result of feedback from the PSE tutors who had found teaching this

unit on an undifferentiated basis had not been successful, especially for pupils not thinking about higher education.

In the fourth school, PSE classes were organised on the basis of pupils' academic level and the PSE tutors had flexibility to vary the content and emphasis of classes as appropriate, for example, the extent to which study skills were covered.

In the two schools where PSE provision was not organised on a differentiated basis, opinion about the value of doing so differed. In one school, several staff were considering whether it would be a good idea since they felt it would make it easier to cover post-school options. In the other school, it did not seem to be an issue, perhaps because the PSE programme in S5 was the least vocational/careers focused of S5 provision in all of the project schools.

Focus of PSE

One could roughly categorise the focus of upper school PSE in the project schools as being social education based in one, mixed social education/careers/vocational in three, and careers/vocational in the other two schools. An issue raised by staff in one of the schools with a vocational focus to the PSE programme, was the difficulty for tutors to absorb and keep up-to-date with the amount of information involved.

Staff opinion of PSE

The project schools were at somewhat different stages of development and satisfaction with their PSE provision for the upper school. Staff in one school which had recently developed S5 and S6 provision felt that the programme was going well, especially because they had built up the use of external agencies and speakers (including students) for both social and vocational topics. They felt that pupils found input from external speakers more relevant and meaningful than from teachers. Several issues were, however, identified by several staff. One concerned the extent to which the programme was knowledge rather than skills focused, that it was good at increasing pupils' knowledge of topics but less good at helping them develop skills such as self-assessment, decision-making, and inter-personal skills. A second issue was the lack of progression in pupils' overall programme because of a lack of social education topics in PSE in S3 and S4.

Senior management in another school, felt the lack of provision in S6 was an anomaly but were unsure whether it would be possible to find the resources and time to develop a programme in the short-term. A third school with an established S5 and S6 programme was revising it to take account of identified problems, mainly how to cater for the more varied range of pupils in the upper school. Another school was also considering whether its S5 and S6 provision should be revised to take more account of pupil differences. A fifth school recognised that its current PSE provision in the upper school was limited as was PSE in the school as a whole; several members of senior management acknowledged that more time needed to be given to PSE overall.

In the sixth project school, efforts were being made to develop an S5 and S6 programme for the first time. The guidance and senior management staff involved in the programme identified a number of problems. One was the very short time that had been given to develop the programme which would, in fact, have to be revised again at short notice for the following session because the time allocation for PSE was being cut. Large class size was another difficulty as was the negative reaction of most academic pupils to some of the social topics and to the study skills input. There was a feeling among the staff involved in the upper school programme that the school still did not give sufficient recognition to the importance of PSE for S5 and S6 pupils.

Primary/secondary links

The general view among staff in the project schools was that their primary/secondary liaison was well-established and effective. All of the project schools made visits to the associated primary schools and these usually involved current S1 or S2 pupils; had an induction programme for prospective S1 pupils while they were in P7; and held information sessions and open evenings for parents. Liaison between primary and secondary teachers in respect of 5-14 developments was seen as valuable in building up contact between staff in general and improving the continuity of pupils' education.

Staff in the project schools felt that while the transition from primary to secondary can be a difficult experience that provision had developed considerably and that their transition programmes for pupils were effective.

Parents and guidance

Awareness of guidance

Guidance teachers in two of the project schools were confident that parents understood the role of guidance, knew their child's guidance teacher and were happy that the guidance teacher knew their child. Staff were less sure in the other four project schools about parents' awareness of the guidance system and, in two of these schools, a number of staff believed that parents did not know much about the role of guidance teachers and usually assumed that they did not have teaching responsibilities. In these schools, guidance staff tended to perceive themselves as inaccessible to parents.

Staff in two schools identified a lack of parental support in dealing with matters such as late-coming, attendance and smoking. Referral to an external agency was noted as another area where parents might not support the school. This might be because the parents refused to accept the need for referral or because they did not want it to be recorded as a problem, feeling that their child would then be labelled.

Use of guidance

There was some variation across the schools in the extent to which staff thought parents were prepared to contact the school. One school, in particular, thought that parents were very ready to discuss matters with either guidance or the headteacher possibly because of the close-knit nature of the local community. Staff in another school also thought that parents were fairly likely to contact guidance if they were anxious about their child. In the other project schools, staff were less inclined to think parents were generally ready to approach guidance and, in one school, several guidance teachers thought that only a few parents informed guidance about matters at home that might be relevant to their child at school.

Contact with parents

Most individual contact with parents happened when there was some difficulty such as illness, attendance or behaviour. In several schools where the guidance role in discipline had recently been changed, staff noted that this had led to a reduction in their contacts with parents. The general feeling among guidance staff was that they would like more contact with parents about educational matters rather than personal or behavioural difficulties and more opportunity simply to inform them that their child was doing well. Nevertheless, most did not see this as likely because of time pressures.

The project schools held a variety of parents' sessions in addition to the usual parents' evenings, for example, information evenings for prospective S1 parents, subject choice and post-school options meetings; and, in two schools, meetings about S1 and S2 PSE. The general view among staff was that attendance at parents' evenings dropped off further up the school. Staff in one school noted that a change to posting out invitations to parents' evenings rather than sending them by the pupil had boosted attendance. Staff in this school also pointed out the value of social activities through the PTA especially as a way to get parents into the school who would not normally attend parents' evenings.

External agencies

Our discussions with staff about liaison with external agencies mainly concerned links with Psychological Services, Social Work and the Children's Panel. Careers Service contact was a specific area of the research and is reported in chapter seven.

Extent and nature of contact

We asked the project schools about the extent and nature of contact with these main support agencies. One of the project schools had no time allocation from Psychological Services and staff saw this as a definite lack. In the other project schools, links with Psychological Services seemed to be more structured than with Social Work. The pattern seemed to be that these schools had a regular timetabled input from Psychological Services but in four of the schools contact with Social Work was more ad hoc. Staff commented that social workers were difficult to contact and that contact relied heavily on the telephone. In two schools which had pupils coming from a number of primary schools, a particular difficulty was the need to liaise with more than one Social Work office.

Although staff assessed the quality of input from Social Work and Psychological Services as very dependent on the individual concerned, this comment was much more frequently made about Social Work than Psychological Services. In the latter case, more comments related to the need for a greater allocation of time from Psychological Services. Nevertheless, staff acknowledged that generally the external agencies were over-worked and under-resourced. Some questioned whether, in reality, the other agencies could respond to requests for greater contact because of resource constraints.

In one school, the changing nature of the school roll because of placing requests had resulted in more pupils from Areas of Priority Treatment, some of whom had social workers or were in need of Social Work support. Several members of staff thought that guidance teachers had not fully adjusted to the more varied school roll and did not liaise enough with Social Work about these pupils.

Two of the project schools had a social worker based part-time in the school. In one case there had been problems of staff turnover which it was hoped had been resolved. In the second school, staff were positive about the value of their school-based social worker because of ease of contact and the support provided. In considering the extent of Social Work involvement in relation to pupil need, we expected a third project school to have a social worker based there, at least on a part-time basis. This had apparently been discussed in the past but had not been possible because of lack of resources.

Opinion about links with the Children's Panel was generally positive. In several cases staff spoke of telephoning the Reporter to ask for advice. Lack of time to attend Children's Hearings meetings was an issue for a substantial number of staff. A number felt that while they provided reports for these Hearings, their absence at the meeting could adversely affect the quality of the decision, for example, a decision to return a child to school whom staff felt the school could not support.

A number of staff mentioned an increase in reports for the Children's Panel and, that in recent years, the questions had changed and become more searching, for example, in asking for reasons for pupils' absence rather than simply the number of absences. It was also pointed out that an ostensibly minor change in the report form (it no longer had a duplicating sheet) had also had an impact on the time involved because it now had to be photocopied.

Joint meetings

On the whole, in the three schools where there were regular joint agency meetings, opinion of their value varied, but on balance, guidance staff did not appear to think them very effective. It was difficult to identify precisely the reasons for this. In one school, several staff thought that the meetings tried to deal with too many cases and that the various agencies involved failed to deliver promised action. More generally, the somewhat negative response may be related to two factors. One was an organisational one, that the guidance teacher whose pupil was involved did not attend the meeting. There was considerable dissatisfaction that the guidance teacher who had hitherto been involved was not present at the joint agency meeting.

The second reason for the somewhat negative response to joint meetings was a very common view amongst school staff that the other agencies had a different perspective on pupils with problems than had teachers. Typically teachers felt that they considered pupils in the context of a group or class and had to take into account the impact of an individual pupil's actions on the rest of the class. Their focus was also on the "normal" or ordinary pupil. In their view social workers and educational psychologists had a different perspective, that they were used to dealing with problem or dysfunctional pupils and dealt with issues on the basis of the pupil as an individual.

A number of teachers also felt that both Social Work and Psychological Services could be over-concerned about confidentiality and in two schools complained that the school and guidance teachers were not kept informed about the progress of cases referred to one or other of the agencies.

The research did not involve a programme of interviews with social workers and educational psychologists but we were able to obtain some degree of perspective from our key informants' interviews. In these interviews it was argued that Social Work and Psychological Services do not focus on pupils as individuals, that indeed a key element in their interventions was to help pupils function within their wider world, including school as well as family. It was also felt that while some guidance staff criticised Social Work and Psychological Services for paying undue regard to confidentiality that the same criticism could also be levelled at some guidance teachers, not only in respect of external agencies but also in relation to other teachers in the school.

Specialist support

One school had access to a day unit for pupils experiencing difficulties. It was felt to be successful partly because of the mix of the staff, in particular, the involvement of teachers as well as social workers and staff from community education. Workers from the Unit were increasingly working with pupils in the school itself. Teachers felt that this helped make them seem more part of the school and less like outsiders.

A general point that was raised in five of the six schools was the impact of the increased emphasis on retaining pupils in school rather than suspending or excluding them. This was thought to be putting more pressure on subject teachers and more pressure on guidance in dealing with the pupils concerned and in trying to support the subject teachers. Guidance staff themselves, therefore, needed more help in school from specialist agencies. It was pointed out that sometimes it was not just support and advice from agencies that was wanted but more direct action, for "someone to take over".

Summary

Individual pupil contact

- A difficulty in assessing guidance - pupil contact was the lack of available information about guidance teachers' contact with their caseload.
- Guidance teachers showed a high level of commitment to their caseload and most used non-guidance time to see their pupils.
- Dissatisfaction was expressed by most guidance staff about the adequacy of contact with their caseload. They felt they were unduly reactive and problem-driven in their work which focused on the crisis or problem pupil.
- Staff felt that pupils with obvious needs or problems and disruptive pupils were being dealt with by the guidance system but most questioned whether the majority of pupils perceived guidance as relevant to them.
- Guidance staff with the lowest time: caseload allocation were most likely to think they did not know their pupils well.
- Weekly contact through PSE teaching of their caseload by guidance teachers; annual interviews; and a small school roll were factors identified as improving the quality of contact with pupils.
- Nevertheless, in the two schools with a programme of annual interviews, staff's opinion of the effectiveness of the interviews differed. The organisation, management and purpose of the interviews appeared to be critical to their success.
- There were differences in teachers' and pupils' perceptions about the quality of contact, the accessibility of guidance teachers, and about pupils' desire for privacy and need for confidentiality.
- Guidance staff in five of the six project schools identified the monitoring of attendance and truancy as a major element of their work and one that focused their attention on a particular group of pupils.

Referrals

- Subject teachers were thought to prefer informal rather than formal referral to guidance; they were more likely to refer pupils for behaviour or discipline issues.
- Pupil self-referral to the guidance teacher was the least common method of initiating pupil-guidance contact. Where guidance teachers could estimate, it seemed that 10-15% of pupils on their caseloads approached guidance themselves.
- Guidance staff identified a range of reasons why more pupils did not self-refer, in particular, the difficulty in contacting the guidance teacher because of subject teaching commitments, the association of guidance with authority, and a lack of on-going contact with the guidance teacher.

Discipline

- Despite clear policies to avoid involving guidance in discipline sanctions, guidance teachers felt that they were still expected by colleagues to have a corrective influence on pupils' behaviour.
- Some guidance teachers were concerned about a loss of contact with parents over discipline issues; others noted that guidance should not need an excuse to contact parents, particularly on such a negative matter.
- School senior management and subject colleagues were thought sometimes to take a different line on discipline to that of guidance staff.
- Most guidance staff felt they were neutral in their response to discipline issues but pupils' perceptions were different, seeing guidance as taking the school's side.

Management of guidance

Policy and decision-making

- All but one of the project schools had a written guidance policy, and all had descriptions of the structure and role of guidance.
- All project schools supported a "guidance for all pupils" principle, but most staff felt it could not be met in practice.
- Most guidance staff felt that senior management should be setting priorities for guidance but some members of the SMT saw this as the role of PT(G). School staff felt that priorities should be set for guidance at national level as well as locally.
- In all schools, the management of guidance was one among other responsibilities of the guidance manager; this is a change within the last decade.
- We could find no evidence that it was necessarily beneficial for the manager of guidance to have had experience in guidance, although some staff, including some managers, did take this view.
- The level of commitment of senior management was seen by guidance teachers as critical to the morale, credibility and resourcing of guidance in the school.
- The relationship between guidance teachers and other members of the SMT was important; there appeared to be no one organisational model that was clearly better than another in structuring the link.
- The involvement of guidance staff in decision-making appeared to be partly related to the management style of the guidance manager, but also reflected the way policy was decided and implemented in the school as a whole.
- Given the early and varied stage of development planning in the project schools, it was not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the involvement of guidance. But where guidance staff had been involved in development planning as a department, their response was positive.

- Guidance staff in three schools were critical of the effectiveness of guidance meetings believing that there was too much emphasis on administrative matters and not enough on their stated function as a forum for the discussion of guidance issues or individual cases. The presence of senior managers tended to focus the meeting on their concerns rather than those of guidance teachers.

Quality and consistency of provision

- The quality of guidance provision and the consistent minimum standard of provision for all pupils highlighted issues concerning the autonomy and accountability of guidance teachers and the extent to which they worked as a team within a common framework.
- While guidance teachers generally welcomed a large measure of autonomy in their work, it could nevertheless mean isolation and lack of support for guidance staff.
- None of the project schools had any comprehensive system for monitoring the everyday work of guidance teachers; the review of development plan targets was the main formal, but very partial, method of evaluation.
- The majority of guidance teachers in four of the project schools thought that they were not really expected to be accountable for their guidance work; most guidance staff were not in favour of greater accountability.
- Some staff in the project schools did not accept the contribution of good record keeping to effective guidance or to accept its potential for identifying needs and feeding these back to the school.
- A majority of staff saw a need for guidance teachers to operate as a team to achieve consistency in the guidance response; to make best use of the variety of skills, knowledge and experience of individual guidance teachers; to lessen the isolation of guidance staff; and to share casework issues.
- Guidance staff felt they shared a common philosophy but might differ in how they operated. The aspect of guidance where response was thought to vary most was pastoral/personal guidance; areas such as attendance and subject choice interviews were more likely to have a standard set of procedures.
- Efforts were being made to achieve greater differentiation in the work of PT(G)s and APT(G)s in most of the project schools, usually by defining extra responsibilities for PT(G)s. There was a tension in three schools between the view held by some staff that the relationship between PT(G)s and APT(G)s was one of mutual support not supervision, and the desire of senior management to develop the line management role of the PT(G).

Workload issues

- Workload and time were the most pressing concerns for the large majority of guidance staff interviewed.
- Guidance teachers' time allocation and workload varied considerably across schools but also within the same school depending on the staffing, timetabling demands and attitude of the guidance teachers' subject department. In only one of the project schools did all guidance teachers interviewed have at least the minimum recommended time.

- A number of guidance teachers contrasted the nature of the work in guidance where some demands were unpredictable and flexibility was needed with their subject in which there were set teaching times.
- The large majority of guidance staff expressed tension between their guidance and their subject role. Nevertheless, no guidance teacher favoured the idea of full-time guidance staff.
- The amount of paperwork and administration that guidance staff had to deal with was identified as a major burden.

Staff support, training and development

- Most of those interviewed identified a number of outstanding training and development needs. These included: counselling skills; information about the post-16 curriculum and post school options; Records of Achievement and profiling; drugs and HIV/AIDS; how to manage other staff (identified by PT(G)s in respect of PSE and FLG tutors); and team work skills.
- Time and financial restrictions were identified as barriers to training for guidance staff; for two schools the loss of TVEI funding was noted as affecting the amount of regional inservice.
- Just under a third of guidance teachers in project schools held the Certificate in Guidance.
- None of the more recently appointed guidance staff had had a formal induction when they entered guidance.
- Guidance staff identified stress in dealing with some aspects of their work eg child protection.

First level guidance

- Four of the six project schools were at the early stages of developing FLG and the other two at the middle stage of development. Staff from those schools where FLG was more developed were positive about its impact.
- Barriers to the development of FLG included: a view that this support should be resourced with the guidance system; reluctance to accept the necessary level of relationship with pupils; a perceived lack of skills, support and training; that practical difficulties in timetabling and organising would occur; and a view that there was a residue of ill-feeling resulting from earlier industrial action.

PSE

- PSE in schools has developed over recent years, and has moved from a focus on content to one on skills and understanding. However most guidance teachers felt that PSE still lacked credibility in the eyes of many staff, pupils and their parents, and was an area needing development.
- Guidance staff saw themselves as having a leading role in PSE, but most identified individual work with pupils as their main task; many felt they had no greater expertise in PSE than other staff.

- Staff in most of the project schools identified difficulties in the design and delivery of PSE. These related to a lack of training and support for PSE teachers; the use of non-volunteers to deliver PSE; class size; the use of inappropriate methodologies; the variable development of provision; and difficulties in differentiating PSE provision by pupil need.
- Guidance staff and teachers delivering PSE identified a need for greater coherence and progression in the programme, and for clearer priorities and outcomes for PSE.

Records of Achievement

- Guidance staff valued the Record of Achievement and thought it could contribute to pupils' self-esteem.
- RoAs were seen as an other example of an initiative which was not obviously subject based being allocated to guidance; staff accepted that helping pupils with the personal statement and background information was an appropriate role for guidance.
- Guidance teachers were concerned that the potential of RoAs might not be realised without resources to allow individual pupil discussion.
- RoAs were seen as putting pressure on time available for PSE, and as increasing administrative demands. Staff identified a need for all pupils to have a well-produced document to show to users.

The upper school

- Staff in all the project schools felt that the more varied senior school roll and the increased complexity of post 16 choices posed challenges for guidance.
- The nature of individual guidance work was seen to be different in the upper school, focusing more on vocational and personal matters.
- Senior management played a key role in the subject choice process in the upper school in varying ways.
- Five out of six schools identified inappropriate staying on as an issue: this was seen to relate to pupil indecision, inertia and lack of information about alternatives.
- The need to help pupils achieve their academic potential and cope with pressures of work was identified in all of the project schools.
- In two of the project schools, pupils had some element of choice in their PSE topics in S5. The extent of differentiation varied across schools, being more apparent where the PSE programme was vocationally rather than socially focused.

Primary/secondary links

- The general view among staff in the project schools was that their primary/secondary liaison was well established and effective.

Parents and guidance

- In two project schools, guidance teachers were confident that parents understood the role of guidance; staff in other schools were unsure about this.
- Some guidance staff noted a lack of support from some parents to the school regarding late coming, attendance, smoking and referral to external agencies.
- Guidance staff across the project schools felt they would like more contact with parents about educational matters rather than personal or behavioural difficulties and more opportunity simply to inform parents their child was doing well.

External agencies

- Our discussions with staff about liaison with external agencies mainly concerned links with Psychological Services, Social Work and the Children's Panel.
- Five schools had structured links with Psychological Services; the sixth had no time allocation but staff identified a need for more time from Psychological Services.
- With the exception of two schools where there was a part-time social worker based in the school, contacts with social workers were mostly ad hoc. Social workers were thought to be difficult to contact, and contact relied heavily on the telephone. Where pupils came from outwith the school catchment, a particular difficulty was the need to liaise with more than one Social Work Office.
- Staff assessed the quality of input from Social Work as very dependent on the individual concerned: this comment was also made, but less frequently, about Psychological Services.
- External agencies were thought by teachers to be over-worked and under-resourced. Teachers felt that the increased emphasis on retaining pupils in school put extra pressure on school staff and meant a greater need for support from external agencies.
- Opinion about links with the Children's Panel was generally positive.
- Three schools had regular joint agency meetings. While viewed as positive in theory, these meetings were thought to be of limited effectiveness in practice.
- Typically teachers felt that other agencies had a different perspective on pupils with problems; other agencies were thought to deal with the pupil as an individual and ignore the impact of the individual on the class. However there was a view from Social Work and Psychological Services that they aim to help pupils function within their wider world, including school.

Issues

Individual pupil contact

- How can guidance teachers achieve a better knowledge of all pupils on their caseload? What is an appropriate time allocation to enable them to do so? How can this time be made available in all schools to ensure guidance staff can fulfil their basic duties?
- What strategies could be adopted to help guidance teachers make best use of their time? Is the current balance of their activities appropriate?
- Is a programme of one-to-one interviews the best way for guidance staff to work with pupils on their caseload? Are there alternative or additional methods that would be useful? How can pupils and guidance teachers be helped to make better use of one-to-one contacts?
- Teachers and pupils put different weight on the importance of privacy and confidentiality. How can these different views be incorporated into guidance provision?

Referrals

- How can guidance teachers and school guidance systems encourage appropriate referrals (for positive as well as negative reasons) from all school staff who are in contact with pupils? There were still unresolved issues concerning the role of guidance staff in the discipline of individual pupils, how can their role be clarified and mutual understanding encouraged?
- When should pupils refer themselves to guidance and how can they be encouraged to do so?

Management of guidance

- How can a policy of “guidance for all” be delivered in practice? There is a need for priorities in guidance work to be set at national, regional and school level.
- Is the management of guidance a more difficult, or at least a different task, for senior management than that of subject departments? Training in the management of guidance for SMT members would be valuable.
- How should the SMT members work with guidance staff to ensure smooth communication on casework and to encourage discussion of policy in relation to practice?
- How can development planning best be used to assist guidance to identify developments and review targets?
- There is scope to improve guidance meetings and make them more useful to guidance staff in respect of support and development, casework and the sharing of good practice.
- To what extent should guidance teachers be accountable in their work and follow common systems to ensure a minimum standard in *outcome* for all pupils irrespective of their guidance teacher?

- More thought needs to be given to the differentiation of work between PT(G) and APT(G), taking into account time allocations, responsibility payments and an appropriate professional relationship.

Staff support, training and development

- Given that many pupils, parents and guidance staff felt that guidance teachers should hold a relevant qualification, how can the Certificate in Guidance, or another suitable qualification, be made available to guidance staff who do not hold it?
- There is a need to develop formal induction procedures for new guidance staff to structure in-service training to achieve greater coherence and progression, and to provide personal support where staff are dealing with distressing cases.

First level guidance

- Is the further development of FLG feasible? If so, how can it be done and can it be developed without some increase in resources?

PSE

- How might the development of a coherent PSE programme be supported? Is there a best model or strategy to do this?
- What is an appropriate role for guidance in PSE? What is the appropriate balance and relationship between individual guidance and PSE teaching in a guidance teacher's work?
- How can the delivery of PSE be improved? Attention needs to be given to the support and training of guidance staff and non-guidance PSE teachers, to class size and accommodation to ensure appropriate methodologies are used.
- The PSE programme has expanded greatly and there is a need to identify priorities given pressures from national and local initiatives. Who should set these priorities, and on what basis?

Records of Achievement

- To what extent should Records of Achievement be a guidance responsibility? What is an appropriate role for guidance staff in RoA?
- Where different schools have different levels of administrative support for the production of an RoA, are pupils with RoAs which are less well produced disadvantaged? What are the implications of this for the support and resourcing at school level?

The upper school

- There is a need to develop further PSE provision for S5/S6. What level of differentiation is appropriate? Should it only be apparent in the context of careers/vocational topics? What should the balance be between knowledge-based and skill-based inputs to PSE at S5/S6?
- There is a need for regular inservice training on post 16 options and information to support staff delivering careers/vocational elements of PSE.

- What are the appropriate roles for senior management and guidance in S4/S5 and S5/S6 subject choice process?
- What can PSE and guidance teachers do to encourage greater self-reliance and willingness to leave school at an appropriate time?

Parents and guidance

- While guidance teachers wished to have more contact with parents, their time pressures made this seem unlikely. How high a priority is it compared with other guidance tasks?
- There was evidence from one school that sending invitations to a parents' evening direct to the home boosted attendance. This may be one way to increase parent contact.

External agencies

- How far is pupil need in a school a factor in the allocation of resources by external agencies to schools?
- Lack of time for guidance teachers to attend Children's Hearings and a lack of involvement in joint agency meetings about pupils on their caseload were issues. How important is it for the child's guidance teacher to attend a Children's hearing or similar meeting compared with other guidance tasks?
- There is a need to build up working relationships between teachers and colleagues from external agencies to ensure mutual trust, understanding and an exchange of information in the interests of the child.
- Teachers noted different levels and quality of support from individual workers from external agencies. What can be done to identify a base line provision to ensure that some pupils are not disadvantaged by different practices and resources?

Chapter 7 **Guidance in practice: the pupil perspective**

This chapter considers pupils' experience and views of guidance provision in the project schools. It is largely based on the 18 group discussions with S2, S4 and S5 pupils we carried out in the first year of the research. As described in chapter two, pupils in the groups completed a questionnaire on an individual basis and worked in pairs to produce a list of issues as well as taking part in a group discussion. The groups therefore gave us three sources of information. In the second year of the research, we conducted small group discussions with S5 pupils in three of the project schools to investigate senior pupils' views further. This data is also included in this chapter.

The importance of individual guidance teachers

In considering the various data from our work with pupils, the importance of the individual guidance teacher in determining pupils' opinion of guidance provision was striking. We would not wish, however, to under-estimate the importance of school level factors that affected the ability of individual guidance teachers (and other related staff) to do their job, for example, the status and importance given to guidance, time allocation, the quality of management and the organisation of provision. Pupils themselves recognised this to some extent.

Nevertheless, we can relate young people's responses very directly to the attitude and approach of their own guidance teacher and pupils themselves remarked on the variation among guidance teachers in their school. Their response to our questions about whether or not they or their friends would approach guidance about problems was often that it "would depend" on the guidance teacher concerned, that some were approachable while others were not:

"Mr A is approachable, he listens, gives you information, he helps you ... so does Mr B ... it's not all guidance teachers you would say something to, Mr C shouts at you for nothing"

Summarising pupils' overall judgement of guidance in each of the schools, we could categorise them as positive in two; negative in two; and "middling" in the other two. Within each school, however, pupils distinguished between "good" and "bad" guidance teachers. The schools in each of our three categories were different from each other in pupil characteristics, social background, location, guidance structure and, to some extent, size. These factors did not appear to have a bearing on pupils' opinion of guidance.

The importance of the individual guidance teachers to pupils' views of the quality of provision highlighted the issue of the selection and training of guidance teachers. Both were raised by the pupils themselves. Getting the selection right was seen as crucial, as one pupil remarked

"training might help but it still wouldn't change the person"

We cannot be definite about the connection, if any, between guidance staff's training and pupils' opinion of their effectiveness. Although pupils in discussion commented on particular members of guidance staff, we believed it would be inappropriate to ask them systematically to rate the effectiveness of individual teachers. From the data we have there was no clear pattern, for example, of two guidance teachers who were highly thought of in two different schools, one held the Certificate in Guidance while the other did not.

Qualities of a good guidance teacher

Pupils had a very clear and consistent view of the qualities of a “good” guidance teacher. A good guidance teacher was someone who listened, was understanding, liked children, took time and showed an interest in them. A good guidance teacher should be “fair”, should listen to the pupils’ side of an issue and should not label pupils or categorise them into “good” and “bad”. The ability to preserve confidentiality was another feature of a good guidance teacher; pupils wanted a person they could trust:

“Teachers who’re prepared to hear your side of the story as well as the teacher’s, the other adults concerned. Folk that would actually listen to what you had to say. Folk you could go to”

*“they should take teachers who actually **want** to do it, who want to spend time and talk to us and are prepared to listen”*

“someone who doesn’t think about good or bad people”

*“someone, if you’re speaking to them, you ken that they want to speak to you, it’s not that **you** want to speak to them and they’ve got to stand and listen”*

“someone who’ll not pass things on, someone with respect”

Another quality of a good guidance teacher pupils identified was that they should treat and respect pupils as individuals, in contrast with the usual situation in class:

“somebody who’d treat you different from in a class to when you’re talking to her privately ... when you’re in a class they just treat you like all the pupils, like every person is like each other”

Equally, pupils did not want a guidance teacher to treat them “just going through a phase”:

“they [guidance teachers] always say “oh, lots of people have gone through this” but you don’t feel like that”

There was considerable support for younger guidance teachers; the feeling seemed to be that they would be easier to talk to and more likely to be understanding.

The following comment from one pupil about her own guidance teacher, generally seen as a “good” guidance teacher, illustrates much of what pupils wanted from guidance:

“he’s the one teacher you can talk to and he would sit down and listen to you and not flip his lid, he stays calm and you can just talk to him and he’ll give you some advice and he’ll try to help you all he can”

Pupils’ views about the guidance system

Support for the guidance system

While pupils were critical of some guidance teachers, all believed in the value of a guidance system and, as described in the preceding section, had a very clear idea of what a guidance teacher should be like. There was support for the existence of the guidance system and, even where pupils were very negative about current provision, they felt that the problem was that

the wrong teachers had been selected, rather than questioning the existence of the guidance system. Even those pupils who said that they would go to a teacher they “got on with” rather than their guidance teacher (and had usually been encouraged by their school to do so), still supported the idea of a distinct guidance system:

“even if you don’t have a problem and you don’t go to them in the end, at least you know there’s somebody there if you need them. The feeling reassures you.”

“... our relationship with our guidance teacher could improve because your guidance teacher’s supposed to be someone you can speak to if you’ve got problems ... and for a lot of pupils it’s the only person you could talk to...”

“what if your pals can’t do nothing and what if you’re somebody that’s not got any pals, you need someone to talk to, you can’t just keep it inside”

Pupils’ support for the existence of a guidance system also related to their desire to be recognised and treated as individuals, not generally the case in schools. The predominant focus of schools on the class or group was acknowledged in our interviews with guidance staff.

Problems of access to guidance teachers

A very common theme of pupils’ comments on the guidance system was that staff were overloaded and did not have enough time. Access to guidance staff because of lack of time and large caseloads was identified as a problem by pupils in five of the six project schools. Although they complained that they frequently could not find their guidance teacher when they wanted or needed to, their complaints were usually prefaced or followed by comments about their guidance teacher’s workload as guidance and subject teacher:

“...it’s difficult to grab her and have a chat, she’s too busy. Like yesterday I was trying to find her and I just couldn’t find her at all ... but she’s got classes as well.”

“...my guidance teacher, she’s always rushing around, cos she’s got classes ... she’s got no time ... I don’t know when they’re supposed to fit it in because if you notice all the guidance teachers, they’re all rushing around, they can’t fit everybody in any way.”

The dual role of guidance teachers

While some pupils suggested that their school should appoint more guidance teachers, the more common suggestion was for full-time, non-teaching guidance staff. The appointment of full-time guidance teachers was a suggestion made spontaneously by pupils and not in response to a question posed by us. Part of the problem, as far as a substantial proportion of the pupils was concerned, was that guidance staff were also subject teachers:

“it [guidance] shouldn’t just be part of a job, it should be a job on its own. They shouldn’t have to be a teacher, teaching a subject and a guidance teacher because it’s hard to fit in.”

A number of pupils spoke of the difficulty of having to interrupt their guidance teacher in his or her subject class:

“Mr X, he doesn’t like his class being interrupted but I sometimes had to and he wasn’t very happy about it. I didn’t really like interrupting them ... there should really be someone there when you need to see them.”

A related point made by a couple of groups concerned the training of guidance teachers, echoing the views expressed by some guidance staff:

“all the guidance teachers in our school are maths teachers or English teachers and they’ve taken a course to train them to do that. And now they’re doing guidance. I would make guidance a course of its own and they would train to be a guidance teacher”

Apart from problems of accessibility, a number of pupils felt that guidance teachers’ subject teaching commitment raised other issues. One was the difficulty in going to a subject class to be taught by their guidance teacher if they had previously been discussing personal matters. A second issue was the impact of teachers’ guidance work on their subject. This echoed the tension between their guidance role and their subject teaching referred to by many guidance staff. One group, when asked if there was a difference between a subject teacher and a guidance teacher, responded:

“Aye, because they’re [guidance teachers] never in the class”

“They’ve always got work on the board, they’ve always got meetings ... you’re waiting to get your work done and they’re away chatting to other people.”

The guidance structure

The particular guidance structure in the school (horizontal, vertical or some combination) seemed to make only a little difference to pupils’ experience of guidance and to their opinions. In the two schools that had moved over to a vertical house system with the intention, among others, of fostering a house spirit and greater pupil interaction, there was little from the pupil groups to suggest that this had been achieved:

“you don’t get to know people in your house ... it just means you come last in Sports Day”

In one school with a horizontal guidance system, some senior pupils recognised the pressure on some guidance teachers at certain times of year:

“... at the beginning of the year, it is so busy, you can’t see him at all because he’s rushing around changing people’s subjects ... and he would say “I’m very, very busy, come back tomorrow” and then you would go back and he’d say “come back next day” ... there should be more help around at that time because he looked as if he was doing it all himself”

Another aspect of the nature of the guidance structure which did seem to impinge directly on pupils’ awareness relates to the extent to which guidance staff followed a common approach. Differences or inconsistencies in approach were more apparent to pupils in a vertical than a horizontal system.

Extent and quality of contact

There seemed to be some difference in the perception of staff and pupils about the effectiveness of provision. Although the majority of guidance staff felt that their workload and time allocation impaired their ability to be as effective as they could be in their guidance work, there still seemed to be a gap in perceptions, in particular, about the quality of the relationship between guidance staff and pupils and the extent to which pupils felt they were known by their guidance teacher. With a few exceptions (and these seemed to depend on the qualities of a particular guidance teacher), pupils did not feel that their guidance teacher knew them well. This varied across schools but even in a small school where guidance was carrying out a programme of annual interviews, pupils still felt that their guidance teacher did not really know them:

“... they know you to say “hello, how’re you doing?” but it’s got to be a bit more ... guidance teachers have got to know them [pupils] really well to understand them and understand the problems if they have any”

Greater contact with guidance staff did not necessarily mean that pupils felt more known by their guidance teacher, for example, pupils who met their guidance teacher every week in PSE, were not automatically more likely to feel that their guidance teacher knew them very well. This was most sharply demonstrated by the different pupil responses in one school where pupils had weekly contact with their guidance teacher; their responses varied depending on their particular guidance teacher.

Whether or not a pupil felt their guidance teacher knew them was important in several respects, in particular, whether or not they were likely to go to them with any problems.

“You should get the chance just to speak to them about how you’re getting on, not just when there’s problems and if you knew them you would be more likely to go to see them later on if you had problems”

Pupils were more likely to self-refer to guidance teachers they considered approachable:

“some [guidance teachers] you feel you could talk to but others you wouldn’t touch with a barge pole”

“you can speak to Mr X about anything ... you don’t have to act differently in front of him”

Apart from influencing pupils’ decisions whether or not to self-refer, pupils felt that it *did* matter whether or not their guidance teacher knew them. As they pointed out, guidance staff were there to “guide” them and how could they do so without knowledge of the person? This was seen as particularly relevant on occasions such as subject choice; an activity in which guidance staff were heavily involved. In such situations, guidance staff were perceived to be in an influential and powerful position, giving advice and making recommendations about subject choice but possibly lacking any real knowledge of the pupil:

“one of the things people are objecting to is “this guidance teacher doesn’t know me”. If you’ve never been taught by your guidance teacher they don’t know - apart from looking at grades in a report card - they don’t know what you’re like ... And here’s these people telling you you can’t take this course”

“If the guidance teacher doesn’t know you, she can’t really pass judgement on you, and if she’s interviewing you, she can only go by what someone else has wrote”

In particular, in the schools where pupils did not have regular contact with their guidance teacher, pupils made the point that guidance staff’s knowledge of them was secondhand, gained from other teachers’ reports and lacking any individual, personal insight:

“They write a big report about you at the end of the year and they’ve never spoken to you ... they just go by what other teachers have said”

“He just scans through the grades and writes a comment like “a credit to the school”“

There was some feeling in several schools that it was presumptuous of guidance teachers to give them advice and write reports about them based on this level of knowledge.

Although this was not a commonly raised point, one group commented on pupils’ lack of knowledge of, and access to, their records; a sore point in this case because they queried their guidance teacher’s personal knowledge of them.

Awareness and use of guidance

With the exception of one group, pupils knew their guidance teacher and were aware that, in principle, he or she could be consulted about any difficulties or issues. (In the remaining group, pupils were confused as to who their guidance teacher was, mixing up their register teacher, PSE teacher and senior management. Their own guidance teacher had been absent on long-term sick leave.) Pupils' level of consciousness about guidance did vary, partly related to the extent of contact:

“because we don't have a routine appointment, we kind of forget you've got a guidance teacher”

The status and profile given to guidance by senior management also seemed to have an impact:

“they've started to encourage guidance a lot more”

Readiness to approach guidance

The extent to which pupils were prepared to consult their guidance teacher (apart from routine things like permission slips) differed and was related to how approachable and accessible their guidance teacher was perceived to be, on the nature of the problem, and by age of the pupils. Perhaps a half of the pupils felt that they would approach their guidance teacher with certain problems or concerns, for example, school work, bullying, problems with other teachers and subject choice:

“you'd go if you were getting bullied, if teachers were giving you hassle ... if you've a problem with course choice you'd go to your guidance teacher, they'll usually help you”

“they help you with basically everything, it is like having an uncle in the school but a lot of people don't see it like that”

They were more divided in their opinion whether or not they would go about family and personal problems:

“you'd go about school problems, problems with work or somebody in a class, or a teacher ... but I wouldn't really go and speak to them about problems in the home”

“... like go and say you were having family problems and say your dad was always shouting at your mum and your mum was always shouting at your dad and they were driving you up the wall”

A substantial proportion of pupils felt that they would not go to their guidance teacher with personal problems but would instead talk to their friends:

“I would go to friends or family ... because I'm a bit shy and he sees you at school and you wouldn't want him to pass you in the corridor knowing all the private things you had told him.”

Pupils in fifth year were least likely to say that they would approach their guidance teacher on a personal matter.

Concern about confidentiality and privacy

The extent to which pupils felt they could trust their guidance teacher to respect confidentiality had a major bearing on whether or not they were prepared to self-refer, especially about personal matters. A majority of pupils were not convinced that their guidance teacher would maintain confidentiality, especially with respect to parents:

“... you’re scared to talk to her in case she says things to your mother, because she does, she goes away and tells your Ma at the parents’ night what you’ve been saying.”

“...we’ve got these referrals ... and she just comes out with it in class if you’ve got a bad referral slip, she’ll just tell you about it in class and discuss it in front of the whole class”

In one school, however, pupils were more confident that confidentiality would be preserved:

“he makes you feel comfortable and he makes you realise it is in the strictest confidence”

Pupils did recognise that, on some occasions, it would be necessary for their guidance teacher to pass on information to others if the matter was to be resolved:

“she might tell the headmaster if it’s something to do with the school so she could make it right”

But, on the whole, pupils were not convinced that guidance staff would make the correct judgement when to pass on information. Concern about confidentiality was linked to the prevailing view that teachers discussed pupils in the staffroom and was also related to a general feeling of lack of privacy. Lack of privacy and the tendency of both guidance and class teachers to expect pupils to be prepared to discuss problems in public, was a common complaint:

“...she [guidance teacher] asks you in class if you’ve any problems but no-one’s going to put their hand up in front of the whole class and say that”

“he [guidance teacher] goes “tell me now”, you’re in the middle of the dining hall and he goes “tell me now”. He wouldn’t put time aside for to speak to you”

From the comments of both staff and pupils and from our own observations, we were struck by the amount of guidance “business” that seems to be conducted in corridors, dining halls and other public areas in schools.

Contact with other staff

Although pupils had been told they could talk to any teacher they felt most comfortable with, a number of pupils noted that, in practice, they were referred on to their guidance teacher. In some groups this was an issue because, if given the choice, they would not have chosen their guidance teacher. There was a fair degree of support for the principle of pupils being able to choose their guidance teacher, including from those who “got on” with their guidance teacher:

“I think we’ve got a good system at the moment but you should have more of a chance to choose your guidance teacher rather than being told you’ll have Mr X. If I didn’t happen to get on with him, which I do, it would be a pretty pointless exercise”

On the whole, pupils did not see their register teacher as an alternative person to go to because their register teacher did not know them well enough. In one school, however, where efforts had been made to promote the guidance role of the register teachers, in particular through their delivery of PSE to their form groups, pupils did feel that their register teachers knew them well:

“our register teacher [knows us] because we get them for English and PSE and see them every day before and during the day”

The perceived focus of guidance in the school

The extent to which pupils would self refer and, more generally, perceived guidance as relevant to them, was also bound up with the role that guidance fulfilled in their school. In all of the project schools pupils were clear that guidance teachers were not directly responsible for discipline but the general view was that their role centred on discipline to a major extent:

“... the only time they want to chat with you is if you’re in trouble, like they’ll call on you then, but if it’s just to see how you’re getting on, they won’t really call on you”

Consequently, in four of the six schools, pupils felt that if they were “good” or, more particularly, “ordinary”, their contact with guidance throughout their school career might be minimal:

“if you do quite well in school you can go through five years and see your guidance teacher three times in the whole time you’re there”

In four schools, the perception among the majority of pupils was that pupil contact with guidance revolved around “trouble” and course choice:

“the only time really that you see your guidance teacher is when you’re picking your course or if there’s actually something going wrong in the school ... if you’re in trouble”

“the first time I saw my guidance teacher in the two years I’ve been here was picking my subjects”

But the large majority of pupils believed it was important that guidance teachers should be there for *all* pupils, not just those with obvious needs or causing problems. This was a view shared by the more academic pupils who clearly felt that because they were apparently successful, they were wrongly assumed not to need, or want attention, from their guidance teacher:

“the guidance teacher seems to take too much time chasing after people who are in trouble, they don’t have time for the ones doing well ... Mr X is never in his office when you go to tell him anything”

“all they do is deal with the problem kids, they just leave us to get on with our lives ... they really be helping us more ... if you could speak to your guidance teacher, he could maybe tell you what they think you could maybe be doing”

“even if you’re doing all your work, you want reassurance that you’re doing well”

“I know they have to chase all the folk who’re mucking about ... but they’re never there when you want to talk to them about courses or whatever”

More interviews with guidance teachers wanted

Regular one-to-one interviews were generally viewed as a good idea to ensure a basic level of contact and knowledge. This was seen as important if pupils were to go later to their guidance teacher:

“I think interviews would be a good idea because then your guidance teacher knows more about you than when you speak to him he has to go away and find out about you”

At a more basic level, some comments indicated that pupils wanted more contact with guidance as an acknowledgement that they mattered, that someone in the school was interested in them - one of the most fundamental aims of guidance:

“you should get more regular guidance talks [interviews] just to see what you’re up to so it looks as if they’re actually taking an interest in you and your schooling”

Some S5 pupils, there was some feeling, particularly in two schools, felt that contact with guidance was greater in the lower school but that more help was needed in the upper school:

“there’s more interviews and things in first and second year, especially first year but as you go up the school it gets less and less”

“like in first year they do interviews to see how you’re settling in, they should do interviews in fifth and sixth year to see what you’re wanting to do”

Regular interviews were also supported as a way to circumvent what pupils acknowledged as their reluctance to approach guidance and thus be seen to have a problem:

“As it is I’ve just had a guidance interview and if I was to start having a problem now I’d have to go and actively arrange a meeting and that would be very uncomfortable, I don’t think I would want to do that, whereas if we had them more often, I’d think, “oh well, it can wait, I’ve got a guidance interview coming up” ... we can go any time to talk to your guidance teacher but it’s like admitting it”

Although the idea of regular interviews was put forward, it was also clear from some of the pupils in the two schools which had an annual interview programme of interviews, that the interviews might not be perceived as worthwhile or could be a difficult experience. In one of the schools, pupils were dismissive of their annual interview:

“it doesn’t amount to much”

“but your guidance teacher doesn’t see you as a person, your personality, he just sees you as your records. He can look up your record and say “he’s bad, that’s it”. If you’ve got a good record its “oh, here’s a star pupil”, see, that’s what it’s like, he doesn’t really sit you down and ask you about your family or that, to find out about you ... so it’s like a wasted appointment”

In the other school, pupils valued their interview but experienced it as a difficult situation to handle and get the most out of; this applied to fifth as well as second year pupils:

“they’re only once a year ... and you’re quite shy and you don’t know what to talk to them about”

One pupil made the point that an individual interview was an unusual event for a pupil:

“...you get one guidance interview a year where you’re on your own so it’s kind of one extreme to another”

The issue of the skills to benefit from an interview also arose in relation to careers officer interviews. Pupils’ difficulties in interview highlighted the need for high level interviewing skills on the part of the guidance teacher.

As well as suggesting frequent (more than annual) individual interviews, other suggestions included small group sessions in addition to PSE classes:

“...get together a small group and talk about the problems everyone might be having”

It seemed that such groups would be less intimidating than individual interviews but because they would be smaller than PSE classes they would allow discussion of personal concerns. They would also provide an opportunity to raise issues casually, or, have someone else raise them; and to benefit from hearing other pupils’ views. Pupils also thought it would be more likely that their school could organise small groups than to be able to offer more individual interviews. The last point illustrated that pupils in the group discussions were generally realistic and practical in the views and suggestions they put forward.

Guidance and discipline

Although pupils were aware that guidance staff were not responsible for discipline they perceived the role of guidance to revolve around discipline, as we have already noted. Pupils in the group discussions had had contrasting experiences of guidance teachers' actual role and conduct about disciplinary matters. In several groups (from different schools), pupils felt that guidance teachers did not try to find out the reasons behind the incident or behaviour:

"...I mean if someone is skiving off a certain class, they must have a certain reason for this class but they don't talk to you about it ... he just says to you, he'll phone up your mum"

"...most of the time you go to guidance it's because you're in trouble and you get shouted at"

This contrasted with several other groups where pupils felt that their guidance teacher would try and find out why the incident had happened:

"she doesn't give you a row, she can't ... she asks you what you did and why"

A common theme was that guidance teachers usually "took the teachers' side". Very few pupils expected their guidance teacher to support them automatically, but they did want him or her to be prepared to listen to both sides. This complaint was sometimes related to the view that teachers, including guidance teachers, tended to categorise pupils into the "good pupils" who did their work and the "bad pupils" who didn't and that pupils were subsequently judged on the basis of this labelling throughout their school career. Several pupils felt that even if other teachers reacted in this way, guidance teachers should not.

"If you've been in trouble, they'll [guidance teacher] come and see you and afterwards that'll be that and if you're wanting to see them about something, they'll not believe you"

The large majority of pupils, however, did not expect or want guidance teachers to be "soft", being able to maintain discipline and to defuse situations effectively were seen as important attributes of guidance teachers:

"[a good guidance teacher is] someone who know when you're telling the truth or a lie, what's right or wrong, to give you discipline as well as being nice"

Personal and Social Education

There was a large variation in pupils' opinion of PSE⁵ provision but even those pupils and groups who were very negative about their PSE, did not question the need for such provision or, more generally, that schools had a role to play here:

“the information we got [from PSE] was really good, very helpful, it gives you a lot of facts ... you become aware of issues outside the school and it lets you know what's happening for people our age ... you know what to do and what not to do.”

“it's a worthwhile thing to do if it was things we wanted to do, not what they would like”

What they wanted was improvements in content and methodology. Opinion about PSE covered the full spectrum from very positive to very negative with the majority opinion somewhere in the middle. Although opinion in the pupil groups in the same school tended to be in the same direction, pupils' reactions to PSE within each school varied. The differences within schools seem to be explained as much by the approach of the teacher delivering the PSE programme as by its content.

To a large extent, pupils across schools shared the same perception of what they wanted included in PSE and how this content should be delivered. This was true of issues that all pupils felt to be important and also to particular topics identified by specific groups. Nevertheless, there were some differences. Pupils from the remote, rural school identified a need for PSE to include topics on living and coping in a city and while drugs and AIDS/HIV were a matter of concern to pupils in every school, the nature of that concern differed, being more immediate for pupils in schools where drug use was a problem in the local community.

Although, on the whole, pupils identified the same range of topics they felt should be covered in PSE, a critical point is that, within this common list, they wanted coverage to be related to their particular individual needs and circumstances.

Choice in PSE

Senior pupils in two schools reported that they had had some choice of the topics to be covered in PSE but in one school they felt that the options had been somewhat limited, and in the other, that they had not had much choice in reality:

“... they said they were going to let us choose but as far as I can see it we've had no choice ... they just do it their way”

Pupils in the former school also made the point that they had not been given enough information about the available choices and so were not in any position to make an informed decision:

“We got this sheet, it had self-defence and shadow work [sic] and I don't even know what that is. So they're not telling us what they [options] are about before we make our choice ... so you go “well I'm no going, I don't know what to do, you don't want to let yourself in for something you can't do”.”

⁵ We are referring only to the timetabled provision of PSE encompassing personal, social, health and careers education; this had a variety of terms in the schools but we use the term PSE for all programmes.

Although pupils in most groups wanted more opportunity to decide on the content of PSE, lack of choice seemed to be an issue for pupils because they felt their school had “got it wrong”. The two groups (in different schools) who were most satisfied that the content of PSE matched their needs and wants, were least exercised about the principle of choice. The more general feeling, however, was that pupils should have a greater input into decisions about PSE provision:

*“they should give you what **you** want, not what they think you need”*

Although we were told by staff in five of the project schools that the PSE programmes included review of provision, only a few groups reported that they had been asked for feedback. We cannot say whether or not these reviews had happened but if they had, it would seem that the process had not made much impression on the pupils.

Coverage of sex education, drugs, AIDS/HIV and alcohol

Sex education, drugs, AIDS/HIV and alcohol were the topics that most groups felt were not currently dealt with adequately in PSE. Study skills and careers-related issues were also noted by the fourth and fifth year groups.

Pupils complained either of lack of input, or, of superficial and inappropriate coverage of sex education, drugs, AIDS/HIV and alcohol. Sex education, for example, was generally limited to particular years. Pupils felt that they needed sex education in every year but with a changing focus that reflected their changing needs:

“You get it in 1st and 2nd year but it’s really basic reproductive stuff ... it’s fine to do your basic sex education but then in 4th year, you’re coming up to the age of consent and there’s nothing there ... they should go into more detail in 4th year.”

“You grow up a lot in two years ... you need more [sex education] in 3rd and 4th year”

In general, most pupils felt that the sex education they had received had been superficial. In some cases it had only “told us what we already knew”. A specific point was that advice about contraception in fifth or sixth year was too late and should have happened earlier, perhaps in third year. A common criticism was that the approach taken was too scientific and failed to allow them to discuss their feelings, to raise questions and concerns they had, and to explore how they might respond in situations in which they might find themselves. It did not, therefore, respond to their needs:

“it’s all so scientific, it doesn’t talk about how you feel when you’re going through puberty”

“they don’t go into what happens if you get yourself into these sorts of situations, what you can do”

A number of pupils felt that part of the problem was that their PSE teachers (including guidance teachers) were too embarrassed to deal with sex education properly:

“The teachers are pretty much embarrassed to talk to you about it ... they shy away from it when you ask them something.”

Similar criticisms of lack of discussion, especially the lack of opportunity to discuss personal concerns and experiences, were made about coverage of drugs in PSE:

“they should make it more open, describe drugs and ask about personal experiences, that’s another thing they don’t do...”

A number of pupils summed up their school’s approach to sex and drugs education as taking a “don’t do it” line. They related this attitude to the inability of teachers to handle any other approach; to a fear of encouraging sexual activity or drug use; and to a general “burying their head in the sand” approach, a reluctance to recognise the realities of life for their pupils:

“It’s as if they think we’re stupid that if they tell us anything, we’ll go and do it.”

“make the drug education real, don’t make it like the pretence it’s not going to happen to us, that we would never think about it”

Pupils were quick to pick up on inconsistencies in approach taken to topics. A number remarked that teachers gave different messages about acceptable behaviour in relation to alcohol, drugs and sex:

“You don’t get hassle about drinking because they know everyone does it. It’s like sex - just do safe sex. You do get hassle about drugs.”

Pupils objected where they felt teachers were putting their own viewpoint on alcohol, sex and drug education; this seemed to be relatively common:

“one of them [guidance teachers] is very religious and got set views and he sometimes puts his own views on you”

Pupils were divided in their opinion of the impact on behaviour of PSE about alcohol, drugs and smoking. For example, pupils within the same group disagreed whether or not what they had done about smoking and drugs had made any difference to behaviour:

“We’ve done smoking, a big smoking project, and it didn’t make any difference cos nobody stopped smoking and quite a lot of people smoke in the school.”

“I think it does help because I know some people who did try to stop using drugs when the guidance teacher was talking to them.”

As some pupils pointed out, the impact of drug and alcohol education depended on the quality of discussion and its relevance to the young people:

“it’s at a superficial level, quite childish sometimes ... “don’t take drugs, they’re bad for you” - end of story ... it doesn’t have a great deal of influence what the teachers are saying to you because it just doesn’t relate to you”

“it [drug education] was all about how to match the drugs and their real names ... but why their real names? How can they not get us to write the names that we know and then we could understand them ... it wasn’t telling you about drugs, it was just giving you the names, it wasn’t telling you what they can do to you, how bad they can be for you.”

*“... it’s **their** view on drink ... they don’t listen to your side”*

Input from external speakers or agencies which drew on personal experience of drug and alcohol abuse and HIV was perceived as valuable:

*“... the guy from Alcoholics Anonymous, that was good. It wasn’t just someone saying “drink and drugs can ruin your life”, he was saying “alcohol has ruined **my** life and this is how it happened”. He was giving you the other side of the story of it.”*

Study skills and workload

Help with study skills was wanted by fourth and fifth year pupils. Several groups had had some input on this but a particular issue was the need for more individualised help, both terms of being individual to themselves and also to reflect the different approaches required by different subjects:

“I think that [study skills] varies with the subject, teachers have different ways of doing things, cos like, maths isn’t the same as English and Biology isn’t the same as Art.”

“We got a video about how to study but we all just sat and laughed at it. You had to make up your own timetable but ... it was like three pupils but if you fell somewhere in-between or weren’t like them at all you weren’t really catered for.”

In two schools, the input on study skills had focused more on time management but this was not what pupils wanted:

“As regards study skills they give us a wee booklet about how to divide up your day and we’re supposed to read it and get something out of it. It’s not helpful, not as helpful as it would be if we got personal information and advice.”

Some younger pupils identified workload as problem, for example, in relation to Standard Grade assignments. S5 pupils taking a number of Highers, especially over one year, were most pressurised:

“... there is such a big jump between Standard Grade and Highers that you’ve got it all piled on you every day and all the teachers seem to think their’s is the only subject.”

It was felt that schools could ease the pressure of pupils’ workload by greater liaison among teachers to spread the demands made by different subjects more evenly:

“... there should be more integration between subjects so that teachers know all what the pupils have got to do so they can’t expect us to do too much for their subject. There should be a plan at the beginning of the year to help you.”

Pupils’ comments echoed those of parents who thought that guidance teachers were in a position to have an overview of pupils’ school work, the overall demands being made on them and to watch out and help them cope with study and exam stress.

Money and finance

Another set of topics identified by fourth, and especially fifth year students, concerned money management, benefits and taxes:

“We should be taught how to handle our money, and all about taxes and benefits cos I haven’t a clue.”

“Most folk, if you’ve got a part-time job, they’ll blow it at the weekend, it’s away, but some folk can save it up.”

Repetition in PSE

S5 pupils in two schools complained of repetition in the topics included in PSE in fifth year, particularly social education topics. It was not that pupils saw them as irrelevant but that they had already been covered:

“its just the same things over and over again ... they do affect society in a big way but it’s all drugs, racism and moral issues, the same every year just under different headings.”

But part of the problem seemed to be how the topics were tackled, for example, pupils in one group who complained about repetition also remarked:

“... we didn’t discuss anything, we just filled in forms, it would have been quite interesting if we had discussed it.”

S5 pupils in another school, which had a strong emphasis on the use of external speakers and agencies in its S5 PSE including those with personal experience of the issue, were more positive about coverage of social education topics.

Criticism of PSE methodology

Overall, more of the groups were negative than positive about the methodology of PSE; approximately two-thirds were critical. Where an appropriate methodology was being used, the bulk of pupils clearly appreciated it and remarked on the difference from their subject classes:

“we talk and sometimes we act at plays or situations, we do topics ... it’s quite a good class because you’re never right or wrong ... you’ve always got your own point of view”

“... we sit in discussions with them [PSE teachers] and they get to know how you’re feeling; with any other teachers you’re just doing your work and they don’t really get to see the inside of you”

Nevertheless, pupils in one fifth year group, unused to a less formal methodology, had been very uncomfortable when they had experienced this for the first time in PSE in fourth year and made dismissive, joking remarks.

More commonly, pupils criticised the size of their PSE classes; lack of, or poorly focused, discussion; an over-reliance on worksheets and videos; out-of-date or English focused materials; and inappropriate classroom layout. Lack of continuity in the composition of PSE

classes was also an issue and, as noted earlier, they felt that their teacher was sometimes uncomfortable dealing with certain topics:

“...you don’t feel comfortable to sit and talk about anything, it’s still dead tense like you’re in a normal class”

“you can’t really talk about things, you’re in a class, it’s all rows of desks, see if we were sitting like we are now in comfy chairs like this in a circle...”

“they could discuss it with you ... they just show you a video, plunk it in, take it out, they jabber away about it. They don’t say “what do you think about it” ... that is when they should have smaller groups”

“we got videos about how you’d go about it [interviews] but they’re like ancient, everybody laughed at them instead of listening to them...”

“they show you videos that say things like “I’m going to take 6 technology subjects” which you can’t do cos it’s English.”

“when you’re watching videos, it’s the whole class and they just ask the whole class questions, I think it would be better with just wee groups ... half of the people don’t speak for the whole period, they just sit up at the top of the class”

One group which had recently changed guidance teacher was able to make a direct contrast of teaching styles and the impact of this on the class:

“...it’s different ... we’re no sat like this anymore [indicating the circle of chairs] ... and we do sheets, but it’s not so good”

Several groups felt that part of the problem of the delivery of PSE was that sometimes teachers were forced to teach it irrespective of whether or not they had the necessary training:

“Mr X is good at what he does, he’s a X teacher but I don’t see how it qualifies him as a PSE teacher ... quite a lot of teachers are fed up of getting dragged out of X [names their subject]”

In two schools (one non-denominational and the other denominational), pupils contrasted the nature and quality of discussion in their PSE and RE classes. In both cases they felt that in RE they had a “real discussion” of topics, for example, of drugs, that their RE teacher encouraged them to consider both sides and did not put forward his/her own viewpoint:

“We did drugs in RE and Mr X was asking who’d tried this and who’d tried that ... it was surprisingly easy how the whole class just opened up ... he’s so open and so down-to-earth but there’s so many teachers aren’t.”

Primary/secondary transfer

The large majority of S2 pupils felt that their school had made a considerable effort to make their transition from primary to secondary school as easy as possible. Most had had a visit from guidance and other staff while at primary school and had visited the secondary:

“They do come out and see you, the teachers come out and talk to you.”

Concerns had centred on making friends and the possibility of being bullied:

“Everyone was very nervous, trying to find friends and stay with them.”

“You were scared you’d get chased.”

“I heard a lot of stories [about bullying] but nothing ever happened.”

Pupils generally felt that their school could not have done much more to prepare them for their move to secondary apart from, in one school, suggesting that their visit to the secondary school could be longer:

“I think they did all they could ... it’s just really weird changing from primary school ... you should maybe get more than a day to get used to it, maybe a week before the summer holidays.”

In another school, pupils made the point that the interval is a time when bullying tends to happen and attributed this partly to the lack of structured activities:

“They should have things for you to do at playtime [to make it easier for new pupils]. You’ve no time to play football at playtime so you just carry on and that’s when you get bullied. You should have more time to do something properly.”

The group’s suggestions were:

“Football for the boys and netball for the lassies!”

Subject choice

S2 subject choice

Although all the pupils had had a considerable input at the second year option choice stage via PSE and interviews with guidance staff, the majority were fairly critical of, at least, aspects of the process. (The discussions with second year pupils were scheduled after they had completed their option choice.) Pupils from two schools, however, were much more positive than others about the guidance they had had and showed a clear understanding of how to go about the process:

“We got plenty of help, it was explained a lot. With our option forms we got this booklet, it explained what you do in each subject and Mr X gave us a talk and any questions you wanted to ask you could just go ahead and do it.”

“Our option form was really awkward but the teachers dealt with it quite well and we knew what to do after that.”

Criticism or suggestions for improvement centred round lack of real choice; the desire for a greater careers input; and more time. Although the S2 option choice process and course choice interviews formed a significant part of the project schools' second year PSE provision, quite a common feeling among pupils was that the process, especially their interview with their guidance teacher, had been rushed. There was some perception that choices had to be made quickly to suit the school's timetabling requirements rather than pupils' needs:

“They don't give you long enough ... they came back the next week and says “It needs to get done now; it needs to get put on computer, the class needs to get fixed out”, and that was it.”

A substantial proportion of pupils would have welcomed a longer interview with the guidance teacher:

“And somebody will say “what is it you've picked” and you'll say “oh, I cannae really mind”, it was that quick, it was down on paper and you were out the door again.”

“We need longer, more time at interview to talk, you don't have enough time.”

They also wanted more information and advice before their interviews since they felt they had not known enough about third year subjects when they made their choice. Pupils generally believed that their subject choice should be related to their career ideas and wanted more careers-related input:

“more careers talks before third year ... if you're in second year you're thinking to yourself “I don't know what job I want to do”. I think more people should come in before you take your options, maybe explain more what subjects you need for what jobs.”

In a number of groups, there were differing views as to whether or not they had really had a “choice” of subjects. In a number of instances, it was felt that teachers concentrated on pupils taking their “best” subjects, sometimes irrespective of their likes and dislikes and their career ideas, which effectively limited the pupil's choice. In other cases, teachers were seen as virtually choosing subjects for youngsters:

“... if we got a good result for a subject and just say we didn’t like it, we still got pushed into it, we had to take it.”

“what we find a lot is when we go to guidance teachers for our course choice, we don’t get to choose, they do ... I’ve heard a lot of folk complaining about that and you’re afraid of saying anything like “I’m no wanting to do that” because, well, they’re your guidance teacher and you just say nothing.”

Views of S4 pupils

The group discussions with fourth year pupils were held in the second term so that pupils should have had some of their school’s input on option choice for fifth year subjects according to our information from staff. All of the groups felt they had had, at least by this stage, less help with choosing fifth year subjects than they had had in second year. Although anxious about the issue, it was notable that none of the fourth year groups knew what, if any, further input they might have later in the session:

“I think we got quite a lot in second year compared to what we got choosing our Highers ... a few weeks ago we were told to write down the Highers we’d like to do but we weren’t given any advice ... I don’t think we’re getting more about it.”

Views of S5 pupils

Fifth years, reflecting on the help they had had in fourth year, echoed the view of S4 pupils that they had had less information and support to help them choose subjects in fourth compared with second year. Their criticisms echoed those made in respect of S2 option choice: lack of time and little, if any, discussion of future career ideas. But the latter was clearly more of an issue at the S4/S5 stage than had been the case in S2. These criticisms were made by S5 pupils across the academic range.

Lack of preparation for S4/5 subject choice

In contrast with the input via PSE before their course choice interviews in S2, S5 pupils identified a lack of similar preparation in S4 to help them choose their S5 subjects:

“it wasn’t so much discussing subjects then [in PSE class], somebody would come in from a careers office or college or something and tell you information. You never discussed it until you were actually choosing them.”

“there should be more lead up, more build up to it [subject choice]”

“it would be good if they had a talk on each subject, we got that in second year but they never even done that for Highers”

Apart from more preparation before their course choice interviews, a common suggestion was the need for at least two interviews, one which would allow a more general discussion before the interview at which pupils made their actual choice of subjects:

“you should get an interview to talk about it first and then another to make your choice”

A minority of pupils had found the course choice process satisfactory:

“Mr X [guidance teacher] was planning round all departments that were offering the subjects I could have taken and I went away and discussed it with my mum and dad and came back and told him what I wanted to do.”

Narrow focus of course choice interviews

S5 pupils of different academic levels felt that their S4 course choice interviews had been too narrowly focused on their subject choice and had not included enough discussion of the implications for their future career ideas:

“... he just told us what was on the sheet basically, there wasn't much talk about what jobs you might do, just about what subjects you enjoyed and that”

“if you're not too sure [of career plans] or if you think you're not going to make it, it would be good to know you've got the subjects to back you up, that you haven't just picked the subjects for that job only. What you don't know either and they don't tell you, is what other things you can do with the subjects you've already chosen.”

Opinion of pupils taking a modular programme

Among the S5 pupils who were taking a mainly modular rather than an SCE programme, there was some feeling that the curriculum on offer to them was limited and that they had had to take subjects to fill up their timetable rather than out of real interest or need:

“I had to take Economics to fill up my timetable because you can't have big spaces but I'm not interested in anything to do with Economics.”

On the whole, the S5 pupils taking a modular programme were critical of the available provision. A particular issue was the scheduling of modules:

“Half the courses finish at Christmas and when you come back you've to choose other ones [modules] and there's nothing interesting.”

“Most of the modules finish now [February] and there's nothing else to go for till the summer. You're working to finish your courses up, in March you get 10 hours to do your investigation and after that you've nothing else to do - it's like saying “what's the point of coming to school after that”.”

These pupils were aware of the difficulty of scheduling modules through to summer because of pupils who left at winter of S5 but felt that their school should not leave gaps for those who stayed on until summer of S5.

In two schools, some pupils taking modules felt that the further education option should have been explored at their subject choice interview:

“No-one tells you about going to college to make up for your Standard Grades. They just put your choice sheet in front of you and you take from that.”

Quality of advice

As a whole, S5 pupils felt that the emphasis on choosing “best” subjects was even stronger at the S4 stage than in S2. This was accepted to a certain extent, pupils recognised there was little point in taking a subject at Higher at which they were likely to fail:

“It depends on your ability because the school looks out for the best because they don’t want you to waste a year if you’re not going to pass. But people do have a choice.”

Nevertheless, there was a feeling in several groups that guidance staff were not making the correct judgement in this respect, on the one hand sometimes failing to encourage pupils to aim as high as possible but, on the other, pushing them unduly. Whether or not guidance teachers would be likely to get this judgement right was felt to depend on whether it was based on an adequate, knowledge of pupils or not:

“they’re not very encouraging ... there must be a lot of people that didn’t take things because they were told by their guidance teachers that they just couldn’t manage it.”

“Some people can be less academically brilliant but they can get the grades because they work really hard but the guidance teacher looking at a report card might not know that about you.”

Subject teachers seemed to play a more prominent role at the S4 and S5 subject choice stage than in S2:

“We had a couple of days when a teacher from each subject would tell you about it and try and persuade you to take that subject.”

But S5 pupils in four schools distinguished between the advice from subject teachers and that from guidance staff:

“The subject teacher will try to get you to do their subjects but the guidance teacher will just try to get you to do what you want to do... he’ll tell you what you’re good at and help you to decide.”

In two of the schools where both senior management and guidance teachers were involved in course choice interviews, a number of pupils commented on the difference:

“... with Mr X [AHT] there was more pressure to choose your subjects but with Mr Y, he’s our guidance teacher, he wanted you to sit down and think about why you wanted to chose a subject.”

In one case, a pupil’s guidance teacher had intervened against the AHT’s wishes to enable her to take a particular Higher. She felt this might have been because her guidance teacher knew her better than the AHT did.

Careers education and guidance

Post-school options were a major concern of all S4 and, especially, S5 groups. As noted earlier, pupils at the S2 stage were also concerned about future career ideas when making their choice of Standard Grade subjects. The focus of pupils' needs varied across and within schools, depending on pupils' academic level and likely post-school destination. The emphasis differed on whether more information and advice on higher education was wanted rather than job-related advice. Nevertheless, there was a large degree of similarity in both the topics pupils thought should be included in careers education and also their stress on wanting more detailed, and often more practical, information and help.

We have already discussed the variation in the extent and nature of the careers education that pupils had received in the project schools. This largely reflected the extent to which PSE provision was developed for S5 and S6 pupils. Variation of the input pupils received also differed because, in four schools, Record of Achievement work had been introduced into either S4 or S5. Another source of variation was work experience. Although fourth year pupils did work experience in five of the project schools, there was variation in the extent to which it dominated the PSE programme.

Timing and focus of careers education and guidance

An issue which pupils in several schools (including the one with the largest proportion of fourth year leavers) identified was lack of careers provision for fourth year leavers. With the increasing proportion of young people staying on for a fifth and, indeed, a sixth year, both school and Careers Service focus was shifting to S5 and S6. The danger, as identified by the pupils themselves, was that those who did leave at fourth year missed out on provision which was timetabled in fifth and sixth year:

“There’s not really much there for them [those leaving at S4] ... there’s not very much guidance if you decide to leave at the end of fourth year.”

The extent of careers education and guidance in S5 was also an issue for the more academic pupils in three of the project schools. This included both the extent to which higher education and careers talks were included in PSE in S5 and also their perception of their lower priority in respect of interviews with the Careers Service. Even if they planned to stay on to S6, the majority of pupils in these schools felt it was important that they were encouraged to think about their post-school plans:

“they [guidance] tend to say if you’re thinking about leaving, go and see the careers officer but if you’re staying on, they don’t really think its really that big a concern for you.”

“It’s important you find out more this year [S5] because it might influence your choices in sixth year.”

“They should give you more about your options, what college courses, maybe an interview with careers.”

“We’ll be getting university talks and the chance of going to Open Days next year [S5] ... I think you should maybe get university talks in fifth year because some people may want to go to university at the end of fifth year.”

Demand for more coverage of courses and jobs

While some of the fourth and fifth year groups were more satisfied than others with their careers input, all of them wanted more. One category of “wants” centred on information and advice needs about courses and jobs:

“I’d like to discuss where you go after school, how you could get into unis and colleges so you know what unis and colleges consist of. If you want to go into a job, what kind of jobs you could get into with the education you’ve got.”

“[It would be useful] even getting information about if you want to do a certain subject, what universities and what sort of grades you might have to have.”

Several groups noted that the further education option was not really covered and wanted more information specifically about FE:

“They should give you more information about further education and courses, most people don’t know you can go to college after fourth year.”

In two schools, pupils felt that teachers (both guidance teachers and others involved in delivering the careers element of PSE) lacked sufficient knowledge of post-school options, in particular, of higher education:

“The teachers don’t know what they’re doing. Our guidance teacher has to look up the book all the time, she doesn’t know what she’s talking about.”

The difficulty of keeping abreast of post-school opportunities was an issue identified by guidance staff themselves and, in one of the schools concerned, the PSE teachers’ difficulties in this respect had been recognised. The amount of available information was also a problem for some pupils who wanted help in making sense of it:

“.... we could do with some advice. There’s a lot of prospectuses and you could never get through the lot of them, you could do with something more succinct.”

There was a strong demand for more external speakers, including former pupils and students, and for more choice of speakers. A number of groups criticised the range of external speakers which tended to focus on a narrow range of organisations, for example, the Forces and engineering:

“We get people coming up and talking about different sorts of jobs but it’s engineering, electronics or the Forces, nothing on the creative side.”

At least one school had made a considerable effort to invite a range of careers-related speakers and offer pupils a choice of groups to attend but, in practice, pupils had still ended up attending sessions about occupations in which they had no interest:

“when there’s choices it’s a matter of say the police, going to art college and another one and you’re not interested in any of them so it’s a matter of just sitting there and when it comes to questions no one’s got any.”

There is an issue, however, about how far a careers programme should simply reflect pupils interests and how far it should extend and challenge ideas. We discuss this in chapter ten.

More detailed information wanted

Pupils also wanted more detailed information:

“We just have people coming up from universities, giving you lectures ... they just talk about what life’s like as a student .. that’s not the most important thing, it’s what you get at the end and what you need to get in ... and they tell you about the accommodation rather than the actual work.”

This wish for more detail applied to pupils of all academic abilities, for example, one group of S5 pupils taking a modular programme were critical of the level of information given in a session from a local further education college:

“they didn’t say what it [course] involves, it was just a matter of “you could do this and it lasts for that long”, it doesn’t tell us what you do. We want to know what you actually do, just say it was French - you’re going to do your vocabulary, learn how to talk it and then you’re going on to listen to it and all that.”

Careers evenings and open days

Events such as careers evenings and open days did not necessarily meet pupils’ needs for detailed information. This was partly related to the time and privacy available at some events:

“there’s not a chance to sit and talk to them [F/HE and employers at careers evening] because there’s always a big queue behind you and people can hear what you’re saying ... they’re just say like “you need so many Highers and cheerio, next person”. And you’re trying to find out what the job involves.”

A number of pupils suggested that the value of conventions and other events to them could be increased if they had more preparation and also some de-briefing:

“when I was at the careers night to speak to the universities, I didn’t know about many courses and their first reaction was “what course do you want to take”. They don’t have time to tell you about the different courses. Without any background knowledge from the school you were struggling.”

“you weren’t given any hints about what to go to [at HE Open Day], you just went there and found where you wanted to go yourself.”

Most pupils considering higher education thought that contact with students at events like Open Days was potentially extremely valuable because they could provide the sort of information not available in official information:

“... being able to speak to the students is the best ... whether its enjoyable, the workload, what the atmosphere is like, what are the teachers like. I mean, you don’t get that in the handbook.”

Awareness of opportunities and self-assessment

A general feeling, again common across pupils of different attainment levels, was that they were not aware of the full range of possible courses and jobs open to them and found it difficult to assess what of the various possibilities might suit them best:

“everyone’s got a list of 20-30 jobs they think exist but there’s all sorts of others that might suit you perfectly but you’ve never thought of them.”

A number of pupils who had had an interview with a careers officer had found it helpful in this respect:

“My interview was a lot of use because I was quite hazy about what I wanted to do and he pointed out a lot of stuff.”

Value of Records of Achievement

A number of pupils who had done self-assessment and target-setting in PSE and completed a Record of Achievement had not found these useful in helping them assess themselves and their future plans. Part of the issue seemed to be the context in which target-setting and RoA work was done, whether it allowed enough individual attention and the chance to move beyond generalities:

“it [target-setting] needs to be done in a lot more detail because everyone seems to put general sorts of targets like “I’m staying-on to sixth year and then go to university”..”

“it would be better alone with your teacher, you’d be more likely to be truthful than with your friends in class.”

But the dual purpose of RoAs was also highlighted as a factor that reduced their use for some pupils:

“It’s difficult for us to look at ourselves because you’ve never really thought about it ... you need to be more honest about yourself but [in the RoA] you exaggerate your good qualities and play down your bad qualities. “Ignore them” that’s what the teacher says.”

Most pupils who had completed a Record of Achievement expected or hoped it would be useful to show to employers or further and higher education. A number, mainly less academic pupils, also commented that it had been useful to think about what they had done and write it out in a coherent way:

“it [RoA] doesn’t really prepare you for an interview but it gets you sorted out what everything is, like when you do a Personal Statement, you’ve got to think about it.”

But these pupils also felt that their RoA was something of a marketing document and, as such, did not encourage true self-evaluation:

“you’ve got to be imaginative in your Personal Statement, like exaggerate it, make yourself sound interesting which you’re not.”

Help with practical aspects

A second category of need identified by pupils related to help with the practicalities of applying to college or university or for a job. Detailed help with application forms for jobs and courses, cvs, and interview techniques was wanted:

“We should learn more about job interviews to prepare you more for the kind of interview situation you’re going to be faced with ... maybe a practice session in front of a class, more information on the kinds of techniques interviewers have to use.”

“I think they should help you more with applications, you’re sitting with them and you don’t know what to do with them.”

In one school, a specific criticism was that guidance teachers were too optimistic, indeed unrealistic, in discussions about employment. Pupils wanted to consider what they should do if they left school and did not succeed in finding a job:

“They should talk about what happens if you leave school and don’t get a job ... you should talk about what you’re going to do then ... they talk like you’re just going to go right out to a job.”

Some pupils in several groups had had some input on job interviews, in one case this had been by a major local company and was seen as very useful:

“When the X people came in to give us interview techniques that was good ‘cos we were only in fourth year at the time and we’d to write out papers and CVs and make up an interview ... we hadn’t experienced anything like that.”

It seemed, however, that input about interviews was restricted to job interviews but pupils felt that preparation for interviews for further and higher education would also be useful. As discussed earlier in relation to guidance interviews, some pupils seemed to find interviews difficult, including interviews with careers officers:

“It’s frightening, you’re sitting there in front of the careers officer and you’re wanting to be told all the information and she goes “what do you want to know” and, like, I goes “I don’t really know”. It’s frightening because you have to sit there and ask all the questions whereas you really want her to tell you things.”

This, the more common attitude, was in contrast with the response of pupils in one group who seemed much better prepared for their careers interview. When asked if they knew what the careers officer would be talking about, the response was:

“It’s you that talks to him, you have to give him the ideas.”

Employment legislation

A final area of need identified by pupils concerned more general information about employment legislation and rights:

“They should tell you more about job terms, like, when you’re going for a job and you’re getting told all this information you don’t know what it means “contract of employment”, just what it all means.”

Careers library and computer packages

In two schools, there was a problem of access to the careers library but, in general, pupils were not inclined to make much use of the careers library themselves. The groups were also vague about the use of any computer packages although it would seem from our interviews with staff that most would have had a session on Microdoors. After some prompting, about half of the groups recalled doing JIIG-CAL, usually in third year. Opinion was not positive. The common view was that third year was too early since they had not started to give serious thought to their futures:

“But it was a wee while ago we did it and at the time we weren’t really that concerned about it but now we’re thinking of different things and it’s no use.”

It also seemed to be the case that there had been insufficient discussion of their print-out; in one school, at least, pupils did not get a copy of it.

Contact with the Careers Service

The awareness of S4, and to a lesser extent that of S5 pupils, of the role of the careers officer differed considerably across the schools. At one extreme, pupils seemed to be confused between the guidance teacher responsible for careers and the careers officer. At the other, pupils were well aware of the careers officer and interview system:

“The first one [interview], everyone sees him and then it’s optional, you can go and see him if you want.”

Careers interviews

On balance, there was also considerable confusion among pupils about interview arrangements, when they would be interviewed by the careers officer and if it was possible to initiate an interview themselves. In three schools, it was the academic pupils who seemed most uncertain about the system to see a careers officer:

“I think it [interview] was through choice, something was given out.”

“We were all given forms to fill in at the beginning of the year about what your ambitions were but they haven’t come back to us ... there’s not been much communication.”

A number of groups complained of the time they had to wait if they requested an interview:

“The careers officer’s more helpful [than the guidance teacher] but she only comes at specific times, that’s the problem ... there’s an awful lot of people wanting to see her.”

The time pupils had to wait between requesting and receiving an interview from the careers officer varied considerably across schools but also at the individual level. In one school pupils noted that they could get an interview within days. In several other groups, the waiting time was two-three weeks but it was up to four months for some pupils in another school. The latter was likely to be explained by the interview system which gave priority to particular pupils but clearly the pupils themselves had not been informed about this and when they could expect their interview:

“none of us have had an interview tho’ we filled out sheets [requesting one], this was four months ago, some people have had two interviews and I’m still waiting for my first.”

Pupils’ perception of acceptable waiting times was related to need as illustrated by the reaction of the fourth and fifth year groups in one school. In this case, fourth years in the school felt that speed of access was not an issue while the fifth years did perceive it to be.

Positive opinion of careers officer

With the exception of one school where opinion of careers officer input was particularly negative, opinion was positive:

“The interview was alright. She just asks you what you want to do and later on she writes down what you’re interested in and sends it to you. And if there’s anything that crops up that she thinks you might be interested in, she gives you a phone.”

“She is good, she asks you, she doesn’t tell you. She gives you options and then you say what you think you’d be interested in.”

The careers officer’s help in extending ideas was valued by a number of pupils:

“she gave me a whole lot of ideas, things I hadn’t thought of before.”

Another aspect, remarked upon by pupils in one school in particular, related to reassurance and acceptance by the careers officer about their uncertain or changing careers ideas:

“... I’m staying-on till sixth year and I’m not sure yet, she told me it was alright not to know what I wanted to do and change my mind and I will see her again but she’s suggested new ideas.”

“They are always there to help and if you change your mind they don’t give you any aggro about it.”

The impression conveyed by these pupils was that they were under pressure from their school and parents to make up their minds.

But pupils’ comments also illustrated the differing criteria sometimes being used to judge the careers officer’s input. In one group, two pupils felt that the careers officer had not been helpful. One thought that she had been too directive in her guidance while the other was critical for the opposite reason:

“they don’t actually give you any advice on what you should do”

but

“she wasn’t really much help. I wanted to do music and she said “what about law, there’s not much of a career in music”.”

More careers officer input wanted

In general, pupils wanted the careers officer to have more of an input, including clinic sessions where these were not currently held. A number of pupils thought that the careers officer should be involved when they were choosing their fifth year subjects:

“They [the school] just give you the form and get you to tick the subjects you think would be appropriate for you and that’s that .. the careers officer should see you individually and discuss the matter with you, what you are going to do after school.”

Some second year pupils would have liked to have seen a careers officer and were unaware that this had been possible:

“They wouldn’t let me see the careers officer in second year, only in fourth year. You can get to see her now. It would have been useful [in S2] to help you choose which carer you’d want to do and which subjects would help you.”

Another area where more involvement from the Careers Service was wanted was in PSE, for example, doing group work:

“maybe a visit from the careers officer [to PSE] because the only time she’s available is on a Tuesday afternoon ... then in the class you’d get an idea of what everyone else wants to do and you could say I maybe could do that as well ... if you forgot to ask a question somebody else might.”

Group work, for example, on occupational areas, appealed to a number of pupils. It seemed to be attractive to them as a way of gaining information, hearing others’ ideas and questions without being as intimidating as an interview.

Support for comprehensive interviewing

In several schools, pupils felt everyone should have an interview in fourth year, whether or not they intended to stay on:

“it would be much better if you could get everyone done [interviewed] much sooner. I mean, I’ll be finished this year and I’m not sure what I want to do, so if there’s anything I could gain [from an interview] it’s a bit late anyhow.”

As we have already noted, the more academic S5 pupils in three of the project schools felt that they were not high in the Careers Service priorities for interview. But the general view was that they too needed quick access to the careers officer, including to allow them to discuss their subject choice in a broader context than with school staff:

“... people leaving school, they get priority, I think that’s ok, yes, but everyone should get the chance, everyone should be able to be seen really quickly because you want to be seen now and see what you want to be doing in sixth year.”

Among these pupils there was strong support for the idea of everyone being given an interview with a careers officer even if they were staying-on and even if they appeared to be certain of their ideas and that they should be interviewed more quickly:

“I think everyone should get an interview with the careers office in fifth year before you choose your subjects for going into sixth year.”

“If you know roughly what you want to do and you put it down and if you put down you’re doing the subjects that you need for that, then they think “that’s fine, because she’s got a good idea of what she wants to do, forget the interview” but it’s still important to everyone.”

A number of pupils recognised more resources might be needed:

“its really hard when there is only one person doing it, they [CS] should have more people, then everyone could have their interview done more quickly.”

In one school, it seemed that a perceived lack of resources, had had the effect of some pupils restricting their demand on the Careers Service:

“when you’re thinking about requesting an interview, you say “there’s probably no point because they won’t get around to me”.”

A number of pupils also made the point that being allocated an interview would get over many pupils’ tendency, especially if they were under a lot of pressure in their school work, to put off making an appointment:

“it would be better if everyone had to have an appointment with the careers officer because otherwise you think “maybe next week” and you keep putting it off. At least then you’d find out things, whether it’s about jobs or university.”

Summary

Importance of individual guidance teachers

- Young people's experience and opinion of guidance provision was heavily dependent on the attitude and approach of their own guidance teacher.
- There was no clear relationship between guidance staff's training and pupils' opinion of their effectiveness.

Qualities of a good guidance teacher

- Pupils had a very clear and consistent view of the qualities of a good guidance teacher as someone who
 - ◆ listened and was understanding;
 - ◆ liked children, took time and showed an interest;
 - ◆ was fair, listened to pupils' side and did not label them;
 - ◆ was trustworthy and would preserve confidentiality;
 - ◆ treated and respected pupils as individuals.

Support for the guidance system

- All pupils saw the guidance system as necessary and valuable although some were critical of some guidance teachers.
- They valued having someone whose role it was to be there for pupils and whose focus was the individual pupil and not the class or year group.

Problems of access

- A very common theme of pupils' comments was that guidance teachers were overloaded and did not have enough time. Some pupils thought more guidance teachers should be appointed but the more common suggestion was for full-time guidance teachers.
- Access to guidance staff because of lack of time and large caseloads was identified as a problem by pupils in five of the six project schools. A substantial proportion of pupils identified the dual role of guidance as also subject teachers as a problem in terms of their accessibility and in several other respects.

The guidance structure

- Whether the guidance structure was horizontal or vertical made little difference to pupils' experience and opinion of guidance.

Extent and quality of contact

- There was some difference in the perception of pupils compared to that of staff about the effectiveness of provision, especially, the quality of the relationship between guidance staff and pupils.
- The majority of pupils did not think their guidance teacher knew them well; this view did vary in extent across and within schools. Greater contact by itself did not necessarily mean pupils felt their guidance teacher knew them better.

- Pupils felt that a basic requirement of the job of a guidance teacher was a knowledge of pupils on their caseload. This was seen as particularly relevant on occasions such as subject choice and writing reports when they might be giving advice and writing information based on inadequate and, sometimes, secondhand information.

Awareness and use of guidance

- The large majority of pupils knew their guidance teacher and that he or she was there to be consulted by them but the level of consciousness about guidance varied, partly related to the extent of contact.
- Around half of the pupils were prepared to approach their guidance teacher with concerns or problems. Willingness to do so varied by their view of how well their guidance teacher knew them, how approachable and accessible their guidance teacher was; pupils' age; and the nature of the problem. Pupils' perception of whether their guidance teachers would respect confidentiality strongly influenced their readiness to self-refer. On balance, they were sceptical about confidentiality being maintained. Concern about confidentiality was linked to a general feeling of lack of privacy in dealings with guidance teachers.
- Pupils were most divided whether or not they would go to their guidance teacher about personal or family problems; S5 pupils were least likely to say they would go to their guidance teacher about a personal matter.
- On the whole, pupils did not see their register teacher as an alternative source of help. The exception was one school where the guidance role of register teachers had been promoted.

Who is guidance for?

- Pupils knew that guidance teachers were not responsible for discipline but felt that their role centred round discipline.
- In four of the six project schools, pupils felt that "ordinary" pupils had minimal contact with guidance. The large majority of pupils believed that guidance should be there for *all* pupils, not just those with obvious needs or problems. Some academic pupils thought it was wrongly assumed that they did not need or want attention from their guidance teacher.
- There was some feeling among S5 pupils, especially in two schools, that contact with guidance was greater in the lower school but that now, more was required.
- Regular interviews were seen as a good way to ensure a basic level of contact and knowledge which pupils felt was important to facilitate self-referral. Regular interviews were also supported as circumventing pupils' stated reluctance to approach guidance and be seen to have a problem. As well as more frequent individual interviews, pupils suggested small group sessions.
- Although regular interviews were suggested, pupils' comments from one school indicated that interviews were not necessarily perceived as worthwhile. Individual interviews could also be a difficult experience for pupils not used to such an event. The need to have the skills to benefit from an interview also arose in relation to careers officer interviews.

Guidance and discipline

- Pupils' had different experiences of guidance teacher's role in disciplinary incidents, in particular, whether they had tried to find out the reasons for the behaviour.
- A common comment was that guidance teachers "took the teachers' side". Pupils wanted their guidance teacher to listen to both sides. Most did not expect or want guidance teachers to "be soft".

Personal and Social Education (PSE)

- Pupils' opinion about PSE ranged from the very positive to the very negative with the majority view somewhere in the middle. Opinion in the same school tended to be similar but there was in-school variation, partly related to the PSE teacher.
- Pupils accepted the need for PSE and that schools have a role to play.
- Pupils across the schools generally wanted the same topics and issues included but in a way that reflected their own circumstances. There were some school or area specific needs identified.
- A minority of pupils had had any choice of PSE topics and most wanted more input into decisions. But lack of choice seemed to be an issue, at least partly, because their school had "got it wrong".
- Few groups reported that they had been asked to review their PSE provision although this was, in principle, part of the PSE programme.
- Pupils identified a number of topics not adequately dealt with in PSE: sex education; drugs; AIDS/HIV; and alcohol and, for S4 and S5 groups, study skills and careers-related issues.
- Pupils complained of lack of, or superficial, impersonal and inappropriate, coverage of sex education, drugs, alcohol and AIDS/HIV. They remarked on the difficulties PSE teachers had, including guidance staff, in handling certain topics, especially sex education.
- Pupils were divided in their opinion of the impact of PSE on behaviour in relation to alcohol, drugs and smoking; this partly depended on the relevance of the provision. Pupils valued input from external speakers with personal experience.
- Around two-thirds of the pupil groups were critical of the delivery of PSE and criticised: the size of classes; lack of, or poorly focused, discussion; an over-reliance on worksheets and videos; out-of-date or English related materials; and inappropriate classroom layout.
- Where appropriate methodologies were used, the bulk of pupils appreciated this and noted the difference from their subject classes. Several groups identified the negative effect of the use of "conscript" and untrained teachers to deliver PSE.

Primary/secondary transfer

- The large majority of S2 pupils felt their transition from primary to secondary had been made as easy as possible. Most had had visits from guidance and other staff while in P7 and had had an induction visit to the secondary schools.

Subject choice

- All pupils had had considerable input at the S2 option choice stage but the majority were critical of at least some aspects; pupils from two schools were more positive. Pupils' criticisms concerned a lack of real choice; the desire for a greater careers input; and more time, especially for their course choice interview.
- S4 and S5 pupils felt that they had had less information and support in choosing their S5 subjects compared with S2. S5 pupils wanted more than one interview and more opportunity to discuss the career implications of their choices.
- S5 pupils taking a modular programme felt the curriculum on offer to them was limited; the scheduling of modules was a particular issue.
- S5 pupils distinguished between the subject choice advice from subject teachers and guidance teachers, and between guidance teachers and senior management.

Careers education and guidance

- Post-school options were a major concern to all S4, and especially, S5 groups. S2 pupils were also concerned about career ideas at their subject choice.
- The focus of pupils' needs varied across and within the project schools depending on pupils' academic level and likely post-school destination. There was, however, much commonality in the topics suggested; in pupils' stress on wanting more detailed and more practical information and help; and in their desire for more detailed information about careers and jobs. Several groups noted the need to cover the FE option.
- Lack of careers provision for S4 leavers was identified as a problem by pupils in several schools because it was timetabled in S5 and S6. The perceived lack of careers education and guidance in S5 was also an issue for the more academic pupils in three of the project schools, reflected in inadequate attention in PSE and their lower priority in respect of Careers Service provision.
- In two schools access to the careers library was a problem but, in general, pupils were not inclined to make much use of the careers library. Pupils were vague about the use of any computer packages, including JIIG-CAL. About half had done JIIG-CAL but opinion was not positive.
- There was a strong demand for more external speakers, including former pupils and students and a greater choice of speakers. A number of groups complained about irrelevant talks.
- Careers conventions and open days did not necessarily meet pupils' needs for more detailed information because of the restricted time and privacy available and pupils' difficulties in making full use of them because of lack of prior preparation.

- Pupils of all attainment levels felt they were not aware of the range of possible courses and jobs and found it difficult to assess what would suit them best. Target setting and Record of Achievement (RoAs) work did not appear to help in this respect.
- A number of pupils identified a tension between the use of RoAs to market themselves to employers and further and higher education and to help them assess themselves and their plans honestly.
- In two schools pupils noted that PSE and guidance teachers lacked sufficient knowledge of post-school options, especially of higher education.

Contact with the Careers Service

- Awareness of the role of the careers officer among S4 and, to a lesser extent, S5 pupils, varied considerably across the project schools. There was considerable confusion among pupils about interviews arrangements and in three schools, academic pupils were most uncertain.
- Waiting times for an interview with the careers officer varied considerably, partly reflecting time available but also because of the system for establishing interview priorities. Some pupils were not aware of the latter. Academic pupils in three schools felt disadvantages by the interview system.
- Opinion of careers officer input was generally positive with the exception of one of the project schools.
- Pupils wanted greater input from the Careers Service including drop-in clinic sessions where these were not already held; careers officer involvement in subject choice and group work on occupational areas as part of PSE.
- There was considerable support for more comprehensive interviewing by the Careers Service whether or not pupils were leaving or appeared certain of their plans and that all pupils should have ready access to an interview with a careers officer.
- A number of pupils suggested that more resources might be required to enable the Careers Service to meet their need for better access to the careers officer.

Issues

- Pupils' perceptions of the quality of guidance provision, and their willingness to make use of it, depended heavily on the guidance teacher in question. How can schools ensure that all pupils receive a *minimum* standard in their guidance provision?
- Less effective guidance teachers need to be supported and helped to develop their skills and practice. What is the best way to do so?
- How well should guidance teachers know all pupils on their caseload? What is the role of individual interviews, group work, delivery of PSE and informal contacts in enabling them to do so?
- Guidance is clearly associated in most pupils' view with pupils in trouble or with problems but the large majority thought guidance should be for *all* pupils. Is this realistic and if so, how can it be realised? How can pupils' access to their guidance teacher be improved?
- Can the tension between guidance teachers' dual role in guidance and in their subject be minimised or is there a need for full-time guidance teachers?
- In view of the gap between pupils' and guidance teachers' perceptions of provision and relationship, it would be valuable for schools to pay greater attention to pupils' views.
- Pupils' and teachers' expectations and understanding about confidentiality appear to differ. How can a common view about confidentiality be achieved?
- Pupils' need for privacy seems to be at odds with schools' perceptions. Is the pupil perception fair and, if so, how should schools respond?
- Although the topics included in PSE matched those identified by pupils, there is a need to deliver them in a way that is relevant to their particular circumstances and experiences and to do so using the appropriate participative methodologies.
- The subject choice process at S4/S5 needs to be further developed, in particular, to include consideration of career plans.
- Pupils identified a need for more careers education and guidance; a particular issue was when certain careers education topics were covered. This would suggest that the timing of careers education and guidance provision should take account of pupils' need for input at an early stage, well before the point of decision.
- Pupils, including the more academic, identified a need for greater contact with the Careers Service. What is an appropriate level of contact, how should it be organised and how can it be resourced?

Chapter 8 Guidance in practice: the parent perspective

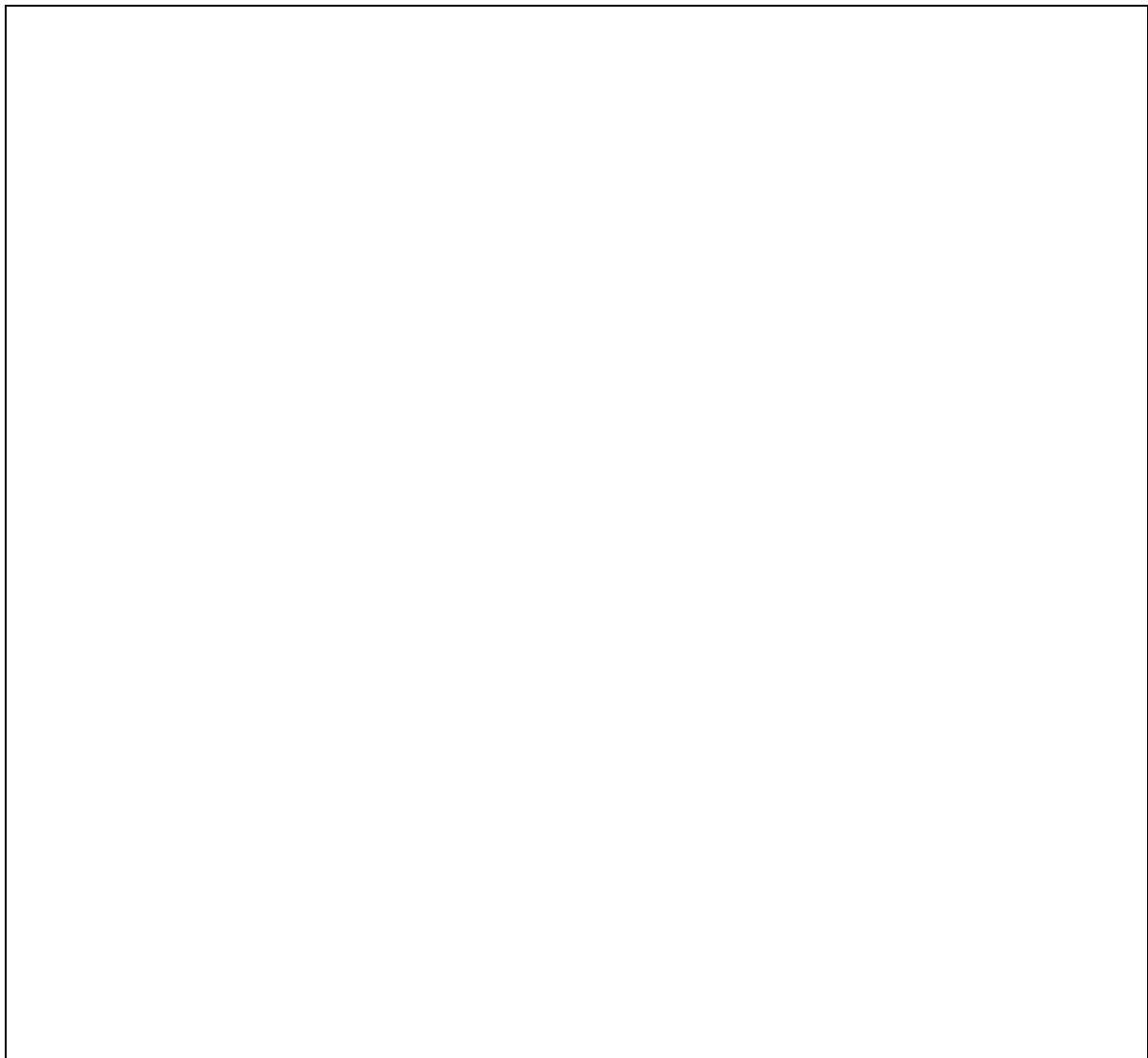
Introduction

In this chapter we consider the views of parents in the six project schools using data from the questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaire responses

As indicated in Chapter 2, 42% of parents returned the questionnaire:

Table 8.1 gives details of those parents who returned their questionnaires.



Three quarters of parents who returned their questionnaire were mothers. Both status and class of parent were affected by the predominance of women who were more highly represented in part-time work and at home status. There were only three parents in the “skilled manual” class and although this is partly accounted for by the number of mothers responding, it is still surprising.

Parents who were willing to be interviewed

34% of respondents said they were willing to be interviewed. Two-thirds of those who did so were parents of S3 pupils. Those parents who were prepared to be interviewed differed to a certain extent from respondents as a whole. Compared to parents who completed the questionnaire, those who were willing to be interviewed were:

- more likely to have had contact with their child's guidance teacher
- very slightly more negative about ease of contact with guidance
- a little less satisfied with the contact
- more likely to be the pupil's father responding than the mother
- better qualified
- from a higher social class.

This was not unexpected, but meant a decision had to be made about whether to choose parents for interview to reflect the responses overall or to reflect those prepared to be interviewed. We decided to attempt the first, that is to select parents for interview to mirror the overall response. We did so by choosing the most positive of those willing to be interviewed, adding in those with more negative views who expressed thoughtful, constructive or interesting views in the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. We ensured a fair representation of parents who had not had contact with their child's guidance teacher. Although those who had had contact were more likely to have "something to say" about the experience, it was important to find out why some parents had not had contact, and what their views of guidance were. Of 29 parents interviewed, 9 had had no contact with their child's guidance teacher, compared with the 44% of respondents as a whole. Experience confirmed this to be an appropriate balance, as parents who had not had contact were, in the main, able to contribute less to our questions about guidance provision, its effectiveness and pupil needs.

We selected parents for interview to reflect parental response in the questionnaires overall, taking into account:

- different types and levels of contact with guidance
- different levels of satisfaction with guidance
- balance of S3 and S5 parents
- balance of ethnic minority parents, where available. (In the end, two parents from an ethnic minority background were interviewed.)

Some general points

S3 and S5 parents

We deliberately targeted parents of S3 and S5 to gain insight on guidance support at the two key stages of S2/S3 and S4/S5 as well as on guidance provision more generally. But the division between these two groups of parents was impossible to maintain in handling the interview data. All but two parents interviewed had children at different stages in the school, and their responses to questions about guidance provision resulted from the cumulative experiences of all of their children in the school, past and present. This is also likely to be true of some of the questionnaire responses.

Effect of interview timing on parents' awareness

A second issue is that of the timing of the interviews which were around three months after the completion of the questionnaires. Clearly some pupils and some parents had had

additional contacts with guidance and different experiences of the school and advice services in the intervening period. One of the benefits of these interviews was that we were able to take account of these, mainly positive, changes. In particular, parents interviewed were subsequently much more positive and informed about the Careers Service and the Record of Achievement by the time of the interviews in July, especially parents whose children had left school. They had seen the Careers Service giving advice, information and practical help in finding opportunities in education, training or employment for their children. In considering the level of satisfaction about careers guidance expressed in the questionnaire, the question of timing needs to be borne in mind. The questionnaire is likely to have underestimated levels of satisfaction since parents had not experienced the Careers Service in operation post-school and had not had the chance to consider how well their children had actually been prepared for their transition out of school.

This also applied to the answers to questions on their child's Record of Achievement that were asked in the S5 parent questionnaire. Interviews with parents indicated that it was only at the end of the school session that parents had seen and understood the uses of the Record of Achievement in helping their children, and the implications of the document for guidance teachers' work. This raises the issue of how well and how often parents are informed of new developments.

Parents' awareness of guidance

A third issue that emerged in the interviews was that, as expected, most parents had asked their children for help in completing sections of the questionnaire. For many families, the questionnaire had the effect of stimulating parent-child discussions on guidance, and several parents said that this had increased their understanding of what guidance was about. It is therefore likely that the parents who responded became more aware of guidance in their school than the parent population as a whole so that the level of awareness in the questionnaires, therefore, may be higher than among parents in general. At the same time, we found that, in a majority of the interviews, we had to explain or clarify aspects of the guidance system to parents. These parents clearly welcomed the opportunity to find out how the guidance system operated and to have their queries answered.

More generally, the effect of being interviewed and being asked to reflect about guidance led most of the parents concerned to identify expectations of guidance that they had not previously considered. In interview parents were, overall, more critical than in their questionnaire responses. It is necessary to bear these two levels of response in mind when considering the views expressed by parents.

Fourthly, we have noted earlier that in a number of respects teacher/pupil perspectives differed. Parent interviews indicated that parent perspectives were mostly closer to those of young people than teachers. This is probably inevitable since many parents got their information about guidance primarily through their children, though as we shall see later, schools did make attempts of different kinds, and at different levels of effectiveness to inform parents about guidance in their child's school.

Fifthly, parents were overwhelmingly in favour of guidance in schools although they made criticisms of guidance in practice. They saw guidance as being necessary for their child.

And finally, as with young people, parents who made criticisms took a balanced view and showed understanding of the pressures on individual members of guidance staff and on teachers as a whole.

Parents and the guidance system

Awareness of guidance

The great majority of parents stated in the questionnaire that they knew the name of their child's guidance teacher (Table 8.2).



There were some differences across schools in awareness of the guidance teacher. Parents from Schools B and E were less likely to know the guidance teacher's name. It was not clear why this was, but size of school may be part of the explanation. Schools B and E were the largest project schools. The type of guidance structure did not appear to be the reason since one school had a vertical and the other a horizontal guidance system.

In interview, some parents said they had had to ask their child for the name of the guidance teacher:

"I've only found out about guidance through (daughter), she said, "I've to go to guidance". I said "What's guidance?" and she explained that it's if you have any problems."

Parents interviewed recalled receiving information about the guidance system in several ways. Some spoke of meeting a guidance teacher at the P7/S1 induction events and others of having read about it somewhere. Further questions helped parents to remember it had been in the school handbook, or in the parents' leaflet. One parent suggested that her lack of knowledge of guidance was, in fact, a measure of the lack of effectiveness of guidance:

"Could you say that guidance is working if I as a parent know nothing about it?"

It could not be assumed that where a parent knew little about guidance, it was because of lack of interest in the school or its pupils:

“I’m on the PTA and my husband’s on the school board but we knew very little about the guidance system. When it comes up at the school board it’s just about disruptive pupils.”

Contact with guidance

The questionnaire focused on parents’ contacts with guidance during the current and previous academic session. We thought it likely that parents might have had increased contact in the previous session, in particular, because their children would have been choosing subjects for S3 or for S5.



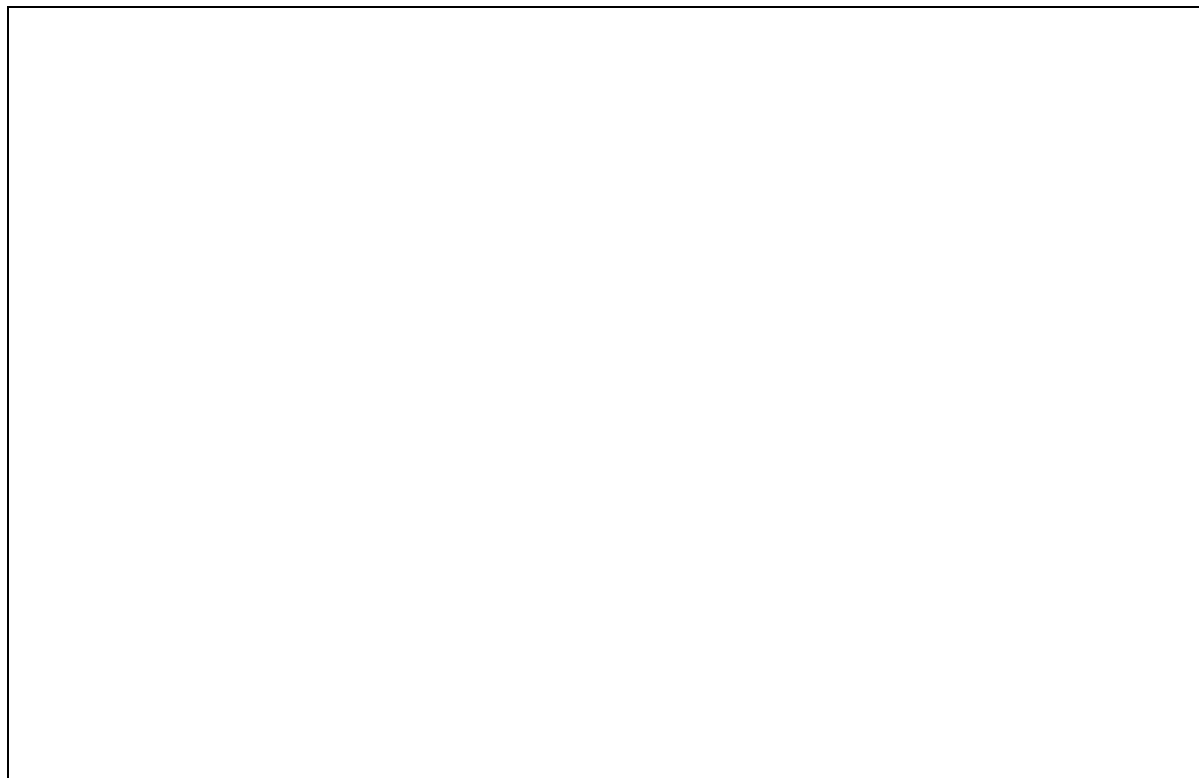
The questionnaire responses show some school differences here: parents from Schools B and E were less likely to have had contact with guidance, and parents from School F, too, reported lower contact levels (Table 8.3). Interviews with parents from Schools B and E, where responses to both contact and awareness of guidance had been lower, revealed uncertainty about what subject choice information and advice had been provided to parents, and a degree of unhappiness about the timing of parents evenings.

Whether the parent had had contact with the child’s guidance teacher in the previous session did not differ by then level of education or social class. The nature of the school’s guidance system - horizontal or vertical - also made no difference to parents’ contact with guidance.

Reasons for contact were varied, with subject choice (24%) and school work (20%) being most common. Other reasons were personal problems (13%), career plans (10%), behaviour problems (7%), bullying (S3 only - 6%) and illness (5%). Other than the fact that fathers were more likely to be in contact about career plans than mothers, there were no differences in the reason for making contact by the mother or the father.

How easily could parents contact guidance teacher?

Parents who had had contact with guidance felt it was easy to do so; 91% reported that contact was very or fairly easy.



Contact was most commonly by interview in school (48%), parents' evening (44%), telephone (43%) and letter (23%): parents could tick as many items as applied. Ease of contact between parents and guidance did not differ by whether the guidance system was vertical or horizontal. Parents' experience of trying to contact guidance teachers was positive, as seen in their responses to the open-ended questions in this section of the questionnaire:

"From my experience I have had the best cooperation possible when I get in touch."

"We are free to 'phone the school any time if we need help from the guidance teacher."

Interview responses also were positive about ease of contact:

"They're not usually there when you 'phone, but they'll always get back to you as soon as they can."

"I can't fault the guidance teacher, she was really helpful and kept in touch with me"

Parents' views about ease of access contrast with the perceptions of guidance teachers themselves who felt that parents had difficulty in contacting them.

Satisfaction with contact

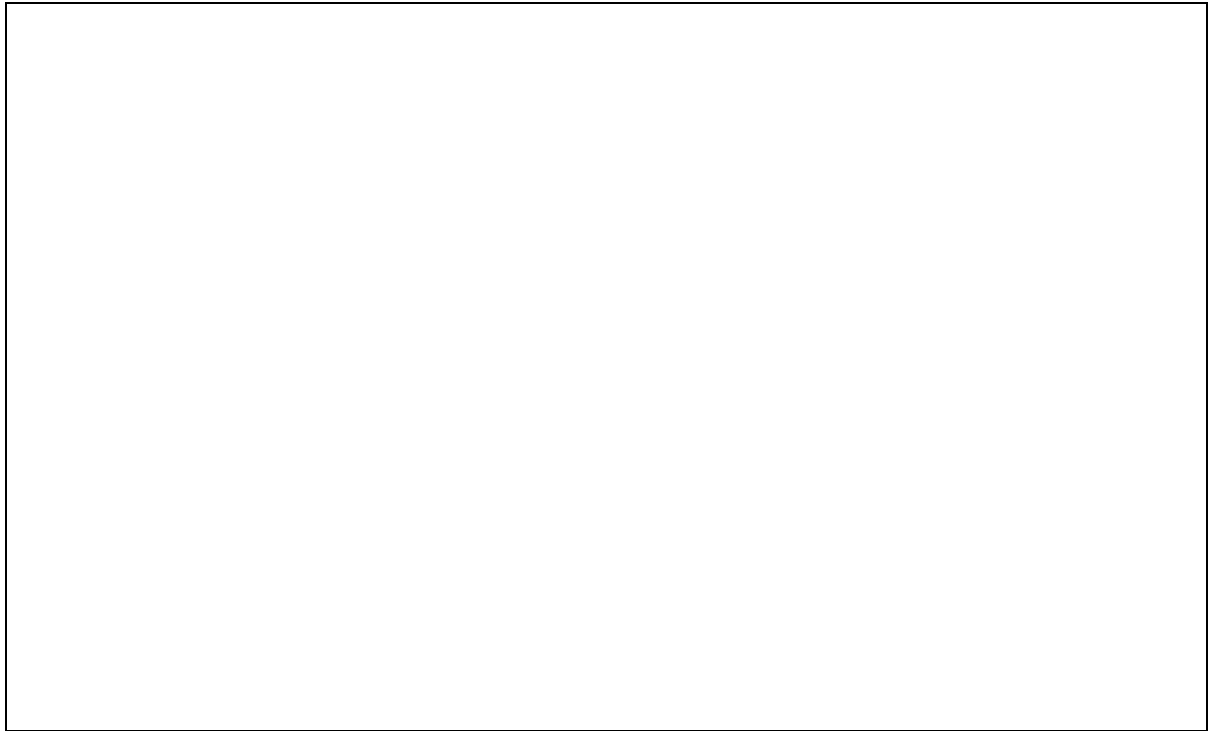
Parents who had contact with guidance were generally very or fairly satisfied with their experience.



Parents who had not had contact with guidance staff were asked in the questionnaire why this was. The most common reason was “nothing to discuss” (75%). Ten per cent said that they were not clear what guidance did, and 6% said their child did not want them to make contact. Other reasons for lack of contact were that the guidance teacher was not available (3%) or that parents’ involvement would not be welcomed by the school (2%).

Improvements to contact

Despite parents’ reported satisfaction with the ease of contact, and with their experience, many thought contact could be improved (Table 8.6).



Parents were more likely to say contact could be improved if:

- they had stayed on at school beyond the statutory leaving age
- they held higher level qualifications
- they were in a higher social class.

It seemed that “middle class” parents were more likely to suggest contact could be improved, perhaps because they had higher expectations of guidance.

The response to this question showed a good deal of uncertainty about the role of guidance, with over a fifth not sure, and another fifth saying they did not know enough to comment. Some 39% were clear that contact could be improved. Altogether just under a fifth (19%) felt that contact between guidance teachers and parents could *not* be improved.

Parents in School C were considerably less likely to say they did not know enough about guidance to comment. This may be partly a result of the school’s efforts to inform parents about guidance through a leaflet specifically designed for them and also be related to the higher educational level of School C parents compared with those from other schools.

However greater awareness did not stop parents from School C thinking that contact could be improved, they were most likely (53%) to say that it could. Perhaps an understanding of the guidance system had raised expectations of greater contact that had not been met. Or perhaps, as we wondered earlier, do “middle class” or more educated parents have higher expectations of guidance?

From questionnaire responses, the following are the main areas parents suggested for improvement:

- more letters, comments, phone calls from the school to the home;
- contact with the home when the child is *not* in trouble;
- parents and guidance teachers to get to know each other so that they can work together when a problem does occur;
- send a note of the advice guidance staff have given to children as they may not communicate this to their parents;
- explain when and why a parent should contact the guidance teacher;
- tell parents the regular times when the guidance teacher is free for a phone call;
- make times available to see guidance staff outwith school hours;
- send out annual reminders of who the guidance teacher is, and how to contact him/her.

Parents interviewed had a lot to say on the subject of how contact might be improved. However the main point was the importance of building up a relationship with the parent outwith a crisis or problem situation:

“Contact with guidance could be improved because at present there is no contact unless there is a problem. Parents of children with problems, perhaps in discipline or attendance, will be contacted, but I would like a report on overall progress and personal development, in social aspects and in overall school life as well as the academic side.”

“I’d like some contact from guidance for positive reasons ... you get no contact unless it’s about a caper in the class they’re good at sending out letters when something is wrong!”

“Unless you have a problem you don’t hear from the school. I would have liked more contact with the guidance teacher to let me know what is happening, my daughter keeps things to herself so that I wouldn’t know if there was any problem. Rather than wait until parents’ night to tell you, they should send you wee letters to say how they are getting on quite regularly.”

Parents’ evenings as a method of contact

Although parents’ evenings were valued by parents they were also the source of considerable frustration because of time constraints and the lack of privacy.

“There is no privacy at parents’ evenings, other parents are less than five feet away and it is very poor if the guidance teacher is telling you for the first time that there is a problem. The guidance teacher should have a room of her own for the parents’ evening.”

“Parents’ evenings are a nightmare you rush around trying to see all the teachers, and the guidance teacher has her subject people to see as well..... they should have a parents’ evening for guidance on its own.”

“Parents should automatically have an interview with the guidance staff at parents’ nights from primary 7 right through to 5th year so that staff are more aware of pupils and parents.”

Parent/guidance teacher communications through the child

While recognising the cost of such an exercise, many parents felt that letters should be sent directly to the home, as communications based on the “school bag post” distribution system often did not reach the home. However, there was an opposite, if minority, view expressed that the teenager, as an adolescent approaching maturity, should deal directly with the guidance system without the involvement of the parent:

“I would feel it would be quite inappropriate for me to contact the guidance teacher now since he’s so mature. It would be very presumptuous. Parents should get involved with guidance about a youngster of this age (ie S3) only when there is a serious problem.”

Difference between primary and secondary links

A number of parents spoke in interview of the different experiences and expectations they had of home-school links in primary compared with secondary. This was particularly apparent in the school in the most deprived area where primary schools had made determined attempts to involve parents:

“I can walk comfortably into the primary school but I can’t do that in the secondary, I don’t know teachers on a friendly basis in the secondary as I do in the primary.”

What implications does this have for guidance? It seemed that parents could pick up any problems at an early stage quickly and informally from the primary teacher, and could also get some “good news” when their child was successful and achieving. Parents recognised that the secondary system was different, with a number of subject teachers having knowledge of their child. Parents who spoke so positively of the contacts in primary appeared to have

hoped that guidance teachers might have that same overview and indepth knowledge of their child that the primary teacher had been able to express in such a supportive way to parents.

Is it reasonable for parents to have this expectation? On the one hand, many parents did recognise the growing independence and maturity of their child so that perhaps the secondary school should have a different relationship with the pupils than that in the primary. On the other hand, parents were concerned that their child might be missed and become lost in the larger (sometimes considerably larger) secondary school. Also guidance does, in principle, aim to offer an overview of the child through a supportive pupil-centred approach, and one which acknowledges pupils' achievements as well as any difficulties.

Guidance teacher and the aims of guidance

Ideal guidance teacher

Parents interviewed felt that having the right personality to communicate with young people was the main factor in defining an ideal guidance teacher. Summarising these interview responses, an ideal guidance teacher should:

- be able to listen and not be dogmatic
- be able to build up trust
- have a genuine interest in children and their futures
- be personally open
- show respect to the child
- respect confidences
- be non-judgmental
- treat the child as an adult

This was very similar to what pupils said, as we have discussed in the previous chapter.

In a later section we will look at parents' level of satisfaction with guidance overall but the following quotes illustrate parents' views on the personality of the guidance teacher:

"Their guidance teacher is approachable but not their best pal"

"They should be able to approach the person. The kids seem to block it all out. I'll not say they're frightened but they may not want to open up to the ordinary teacher. If they're confident with the guidance teacher they may be able to talk about problems they've got at school"

"A good guidance teacher would be someone who could bring themselves down to the level of a child, not sit behind a desk looking like a big chief"

"That wee wumman [the guidance teacher] up there would be better aff in the army, she says "Listen while I'm talking to you". My daughter is very much intimidated by her..... that wee wumman'll no be gettin many Xmas cards"

"Someone friendly, someone who was approachable and doesn't stand on ceremony. The guidance teacher is supposed to be a friend, someone you can go to confide in. The guidance teacher should be involved in the school trips and get to know them in a different kind of way. (The guidance teacher) always had his lunch with pupils, he never sat at the staff table, he had always sat down beside some of the pupils in his guidance groups"

This approachability was just as important to parents when they contacted guidance teachers themselves:

"She didn't talk like a teacher, she came across like a neighbour and she wasn't sticking up for teachers either... she made me feel good, I thought, God, someone kens what it's like to have a teenager"

Several parents interviewed compared the role of the guidance teacher to that of a parent:

“There is a need for the guidance system, the school is in loco parentis and it would be nice to think that if something happened at school they would feel confident in going to get help from someone”

“Guidance is like a parent, you have to be there for them when you are needed, but you also have to be willing to back off to give them some space”

Balance of relationship between child and guidance teacher

It is interesting to consider what might be seen as some contradictions in parents’ perceptions of the approach of a guidance teacher. On the one hand, some parents wanted guidance teachers to be “like a parent”; on the other most agreed that the ideal guidance teacher should be open, non-dogmatic, non-judgmental, able to listen to pupils as if they were adults. Some parent-child relationships are not like this ideal guidance teacher’s approach. Indeed, parents did recognise that one of the values of a guidance teacher was that a child, who could not talk to parents, might speak to a guidance teacher. However, almost without exception, parents did not identify themselves as being in that situation; they hoped, and in many cases preferred, that their child would come first to them with any concerns.

Some parents recognised the move to adult status of their child:

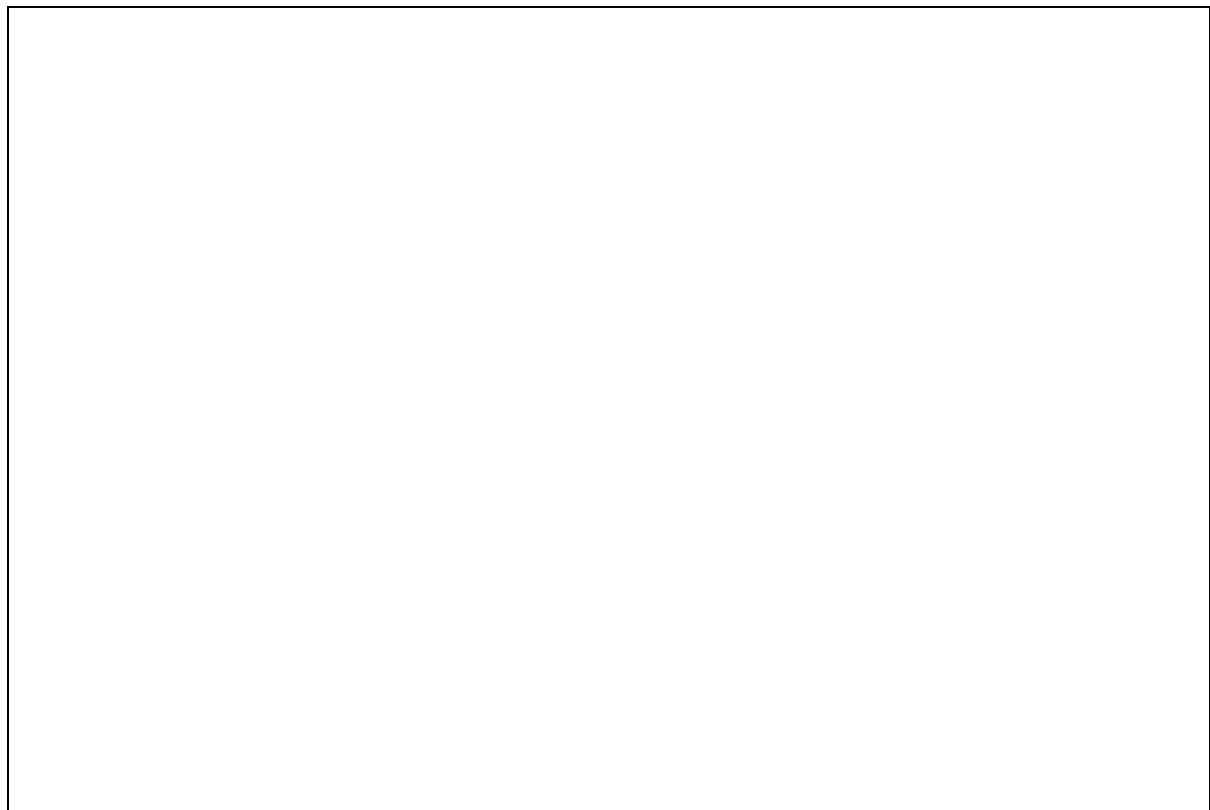
“I could have gone up to the school to find out more about what subjects she could do in 5th year but she’s quite capable of dealing with the decision”

Some hoped that guidance teachers would also support pupils’ independent decision-making and problem-solving:

“It’s important that guidance teachers shouldn’t just intervene to sort it all out for them, the guidance teacher should let them see other sides and other strategies for handling things”

Role of guidance teacher

We asked parents in the questionnaires about the role of guidance teachers. We listed a range of possible activities and asked parents to comment on whether these were carried out by guidance teachers in their child’s school. We then asked them if they thought guidance teachers ought to be involved in such duties.



Parents were clearly aware that the guidance teacher had a particular role in liaising with parents: over four-fifths agreed that guidance teachers were available for parents to speak to. Their answers also showed that the majority saw guidance teachers as dealing with pupils with problems. Three-quarters of parents thought guidance teachers helped pupils who got into trouble at school and those who had personal problems. It seemed that parents had an image of guidance as being focused most on problems, just as pupils and teachers did.

Areas where guidance teachers were *not* thought to be so greatly involved were those where parents had the most pointed things to say about the effectiveness of guidance and areas for improvement, namely progress and knowledge of the child.

Just over a half of parents thought that guidance teachers in their child's school actually did keep parents informed and let pupils know how they were doing.

Given the fundamental aim of guidance that pupils "are known personally and in some depth by a member of staff", it should be noted that nearly two-fifths (41%) of parents either were not sure, or did not think guidance teachers got to know their pupils well.

Parents were also asked what guidance teachers *ought* to do in their child's school. Unfortunately, many parents missed out this question, but from the responses of those who *did* answer, their priorities also related to progress, being available to parents, keeping parents informed and helping pupils with personal problems.

Parents interviewed expressed a range of views about the duties and responsibilities of a guidance teacher, from the parent who thought there was one guidance teacher for the whole school to one who thought the guidance teacher's estimated caseload of 20 was too heavy a load. Some asked about the qualifications and training of guidance staff:

“Do they get paid for it? I hadn’t realised. Do they get trained? I would guess they only go to the children when they see a problem and they probably don’t go looking for problems either It would be nice to meet and know them and to explain what they’re there for or what they do.”

Guidance focus on problems

Many parents in interview noted a difference between what they thought a guidance teacher did, and what they ought to do. Parents tended to assume that guidance dealt with children with problems, but were anxious, particularly if their child was not likely to come to the attention of the guidance teacher, that guidance teachers should try to help *all* children:

“Guidance is there as back up for the 5-10% of children who have problems. The other 90% are only numbers to the school. That’s the whole problem with education. They have the real high fliers and the problem young people and the great bulk of kids are just not known.”

Although not a majority view, some parents noted that, because guidance was so much linked to handling problems, there was a stigma about going to see the guidance teacher:

“I think guidance teachers should personally get to know their pupils and their parents. Children could use them more. My children seem to think of guidance as a place you don’t go to if you’re in trouble or worried because you’ll be teased by other children.”

However, as we will see later on in this chapter, issues to do with accessibility and approachability of guidance are much broader than this and take into account the personality and approach of the individual guidance teacher, and issues about systems of interviewing.

The guidance role in career choice

In interview, the most commonly identified task for guidance was preparation for career choice and life after school:

“Fifth and sixth year pupils should be given much more help with careers. That’s the whole point of educating kids, to bring them out to choose what they’re going to do with the rest of their lives. Guidance should have much more responsibility for careers.”

“It’s (ie guidance is) to prepare them for what will happen to them when they get out of the doors and look after them while they’re still in the school.”

[The guidance teacher’s job is] “to guide the child through education towards career development. The guidance teacher should have one of the biggest roles even including the headteacher. The guidance teacher’s the one they will remember when they’re heading on the road they’ve chosen because that’s the one who says what you can and can’t do when you leave school.”

These comments came from parents whose children had had little contact with the Careers Service. Where the child had had some input from the careers officer, there was more perception of the complementary roles of the guidance teacher and careers officer:

“They’re never too young to look at what they’re going to do. There’s all sorts of careers that they don’t actually know about, lots more than I ever knew about, and I want him to know about them and be able to choose from them.”

Guidance and the careers people should mingle together and start at day 1 in secondary school rather than in just the last year at school.”

Guidance and personal problems

Coping with personal problems was another major area that parents, in interview, identified as important for guidance staff:

“The guidance teacher should be a parent figure, someone you could go to talk about anything in confidence.”

“People should be able to go to them if there’s a problem. They should be able to talk to them about anything at all, that’s what guidance should be. You can go to a teacher and talk about it. It set mine up well anyway.”

“Pupils need to have someone they could talk to about anything without putting you down, someone who won’t say “it’s silly to worry about this” or “have you talked to your mother about that?””.

“Someone understanding who will listen to problems, who will spend time listening to a child that perhaps can’t talk to their parents. The kinds of issues I would expect her to talk to the guidance teacher about might be something like bullying or sex or knowing someone on drugs.”

The issue of confidentiality was of great importance to parents, and many stressed it when describing their picture of an ideal guidance teacher:

“The guidance teacher should use discretion about passing problems on to parents, they need to keep the child’s confidence or the child won’t go to them again.”

Guidance role in monitoring progress

Although guidance about personal problems was seen as a major guidance task, monitoring progress in academic and personal terms was also identified as a key role for guidance teachers:

“The number one aim (ie of guidance) should be pupil’s progress and behaviour.”

“Should be to provide a child-focused advice and support service for young people. Should look at the child as a whole person and not just have an academic focus, although that needs to be there because they are in school.”

Bullying, guidance and the SMT

Although most parents interviewed were aware of bullying as an issue for pupils, the majority had no direct experience of their children being bullied, referring instead to the experiences of the children of neighbours and friends or to what had been reported by their children. These parents thought that the school response had been satisfactory. Six of the 29 parents interviewed had children who had experienced bullying. Two had been satisfied with the school’s response which they described as “nipping the problem in the bud”. Early, decisive action by the school was seen as critical in resolving the difficulty. The other four parents were not happy with how the school had dealt with the bullying of their child and had strong

feelings on the subject. In these cases, the schools' failure to deal appropriately with the bullying arose from:

- the school not following its own procedures;
- school staff at a senior level seriously underestimating the scale and impact of bullying on the child and the family, and on the child's choices and performance within school;
- not keeping the parents informed of action taken to deal with bullies;
- lack of support for the child being bullied;
- senior management not informing subject staff and the child's guidance teacher of the problems experienced by the victim;
- a tendency to blame the victim and encourage the victim to change rather than tackle the bullies.

Those parents whose children had been bullied were more inclined than other parents to look to the school's senior management team for action rather than guidance. In fact, this was one of the few areas where parents saw the SMT acting as part of the extended guidance team:

"Bullying is not a guidance teacher's job, it's for the people who have the power to expel."

"I'll not move my son out of this school, but I'll make sure someone takes action on his behalf."

Guidance in the school system

Advocacy role

Some parents saw the guidance role as internal liaison or as an advocate for the child within the institution:

"It's a teacher that liaises with other teachers and with the headteacher on behalf of a pupil."

"A guidance teacher should be able to look at it from the pupil's point of view although they are also there to represent the school's interest."

"Guidance should sometimes speak to other teachers about child development for individual children and advise on what the subject teacher could do to help them develop."

Guidance as challenge to school

Another area mentioned in parent interviews was the role of guidance staff, not just in negotiating on a child's behalf, but of challenging the system on behalf of children and their parents:

“Does a guidance teacher’s duty lie to the children, or in no’ creating waves? Teachers are colleagues and are bound to chat. What if there is a conflict of interest? You’ve to deal with a complaint about the teacher with whom you play badminton or you have coffee with in the morning!”

“The headteacher maintains a distance from the pupils, does he do it with staff? He maintains that is because he is the end of the line, that things go from the guidance teacher to the Assistant Head to him and you have to go through channels. If he is distant with his staff, it’s to make it easier for him to criticise staff when it’s necessary, so maybe guidance should be a separate department and be distanced from the rest of the school so that it can be able to criticise the school when it needs it.”

These quotes illustrate an awareness among parents of the potential tension in the dual role of the guidance teacher as a full member of staff, expected in some ways to represent the school and its staff to the pupil, and that of the “parent” figure for the child.

Tension between subject and guidance role

Some parents also picked up on a tension between the subject and guidance role of the teacher:

“There could be a problem when a teacher is taking a subject and tears a strip off them for not doing their homework and then they maybe find that they can’t take their personal problems to them.”

Autonomy of guidance teacher

“The guidance teacher has a level of autonomy and understanding that I welcome. He can actually make decisions about levels of support and what they can give. He’s either had a discussion with the headteacher or he knows his view will be accepted as an experienced guidance professional. In the other school (ie the school from which she had transferred her son) guidance was clearly under the autocratic whim of the headmaster.”

We have already discussed issues relating to the autonomy of guidance staff, and its relationship to accountability. This parent was clear that the autonomy of the professional guidance teacher was valuable, but it was in the context of a system of accountability in discussion with the head teacher. In this situation the guidance teacher was effective.

Parents in interview were able to give many examples of ways in which guidance teachers had helped with difficulties with illness, monitoring attendance of individual children, family problems, and particular problems with subjects or subject teacher:

“He made sure she got homework to do when she was off sick, he spoke to other teachers and organised it for her.”

“When my mother was very ill, I ‘phoned the school because she (daughter) was very fond of my mother. The guidance teacher was really good and made sure all her teachers knew. Some of them even asked me at a parents’ night how my mother was. I was really impressed.”

Access and individual attention

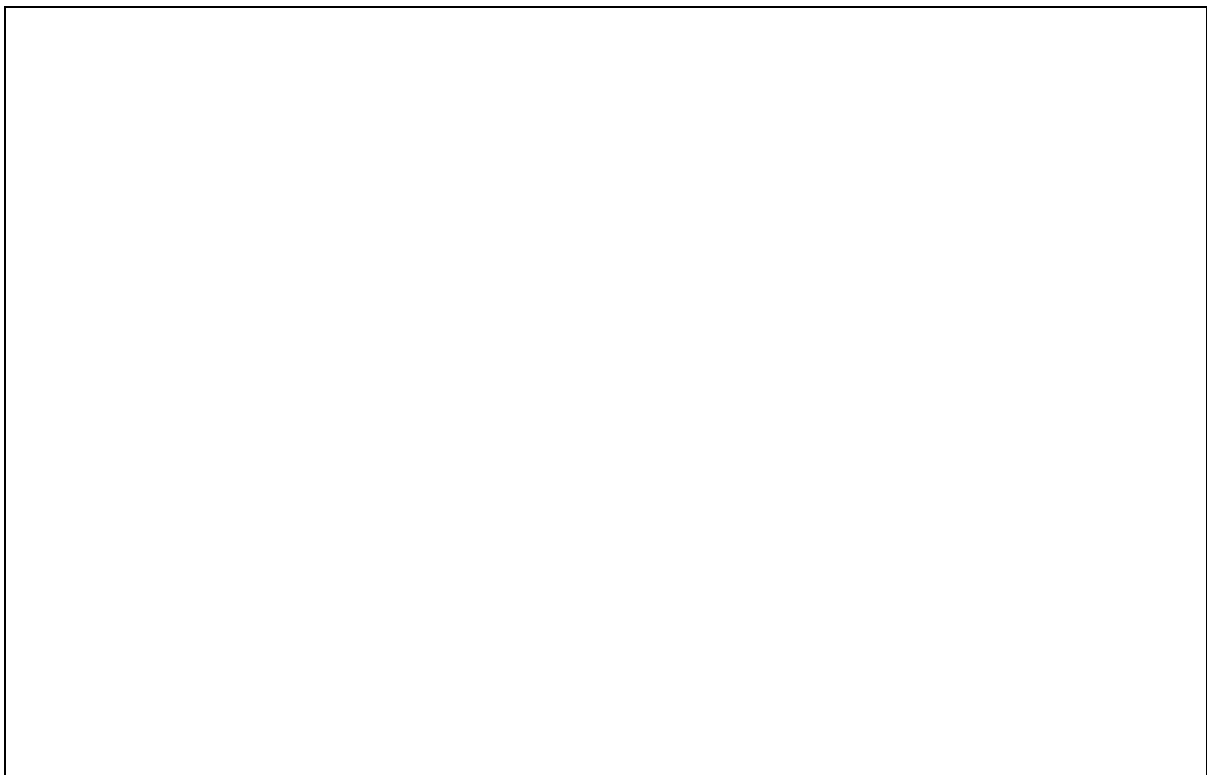
In the questionnaire, parents were asked

“Can your child usually contact his/her guidance teacher when he/she wants?”



67% of S3 parents, and 78% of S5 parents said “Yes”. A greater proportion of S3 parents were unsure of the answer to this question (26% compared with 18% of S5 parents). These answers may reflect the longer time the S5 child has spent in the school and the correspondingly greater knowledge of the guidance system gained over this period.

Parents were asked in the questionnaire how well they thought the guidance teacher knew their child.



Parents were reasonably positive about the guidance teacher's knowledge of their child: 64% thought the child was fairly or well known. There were some differences between the responses of S3 and S5 parents, S5 parents were more likely to think that their child was very well known by his or her guidance teacher. It might be expected that an S5 child who had spent a longer time in the school would be thought to be better known than a younger child. There were cross-school differences, parents of children in Schools A, B and E were least likely to feel the guidance teacher knew their child very well. Schools D and F had the highest percentage of parents reporting they thought their child was known very well: these were the two smallest schools in the project group. Guidance teachers in School D also had weekly contact with their caseload, through the PSE classes, and in School F, guidance teachers carried out an annual programme of individual interviews with pupils.

In interviews we checked what criteria parents were using to assess whether or not their child was known. Most commonly, parents expected to recognise at least some parts of the description given of their child at parents' evenings or in school reports by guidance teachers. Other criteria used were whether the guidance teacher knew basic facts about the child. Did the guidance teacher have to shuffle through files to identify which child the parent was talking about or did the guidance teacher mix up the child with a brother or sister?

"We hadn't made an appointment to meet the guidance teacher even at the parents' evenings but I'm not sure what you could talk about because they don't know their children unless they had a particular problem. When I asked the guidance teacher at a parents' evening about my son he didn't have a clue who he was since he had never taught him"

"He had only 200 kids and my daughter has been there for 5 years, he should know her by now. I recognise that my daughter is a quiet girl who prefers not to be noticed and never really had any problems"

Parents who responded that their child was not very well known were also likely to say that their child did not get enough individual attention from the guidance teacher (Table 8.10).



S5 parents were more likely to think the child got enough individual attention than S3 parents. Perhaps, as with guidance teachers' knowledge of their child, the greater the number of years the child had been at the school, the more the parent assumed the child would have had enough individual attention from the guidance teacher. But parents' responses show a considerable degree of uncertainty about the level of attention: 61% of S3 parents and 51% of S5 parents were either not sure or thought their children were not getting enough individual attention from the guidance teacher.

Whether or not their children were getting enough individual attention from a guidance teacher was an issue that parents picked up on in their recommendations for improving guidance, as we see later in this chapter.

It was noticeable that where parents interviewed were unsure whether their child could contact the guidance teacher easily, or doubtful whether the guidance teacher knew their child well, they were more likely to be aware of the role that the subject teacher could play. Most parents who held these views were confident that there was someone in the school to whom their child would talk, even if that person was not the guidance teacher:

"I was quite sure my older daughter would be able to go to some subject teachers. There are some who put a lot of effort into the whole school, one in particular that the kids are very fond of"

The size of school was thought to be an important factor:

"Because it isn't a big school there are enough people they can talk to"

Some parents were very satisfied with the schools' knowledge of their child:

"I feel that not only does the guidance teacher know every child, but so does every teacher and the headteacher"

However, where a member of the SMT was mentioned, it was normally when the parent had been dissatisfied with action or contact with the guidance teacher:

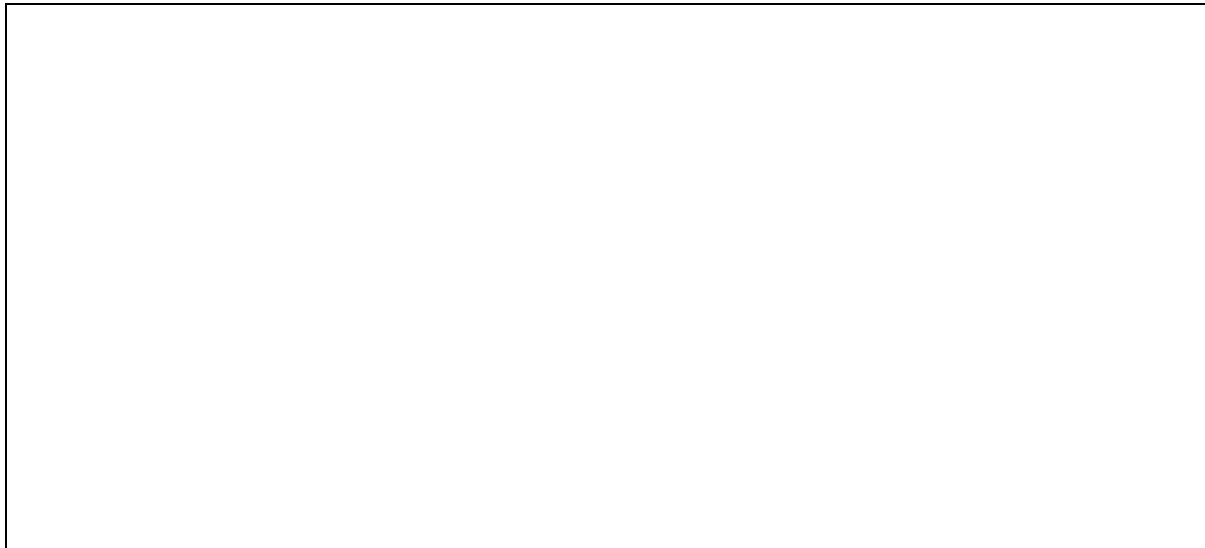
"Problems seem to be sorted out OK if the parent goes directly to the Assistant Head, but not if the guidance teachers get involved".

This parent was talking about problems in reconciling what one subject teacher was saying about his child with what others were saying. Another commented on the caring approach of the Assistant Headteacher:

"He (the AHT) is just what a guidance teacher should be... he was great."

Monitoring and reporting progress

In both questionnaires and interviews, parents had a lot to say about how the school monitored progress and, in particular, the role of the guidance staff. We look first at the evidence from the questionnaires.



Parents of S5 pupils were somewhat less satisfied in questionnaire responses about the information given to them than were S3 parents. In total, 80% of parents were very or fairly satisfied with the information they got on their child's progress. Fathers were less likely to be satisfied with information on their child's progress than mothers.

Quotations from S3 parents' questionnaires illustrate the range of parents' comments:

"The progress at school is well documented and reported on. Happy with this aspect"

"I know that if there are any problems I will be notified and can contact the school at any time."

"More detailed, more specific reports [needed]"

"Don't get any information apart from report cards and parents' evenings"

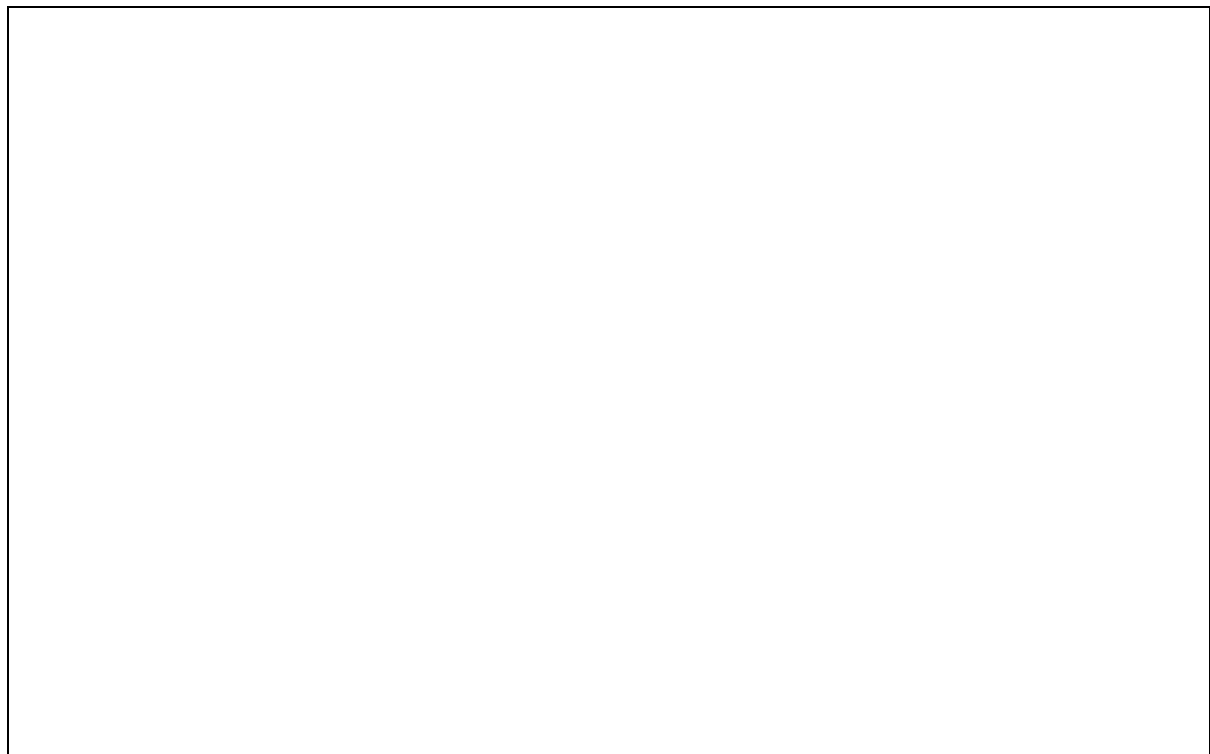
"In 3rd year, information is needed on a regular basis, particularly if a child is not making the progress which might have been expected."

*"A school report should be **before** the parents' evening."*

"During a dismal 3rd year's maths, we were only made aware at the end of that year."

Methods used to report progress

We asked parents in questionnaires about the methods used by schools to keep them informed of their child's progress. Parents were able to tick as many as applied.



School reports were the most likely method to be used, with over 80% reporting this and they were also most likely to be thought helpful. Parents evenings were the next most commonly reported method, three-quarters of parents noted they were used as a method of informing parents on progress.

All of the project schools did, in fact, use school reports to communicate with parents, but 20% of S3 parents and 12% of S5 parents did not say that school reports were used by the school. Similarly, all schools held parents' evenings, but around a quarter of parents were not aware they were used by the school as a method of informing parents about progress.

This may result from the way in which parents receive communications from the school. Perhaps school reports were being sent via the child and not reaching the parent. It was likely that sending information about parents' evening via the child was at least partly responsible for the lack of knowledge of these events. One parent at interview commented that she had never been informed about parents' evenings and was astonished and horrified when her daughter, who was present during the interview, laughed and said:

“That’s because I never gave you the information, Mum, I never wanted you to go”

Another child had taken a different approach to keeping his mother away from parents' evenings:

“He told me that parents had to sit in rows and be talked at by the headmaster so I wouldn’t want to go”

There are two points here: firstly, that there are some difficulties in ensuring parents are made aware of the schools' methods of informing them about their children's progress; secondly, it cannot be assumed that all parents will understand the approach and intention of a parents' evening.

Parents' comments in the questionnaires and in interview raised the same issues about information about their child's progress, that they wanted more detailed and earlier reports and wished to be alerted as soon as a problem arose:

"They will get in touch with you if your child causes trouble but not if their marks are going down. I've got the example of my neighbour's son who was hit with it at a parents' night. They should let you know earlier, there could be some underlying problem, perhaps bullying, that's caused them to do so badly at their work."

"A lot of the time the teachers just mark the boxes and what good is that to me? I'm just a layman in those terms. All it takes is an extra couple of minutes to write in "(son) has improved" or "(son) has struggled at several aspects of this work". The subjects don't give enough details although the English department does do this ... they virtually write me a letter. They need to write something that I can understand. He gets an F grade or an A grade and it doesn't say why. I get good explanations of how he's doing in PE and RE which are subjects of little consequence to me, particularly religious education. I'm not confident at all that the school would get in touch if he was falling behind. I'd probably only hear something about it at the parents' night or in the half-yearly report... I think I should be getting told the minute there's a problem so that I can help."

There are a number of important points in this quote, given at length since it reflected the concerns of many parents interviewed. Although the responsibility for monitoring progress was shared between guidance and subject departments, guidance was still seen as having a major role in this because only guidance had the overview of the child's development and achievement. However, although most parents could see room for some improvement, there were many parents who were confident about the school's involvement in review of progress:

"I feel the school is flexible and welcoming whenever I made any approach and I feel I could rely on them to alert me to any problems in their progress."

Monitoring progress and school targets

In one school, parents commented in interview on the push from the school towards increased attainment. There were different, and strong, views among parents in this school on whether this was entirely a good thing:

"If you're average, you're not so valuable to the school, is it the league tables that have done this?"

The link between monitoring progress and exam passes was made by one parent:

"If getting Highers is so important, why do guidance only allocate 5 or 10 minutes to talk to pupils about their progress?"

Where a school sets academic targets, and is proud of its academic success, this parent suggested that priorities in the use of guidance time should reflect this to allow more time to be spent on monitoring progress.

Monitoring progress on personal and social development

Parents saw an important role for guidance in monitoring progress, not only in relation to academic progress but in providing them with a rounded picture of the child:

“My daughter’s doing well in her subjects and how she’s doing in subjects was always reported, but her behaviour and her other development is never known.”

“I would like to know how she’s getting on with others in her class, is she happy? How do the school see her developing, is she getting more confident?”

One parent felt that the involvement of the guidance teacher should be more than just reporting progress in personal and social development:

“I get really upset, every year I go up to the school, and they say “Oh, your son’s very shy, Mr....., he doesn’t really mix well” and I say I’ve done my best to help him but the school has got him 5 days a week, and they can give him experiences that I can’tthey should be sitting down with him and helping him to try to develop confidence. They recognise the problem. Why aren’t they trying to do anything about it? If they are, I don’t know anything about it.... we should be working together on it.”

A critical point, and one that we will return to again when we consider parents’ involvement in Personal and Social Education, is the importance of joint action by the home and the school, and more particularly in this case, by the guidance teacher and the parent. The parent quoted above wanted guidance to suggest practical solutions and for a partnership approach to help his son develop social and personal skills.

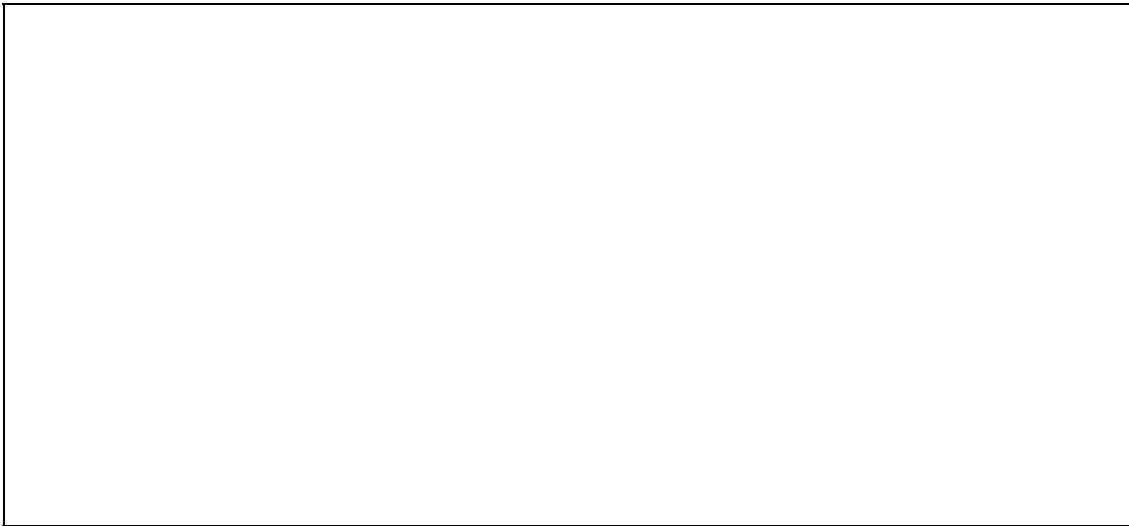
While only one parent made a comment of this kind, it is the logical development of a relationship with a guidance teacher based on knowledge, understanding, and the encouragement of attainment and progress in personal and academic areas. Perhaps the increase in recording, reviewing and target-setting activities leading on to the Records of Achievement will help parents and schools to support each other in encouraging all round development of all children.

Records of Achievement

We asked two questions on Records of Achievement in the S5 parents’ questionnaire: whether parents knew if their child was working on a Record of Achievement and whether they had seen it, or parts of it.

Just over half stated that they knew their child was completing a Record of Achievement, but it became clear in interviews that most parents had had to ask their children for the answer to this question.

Under a fifth of parents had actually seen the Record of Achievement, or any part of it, at the time the questionnaires were completed. But as we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the timing of the interviews in July was fortuitous because by then more S5 parents, especially those whose children had left school, had seen their child’s Record of Achievement and valued it.



One parent picked up on the importance of the guidance teacher's knowledge of the child in the writing of the Record of Achievement:

"I think the Record of Achievement looks good but I wonder how effective it is, how can a guidance teacher make personal remarks about a pupil that she doesn't know? If you go through school life without any particular highs and lows then you can't be known by the guidance teacher."

Of course, schools have been writing references for pupils for many years and the same difficulty has always been present when pupils were not well known by staff. However, parents have not generally seen the school's reference but they do see the school's comment in the Record of Achievement. It is also meant to be shown to colleges, universities and employers who may use the Record of Achievement to make decisions on a young person's future. Perhaps as Records of Achievement become more common and sophisticated, this may increase parents' and pupils' focus on the quality and depth of knowledge that the school and the guidance system have about pupils, and lead to greater pressure on guidance staff to increase their knowledge of all pupils, not just those who come to the attention of the guidance system.

Resources for monitoring and reporting progress

Parents who were interviewed were aware that school reports were a lot of work for teachers, but felt they were extremely important. One parent made the point that school reports, especially for older pupils, were sufficiently important for the school to make a management decision on resources:

"It's up to the school to sort out any problems in relation to the number of pupils and the workload on teachers so that parents get a proper written personal report from the school. A personal written report is even more important in the upper school because this is an important decision time for pupils."

Satisfaction with guidance

We asked parents in the questionnaire to rate their overall satisfaction with guidance for their child and for themselves. We look first at the table for satisfaction with guidance *for their child*.

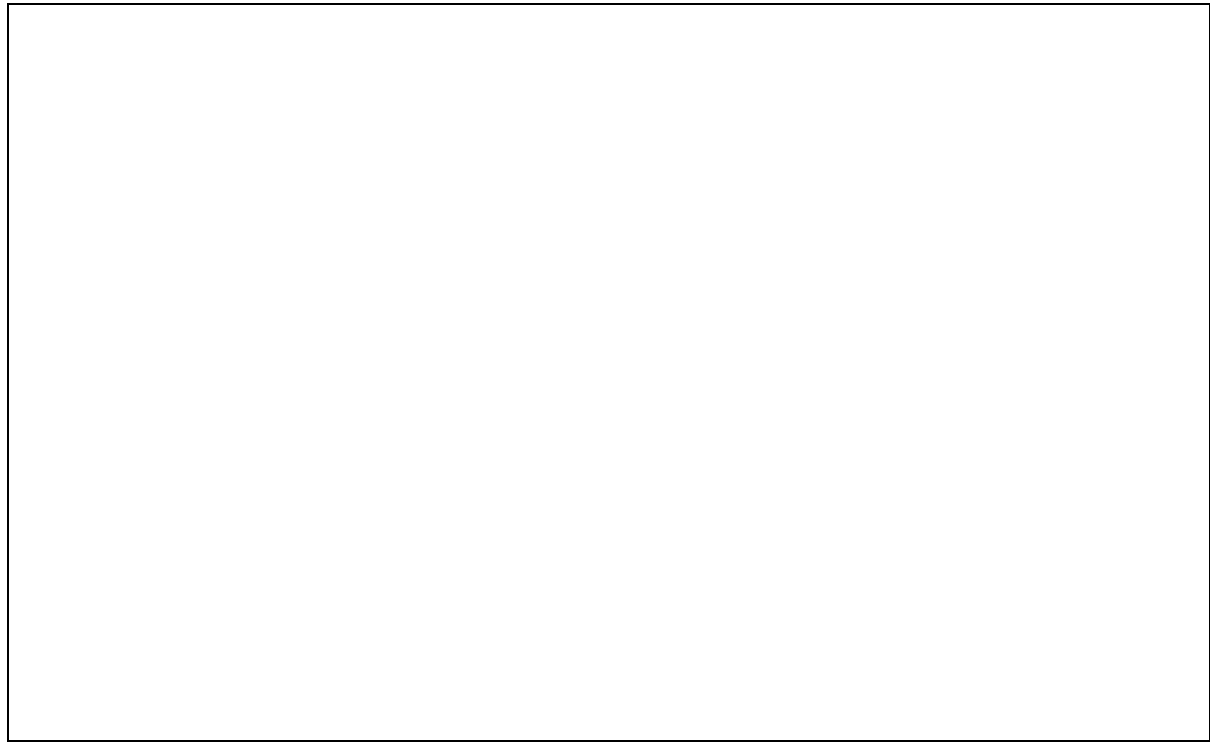


Just over three-quarters of parents were very or fairly satisfied with guidance provision for their child (76%, Table 8.14). It is important to bear this positive result in mind as the impact of some of the quotes in this section may appear negative. There were school differences. Parents in schools B and E were least likely to be satisfied with guidance provision overall. These were also the schools where parents were most negative about ease of contact and awareness of guidance.

A quote from the comments section of the questionnaire will sum up what made parents satisfied with guidance for their children:

“Both members of staff our children have as guidance teachers seem very competent, child-centred, hardworking and approachable. These are most important attributes”

With respect to guidance provision for themselves, parents were a little more negative, around two-thirds were very or fairly satisfied compared with the three-quarters in respect of guidance provision for their child.



Combining the “very satisfied” and “fairly satisfied” response shows that School F parents were most happy with the school’s guidance provision (95% being very or fairly satisfied).

Horizontal and vertical guidance systems

Schools sometimes review whether they deliver their guidance through vertical or horizontal systems; as we have noted earlier one of the project schools was considering whether to change to a vertical system. We wondered whether parents had views on whether a vertical or horizontal structure made a difference to them.

We found that parents’ levels of satisfaction with guidance, both for themselves and for their children, did not differ depending on whether the school had a vertical or horizontal system.



It has often been said that the vertical system is likely to be the one that is most acceptable to parents and most conducive to good home-school links since it ensures that children of the same family are dealt with by the same guidance teacher. We included items in the questionnaire specifically about this. We asked parents who had other children at the same school, if the children had the same guidance teacher: under a half had (Table 8.16).

However, over three-quarters of parents whose children did *not* have the same guidance teacher did not think that this mattered.

Parents in interview expressed different views on the value of having the same guidance teacher for all children in the family. Some were positive about the idea:

“It’s important to have the same guidance teacher for children in the same family but I don’t think it happens. If it’s more than one child you would get to know the family. Maybe if it’s a problem it could be family related though that doesn’t apply to my son.”

“I’m glad that they have the same guidance teacher, they change as they get older and the guidance teacher can then see them growing up and can understand them better.”

Where parents in interview thought a different guidance teacher would be better, this related to whether they thought the guidance teacher was doing the job properly. If the guidance teacher of one child was not well regarded by the parent, it was obviously a good thing that other children in the family had the chance of a more acceptable guidance teacher.

Another, more positive, reason for a parent to favour different guidance teachers for different children in the family was that this would ensure each child would be treated as an individual:

“She’s quite different from her sister. I wouldn’t want the guidance teacher to make assumptions about her because she’s from the same family. She’s her own wee person, the guidance teacher should be for her, not the family.”

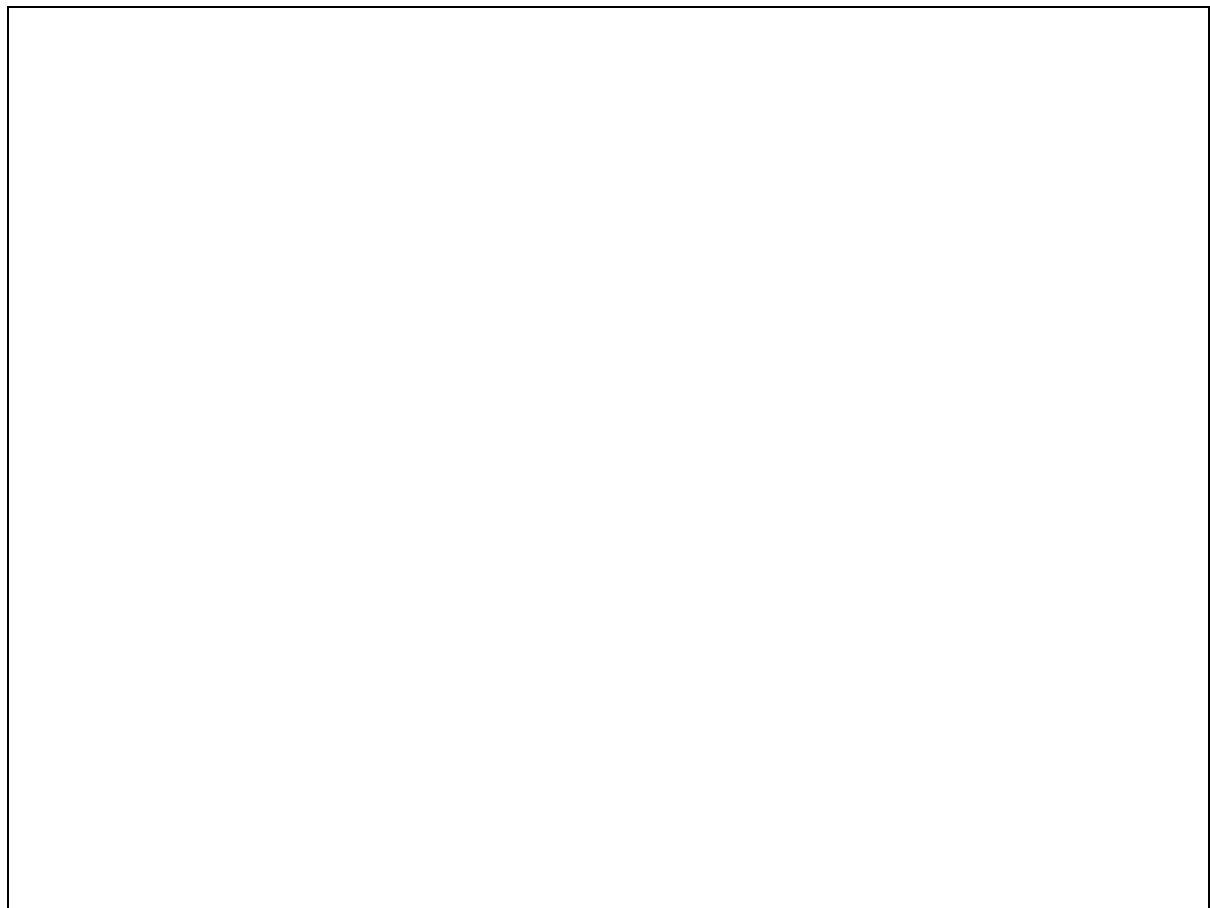
One parent favoured a change in guidance teacher as the child reached greater maturity:

“I think guidance staff should be changed in S5 and S6 as the kind of guidance they need changes in the senior school and careers advice should be given much more frequently from guidance staff..... they’re more mature anyway and when they’ve chosen to go back to school, maybe it should be a different person and a more adult relationship.”

Parents had a more complex view of how guidance should be structured to link with the home than the arguments for and against vertical and horizontal structures take into account.

Advice and support to child

We asked parents in the questionnaires to comment on whether their child was getting enough advice and support in the present session about a number of issues.



A substantial proportion of S3 parents did not know whether their child was receiving enough advice and support about getting on with others and settling into new classes (47% and 42% respectively, Table 8.17) and a minority were satisfied with the extent of help being given by guidance teachers in these areas. Only 29% of S3 parents thought that guidance teachers were giving their child enough advice and support on getting on with others and only 33% thought they were helping pupils enough to settle into new classes.

Parents were more likely to think other teachers were giving enough advice and support on how to study, on coping with Standard grade subjects and on progress in subjects than were guidance teachers. This may be an appropriate role for subject staff, as much support must be given within the context of performance in subject classes. However, the table does indicate that parents, fairly or unfairly, had hoped for more involvement from guidance staff, or were uncertain about what exactly guidance staff were, or should, be doing. We noted in chapter five that guidance teachers felt that S3 was a “flat year” in terms of guidance needs; parents, on the other hand, did see the need for more guidance support for their children in S3.

More than two-fifths of S5 parents felt that their child was not getting enough advice and support on handling study and exam pressures from guidance teachers, with another quarter saying they did not know.

Although levels of overall satisfaction with guidance were high, as shown in Table 8.14, this table shows there were areas where parents thought more could be done. We move now to look at the suggestions parents made to improve guidance.

Suggestions for improvement

Previous sections of this chapter have already indicated some of the ideas parents had for improvements. This section draws together parents' comments from the open sections of the questionnaire and from interviews to illustrate their suggestions.

Increased and different types of contact with pupils

Parents' main concern was how well the guidance teacher knew their child. Different strategies were suggested for improving this:

“They need a guidance teacher but I’m not sure how they can get trust between a guidance teacher and children. Children maybe think guidance teachers will definitely act on what they say even if they don’t want them to. There should be an interview once a year and the guidance teacher should at least be able to recognise each child in the corridor.”

“They should have a personal interview each month or in a small group of 4 or 5. The guidance teacher should be there rooting for them.”

“The guidance teacher should know them by S3, why don’t they have individual interviews with each pupil even after school or at the break, or why don’t they, when they have the guidance classes take them away individually, maybe one or two, while they are doing other work in the guidance class?”

“Maybe it would be good to have one period a week where the guidance teacher talks to their own group, perhaps in different age groups to get different attitudes from 1st year up to 6th year.”

Specialist guidance teacher

There was some interest from a number of parents in the idea of a full-time specialist guidance teacher:

“Is there a slot in school life for someone who is purely there to do guidance? They would be there for everyone so that they don’t have to deal only with people with problems. I know it’s an awesome task to keep on top of your own subject, maybe having guidance to do too is too much of an addition.”

This parent was conscious of the role of guidance in dealing with problems, and its potential role in supporting all children. Another parent was anxious about inappropriate interventions by guidance staff who were not specialists:

“I feel that guidance teachers should be recruited as such - they should not be teachers of other subjects who (for whatever reason) are prepared to enter into the world of psychology and “playing God” with children’s lives.”

Resourcing of guidance

Parents were conscious of the demands on guidance teachers. They recognised that guidance teachers had pressures from their role in subject departments, from the numbers of pupils they were dealing with, from the sometimes very difficult situations pupils could present them with, and from societal pressures generally:

“I feel that the guidance department is stretched to its limits and unable to operate efficiently.”

“Depending on the size of the school, the guidance teacher could have up to 200 pupils under her remit, which does not leave a lot of time to spare per pupil.”

“Some of the problems the guidance teachers face are what society has to face - poverty, child-care and abuse - and the school can't resolve these when they've not been solved outwith the school. However, a school can operate in ways that are child-centred. Perhaps guidance teachers should be unlike social work which has the attitude that we will protect children so we will make the decisions for them.”

Some parents took this a stage further and wanted extra resourcing for guidance:

“How much funding goes into guidance compared with subjects? - and since it's really important for all pupils, it should be better funded. Maybe there should be less in number per guidance teacher, maybe a specialist guidance teacher with just 50 pupils. The school should make sure that guidance is as important as the academic subjects.”

Contact with parents and monitoring progress

We have already spent some time discussing these areas. These issues were so important to parents that it is worth reviewing them at this point.

- parents were anxious to be better informed about what guidance staff did, and how, why and when they might be accessed:

“A letter from the guidance teacher concerned or a group meeting outlining the guidance teacher's function would be helpful.”

“Send communications direct to the home, not through the child.”

- they were keen to build up a relationship with the guidance teacher so that contact might be made in case of difficulty:

“I believe that regular meetings (perhaps each term) or discussions would benefit both pupils and parents, especially if a problem does occur at some stages at least then all parties are dealing with people they know slightly.”

- they wished to be informed about their child's progress when successful just as much as when a difficulty arose; they also wished guidance staff to be able to give a rounded picture of their child's development:

“I would like to have a clear all-round picture of how my child is coping with school and choices as a whole, without any confidences broken.”

- they wished to be given early notice of any difficulty:

“I tend to find they get in touch too late, eg wait until certain situations have gone on too long.”

Parents looked for improvements in guidance to allow these aspects to be part of guidance as a matter of course.

One parent noted the need for tighter management of guidance to achieve greater consistency in practice:

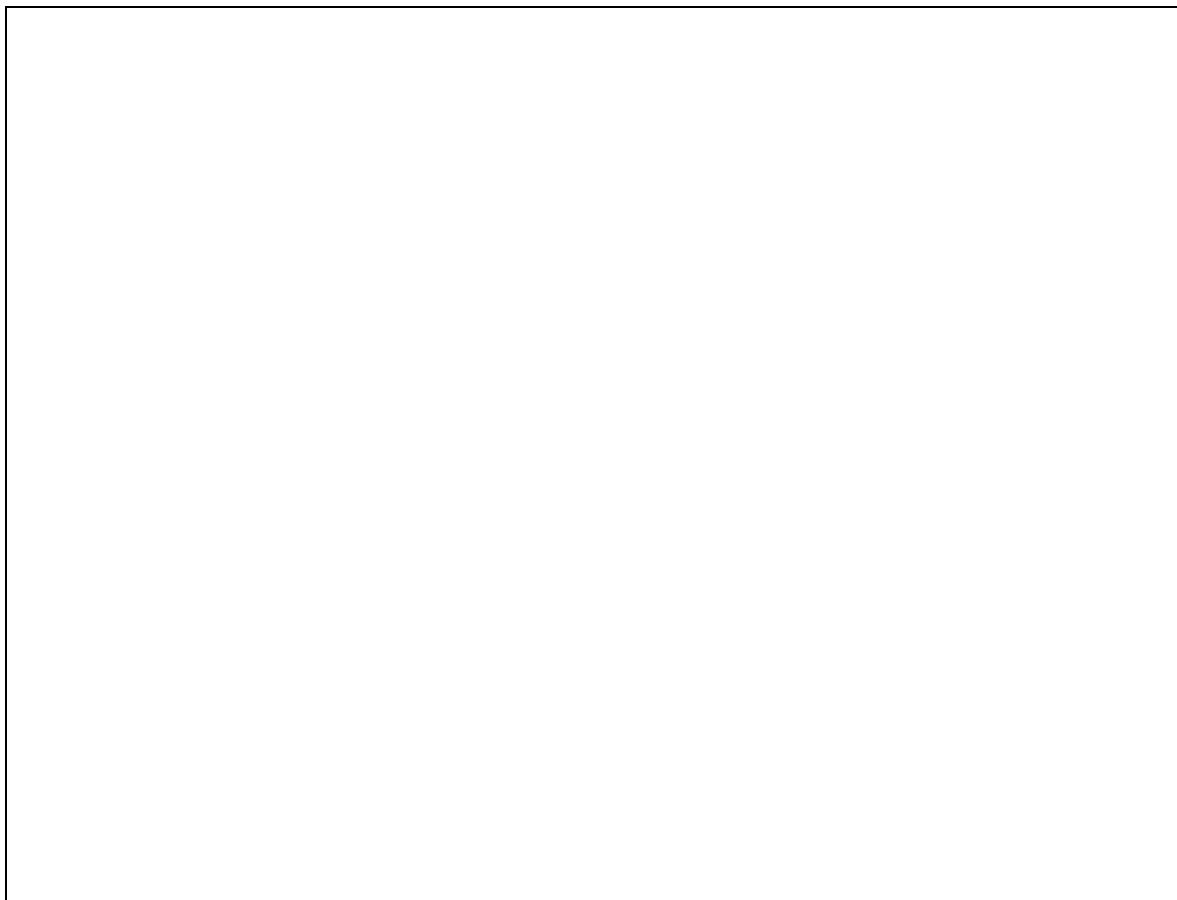
“The guidance teacher should have less class-contact time to enable them to do their job better. There is no obvious person to lead over all guidance teachers (except the headteacher) and so guidance teachers vary greatly in results achieved.”

Changing a guidance teacher

Those parents who were unhappy about their relationship with the guidance teacher or, more importantly, with their child’s relationship with their guidance teacher wanted to know what they could do about it. They were anxious that their child might bear the brunt of any complaint against the school or the guidance teacher, and a small number of parents suggested that there should be a system for changing the guidance teacher without having to make an enormous issue of it.

Personal and Social Education programme

We asked parents in the questionnaire what they thought the school’s personal and social education programme should include.



Parents were overwhelmingly in favour of the range of topics suggested as part of PSE. There were few differences between S3 and S5 parents. As we expected, bullying was less likely to be seen as an issue by the parents of older pupils. The lack of difference between S3 and S5

parents was striking. We had wondered if S5 parents would feel that the PSE programme had already tackled many of these issues in S1 to S4, and therefore would see less need for some of the topics. It seems, however, that their response reflected a lack of knowledge about what the school had done in earlier and current parts of the PSE programme which meant they did not feel confident that topics had been sufficiently covered.

Table 8.19 shows that three-quarters of parents felt they had not received enough information about the PSE programme.



Parents' lack of knowledge of PSE provision also emerged in interview where most said they did not know what the school was doing in its PSE programme although a number of parents of S3 pupils did comment their child was likely to tell them about classes on drugs, alcohol, sex and AIDS.

However, we also found in the interviews that some of those parents who had stated in the questionnaire that they had received enough information on the PSE programme were unable to give examples of the content of the programme when we asked. It seemed likely, therefore, that even the low figure of a quarter over-estimates the percentage of parents knowledgeable about the PSE programme in their child's school.

Parents information needs about PSE

What information did parents want? In interview, most said they wanted to know not just the content of PSE, but also the timetable. Parents' desire to know what was happening rarely related to a wish to check out the acceptability of the content or the topic, rather it resulted from a wish to work in tandem with the school on important issues to do with personal and social development:

“If I know when she’s getting a class on drugs, for example, I can make a point of bringing up the subject with her and see if she’s understood it or if she’s got any problems about it or if she thinks her friends have. It’s a chance for me to introduce it with her in a natural way. We try to talk but it’s not always very easy, they don’t tell you everything that’s going on. I know it’s difficult for the school to deal with these things, it’s not fair they should be asked to try to sort it out alone. The parents and the home should help.”

This parent made two points. Firstly, that parents needed information about when the topics would be covered; this would allow the school and the home to work in partnership in giving advice and support to pupils. Secondly, by having this information parents themselves could be given support in raising sensitive issues with their children in a way which appeared to emerge naturally from discussions about school. This might be something that not all parents would be able, or wish to do, but having a calendar of PSE topics available would leave the option open to parents. Perhaps this indicated a need for guidance and support for parents, one which was rarely articulated?

Delivery and content of PSE

As we noted earlier, parents were conscious of the difficulties teachers faced in handling issues in the PSE programme. Several parents suggested that someone from outside the school might be able to help with sections of the programme. In addition to former drug or alcohol addicts, people from different backgrounds might bring a different perspective:

“In neighbouring housing schemes they have drop-in flats that were started off by Social Work and the end result is that there are local people who live in the area working in the flats trying to help the community. Maybe the school should get in touch with these people who are perhaps aged 19 or 20 and are really level-headed, and get them to come in once a month for 3rd and 4th year pupils. They could have the perspective of working with kids outwith the school.”

There were different views amongst parents about whether they should be asked to suggest topics to be included in PSE. Although most were happy to leave this to the school, several parents did wish to be involved in negotiating PSE content and others felt it was more important that young people were asked what they wanted in PSE.

Guidance needs

We felt that asking parents to identify their own and their child's guidance needs was best handled through interview, therefore all the evidence on this topic comes from parent interviews. Most spoke about the needs of their children, and about how the area or community in which they lived affected these needs; few mentioned specific guidance needs for themselves as parents. The guidance needs that parents identified for their children bore a strong resemblance to some of the topics contained in the Personal and Social Education programme.

Health Education

Drug Abuse

Parents were anxious about drugs, and saw the availability of drugs as being one of the main differences from when they were young themselves, this was by far the most commonly noted concern:

“Drugs really frighten me. Where would I go? How would I cope if he did get involved in drugs? It must be horrendous.”

Parents recognised that they carried the main responsibility for discussing this issue with their children, and for helping them to withstand pressures to become involved in a drug culture. However, they sometimes felt at a loss and assumed the school had, at least, greater knowledge of the facts to do with drug taking. There were mixed views on how far schools were able to deal with issues such as drugs and alcohol:

“They’ll maybe listen to teachers when they won’t listen to parents”

“I think it’s difficult for teachers to deal with those sorts of things.... they should bring in reformed drug addicts and alcoholics to talk to the kids, they are a lot more credible..... it could be quite horrific but it’s more likely to put them off.”

Of all the aspects of the Personal and Social Education programme, inputs on drugs and alcohol were the ones most likely to be reported by pupils to parents. As we saw in the previous section on the PSE programme, parents wished to reinforce what the school was saying on the issue of drugs and alcohol, but this could only be done if the parent knew about the timing and content of the input.

The extent to which parents' viewed drugs as a pressure on their children varied according to the area in which they lived. In the two schools where parents defined themselves as living in a rural area, they thought that drug taking was not such a problem in their locality. In the most deprived urban area, parents reported considerable concern about the availability of drugs:

“I think the first and second years are most at risk, they come under pressure even at the school gate to buy the stuff.”

However, several parents from this deprived area felt resentful that they and their children were being stigmatised:

“They say that it’s only if you’re poor you get involved in drugs, but my sister’s kids are at (a school in an affluent middle class area) and it’s even worse there.”

Alcohol abuse

While parents hoped their children would stay clear of drugs, they felt it was more realistic to assume their children would make use of alcohol. They expected the school to convey a somewhat different message to their children, one to do with sensible use of alcohol rather than total abstinence. This was recognised as an important guidance need for their children.

Some saw alcohol abuse and under-age drinking as symptoms of lack of aspiration:

“There’s a lot of young people in the school who don’t bother about how they get on, they are out drinking, even young lassies of fourteen or fifteen and all they want to do is get out of school.”

HIV and AIDS

This was another area where parents recognised that guidance needs had changed since they were young. They hoped that schools would convey the facts to their children as part of drug and sex education, but again accepted a major role for themselves.

Sex education

This was commonly mentioned as a guidance need for young people in the context of parents’ perceptions about increased under-age sex and teenage pregnancies. In similar ways to young people, some parents felt that some guidance or PSE teachers were not well equipped to deal with this topic:

“Some teachers are embarrassed in discussing sex with pupils.”

“It should come from someone in the medical profession about sex and AIDS because they are experts in that.”

Although one parent spoke about the importance of discussing relationships in the context of sex education, most parents who mentioned this as a concern appeared most anxious that their children should have accurate information. This contrasted with pupils’ views; they wanted a wider focus in discussion than simply the facts of reproduction and contraception.

Sex education was a topic on which parents from the denominational (Catholic) school had somewhat different things to say than parents from other schools. All had discussed the full range of contraception methods with their children but some parents had not realised that their children would be taught only natural birth control methods:

“A Catholic school does have its hands tied regarding sex and AIDS. One of my daughters is getting films on natural family planning. I find this very strange, but I suppose it is consistent in what a Catholic school should believe. Maybe it is better because it gives them wider options. There’s lots of publicity on artificial family planning and I make sure they know all about that anyway.”

“I feel the school could do more. I know that teachers sometimes are embarrassed. I’ve asked the boys and they don’t get told much about it. Perhaps because it’s a Catholic school they knew little about contraception or sexually transmitted disease. They are only taught about AIDS. I feel that is nonsense and I am having to correct it at home. They should teach everything,

at least the class would be hearing the same and they could at least teach the facts and then say - "This is the Catholic line".

Gender differences in need

We wondered whether parents thought girls and boys had different guidance needs. The area of sex education was one in which some parents thought this was the case. Some parents commented on the lack of maturity of boys and their resulting inability to deal in an adult fashion with sex education. A small number of parents also suggested that the guidance team should include both male and female staff to allow young people to discuss sensitive issues with a member of the same sex. Failing this, a female school nurse might be acceptable to girls, or a member of the Senior Management Team should be clearly available as an adviser to pupils to ensure that access to a staff member of the same sex as the pupil was possible.

Careers

Choosing post-school routes and making the transition out of school was, next to health education, the most common area of need identified by parents:

"Whatever they do they should spend more time on careers, filling in forms, doing mock interviews, instilling confidence in kids and giving them the confidence in leaving school. Being anti-drugs, anti-drink, family planning is not the only bit of PSD. Education is not just about what you end up in, it's about a rounded person, but careers is the most important."

Parents were concerned about the future for their children, and saw changes in the choices open to their children compared with when they were young:

"There's nae young boys got trades around here. In the past it used to be possible, but it's not for them now. Now you've got to have qualifications, not like in my day when there was some people who could learn when they were working with their hands, but they couldn't learn when it was book work, and this is no use anymore."

Young people were thought now to need more academic qualifications to enter work which therefore increased the importance of pupils' achievement at school. This puts into context parents' need to have detailed information on their children's progress since success in education was seen to be more important for the future success of sons and daughters than had been the case in the past.

The importance of being successful and being happy at school was heightened by the lack of alternatives to staying on at school that one parent commented on:

"Guidance needs really haven't changed since I was young. It would be sex, drugs, careers. There are some differences in that when I was at school if you didn't like school you could just get up and leave and get a job and say "to hell with it". It's now not possible, you're much more trapped in the school."

Parents' desire to find out from guidance teachers about their child's personal and social development and adjustment to school has added impetus if the child is seen to have little option but to remain at school.

On the whole, the future for young people appeared to be more negative and threatening to parents than it had seemed in their own youth. In addition to lack of jobs, parents were aware

of drugs and HIV, and also of what some thought to be the increased levels of violence that young people encounter.

Pressures on young people

Some parents suggested that the pressures on young people were greater than in the past. Firstly, there was the pressure to conform, on such issues as the purchase of acceptable types of clothes such as trainers. This pressure to conform, parents thought, might lead their children into involvement in alcohol, drugs and sex.

Pressures caused by their children's schooling were also apparent to parents. They thought that, as it was more important to the child to get exam passes to ensure a broad range of post-school choices, the pressure to study was therefore greater and pre-exam nerves were stronger. One parent, from the school where parents had commented on the possible effect of academic league tables on guidance, had been concerned that guidance staff had been encouraged to increase the pressure on pupils:

"I asked what had been happening, she was getting so anxious, (the guidance teacher) said, "Oh, I've just been trying to ginger her up to do her best". But it had had the opposite effect on my daughter."

Guidance teachers were seen as being important in controlling the level of pressure on pupils:

"Sometimes the class teachers forget that pupils are doing other subjects, and they give them too much work and expect pupils to put their subject first..... guidance could help to control this."

Pupils also identified a need to co-ordinate the demands of individual subject teachers.

Other parents felt their children needed the school to put pressure on them to get them motivated to study. It seemed that knowing whether to apply appropriate pressure or to reduce inappropriate pressure was very much a task for individual guidance, based on knowledge of the individual personality and motivation of the young person.

Pressure and exams was another area where parents thought there were differences between boys and girls. As one parent commented, boys might be thought to be disadvantaged:

"I think it's harder for boys rather than girls because they mature later. They're going through these changes (ie adolescence) at a crucial time for exams. Maybe boys should sit the exams later. I don't feel it's fair on boys. In primary school boys outshine girls in the classes and get lots of attention, but it changes. At high school girls get most attention and are liked best by the teachers."

This is an issue that is too large to be solved by changing the way guidance operates in individual schools since it relates to the examination system as a whole. But support for this parent's view might be seen in the currently poorer school attainment of boys compared with girls.

It also illustrates the point, that when we asked parents about the guidance and support needs of their children, they did not always respond on the basis of what the guidance system could do for their child, but on what pupils needed from their schooling as a whole.

Talking about problems

When we asked about the guidance needs of pupils, many parents spoke again about their children's need to have someone to talk to about their worries, someone who was not a parent:

"I feel the school could do with giving more talks to young people, not just to try to motivate them, but actually giving them time to sit and really listen to what pupils say about their ideas and their worries..... that's what they need."

The guidance needs of parents

Parents had given most thought to the guidance needs of their children but from their answers the following were their own most common needs:

- to have, at least, a basic relationship with the person whom they expected to know their child best, in most cases, this was the guidance teacher;
- to be able to trust that person to respect the confidentiality of both the parent and the child;
- to know what was happening in the PSE programme so that they could work with the school on issues they thought were important;
- to be involved at appropriate times in the discussions of their child's progress;
- to be listened to by the guidance teacher and not have their concerns dismissed.

To sum up, they needed to know and trust the person most responsible for their child's well-being in the school, and to be able to contact and be contacted at appropriate times.

Guidance needs differentiated by area

There were some ways in which parents' perceptions of their children's guidance and support needs varied by area.

Impact of large catchment

- Some parents from the two schools with a large geographical catchment where children had to travel by bus some distance to school, were anxious about the lack of supervision on the buses. Parents reported some rowdy behaviour and were aware of the potential for bullying to take place in this situation.
- In these areas, it was sometimes difficult for parents to play a full part in school life because of the time and expense of attending evening events held at such a distance from the home. While they would try to attend parents' evenings, more informal events were more difficult to support. This meant there was less chance of meeting school staff, including the guidance teacher, in a more informal situation.
- In one of the schools with a large catchment, some parents were anxious about truancy. They were particularly concerned that it would be easier for their children to truant and not be noticed when so far away from their home community. It was of considerable importance to these parents that the school had a good system for monitoring attendance but they were generally not confident they would be notified if there were any problems

of truancy. In contrast, parents from the other school with a large catchment were confident that the school's monitoring and early warning systems were effective; the added factor here was that the communities were so small that a truanting child would have been more noticeable.

Impact of remote location

- For parents from the remote rural school, their children had particular guidance and support needs. Some thought their children had been brought up in a very sheltered situation and so needed help in preparing to leave the local community and in adjusting to the pace of city and town life. This included getting used to larger class sizes at college.
- It was also important that they gained an awareness of the range of educational and vocational opportunities not represented in their community. Although this is just as likely to be important for young people living in areas of deprivation, because they are also less likely to see a wide range of options, it was not mentioned by parents from the urban deprived areas.
- Although most parents across the project schools were positive about work experience, parents in the rural school particularly valued it as a way of increasing their children's confidence, their experience of different situations and their picture of their potential choices in the world of work.
- Parents from the school in the remote rural area were more conscious of the need to trust the discretion of the guidance teacher in handling confidential matters. They recognised that in small communities it was difficult to keep private any difficulties being faced by young people and their families. There were some advantages in this, in that teachers were more likely to have heard through the grapevine of problems that pupils were facing, without having to be formally alerted about them.

Impact of deprivation

- Parents from the school in the most deprived urban area were most likely to identify lack of money and lack of opportunities as factors that made young people vulnerable and in need of support. Some felt there was a stigma on young people coming from the area which made it difficult for them to get jobs and perhaps they needed extra support from the school and the Careers Services as a result.
- Parents from the school in this area (urban deprived) also noted a lack of social activities locally. This meant that young people had to go to the expense, and possible danger, of travelling into the city centre. Some parents felt that the school and the community education service should do more to provide evening and weekend activities for teenagers. However, one town-based parent from another school in the project suggested that organised activities were "tame" to teenagers, and therefore would not retain the interest of young people.

Impact of school size

- Some parents from the largest school commented on their concern that their children might get "lost" amongst such a large number of young people. They thought guidance should take particular care in this situation to ensure that this did not happen.

Transition and choice

This section considers parents' views on the support they and their children received at certain key stages of their children's schooling.

- at the transition from primary to secondary school (P7/S1)
- at choice of subjects for Standard grade (S2/S3)
- at choice of subjects for the upper school (S4/S5)
- at preparation for post-school choices and for leaving school

P7/S1 Transition

We did not include a question on P7/S1 transition in the questionnaire, so the discussion in this section is entirely based on the comments parents made in interview.

Parents were unqualified in their approval of how schools had managed and supported the move from the primary to the secondary school:

“He thought it was brilliant when he came up to the high school. Both he and his brother had lost interest in the last 2 years of the primary, and they really took to the secondary school. They had a full week at the school before they started and met their teachers and the guidance teacher.”

“They were both a bit apprehensive about whether they would get bullied at secondary, but the school were really good at reassuring them. She felt she was getting treated like an adult when she started in 1st year.”

Not only were parents very satisfied with the support given to their children, but they were pleased with their own initial contacts with the secondary school:

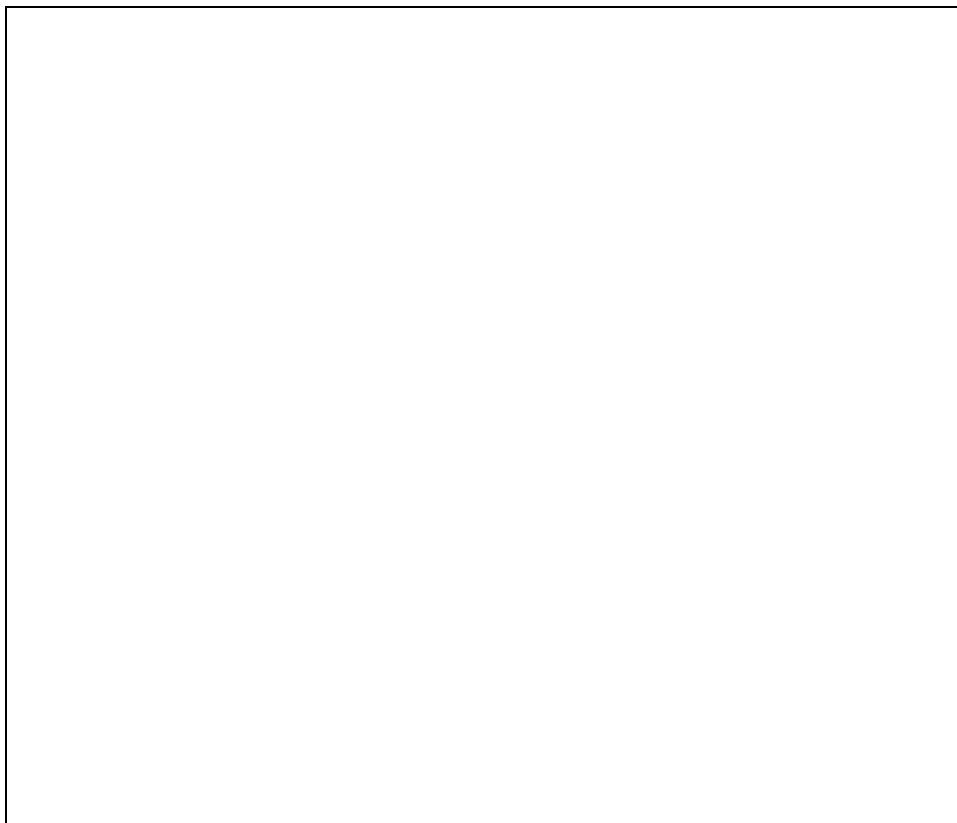
“We went to a parents' induction night and met the guidance teacher. We also got a letter home to explain who the guidance teacher was and what she did.”

“It was very well done. They dealt with the fears of the child, and made sure we (ie, the parents) were kept in touch with what was happening. And they were good at putting them with some of their friends.... or separating them if necessary! We could have intervened if we wanted to, they said we could talk to them at any time, but it wasn't needed.”

Parents had no suggestions on how the P7/S1 transition might be improved, and were keen to move on to discuss areas of transition where they could make suggestions to help the school improve its provision.

S2/S3 subject choice

We included a number of questions on S2/S3 subject choice in the questionnaire to S3 parents. We asked first if parents knew what information and advice their child had been given about S2/S3 subject choice.



Over two-thirds of S3 parents thought they knew what information and advice their children had been given about their choice of Standard Grades and more than four-fifths were either very or fairly satisfied with the advice given (Table 8.20).

Levels of satisfaction related to whether parents said they knew what advice and information their children had been given. In other words, parents were more likely to be dissatisfied with the information and advice if they did not know what information and advice had been given to their children. This suggested that parents were anxious and more negative about school provision if they did not know about it, or did not understand it. It seemed that schools could go some way to improving parents' levels of satisfaction with S2/S3 subject choice by simply ensuring parents were better informed about the support on offer to their children.

Parents' suggestions for improvements to information and advice at S2/S3

We gave parents an opportunity in their questionnaires to suggest ways in which information and advice given to their child at the S2/S3 subject choice stage could be improved. They suggested the following:

- “The link between careers and subject choice is not gone into in enough detail”
- “For teachers and staff to listen to the child”
- “Consult with the parents as well as give us more information”
- “Hope time should be spent individually and in small groups, to ensure that the child's interests and abilities are matched to subjects chosen”

In interview, parents made similar points. A major cause of concern for some parents was the restriction put on their child's choice by the allocation of subjects to columns. Some noted

their satisfaction with the help given by guidance staff in dealing with the difficulties that occurred:

“My son’s subject choice was difficult and the guidance teacher couldn’t have been more helpful.”

Others were frustrated by the limitations the column choice imposed on their children:

“Why can’t they organise the subjects to suit the children? They sometimes seem more interested in juggling the class sizes. I know it’s difficult, but it’s not fair if getting into a particular subject is going to be critical to her career.”

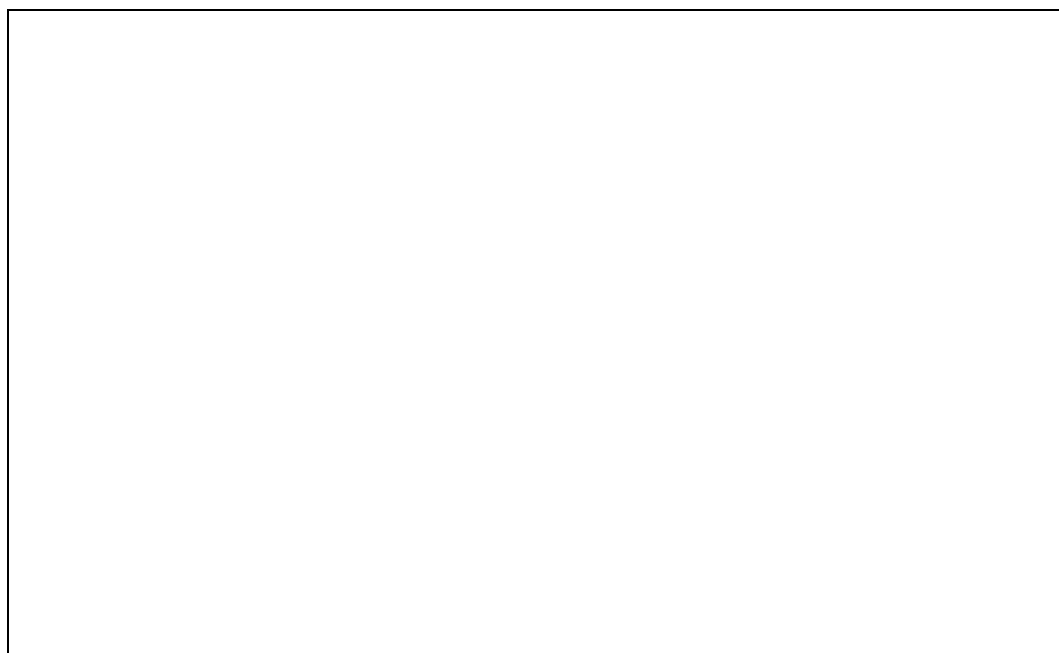
Many parents were keen to have greater involvement with the choice process, wishing to have more briefing sessions and written information. Others, however, were content to leave the choice to their children:

“She would know better than me what she’s good at and what she wants to do, so I’ll just agree with what she says.”

In response to a questionnaire item on whether parents thought their child was happy with the subjects taken in S3, three-quarters answered “Yes”. For most parents, then, the end result was a positive one for their children.

Methods used to inform parents about S2/S3 subject choice

How did parents find out about the subject choices open to their children? We asked parents to tick which method they thought the school had provided, which they had used, and which they had found helpful.



Some parents who had not used these methods had clearly ticked the “helpful” column: perhaps they were making a comment about what would be helpful. Over two-thirds of parents reported being provided with course option sheets, and over a half had received a booklet about subjects.

Nonetheless, we would have expected higher figures in response to these questions since all schools stated they provided course option sheets to parents. But perhaps children were not passing on the information to their parents. This may again be a situation in which direct communication with the home might be necessary.

We have discussed whether parents were satisfied with the help their sons and daughters were given on S2/S3 subject choice. Parents were also asked how satisfied they were with the information and advice given to themselves as parents at this stage.

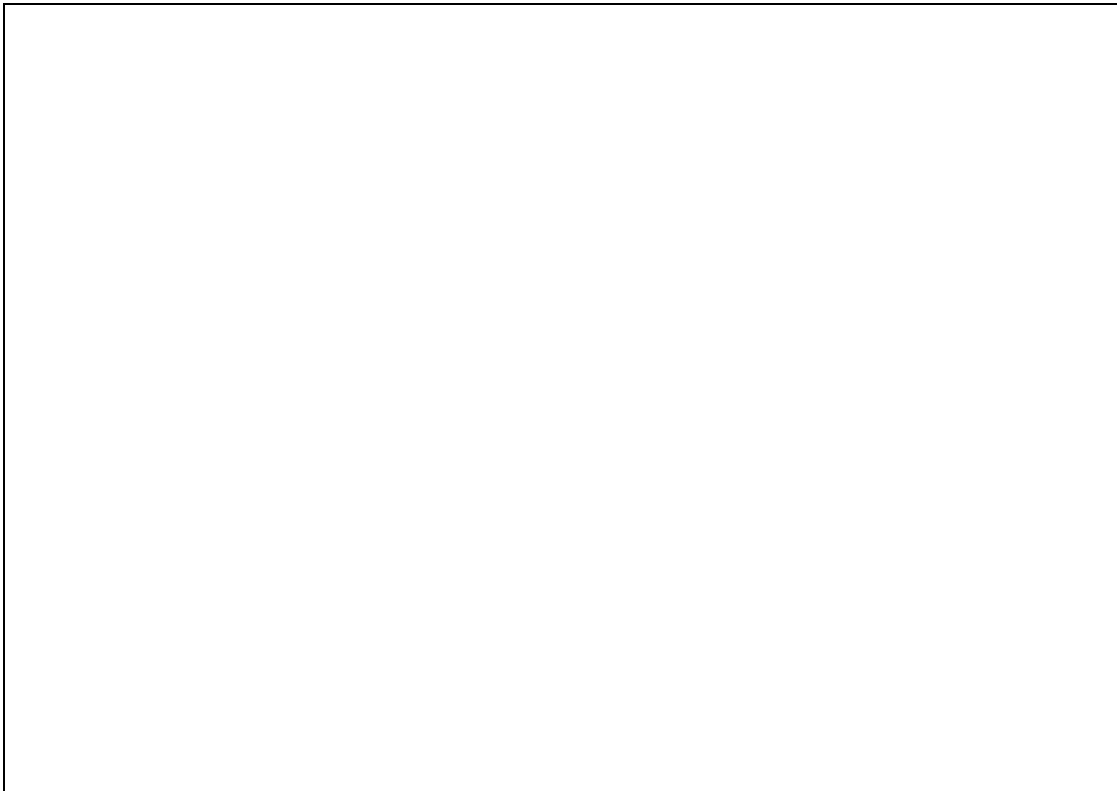


These figures were similar to those for parents' views on how satisfied they were with the information and advice given to their children.

Links with the Careers Service at S2/S3

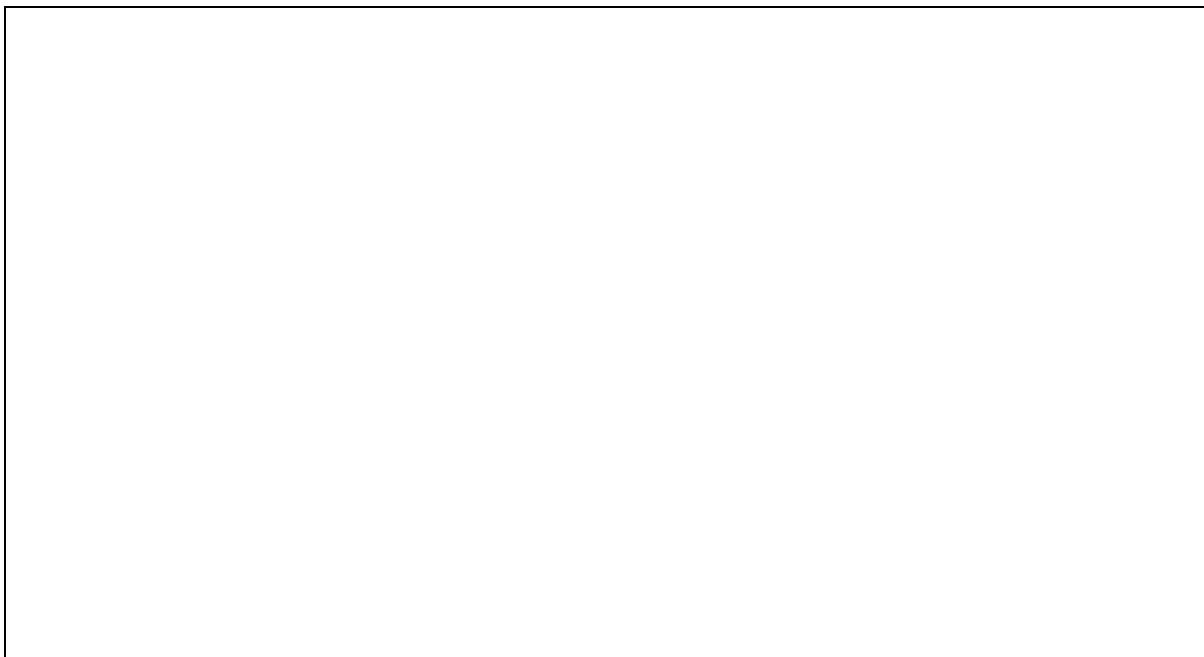
As we have seen, many parents at this stage were aware of the possible career implications of subject choice. We included a question in the questionnaire on links with the Careers Service.

A quarter of parents said they had received help from the careers officer at a parents' evening (Table 8.23). We followed up this question by asking if the information and advice given by the careers officer could have been improved. A substantial proportion of parents (43%) were unsure whether the careers officer's advice and information could be improved, and 36% thought it could. Only 21% thought the careers officer's advice could not be improved.



We were particularly interested in parents' views on the importance of Careers Service involvement at S2 since the "Requirements and Guidance for Providers" document (SOED 1993) identifies pupils in the upper school as the major client group for the Careers Service: S2 is not seen as a key point of transition for Careers Service clients. It seemed that many parents were seeking improved advice and information at S2/S3 subject choice stage.

What did parents think were the important issues for their children to consider at this stage? How important did they think it was for children to have a career idea in mind?



Although 86% of S3 parents rated having a career in mind as fairly or very important, they focused even more on the need for their child to think more generally about the link between subjects and careers and to expand their knowledge of educational, training and employment

opportunities. We might speculate that the Careers Service input at this stage was thought by parents to be more important in raising awareness of opportunities and links between subjects and careers rather than to do with career decision-making.

When we analysed the responses to this question further, we found that parents' responses did not differ depending on whether their S3 child was a boy or girl. We did find, however, that there were differences between parent responses depending on their own level of education. Parents with no qualifications were more than twice as likely as parents with degrees (48% compared with 20%) to think that it was important to have a career idea in mind when choosing subjects at S2. This may reflect parents' own experiences of leaving school for the labour market, a choice which assumes the need for a career decision or direction.

S3 parents who held degree-level qualifications were less likely to think that an awareness of the variety of opportunities in work, training and education were as important for their children as parents who had no qualifications. These differences in S3 parental response, varying by the parents' level of education were not apparent in the responses of S5 parents.

We also asked parents of S3 pupils about other aspects of choice at S2 stage.



Further analysis of this table found that contact with the careers officer, whether in a class talk or individually, was more important for parents who had no qualifications than for parents who held degree level qualifications. Again, no differences in parental response according to the level of parental education were apparent in the responses of S5 parents.

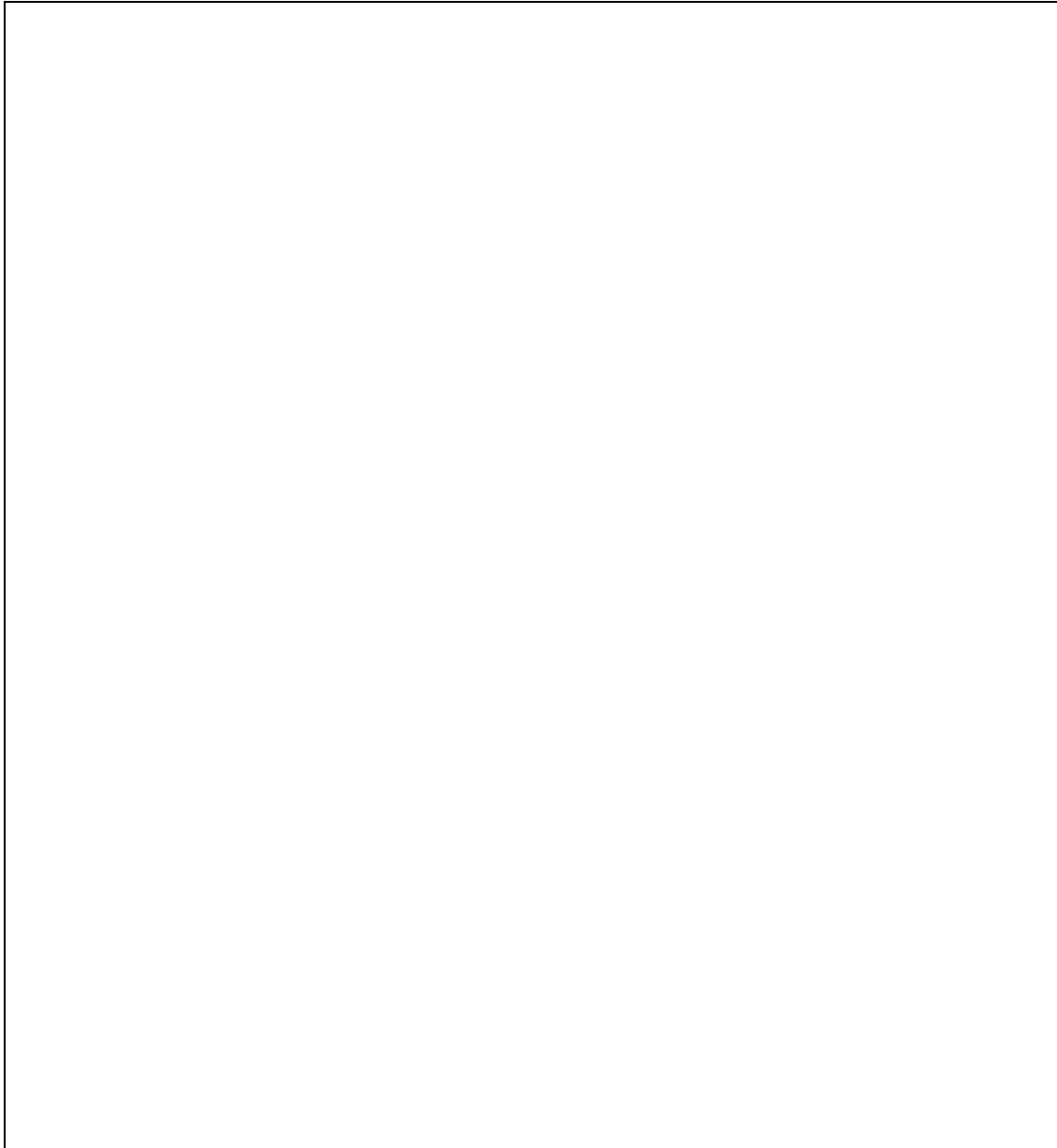
Being aware of your own strengths and weaknesses was the issue most likely to be thought "very important" by parents. This might be another reason why the role of guidance staff in getting to know pupils well enough to report on their personal, social and academic progress was an important area for parents.

S4/S5 subject choice

We asked S5 parents questions similar to those in the S3 questionnaire about subject choice at S4/S5.

Three-quarters of S5 parents said they knew what information and advice their child had been given at S4/S5 (Table 8.26). Almost two thirds thought the information and advice had been provided at the right time for their child, but almost a quarter were not sure. The same proportion of S5 parents were very or fairly satisfied with the information and advice provided for their child.

Their responses differed to a certain extent from those of S3 parents. S5 parents were more likely to be very satisfied compared with S3 parents (29% vs 19%) but also more likely to be not at all satisfied (9% vs 2%). S5 parents were more likely to reflect the extremes of parents' views. Overall, S3 parents were more satisfied than S5 parents (82% of S3 parents very or fairly satisfied compared with 63% of S5 parents).



In interview, satisfaction was expressed by many parents about the way in which the school had dealt with the choice process for their children even if they themselves did not feel completely informed:

“I must say that she (daughter) seems to understand it all; she could explain the subjects and how to choose them to me. I think they’ve explained it well”

Parents gave few examples of their children being unable to choose the subjects they wanted.

When asked how information and advice on S4/S5 subject choice could be improved, parents' questionnaire responses were similar to those of parents in interview.

Suggestions included:

- explaining to pupils the amount of study required in each subject
- more information on the career implications of S4/S5 choices
- focusing more on the child's choice, not the school's needs.

Methods used to inform parents about S4/S5 subject choices

We asked S5 parents which methods the school had offered in informing parents about S4/S5 subject choice and which they had used and found helpful. The responses of S5 parents were virtually identical to those of S3 parents (Table 8.21) with over a half saying a booklet had been provided, and two thirds that a course option sheet had been provided.

S5 parents' satisfaction with the information and advice provided to them was similar overall to the responses of S3 parents with respect to S2/S3 subject choice (Table 8.27). 76% of S5 parents were very or fairly satisfied with the information and advice they had received compared with 80% of S3 parents. However S5 parents were more likely to be very satisfied (28% for S5 parents compared with 19% for S3 parents).



In the open comments section on the questionnaire, and in interviews, many parents spoke positively of the information and advice they had received:

“the brochure was well produced and quite easy to understand”

They also noted the usefulness of parents' information sessions:

“I hadn't really understood what the school subjects meant till then”

Suggestions for improvements

When S5 parents were asked if the advice and information given to them at S4/S5 could be improved, two-fifths said “yes”.

Although the numbers of S5 parents thinking advice and information on subject choice could be improved was similar to that of S3 parents, there was a difference in the “No” response: 34% of S5 parents thought it could not be improved compared with 21% of S2 parents.

We noted that a number of parents interviewed felt they should stand back from involvement at S5 stage. This was partly to do with a perception of their child’s increased maturity, and partly connected with a lack of understanding of the upper school curriculum:

“She’s the one that’s going to have to work at the subjects, not me. She’s old enough and sensible enough to make her own decisions”

“I don’t really understand the subjects and the qualifications. She tells me she’s doing a module. I said “what’s that?” She knows better than me, so I leave it to her”

Suggestions for improvement in the information and advice given to parents at S4/S5 were similar in both questionnaire responses and interviews. Summing these up, information and advice could be improved by

- providing the information earlier
- posting the information to the home
- a closer link to the career implications of subject choice
- more joint pupil/parent/school consultations to lead to realistic goal setting for the fifth year
- a better explanation of SCOTVEC modules

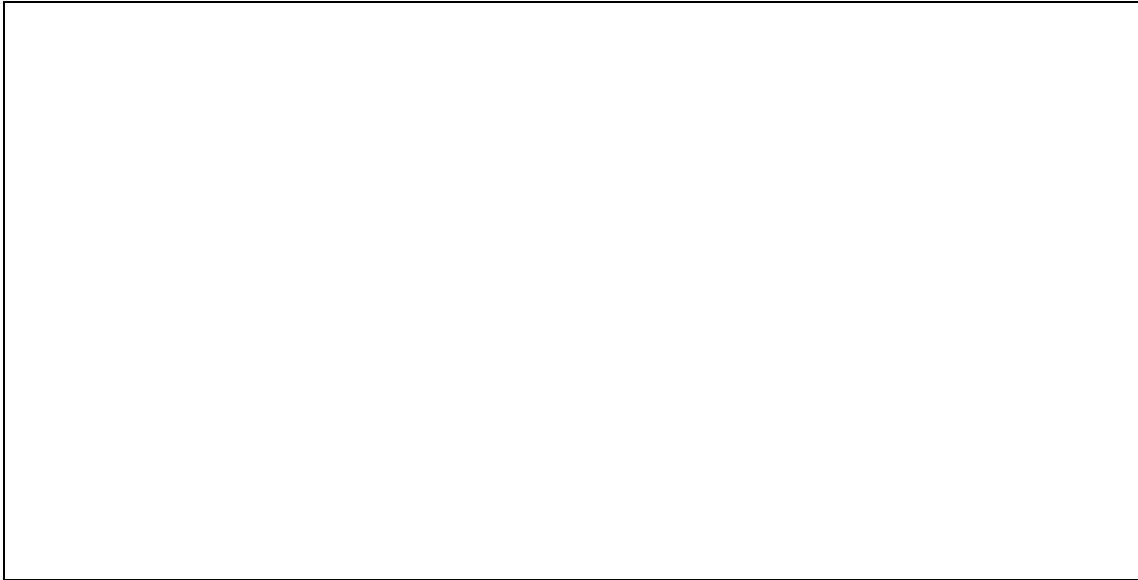
It is perhaps important to say that when parents spoke of guidance for their children at S4/S5 stage, some were aware of the fact that the guidance might be provided by a combination of subject staff, senior management and the guidance teacher. In interview, several mentioned specific members of staff who had given advice or prepared booklets or spoken at information sessions. However they did assume that the major role would be played by the guidance teacher in S4/S5 subject choices. In Chapter ten we consider the effects that the reform of the upper school curriculum through Higher Still may have on guidance and the guidance teacher, and on the S4/S5 choice process.

Preparation for post-school choices and leaving school

As we have seen, one suggestion for improving information and advice at S4/S5 to both pupils and parents was greater emphasis on the career implications of choice. The focus of choices at the end of S4 tends to be on choice of subjects in the fifth year. However this is a *potential* school leaving date for the majority of the year group, and the decision to remain at school is itself an important one, regardless of the particular choice of curriculum.

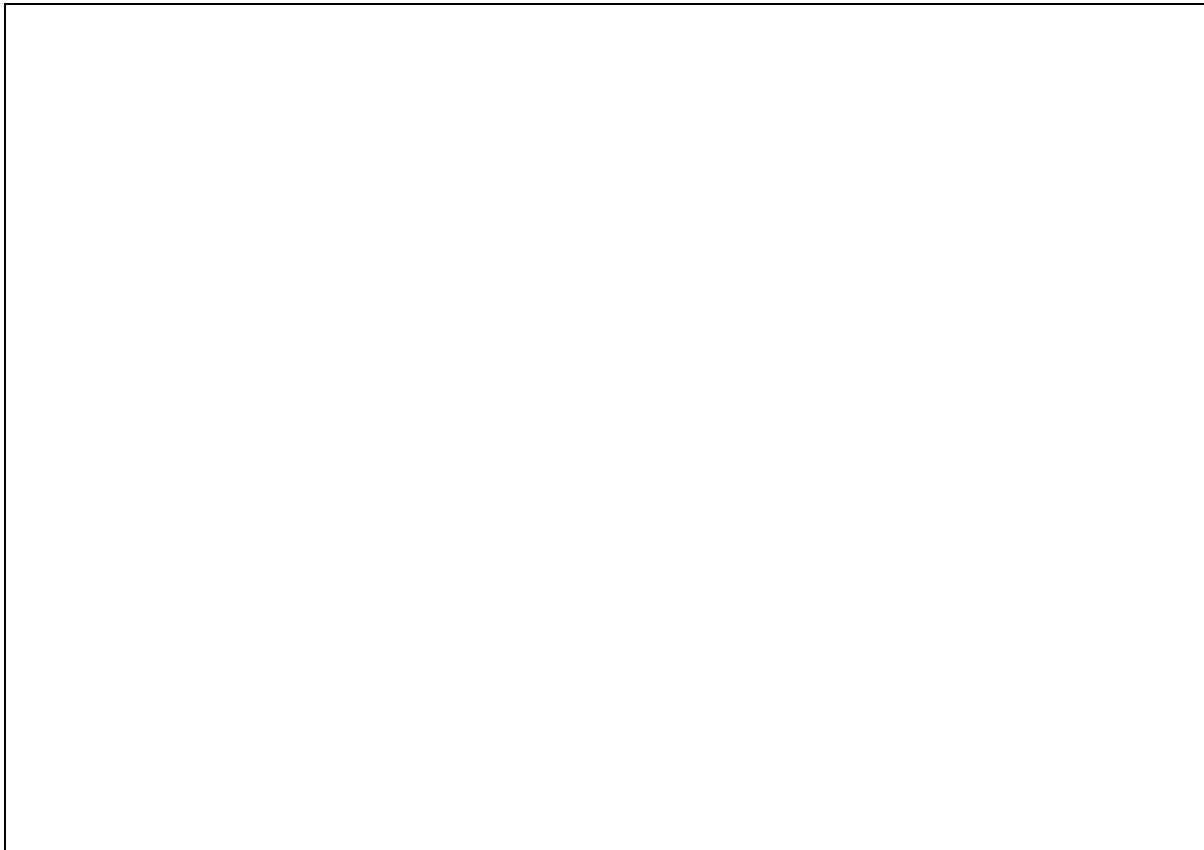
We asked S5 parents to review how post S5 choices had been dealt with by the school and the Careers Service. We felt that since this was more recent than post S4 choices, it would be more relevant to ask them about this. Also, given the increased numbers staying on beyond the statutory leaving date, post S5 options was an important area.

We asked S5 parents in the questionnaire if they knew what advice their children had had about post S5 options.



More than half of S5 parents did not know or were unsure about guidance on post S5 choices: this is double the number of parents who did not know what advice their children had received at S2/S3 and at S4/S5 subject choice. It seemed that although schools had tried with some success to inform parents about the subject choice process, neither the schools nor the Careers Service had been able to inform the majority of S5 parents effectively about preparation for choices after 5th year.

Questionnaire responses on particular aspects of post-school choices showed that parents wished their children to have more help in a number of areas.



It seemed that parents would have liked more help for their children in choosing a course or training after school and, even more, in coping with possible unemployment (Table 8.29). As

we noted earlier, this confirms previous research indicating that many parents are anxious about the perceived lack of opportunities in the labour market (Semple, 1994).

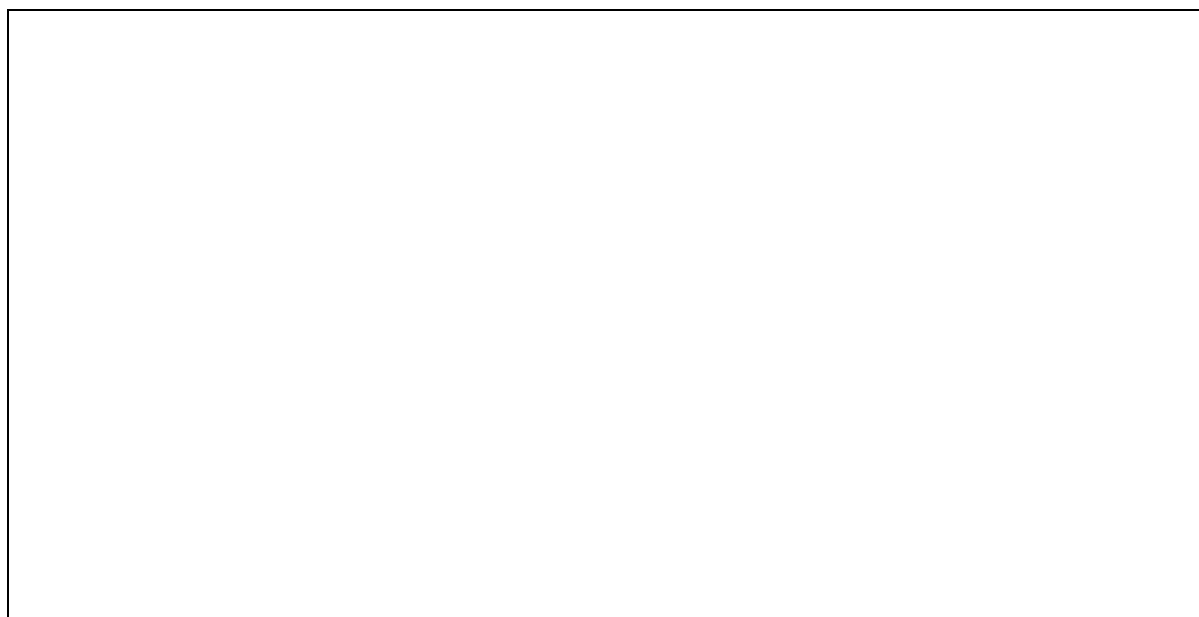
Choices within education (in FE, HE or at school) were the areas in which parents were more likely to feel their children had had enough help.

It seemed that parents were more aware of advice being given in relation to educational choices, whether within school or in further or higher education, than to labour market and training choices. From our research with staff and pupils, it seemed that this was a fair reflection of priorities in careers education. It also reflected the anxiety that many guidance staff had about their lack of knowledge of post-school opportunities, and their concern about the adequacy of careers education in the upper school.

We asked parents to elaborate on their answers to this questionnaire item. There were a number of positive comments about the careers officer's role. Where difficulties with the advice of the guidance teacher and the careers officer were noted these related to

- conflicting advice between the guidance teacher and the careers officer
- a difficulty in pupils' access to guidance teachers and careers officers
- advice given about leaving school not being what the parent wished.

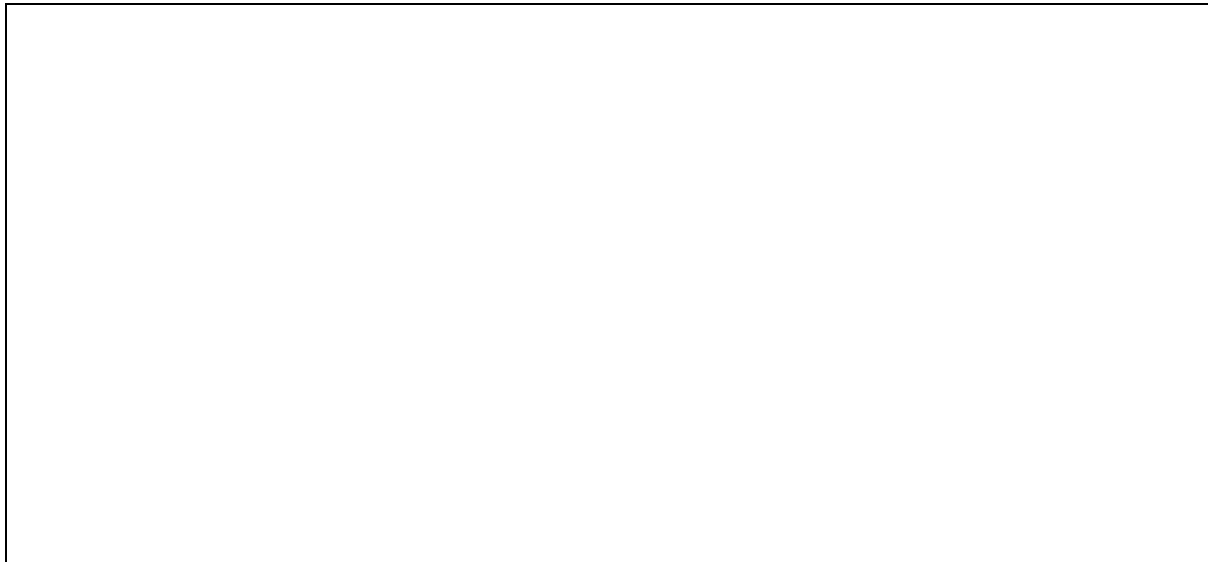
We expected that the Careers Service would be heavily involved with S5 pupils in the project schools. We asked S5 parents about the contact their child had had with a careers officer.



As noted earlier, we discovered at interview that many parents had consulted their children about the answers to particular items in the questionnaire, this was one such item. Parents' awareness of work done by schools and the Careers Service was, as we have seen earlier, limited. Almost three quarters of S5 parents stated that they knew that their child had had an interview with a careers officer, and over two thirds knew that their teenager had had a talk from the careers officer.

Satisfaction with guidance on choices after 5th year

We asked parents how satisfied they were with the guidance on post S5 choices that pupils were getting from the school and the Careers Service.



Parents were more positive about the guidance their child was getting from the school than that from the Careers Service. Just under a third of parents indicated a lack of satisfaction with the school's provision and over a third were not satisfied with input from the Careers Service (32% and 37%, Table 8.31). A higher proportion of parents did not know what guidance was being provided by the Careers Service compared with that provided by the school.

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, subsequent interviews with S5 parents later in the year showed that many parents had become more positive about the Careers Service as a result of seeing the careers officer giving advice, information and practical help in finding opportunities in education, training or employment for their children. Table 8.31 is therefore likely to underestimate both parents' levels of knowledge of, and satisfaction with, the Careers Service.

Improvements in careers guidance

Two fifths of S5 parents thought the careers guidance their child was getting could be improved while the same percentage did not know.



We have noted earlier that lack of information on the guidance provision was linked to lower levels of satisfaction amongst parents. Similarly, parents who did not know what careers guidance was on offer to their children were unable to comment on whether it could be improved, or were dissatisfied with careers guidance provision.

Many parents took the opportunity to comment on the question of whether careers guidance could be improved. The main themes of their comments in the questionnaire were:

- parents are not informed about the careers guidance on offer
- careers guidance should be earlier and involve parents
- careers advice should be more accessible to both pupil and parent
- pupils should be encouraged to use the Careers Service: it is not sufficient to wait until pupils ask for help
- careers guidance should be better resourced and tailored to the individual.

Parents in interviews did not always discriminate between the role of the school and that of the careers officer, they often spoke generally about the preparation their children had received irrespective of the source from which it came.

S5 Parents' knowledge of careers education and information

Parents interviewed spoke about the different ways in which the school and the Careers Service helped pupils think about careers. Some mentioned JIIG-CAL, but when pressed were unable to explain its aims, or confused it with initiatives such as COMPACT. A number spoke about job search inputs such as applications and interviews, but almost the same number indicated this was an area needing development. Careers conventions and visiting speakers were seen as mainly positive inputs to careers education and information. Some parents felt that careers education in fifth year was too geared to university applicants; this was particularly the case in the school with the highest number of HE entrants. Others thought the programme was not wide enough:

“The programme they do only has the local college and one university, this could bear no relation to what pupils are interested in. How are they to find out about courses not represented there?”

Nevertheless, parents' responses and also those of pupils indicated that many pupils did not take responsibility for seeking information themselves. This suggests that schools need to pay more attention to training and encouraging young people to use careers information sources.

For another parent, the school's attempt to allow choice in the S5 curriculum had a negative effect:

“My daughter's doing 4 Highers. She was told, if you're doing 4 Highers you don't have to go to hear the different speakers or go to the (PSE/careers education) class.... you can get study time instead. So of course she didn't go. I think she's missed out.”

The balance between choice and compulsion is a difficult one. The situation this parent describes might reflect the view that more able pupils do not need careers advice because they can find out the information themselves. However well intentioned, it seemed this school was encouraging a short term view of academic success (in terms of school attainment) and not a long term view of educational and careers success. It may also reflect the acknowledged difficulties in designing a PSE careers programme suitable for more able pupils where the programme needs to be credible, and seen as relevant when “academic” subjects carry greater status.

Many S5 parents took the chance in interview to look ahead to the future. Some were anxious for their children and saw the school as passing on unrealistic messages:

“The school gives them untrue messages. They say “work hard and you’ll get a job” tell that to unemployed school leavers”

“Rewards do not automatically come if you get qualifications.... I know that from experience.”

Pupils too, as we saw in chapter eight, felt that some teachers were too optimistic in their view of post-school opportunities.

Some S5 parents suggested that careers programmes should include more on trends in the labour market, especially where these were negative. This is a partial explanation of the low figure (13%) of parents who thought schools were doing enough about helping pupils to cope with unemployment (Table 8.29):

“There’s not many jobs with training nowadays”

“Opportunities are reducing for young people”

“There’s not so many employers around that give self esteem to young people”

Whether these parents’ perspectives are accurate or not is a separate issue from their effect on their children’s choices.

Perhaps the most important point about careers education, was that parents’ knowledge of the school’s careers programme was limited to specific events such as JIIG-CAL or conventions; few could describe the content of their child’s careers education.

Careers guidance

Some parents saw the complementary roles of guidance teachers and careers officers:

“They should really work closely together, the careers officer comes from outside the school and has a different perspective.”

One parent suggested that the guidance teacher should play a greater role in careers guidance than the careers officer:

“The careers officer comes in as a stranger to talk to young people who are strangers. Surely it should be the guidance teacher that should do it? On the other hand the guidance teachers would have to really know the pupils before they could do that.”

This brings us back again to the level of knowledge guidance teachers need to have of pupils on their case load.

Some parents saw a need for schools to give pupils a realistic idea of their likely abilities but emphasised that this had to be done in a positive way:

“She had been finding out about being a vet and a teacher said to her “You’ll never get those qualifications - forget it”, and she did. I was very angry at the time but didn’t do anything about it. I feel the school should help young people be more realistic in a much more tactful way.”

Contact with the Careers Service

The S5 parents we interviewed had mainly positive things to say about the Careers Service if they had experience of it. The careers officer was commended for listening to pupils’ ideas, for broadening career thinking and for giving useful information and guidance:

“He told the careers officer what his ideas were and she said she would send the information and the information came through quite quickly. It was just exactly what he wanted to know.”

“(The careers officer) took the pressure off her when she couldn’t make up her mind, and suggested a non-vocational degree she was getting in quite a state about it.”

“The careers officer gave the impression of knowing him well and I felt that she had spent a long time talking with him and helping him to make up his mind.”

“The careers officer spoke to my daughter as an adult not some stupid girl. She spent an hour and a half in the Careers Office with me and my daughter. I didn’t interfere because it was all going well, so I just listened.”

Where parents had had contact with the careers *office* as opposed to the careers officer in the school, they had only positive comments. They identified help with finding jobs, training and courses, good careers information in the office and more time to talk to the careers officer than at school as positive aspects of the service.

We have frequently noted in this report the effect that the competence or personality of an individual member of staff had on satisfaction with guidance. This was also the case for careers officers. Where individuals were criticised, it was because of:

- a failure to send out careers information as promised
- a narrow approach to guidance that focused too much on school subjects
- a lack of detailed knowledge of HE courses.

“I feel that (the careers officer’s) guidance didn’t take account of the boy’s aspirations. I thought that the advice was poorly done and based only on the link between subject and careers. If I compare what the careers officer does with what an adviser does in redundancy counselling, the redundancy counselling goes into a lot more detail about the individual and about aspirations and life styles. But interviews for young people are more difficult if they’re already disenfranchised and have limited horizons. You really can’t expect an individual to come in and change this.”

This parent raised the issue of what outcomes were reasonable to expect from a careers interview. Other negative comments resulted from the careers officer advising on entry to Skillseekers against the parent’s wishes, a conflict between the school and the careers officer over S2 subject choices, and inaccurate careers information being passed on.

Access to the careers officer

An analysis of S5 parents' interview responses showed that they expressed a need for careers advice for their children, that it should happen earlier and that there should be more time available for the careers officer to work in schools.

Some parents expressed a wish to be present at the careers interview although others recognised that this might not be what their children wanted.

A common theme was the parents' lack of information on the role of the Careers Service and of the individual careers officer in their child's school. In particular, they sought information on when a careers interview would take place, and some summary of what had happened during it. Few parents appeared to have received a copy of the summary of guidance or a careers plan of action. The lack of an evening appointments system to see the careers officer in the office was a lack for some parents.

In one school where the careers officer had been on long term sick leave, there were particular anxieties amongst parents about their child's access to careers guidance.

There was some support amongst S5 parents for careers interviews for all pupils:

"Every child should have a careers interview. Some of them are really unrealistic."

"They should have an interview with the careers officer every year after the third year to help them think about their future."

"They should push the children to see the careers officer."

One parent felt her child might see the careers officer as too much part of the school system:

"You know how anti-establishment they can be at that age. I'm sure that's why she wouldn't go to the careers officer..... she just got her YT place from an advert in the paper."

Work experience

Data on work experience came primarily from interviews with S5 parents, although some S3 parents with older children volunteered comments from their experiences and other S3 parents looked ahead to their child's work experience in S4.

There was strong support from parents for work experience. It was seen to help their children mature, gain broader experiences, test out career ideas and increase motivation:

"My son loved work experience, he was a different boy when he came in at night."

"He grew up a lot on work experience."

"It gave her the chance to try out being a hairdresser."

Parents from the remote rural school thought that work experience was critical in preparing pupils to move away from their home area after leaving school.

One parent suggested that the value of work experience as a motivator to education might be harnessed earlier in the child's school career:

“They should get work experience earlier, because if a child is slow at a subject, perhaps computing, and not able to see the application of it at work, that would help to motivate them to study.”

Another parent praised the report on her child's work experience as giving useful insight into their child's strengths and interests in a different context from the school.

There were some criticisms of the lack of variety of placements, leading to a lack of choice. There was also irritation expressed by some parents whose children had been unable to get work experience in an occupational area linked to their career choice. Although the main intention of work experience is to give pupils experience of the attitudes, behaviour and skills needed at work, most young people and, as we see here, their parents are more likely to see it as a job taster. This makes the task of allocating available placements a more difficult and sensitive one.

Two other issues arose in parents' interviews. For one parent, work experience had had the opposite effect from intended:

“She went out all full of enthusiasm, but they told her she didn't have to come in on time and could leave early, and they made it easy for her. In a way she's not trying as hard as she was.”

This illustrates the need for good debriefing of pupils, and for monitoring of the placement experience.

Secondly, it was important that pupils were given guidance when they chose their work experience placement based on an intended career area:

“It's no kindness to encourage them to try something they'll never be able to dothe guidance teacher should help them see what's suitable.”

Where schools were preparing young people for work experience on the basis of their career ideas, this parent felt that they had a responsibility to guide those choices.

Summary

Introduction

- Where teacher/pupil perspectives differed, parents' perspectives were closer to those of young people.
- Parents were overwhelmingly in favour of guidance in schools although there were a number of criticisms of guidance in practice. They saw guidance as necessary for their children.

Contact

- The majority of parents stated they knew the name of their child's guidance teacher.
- Over a half had had contact with the guidance teacher in the previous session, this did not differ by level of parental education or social class. There were also no significant differences whether the school had a horizontal or vertical guidance system.
- The large majority of parents who had had contact with the guidance teacher reported contact as easy or very easy. They were generally very or fairly satisfied with their experience. Nonetheless, many thought contact could be improved.

Role of guidance

- Many parents were uncertain about the role of guidance in schools. Parents mostly saw guidance as being problem driven, and as reacting to pupils in difficulty rather than supporting and encouraging the learning of all pupils.
- Parents identified guidance about personal problems, career choice, and progress in school as major tasks for guidance teachers.
- Parents had a similar picture to pupils of an ideal guidance teacher as someone who should be open, able to listen and trustworthy.
- Parents wished for more information, in an understandable format, on their child's progress at school. They not only wanted academic information but also an assessment of their child's personal and social development. Parents requested earlier and more detailed reports, and to be alerted as soon as any problem arose.
- Confidentiality and neutrality were valued in guidance. It was important to parents that their children were listened to in a non-judgmental and unbiased way, and that private information remained private.
- Parents saw school senior management as having a major role to play in combating bullying. Where bullying had been unsatisfactorily dealt with, this was a critical issue for parents.
- Where guidance teachers had been involved in supporting individual children, their parents were generally pleased with this guidance support.

Satisfaction with guidance and level of individual contact with child

- Three-quarters of parents were very or fairly satisfied with guidance provision for their children. Parents judged this on the basis of how well they thought the guidance teacher knew their child, and on whether the guidance teacher was approachable, accessible and contactable. Parents were a little less satisfied with guidance provision for themselves.
- Two-thirds of parents thought their child was fairly or well known by the guidance teacher. But only around a quarter of parents of S3 pupils and a third of S5 parents thought their child got sufficient individual attention from the guidance teacher.
- Parents' level of satisfaction with guidance, both for themselves and for their children, did not differ depending on whether the school had a vertical or a horizontal system. Parents identified some individual guidance teachers as better than others.
- A substantial proportion of S3 parents wished for more help from guidance on getting on with others and settling into new classes and more than two-fifths of S5 parents felt their children needed more advice on study and exam pressures.
- Those parents who had seen their child's Record of Achievement were, on the whole, positive about it. Several thought the school's comments would only be useful if the guidance teacher knew children well.

PSE

- Parents were overwhelmingly in favour of the range of topics likely to be delivered in PSE. Parents knew little about the actual content and timing of the programme and wanted more information so that they could support the school by discussing the issues at home.

Guidance needs

- Parents identified few overt guidance needs for themselves. However, it seemed that parents' needs from guidance were primarily to know and trust the person in charge of their child's welfare in the school, and to be able to contact and be contacted at appropriate times.
- Guidance needs identified for their children included:
 - ◆ drug and alcohol abuse
 - ◆ HIV and Aids
 - ◆ sex education
 - ◆ career choices
 - ◆ handling peer and study pressures
 - ◆ having someone to talk to.
- The catchment area of schools had an effect on the guidance needs parents identified for their children.

P7/S1 transition

- From parents' perspective, the P7/S1 transition was well managed, and guidance was appropriately involved.

Subject choice

- Parents who knew what information and advice had been given to their children about subject choice or career choice, were more likely to be satisfied with what had been done.
- The majority of parents were satisfied with the advice given to their children at S2/S3 and S4/S5 subject choice but, nonetheless, were able to make suggestions for improvement, including a clearer explanation of the career implications of subject choice at S4/S5.

Post S5 options and the Careers Service

- Less than half of S5 parents knew what advice had been given to their children on post S5 options. They were less aware of this than of the subject choice advice that had been given. Parents' knowledge of the school's careers education programme was limited to specific events and few knew the content of the programme.
- S5 parents were more likely to feel that their children had had enough help with educational choices after fifth year than with advice on entry to work or training, or support in unemployment.
- At interview, some time after completing the questionnaire, parents' levels of satisfaction with the Careers Service and the use of Records of Achievement were higher. Parents' responses about the guidance given to their child by the Careers Service partly related to lack of information on what the Careers Service did.
- The large majority of S5 parents thought the careers guidance their child was getting could be improved.
- Most S5 parents who had some experience of the Careers Service valued it. Careers officers were commended for listening to pupils' ideas, for broadening career thinking and for giving useful information. But, as with guidance teachers, parents' opinions varied according to the individual careers officer.

Work experience

- There was strong support from parents for work experience. It was thought to help their children mature, gain broader experiences, test out career ideas and increase motivation.
- Where problems with work experience existed these included a lack of variety in placements, the need for guidance on choosing a work experience placement and the importance of ensuring the placement stretched the child appropriately.

Issues

- Parents' level of satisfaction with guidance was related to how well they felt informed about provision; they wished to understand the guidance system better and to know their child's guidance teacher better. What strategies can be used to make parents better informed and to improve guidance teacher/parent links?
- Only a minority of parents thought their child got enough individual attention from their guidance teacher. To what extent can parents' desire for their child to have more individual attention be met, and how might this be done?
- How can parents be provided with improved information on their child's academic, personal and social progress? What are the respective responsibilities of the guidance teacher, subject teacher and senior management in this?
- How should schools communicate with parents? It was important for parents that communications from the school were sent directly to the home. This has resource implications but there is also a problem in relation to the older pupil who may wish to be in charge of communications between school and home. How can this be reconciled?
- There is a need to consider parents' desire for more help for their children from guidance on settling into classes and getting on with others (S3 parents) and study skills and exam pressures (S5 parents).
- Consideration should be given to issues of privacy at parents' evenings and whether some parents' evenings should be focused on guidance issues.
- Should guidance staff be an advocate for the child in the school system? If so, do they need to lose their subject teaching role to allow them freedom to do so? If not, how may guidance staff be encouraged to challenge the school where appropriate?
- Some parents raised the issue of resourcing for guidance. If guidance is seen as important to pupils, parents and teachers, how can appropriate resourcing be allocated?
- Parents need more information on the timing and content of PSE programmes, including careers education, so that they may work in partnership with the school.
- Schools need to consider the suggestions that parents had for improving S2/S3 and S4/S5 subject choice. How can the classification of work with S2 pupils as a lower priority activity for the Careers Service be reconciled with many parents' desire for more individual input from the Careers Service at this stage? Consideration should be given to the vocational implications of curricular advice at S4/S5 subject choice stage, and information and advice amended accordingly.
- How can an appropriate balance between educational opportunities and employment or training opportunities post-school be maintained within a school careers programme at S5?
- There was some support for the view that all pupils should have a careers interview, and that this should not wait for the pupil to express a need. This has implications for Careers Service interviewing systems, and for priorities and resourcing of the Careers Service.

- Where careers officers vary in effectiveness, how can Careers Service management ensure a basic standard or entitlement for pupils?
- Parents need to be directly informed of the role and purpose of the Careers Service, and of contact details for the local careers office and school careers officer.
- Parents and pupils saw work experience mainly as job tasting. Should, or can, they be encouraged to change their expectations of work experience? Do schools need to clarify their approach to work experience?
- Parents can provide valuable evaluation evidence. How can parents be consulted appropriately to help schools review their guidance provision and to help the Careers Service review its input?

Chapter 9 Careers and the World of Work

This chapter draws together evidence from teachers, pupils and parents in the project schools and from the Careers Service on careers education, careers guidance and the relationship of the Careers Service with schools. Chapter four has already related much of the evidence: in this chapter we reflect on the evidence and bring in different perspectives. We also look at education industry liaison activities and their influence on pupils and on the guidance pupils receive.

Introduction

In chapter two we described the variety of factors we used in selecting schools to take part in this research. We tried to ensure as many relevant factors that might affect guidance were represented in our choice of schools as possible and, in addition, we sought to identify schools whose guidance provision was thought to be above average.

However, a corollary of this was that we did not choose Careers Services. We worked with the careers officer and Careers Service which happened to be linked to the project schools since selection was on the basis of schools rather than the Careers Service. We realised early in the research that the level of turnover of Careers Service staff in project schools was high so, as well as interviewing the careers officer for the school as originally planned, we also interviewed the area careers officer where possible, and one or more representatives of Careers Service senior management to put the Careers Service's work in the project schools in perspective. We also spent time discussing issues with key informants in other Careers Service areas and in central government. This chapter, therefore, looks at the operation of the Careers Service in the project schools, but takes account of the wider background provided by our key informants.

When we first began to work with the project schools, Scottish Careers Services were just about to enter the year of direction from the Scottish Office; this was a period during which the Secretary of State took responsibility for the Careers Service away from Education Authorities (EAs) although for this year the EAs continued direct management. This was a preliminary to the changed management of the Careers Service which saw services south of the border going out to tender but in Scotland the preferred model was a partnership approach between the Local Enterprise Company (LEC) and the Education Authority. The period of the research, therefore, coincided with a time of considerable uncertainty and anxiety for Careers Service staff and management.

One result of these changes was that Careers Services were tending to employ staff on short term contracts since they could not make budgetary commitments into the period of new management. The resulting short term contracts compounded existing staff turnover which resulted from Careers Service staff being seconded out of mainstream work into initiatives such as TVEI, Compacts and other educational or industrial developments. These secondments had been happening for a number of years, and were in one sense, a positive development for the Careers Service but they made stability of the area team difficult to maintain and had particular effects on the careers provision given to schools.

In three of the project schools, the turnover of careers officers serving the school was thought to have had a negative effect on the provision and particularly on the quality of the relationship between guidance staff and the careers officer. In a fourth school, the careers officer had been on long term sick leave and Careers Service work had been covered by a variety of careers officers who were fitting this in with their other work.

A careers officer new to a school will inevitably focus on maintaining the basic provision to pupils; only after the careers officer has got to know pupils and staff is it possible to embark on developing provision beyond the basic service. Careers officers working in four of the six project schools were in this situation, therefore, we suggest that we saw less Careers Service development work in the project schools than might otherwise have been expected.

A final issue to be mentioned in this introductory section is the place of work experience. As we will discuss later, we found that EIL and guidance activities, with the one exception of work experience, tended to stand separately and were managed in four of the project schools by different members of staff. We have chosen to discuss work experience in the final section of this chapter under Education Industry Liaison.

Careers education

In this section we look at the delivery of the taught careers education programme as a discrete and identifiable input. Only one of the schools had done any regular comprehensive cross-curricular audit of the extent to which pupils' subject teaching contributed to their understanding of career choices or opportunities. In one of the project schools careers education was an integral part of the PSE programme; in four schools most careers education was delivered via the PSE programme; and in the sixth school some careers education was part of the PSE programme.

JIG-CAL was used in three schools as an interest guide accompanied by careers education materials within the careers programme. In two of these schools, it was administered to S3 pupils, and in the third school to S4. Opinion as to its effectiveness rested partly on how well the feedback had been done. Had pupils and parents understood the printout on possible job titles and job groupings where the job suggestions were not thought to be realistic, had the pupil been able to have an individual discussion with a guidance teacher or careers officer? A current report by Careers Service Inspectors, "The Impact of JIG-CAL on Pupils' Career Decisions" (SOEID 1995), confirms the quality of feedback and subsequent guidance as key points in the effective use of JIG-CAL. Some guidance teachers commented that pupils clearly enjoyed the experience and from this they assumed there must, therefore, be positive outcomes.

Changes in the management of the Careers Service, the reform of local government and the advent of Devolved Management of Resources meant both schools and the Careers Service questioned whether schools would pay the £3-4 a head costs of JIG-CAL in the future.

Careers education content

It was difficult to get a clear picture of the content of careers education programmes but most careers education programmes in the schools had common elements. Some were based on regional guidelines. In one school the Careers Service had suggested a recommended draft of a careers education programme to schools. In another school the careers programme was more ad hoc with a good deal of flexibility and variability depending on the member of staff responsible for particular units of work or for a particular class.

A common way to consider the content of careers education is the mnemonic DOTS (ie Decision-making, Opportunity awareness, Transition skills, Self awareness) and we found evidence of each of those areas being covered at different stages in careers education programmes in the project schools.

Balance in careers education

Although these four areas were covered, it seemed that the focus within each area was very variable across the project schools.

Much decision making input, for example, had been covered through health education or other aspects of PSE. Schools varied in the extent to which a careers context for decision-making had been provided; this was most likely to occur in the careers education input to S2/S3 subject choice.

Opportunity awareness in some schools was more focused towards educational than employment opportunities, reflecting the most likely destination for each school's leavers. Schools differed in the use they made of school leaver destination statistics to highlight

aspects of the local labour market and it was rare for local and national employment trends to be covered.

Although the introduction to the careers library took place in S2 in most of the project schools, it was often not reinforced in a structured way after this point. We have noted earlier that the change in arrangements of the Careers Service, the demise of regional authorities and DMR might make changes: staff were concerned whether bulk purchasing of careers information for schools might cease, and thus limit pupils' opportunity awareness.

Transition awareness should include such topics as coping with change but the project schools concentrated on job search skills such as interviews, application forms and CVs.

These are common difficulties also faced by schools outwith this research.

There was also an issue as to how far careers education should be knowledge based rather than skills focused. For example, while schools were trying hard to arrange educational and occupational information sessions for pupils, there was some evidence from our group discussions that pupils, even in S5, lacked the confidence (and possibly the skills) to access the careers library. This is particularly relevant at a time when the ability to access information is increasingly important because of growing complexity and range of information about post-school opportunities.

Differentiation

As noted in "Careers Provision for S5 and S6" (Scottish Office Careers Service Branch 1993) the increase in staying on rates to S5 and S6 was a development to which all schools and careers services had not yet fully adjusted.

The project schools identified particular anxieties about the careers education programme from S4 onwards and in all of them the careers education programme at S5/S6 was being developed or undergoing review. In several schools, the bulk of the transition aspects of careers education was covered in the year group from which the greatest number of pupils was likely to leave. An input on job applications and interviews was delivered in 5th or 6th year in several schools but this created a difficulty for the smaller numbers of pupils leaving school before that point. Teachers in these schools recognised that a pupil planning to leave school in S6 was likely to find job search techniques less relevant at S4, but had not yet solved the problem of how to provide those skills to a minority of earlier leavers.

Several schools found it difficult to identify appropriate careers education (and curriculum) for winter leavers. We have noted earlier that much PSE (and careers education) provision is stage related so that winter leavers were an anomaly in this approach. The responses in project schools included extending work experience over the final few months of compulsory education or providing community based careers education. The FE option tended not to be included in information to S4 pupils who could not leave before winter of S5 and several pupils had found out too late they could have attended college from the end of S4 rather than return to school.

Careers education is easier to deliver if pupils can be dealt with according to their educational stage. In the upper school this is much more difficult as there is the need for differentiation by intended route, by likely attainment and/or by level of vocational maturity.

Where provision was differentiated, who decided which pupils joined a particular group? Four schools organised PSE in the upper school on pupils' qualification level. One school,

where the majority of leavers entered Higher Education, had organised classes and speakers on three areas: Higher Education (HE); Further Education (FE); and Skillseekers. Pupils were broadly identified by the school to join each group as: the most academic to HE; the middle to FE; and the least academic to Skillseekers. This reflected the low status given to training programmes by pupils and parents in this school and would indeed have reinforced this view but it also suggested a misunderstanding of the overlapping levels of opportunities, particularly with FE and Skillseekers.

In another school, pupils sitting a number of Highers were allowed to opt out of the majority of the S5 careers programme in favour of study time. This is likely to have had the effect of reducing academic pupils' awareness of opportunities since many did opt out. The balance between choice and compulsion is a difficult one.

An important question for careers education, and also for careers guidance, is how far a careers programme should reflect pupils' interests, and how far should it challenge the boundaries of their thinking? This is of particular importance where pupils, by nature of the community they live in (eg remote rural or deprived urban areas) have limited experiences, but it is relevant to all schools.

Content related to need?

In the project schools the careers education programme, like PSE as a whole, was thought by many teachers to be driven to a certain extent by central government initiatives, or by external funding. It was common for the S4 programme to be heavily focused on work experience and on preparatory work for the completion of a Record of Achievement. TVEI funding was identified by staff in most schools as having contributed positively to careers education through the development of materials and events and the provision of inservice training to teachers. There was concern about the impact of the loss of TVEI funding on careers education and more generally for EIL activities.

One project school asked pupils what they wished included in careers education, but pupils did not think the resulting programme had taken account of their wishes.

We have discussed earlier the difficulties school staff experienced in identifying pupil need. This meant that careers education appeared to be driven by top-down initiatives and the requirements of subject choice decision-making rather than being closely linked to pupil need. Where schools did identify pupil need, it tended to be stage related, for example, self awareness and careers information in S2 or the need for a full discussion of post S4 options because significant numbers of pupils were thought to return to school when, in the view of many teachers and careers officers, they would have received more appropriate provision in FE or in the labour market.

Progression, management and evaluation

It was difficult for us to gain a clear view of what was happening in careers education in the project schools because most did not have an easily identifiable, fleshed-out careers programme S1 to S6. Bits of the programme were well structured, perhaps for a particular year group but progression in approach or content was difficult to identify.

Careers programmes were managed in different ways. In two schools with a horizontal guidance system, guidance teachers had responsibility for the careers programme for one or more year groups. In one of these two schools, guidance teachers' responsibility for the careers programme was for year groups for which they had no pastoral role and they had little knowledge of the careers education of pupils who were on their caseload. In a third school,

the responsibility was shared between the careers co-ordinator and an AHT. In a fourth school an SMT member had overall responsibility but the day to day management of the careers programme was done by a careers co-ordinator. In a fifth school, the careers education programme, work experience and EIL were the remit of the careers co-ordinator (a PT guidance); in the sixth school the responsibility for the careers programme was shared by guidance staff.

The point here is a lack of coherence and overall planning. The number of different staff involved in careers education was a factor, this included members of the SMT at S4/S5 subject choice and in relation to UCAS/HE briefings and applications. Where a single individual was responsible, time and resource pressures made the planning and management of an S1 to S6 careers programme difficult. However, management of PSE (including careers) was under review in several project schools.

Several schools had tried in various ways to review careers education, normally as part of PSE evaluations. This included asking pupils for their views and consulting teaching colleagues, particularly those delivering the programme. Evaluation was not done systematically or regularly.

Careers officer's role in careers education

The careers guidance given by the careers officer is expected to build on the knowledge and skills gained by pupils in careers education. Careers officers, therefore, thought careers education was an important factor in whether pupils made good use of the careers interview.

A commonly suggested model is for the careers officer to be involved in designing or reviewing the careers education programme in school but because of staff turnover amongst careers officers this had not happened in four of the project schools. In these schools, the careers officer had only limited involvement in the review of careers education as part of a more general review of the links between the Careers Service and the school when negotiating the Service Level Agreement (ie the annual assessment of the previous year and a planning agreement on the careers officer's role in the school for the following year). In the remaining two schools, careers officers had made greater use of Service Level Agreement discussions to make suggestions on careers education, following more informal discussions in the schools.

Whether the careers officer delivered any section of the careers programme was more varied. Given time pressures, the careers officers in the six project schools focused on areas where their expertise would be best used, for example, Skillseekers, post-16 options, careers information at S2, or on introducing themselves and their service to pupils. In one school, the careers officer did work with groups of pupils interested in similar career areas. This was one improvement in careers provision suggested by a number of pupils in our group discussions in other schools. While careers officers wished to have more involvement in advising about the careers education programme and a better knowledge of its content, they did not see a role for themselves in delivering careers education lessons other than those mentioned above. This view was supported by policy statements limiting the involvement of careers officers in the delivery of careers education. There is also evidence that although the involvement of careers officers in the design and review of careers education has a positive effect on pupils' progress in interviews, their involvement in its delivery has no effect (CSB 1982).

Some careers officers suggested that the effectiveness or otherwise of careers education in the schools was apparent in pupils' careers interview. They judged this in terms of:

- how pupils presented themselves at interviews;
- pupils' framework of opportunity awareness;
- whether pupils could demonstrate decision-making skills.

On the whole, careers officers felt careers education had improved markedly over the last few years.

Some careers officers suggested that good careers education whereby pupils become self aware, confident in accessing and assessing information, and capable of handling decision-making might reduce the need for careers interviews. Although they recognised significant improvements in careers education, they thought it was not likely that careers interviews would reduce in the immediate future.

Careers Service

Background, staffing and duties

The Careers Service's time allocation to schools varied according to the upper school roll and regional Careers Service policy. School E had the lowest time allocation, but pupils were able to make appointments at the careers office if necessary. This was also a possibility for pupils in schools other than in the remote rural area. In this rural school, the careers officer's visit was planned to coincide with the day on which parents' evenings were normally held to allow the careers officer to attend.

As we have noted earlier, three schools had experienced significant staff turnover, and a fourth school's careers officer had been on long term sick leave with work covered by a variety of staff from the area careers office.

The major task of careers officers in all the project schools was scheduled interviews, primarily focused on S4 to S6. In five of the six schools careers officers operated a "drop-in" clinic at lunchtimes or breaks which provided an opportunity for pupils to speak to them briefly without an appointment.

In all the project schools, careers officers expected to attend parents' evenings at S2, S4, S5 and S6. Parents and careers officers suggested the effectiveness of parents' evenings depended on whether parents knew the careers officer was present and whether there was an appointment schedule with sufficient time to talk to the careers officer.

Careers officers were involved in a variety of other activities. These included:

- attendance at careers conventions or careers evenings (sometimes organised or supported by the careers office);
- input into preparation for S2 subject choice (four schools);
- providing various talks such as introduction to the Careers Service to different year groups; Skillseekers; Higher Education; choices at S4;
- provision of careers information, eg through group sessions, ordering materials in conjunction with librarians for careers libraries;
- inservice training with school staff - normally awareness raising; this happened in only one school but was being considered for others.

In one school, the careers officer had a large input into S5/S6 PSE; in three schools, there was some involvement and in the remaining two, the careers officer had little or no input to PSE.

In three schools, the careers co-ordinator, a PT(G), was the nominated contact with the careers officer; in two schools a guidance teacher was the link; and in the sixth project school the careers officer liaised directly with individual guidance teachers for different year groups. We have noted that careers officers in four schools were involved in S2/S3 subject choice work with pupils. One of these schools was concerned that the Careers Service appeared to be withdrawing from S2 work with pupils; the guidance teacher felt that the careers officer wished to continue but that the balance of the Careers Service's work was being changed. This appeared to be as a result of Scottish Office guidelines (Requirements and Guidance for

Providers 1993) which did not identify S2/S3 subject choice as a key transition point for Careers Service clients. Where time was limited, Careers Service work was beginning to be focused on the upper school.

Guidance needs and the Careers Service

We wondered how the Careers Service identified the guidance needs of pupils in schools. In discussions with careers officers we found that guidance needs were primarily identified by stage of leaving, levels of attainment and adjustment of pupils to school. Careers officers were more aware of the careers guidance needs of specific groups such as winter leavers than were guidance teachers.

It seemed that the Careers Service, like guidance, was problem driven. As we noted earlier, careers officers sought to give priority to:

- pupils with a mismatch between career aspirations and personal factors such as subjects or attainment;
- pupils requiring early support and intervention such as those with behavioural, personal or health difficulties;
- pupils with learning difficulties;
- pupils who were uncertain about career choice.

For many pupils in our group discussions, it was a concern that if they did not have obvious problems, it could be difficult to access careers advice, given the Careers Service interviewing priorities. They believed that pupils without obvious problems also needed reassurance and encouragement through talking over their career ideas.

The assumption that those who appear to have made a career choice have no need for careers advice is an interesting one. Given that part of a careers officer's role is to challenge assumptions and aspiration levels, and given the evidence that young people go through periods of career certainty and uncertainty, then it can not be assumed that having an apparently appropriate career choice clearly indicates that guidance is not needed.

How far did the Careers Service approach vary by needs of pupils? Most adaptation to individual need occurred in careers interviews which were typically of around 40 minutes in length. However, the careers officer in one school had organised different lengths of time for pupil interviews based on an assessment of need. Although pupils from the different schools had different needs, these were rarely clearly articulated by careers officers. Two examples will illustrate this. One school noted a need to build up self-esteem at the beginning of S5 following disappointing 'S' grade results; no thought had been given to the careers officer's involvement at that stage to encourage pupils by planning ahead for post-school opportunities. Several schools noted exam pressures on S5 pupils. In one case the careers officer had given advice which had relieved some inappropriate pressure close to exam time. The careers officer can work effectively with pupils who are under pressure to discuss different levels of opportunities so that pupils have a "fall back" position in case they achieve poorer results. These are two examples of ways in which the careers officers' contribution to guidance needs might be utilised but had not been considered.

There was little variation in the Careers Service's approach to schools even where there were different guidance needs resulting from area needs. In any case, careers officers and guidance

staff were unsure how far, in practice, the Careers Service had the flexibility to respond to guidance needs once identified because of the limited time spent in schools and the increasingly tight targeting of work on specific year groups and activities.

Careers Service interviews

This was the main activity of careers officers in the project schools:

- All S4 pupils were interviewed, and fifth and sixth year were interviewed on request in School A;
- All S4 and S5 pupils were interviewed in School B;
- All S4 leavers were interviewed, and approximately three-quarters of S5 pupils had an interview in School C;
- Three-quarters of S4 pupils received a careers officer's interview in School D;
- All S4 leavers were interviewed in school E: percentages of pupils interviewed across each year group were S4 - 20%; S5 - 21%; S6 - 83%;
- All S4 pupils were interviewed, with follow up interviews by request in S5 and S6 in School F.

The balance of coverage related in a major way to the pattern of staying on and leaving in the school.

Screening forms

In five of the six schools, the Careers Service used a screening form to gather details of pupils' school subjects, career ideas, interests and intended leaving date. In four of these schools, these screening forms were completed at the beginning of S4, S5 and S6 and were used by careers officers and guidance teachers to identify priorities for careers interviews. A common priority was:

1. HE applicants and winter leavers;
2. Pupils intending to leave school at the end of the session (perhaps with priority given within this group to those with discrepancies such as between subjects and career choice);
3. returning pupils.

It was common to have a section on the screening form asking pupils if they wished a careers interview.

In a fifth school, a screening form identifying pupil need and stage of career development was completed by pupils at the end of S3 and used by the careers officer and careers co-ordinator to plan the approach in S4. In this school, all S3 pupils requested interviews and were seen in 4th year.

In the sixth school pupils were encouraged to refer themselves for careers guidance interviews.

While the use of a screening form was administratively convenient, most pupils and some staff questioned its value. Pupils felt they were left not knowing where they were on the priority list and if the careers interview did not follow soon after the completion of the

screening form, pupils' ideas were likely to have changed as part of a normal process of developing career thinking.

Accessing a careers interview

The time gap between requesting an interview on a screening form and receiving one was a problem for many pupils. Fifth year pupils found having to wait to see the careers officer less acceptable than S4 pupils. Some pupils stated they had been waiting for a careers interview for more than 4 months and had no idea when they would receive one. Other pupils suggested they could see the careers officer if they wanted to within 1 or 2 weeks (this was where a specific request had been made to the careers officer or the guidance teacher). This variation in waiting time was unsatisfactory from pupils' point of view.

Careers officers felt they had explained the priority system to pupils when screening forms were completed and guidance teachers also believed that pupils were aware of how the interview system operated but many pupils were uncertain. There seems to be a gap in perceptions about pupils' level of awareness about interview arrangements.

Even where pupils understood, and accepted, that priority for careers interviews should be given to leavers, they were still firmly of the view that pupils staying on at school also needed to discuss their future plans. They also accepted that pupils who were very unsure, or had a problem about their career choice, should see the careers officer first, but made the point that even those who did not have a problem with career choice would welcome the reassurance of talking over their ideas with a careers officer.

Parents, too, wanted more and earlier individual contact between the careers officer and their child. Similar comments were made by parents in "Home from School" (MacBeath *et al.* 1986). Some parents and some pupils thought a careers interview should be arranged automatically for pupils regardless of whether pupils had recognised a need for it, or had requested one.

Self referral to a careers interview

How far were pupils able and willing to refer themselves to the careers officer for advice? In the school which gave greater emphasis to self referral, we were struck by the fact that some pupils were nervous about requesting an interview, including those who appeared to be confident in the group discussion. This seemed to be caused by uncertainty about the purpose and approach of a careers interview, and a general inability to handle an interview on any topic. Some careers officers suggested that pupils needed help in preparing for their careers interview, and that the careers education programme should provide this. It is also perhaps a reflection of pupils' lack of experience of extended 1:1 contact with guidance teachers.

Some pupils thought they had to have made up their minds about a career before they requested a careers interview, and therefore put off doing so. Others realised that the careers officer could help in dealing with career uncertainty and would not criticise a pupil for a change of career direction.

We have seen that self-referral to guidance teachers was limited. One reason for non-referral was an apparent stigma in going to guidance but no such reason would apply in the case of self-referrals for a careers interview. We found evidence that where pupils were strongly encouraged to self-refer, for example in the case of bullying, this did lead to higher levels of self-referral. Self-referral for a careers interview, too, needed an understanding of purpose and an encouraging environment with the support of both guidance teachers and subject staff.

Some careers service staff identified a tension in the official guidance about the ways careers interviews should be organised. On the one hand, SOED guidance suggested the need for a flexible interviewing system that is available at the right time:

“While the comprehensive one-to-one interview remains central to a sound careers guidance programme, efforts should be made to provide this at a time of the client’s choosing. The routine interviewing of whole cohorts of students at pre-ordained times is not a service responsive to individuals’ needs”

Requirements & Guidance for Providers, SOED 1993

However the expectations contained in the Secretary of State’s more recent document “Training for the Future” (Scottish Office, 1995) were that by year 3 of Careers Service business planning:

- 90% of S4 pupils should be interviewed;
- 70-75% of S5 pupils should be interviewed;
- 70-75% of S6 pupils should be interviewed;
- there should be 60 minutes worth of group sessions involving each pupil in S4, S5 and S6.

These expectations would seem to suggest a less flexible approach to providing Careers Service interviews. We will return to the management and evaluation implications of these Scottish Office guidelines later in this section.

We saw in chapter eight that parents needed to understand the Careers Service interview system, but it also seemed that where screening forms were used to plan interview schedules, neither parents nor pupils understood that they could “interrupt” the system to arrange to see the careers officer at a time of their choosing. We have noted that many pupils were passive and unable to be proactive in seeking careers information and advice. Perhaps this is encouraged where interview scheduling is driven by careers officers and guidance teachers. However, considerable support and encouragement is required to make self referral work.

Whichever interviewing system is used, pupils, parents and staff need to understand it and to be able to access the careers officer at an appropriate time. In particular, pupils need to take responsibility for their own career development. There is currently a good deal of discussion about pupil empowerment, particularly with respect to Skillseekers, but our experience of pupils, which coincided with that of guidance teachers and careers officers, was basically one of passivity in using careers information and guidance.

Only one project school had a self-referral system. In this school the support, encouragement and preparation of pupils was clearly not effective as the pupils we spoke to did not understand when and how it was appropriate to self-refer. However, in the schools where the interviewing system was Careers Service driven, the priorities and criteria that careers officers and teachers were using to programme interviews did not reflect pupils’ wishes and needs. Pupils who were staying on at school, or who appeared to have made a career choice, still wished to speak to the careers officer, and from this came the demand from some pupils and parents for pupils to be allocated a careers interview automatically. It seemed, however, that this demand was for better access to the careers officer rather than for “blanket” interviewing of all pupils.

Preparation for the careers interview

We have noted above that many pupils thought they were inexperienced and lacked confidence in making the best use of a careers interview.

Careers officers suggested that preparation for a careers interview might be handled through the careers education programme, through meeting the careers officer in a group situation prior to interview, or by being given a leaflet explaining the careers interview. Several guidance teachers interviewed pupils in advance of the careers interview to get up-to-date information to produce a pupil profile for the careers officer. This had a number of positive effects. Firstly pupils got some experience in discussing their own interests, abilities and ideas; secondly, it helped pupils think more about the questions they wished to ask in a careers interview; and thirdly it gave guidance teachers an excuse to get to know their pupils better, particularly the “ordinary” pupil.

In five of the six schools, careers officers generally received pupil profiles from guidance teachers in advance of the careers interview; in the sixth the careers officer had access to pupils’ S3 records. In four schools, the pupil profiles were written by the pupils’ own guidance teacher; in a fifth, the careers coordinator had taken over this role. There was no evidence at this stage of data from Record of Achievement work in schools being made available to the careers officer; this was clearly an area where development was needed.

The production of pupil profiles was recognised by guidance teachers as time consuming but essential; if “Training for the Future” interview targets are met, will this put increased pressure on guidance teachers because of the volume of pre-interview profiles?

Careers officers noted one of their roles as to challenge unrealistic aspiration amongst pupils, most often to lower aspirations but also to raise aspiration levels. Guidance teachers were likely to warn careers officers in pre-interview reports that the pupils’ likely attainment did not match their career intentions. If guidance teachers were more involved in reviewing progress, and in profiling and target setting throughout pupils’ school career, pupils’ own perceptions of their likely attainment and a guidance teacher’s assessment might become more in tune with each other.

Careers officer/guidance teacher relationship

Complementary roles

The thrust of “More Than Feelings Of Concern” was that guidance teachers should have a role in personal, social, curricular and vocational guidance, with the careers officer coming in to give specialist advice. The careers officer was to build on the pastoral base established by guidance teachers. In the project schools, the careers officer was seen by pupils, parents and teachers as being an unbiased specialist adviser with expertise on a broad range of opportunities. Careers officers, in turn, valued the guidance teacher’s greater knowledge of pupils. However, as we have noted, a very substantial number of guidance teachers felt they did not know their pupils sufficiently well and pupils and parents also raised this as a major issue.

The complementary roles of the guidance teacher and the careers officer are critical to the successful delivery of careers education and guidance to pupils. This required an element of trust and respect but in the project schools where there had been turnover or sickness of careers officers, this had been difficult to maintain.

Links between careers officer and guidance teacher

Practical links between the careers officer and the guidance teacher in the project schools included:

- the exchange of information on the pupils before and after interview. This was usually in written form, but sometimes was oral, depending on the sensitivity of the information, for example, if it concerned health or family background;
- the guidance teacher making administrative arrangements to support interviewing or group work, for example, arranging for appropriate pupils to attend, identifying accommodation for interviews and group work, filling vacant slots in the interview schedule caused by pupil absence;
- the careers officer updating the guidance teacher on changes in opportunities in the area, delivering careers information for the library, and to some extent, feeding back information on individual school leavers from previous years.

Careers officers generally expected that they would get useful information on pupils from guidance teachers but we did not find that guidance teachers expected careers officers to contribute insights on pupils following their interviews. Feedback was normally through the school's copy of a summary of guidance or an embryonic careers plan of action. Face to face discussions between guidance teachers and careers officers following pupils' careers interviews were restricted by several factors. Firstly, careers officers had assured pupils that their careers interview was in confidence. Secondly, the tight timescale for the careers officer's day in school meant time for any general debriefing was limited. And thirdly, the size of school made contact easier or more difficult. In the smallest school, the careers officer was able to have informal discussions before and after interviews but discussion required greater planning in larger schools.

Factors underlying good Careers Service school links

Teachers and careers officers suggested that three main factors were important in establishing an effective guidance/careers service relationship.

Firstly, good communication and trust needed to be built up. This would allow guidance teachers and careers officers to exchange appropriate information on pupils and ensure that the information and advice of each was trusted by the other. It would also make it easier to handle situations where the guidance teachers' and careers officers' perspectives might differ, for example, to allow each to accept the validity of the other's perception of a pupil, and to build this positively into guidance. Good communication and trust led to respect for professional expertise, an important factor in whether guidance teachers felt able to advise pupils to speak to the careers officer. This level of communication takes time to build up, and schools where the careers officer had recently changed had some development work to do on this. Attitudes were also influenced by how well the school felt it had been served by previous careers officers.

A second factor in an effective guidance/careers service relationship was that both guidance staff and careers officers needed to understand the basic minimum levels of involvement and standards required on each side. There were signs during the time of the research that Service Level Agreements (SLA) were encouraging this to happen: four schools already had an SLA, a fifth was negotiating one, and the sixth was operating an interim SLA.

Thirdly, good personal contact was essential for the Careers Service to be effective in initiating developments in provision.

We have noted that the personality of the guidance teacher was critical in determining pupils' satisfaction with guidance. Personality factors, on both sides, were also important in the effectiveness of links between careers officers and guidance teachers.

Tensions in the guidance teacher/careers officer relationship

Careers officers recognised that sometimes Careers Service advice might be in conflict with that given by the school but they thought that guidance teachers were less likely to give advice contradictory to their own than were subject staff or school managers. Guidance teachers were perceived as having a greater awareness of the career implications of subject choice and of the difficulties caused by pupils inappropriately staying on at school than their colleagues in subject departments.

However, there were situations in which careers officers and guidance teachers might give different advice. This might well occur at transition points such as S2/S3 subject choice where the careers officer would advise only on the career implications of subject choice, whereas guidance teachers would focus on the pupil's capabilities. Post-school choices were another area of possible difference where careers officers might advise on entry to training such as Skillseekers as opposed to the pupil staying on at school.

A third factor, which may create tensions in the future, was the different demands being made of careers officers and guidance teachers. We have discussed guidance teachers' lack of accountability for their work. This contrasts sharply with the tight monitoring and recording of careers officers' work. Careers officers who participated in the research were better able to identify their level of coverage of their caseload than were guidance teachers. By late 1995, Careers Service systems had developed to the point of requiring work targets to be met not just by Careers Services or by areas but also by individual careers officers. Each careers officer has targets to meet in schools in terms of individual interviews and group work with different year groups over specific periods of time. It was suggested that the need for careers officers to meet these targets might remove their flexibility of response to pupils' careers guidance needs.

We discuss evaluation strategies later in this section, but there is a contrast between the mainly qualitative output performance indicators produced by HMI for guidance in schools and the output measures Careers Services are required to supply. Although qualitative measures are also required of the Careers Service, as seen by the Careers Service section of the Scottish Quality Management System, the impact of quantitative measures seems currently to be greater. The need to measure pupil outcome, while more difficult, is important for both guidance teachers and careers officers.

The Careers Service and the guidance team

We questioned how far the school careers officer was seen as part of the extended team. We have already noted that we found limited evidence of guidance operating as a team in the project schools, and the individualistic nature of guidance teachers' work made it more difficult for careers officers to establish common links with so many different staff.

On the one hand, careers officers felt they needed someone from within the school to organise careers interviews, ensure pre-interview pupil profiles were completed and handle follow up work such as passing on careers information to pupils. From a careers officer's point of view, the limited amount of time available for school work meant that each interview

slot had to be filled and therefore school staff were expected to be able to arrange substitutes when interviewees were absent.

On the other hand, the fact that careers officers in the majority of schools linked mainly with one member of the guidance team had the effect of distancing the careers officer from the guidance team as a whole. This meant that the complementary relationship between the careers officer and each pupil's guidance teacher was less likely to be developed if contacts were "filtered" through a careers co-ordinator or careers contact. The role of careers co-ordinator is an interesting one. In England the "careers teacher" both coordinates careers work and has a role in giving careers advice; this is separate from the pastoral care activities of form tutors. In the Scottish guidance system the careers co-ordinator is primarily a co-ordinator, and is not expected to carry a responsibility for 1:1 specialist vocational guidance across the schools. In addition, the careers coordinator in Scotland has a wider guidance role in addition to the specific responsibility of organising Careers Service links. This was the case in the three project schools where a member of guidance staff had the remit of careers co-ordinator. We wondered whether the co-ordination role was an appropriate one for promoted guidance staff, whether or not they are a designated careers co-ordinator. Could these duties be more usefully completed as part of general guidance administrative support and guidance staff's time freed as a result for liaison with the careers officer about pupils and for development work?

We observed that in four of the project schools, the careers officer was a marginalised figure within the school, coming in to interview or conduct group work and leaving with little staff contact. While some of this marginalisation was the result of staff turnover, we would suggest that the way the system operated was a major contributing factor. Careers officers in this situation saw attendance at guidance team meetings as a way of extending their relationship with more guidance staff although we have seen that guidance meetings were thought by most guidance staff to be ineffective.

The lack of team work and of effective guidance meetings made it difficult for the careers officer to integrate into the school system, and even more difficult to influence that part of the careers provision which was the school's responsibility. We found no evidence that the school careers officers were liaising with learning support teachers but this may have been because links between learning support and guidance staff were limited. There was some evidence of links between special needs careers officers and learning support staff but only over pupils with recorded needs.

Careers officers put greater emphasis than guidance teachers on the influence that subject teachers might have on pupils' career thinking. Some Careers Service managers were planning ahead to provide inservice training for all school staff to harness their support in encouraging pupils to make best use of the Careers Service, and to help them recognise appropriate and inappropriate ways in which subject teachers influenced pupils' career thinking.

Careers Service management and quality assurance

It is worth recapping on some aspects of pupil and parent evaluations of the Careers Service. With few exceptions, where they had had contact with careers officers and the careers office, their opinions were positive about the ability of the Careers Service to extend ideas, listen carefully and openly, and provide help in finding work, training or courses. Negative comments, fewer in number, related to individual personality factors, not sending out information as promised, and appearing to be poorly informed. Pupils also wished greater access to careers advice.

Pupils' awareness of the complementary roles of the careers officer and the guidance teacher varied across schools. Pupils in the two schools which had had the same careers officer over a period, were clearer about the careers officer's role, about how to contact the careers officer and get a careers interview, and about how to use the guidance teacher or careers coordinator as a link.

Careers officers varied in their effectiveness and dealing with this was seen to be an important role for Careers Service management. We have looked earlier in this section at how schools judged careers officers. We found that this was on the basis of ability to fit in with the school system, speed of response to guidance teacher's referral and pupil requests for advice, and expertise in giving realistic guidance. Careers Services working in the project schools were using the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) as a vehicle for evaluation and quality assurance of their provision to schools. This allowed schools and Careers Services to negotiate their joint responsibility for careers education, careers information and careers guidance. Although SLAs have been driven by the Careers Service, as they become more formal agreements will guidance staff have to become more accountable in their own contribution to careers provision?

Early models of statements of pupil entitlements to Careers Service provision were available at a regional level in two of the schools but were not in use in the schools.

The reorganisation being experienced by the Careers Services had brought about various changes which were continuing to increase in importance. They involved:

- a greater demand for accountability;
- the increased use of "action-plans" to structure pupil decision making and guidance;
- more customer evaluations.

In two project schools, careers service staff from other areas within that region's Careers Service had been involved in evaluation through pupil group discussions, and a comprehensive evaluation strategy was being developed.

Maintaining a service to schools over the period of change was seen as achievable by Careers Service managers but the difficulties they saw themselves facing were:

- how to develop the service to schools;
- how to negotiate changing provision with school staff;
- how to encourage careers officers to challenge poor school systems.

Staff development and quality assurance has been progressed through the use of Investors in People (IIP) and the Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS) across many Scottish Careers Services over the period of the research. Another challenge will be the impact of client entitlement statements on priorities in Careers Service work. This will be compounded by the careers guidance needs resulting from the Higher Still initiative.

Employers and guidance

Introduction

We were asked to consider what links existed between local employers and schools and how they related to the vocational and careers guidance offered. It soon became obvious to us that links between local employers and the guidance provision of the majority of the project schools were limited to specific aspects such as work experience and the provision of mock interviews. Apart from these two areas, EIL and guidance provision stood separate in three project schools; in only two schools did the same member of guidance staff have a joint responsibility for careers education, work experience and EIL; in a third school a principal teacher of guidance was responsible for work experience. This situation was mirrored at directorate level in some of the regions of the project schools, where guidance and EIL were managed by different education officers.

In four of the project schools, we found that guidance teachers usually did not know who the school's EIL co-ordinator was, still less to have established formal links.

How might employers contribute to guidance in schools? We were aware of various initiatives such as pupil mentoring schemes but none of the project schools were involved in these schemes. We could only consider the main areas where guidance and employer liaison overlapped in the project schools, namely work experience and mock interviews.

Extent of EIL activity in the project schools

Considering EIL in the project schools in general (not just where guidance was involved), it was difficult to get a clear picture of the extent of EIL activities. Apart from mock interviews and work experience, teachers and careers officers noted the following range of activities across the project schools, with no single school involved in all, or even the majority of the activities:

- S3 Industrial awareness conferences;
- careers conventions or careers evenings;
- BP Link scheme;
- visits to and from departments;
- local engineers coming into a school department;
- enterprise activities in S6;
- work shadowing;
- Understanding Industry at S5/S6;
- workplace projects in the Higher Grade course in Management and Information Studies.

Several points were raised by staff about ways of managing these activities effectively. For example, careers evenings were thought to be best attended if offered on a school basis rather than from a central venue in the community and the new Higher Grade course in Management and Information Systems was suggested as a positive focus for EIL activities in S5 and S6. It was also suggested that the Careers Service could act as the first point of contact with employers for careers conventions.

Mock interviews

Several schools had set up programmes of mock interviews where employers or employer organisations such as Rotary gave pupils practice in job interviews. While many had gained a greater understanding of the necessary skills, and had improved their own self-awareness and

presentation skills, others had failed to take advantage of the opportunity. This seemed to be caused by poor briefing about the interviews: pupils said they did not understand what would be involved so decided to opt out.

Work experience

There are, at least, two levels to the management and organisation of work experience provision: the overall management of work experience and the practical organisation of placements. In three schools the actual organisation of the work experience placements was done by senior teachers. Two of these senior teachers had few links to guidance while in the third the careers coordinator (a PT guidance) had overall responsibility. In a fourth school a work experience coordinator organised work experience. In the remaining two schools a PT(G) was responsible.

Four schools certificated work experience via the SCOTVEC National Certificate module. One school delivered work experience in S5, one in S3/S4 and the remaining four placed work experience in S4. Five schools made use of regional databases for work experience in identifying possible placement employers.

In drawing together the views of pupils, parents, teachers and careers officers on work experience a number of benefits were identified:

- it helped remove some aspects of pupils' naiveté about the world of work;
- it could help confirm a career idea or prove to a pupil that the intended career choice was wrong;
- it improved attitudes to school work;
- it gave pupils an external reference on the quality of their work and their attitudes in a work situation;
- it could help to show pupils the relevance of particular school subjects;
- it could be a vehicle for a school to tackle equal opportunities issues, specifically regarding gender stereotyping in work;
- it could be a useful discussion point in a careers interview.

Areas of concern included:

- the lack of variety in placements;
- the importance of immediate debriefing and feedback;
- the need for guidance in choosing a work experience placement, particularly if it was being used as a job taster;
- ensuring the placement stretched each child;
- the difficulty of delivering the work experience module to pupils whose attendance was erratic.

Careers officers and work experience

Careers officers, on the whole, took a more radical and more critical view of work experience than other groups. This related to whether they thought it was appropriate for pupils to use work experience as a way of deciding on careers. On the one hand, pupils could gain a clearer picture of their attitudes, interests and skills in a work environment, very useful in their career decision-making. On the other hand, careers officers were anxious that work experience might not give an accurate picture of the particular career the pupil had in mind: the experience might be too positive, too negative or too limited and could have a strong but inappropriate influence on pupils' career decisions. Work experience was thought to be

limited in its value because it did not challenge pupils', already limited, ideas. One careers officer suggested pupils would benefit from an additional placement in an occupational area in which they did not have a career interest.

There was also Careers Service concern about the position of individual winter leavers in one area who spent their last few months of compulsory schooling on work experience but were receiving no training, in contrast to the experience of young people who had actually left school. Careers officers were concerned that pupils' experience of being in work without training might have a negative effect on their aspiration to training.

The place of work experience in career decision making

Careers officers were very much swimming against the tide in their scepticism about the value of work experience as a career trial. Guidance teachers in five of the six schools saw the main value of work experience as being the chance to test out career ideas. In the sixth school, staff had a different view and work experience was mostly seen as a chance to raise awareness of the world of work. However, in this school, work experience was seen as a low priority, and was not done until S5.

Parents and pupils also saw work experience as a job trial. It was for this reason that they were so concerned if pupils could not get a work experience placement that matched their interests. Academic pupils used work experience to test career ideas even if the work experience placements were at an inappropriate level in career terms.

What is the function of work experience? Perhaps it is inevitable that if guidance staff are involved in delivering the work experience module they will tend to locate it within a context of personal decision making. It seems almost impossible to stop young people seeking to test career ideas through work experience. Perhaps a way forward is to ensure EIL and careers education are integrated in a more structured way in the school curriculum and not just in the pupil's own experience. It is also important that the debriefing of work experience takes account of its effect on career thinking; perhaps this might be a useful role for the careers officer.

Developments and challenges in Education Industry Liaison

Teachers and careers officers noted the importance of TVEI in encouraging EIL activities and they expressed concern about what would happen to EIL work following the demise of TVEI. In particular, they expected a loss of expertise, and reduced funding for specific activities such as Understanding Industry. They were also anxious about what would happen to EIL databases of employers set up during TVEI. At the time of the research, Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) were still developing a role in EIL and had made little impact on the school staff we interviewed. Careers officers were more aware of EIL activities, and several Careers Services had been heavily involved in contributing to EIL databases and to specific activities such as Industry Awareness conferences. Indeed some careers officers felt the Careers Service was well placed to bring some coherence to EIL activities. It remained to be seen how far EBPs would take over TVEI's role, and what input the Careers Service would have to an EBP's work.

Two concerns were raised by some teachers and careers officers. Firstly, that there was already a shortage of good work experience placements and although staff supported the idea of progression in the EIL curriculum to include work-shadowing at S5/S6, they were not sure how sufficient numbers of employers might be found to make it possible for the majority of senior pupils. Secondly, they also identified a decrease in the number of visits to industry and

commerce by pupils in S3 and S4 caused, they thought, by the pressures of 'S' grade assessment requirements.

In the project schools, work experience was having an effect on the vocational choices of pupils. While careers officers noted that work experience was as a useful starting point for discussion in interviews, one careers officer in particular had recognised the combined effects of work experience, work shadowing and Understanding Industry activities in careers interviews with S5 and S6 pupils. We are conscious that there are ways in which other EIL activities influence the perceptions and decision-making of pupils. Within the constraints of this research it was not possible to seek further to identify these effects. This does not mean they do not exist.

There is considerable potential for integration between employer links and vocational and careers guidance. Some of these integrating areas are identified in "Education Industry Links in Scotland 5-18: A Framework for Action" (Scottish CCC 1995). In particular, pupil outcomes under the heading of Jobs and Work at S5/S6 include "demonstrate independence and responsibility in career decisions". Links between EIL and careers information are not only featured in the Framework document but are also noted as aspects indicating major strengths in draft HMI Performance Indicators for EIL.

Summary

Introduction

- the Careers Services involved in the research were not chosen by the research team but were those associated with the project schools.
- the research coincided with a period of major change in the management and role of the Careers Service which resulted in uncertainty and increased already high staff turnover. The turnover of careers officers was an issue in three of the project schools; consequently it is likely that we saw less Careers Service development work in the project schools than might otherwise have been the case.

Careers education

- the project schools varied in the extent to which careers education was delivered as part of their PSE programme; content was also variable across the schools although there were common elements to their careers education provision.
- the nature and extent to which the four commonly accepted elements of careers education (decision-making, opportunity awareness, transition skills and self-awareness) were covered differed substantially across the project schools. A common issue was how far careers education should be knowledge rather than skills focused.
- three schools used JIIG-CAL. Its effectiveness depended partly on the quality of feedback. The continued use of JIIG-CAL may be in doubt if schools have to pay directly for it.
- the project schools were reviewing careers education provision for the upper school to respond to the varied needs for a more diverse school roll; this was a cause of concern and difficulty. A particular difficulty was timing of input which, if geared to the staying-on pattern of the majority of pupils, excluded those who left earlier. In the four schools where careers education was differentiated, this was on the basis of pupils' qualification level.
- careers education appeared driven by top-down initiatives such as work experience and by the requirements of subject choice decision-making rather than closely linked to pupils' needs.
- there was little evidence of progression in careers education programmes and, in general, there was a lack of coherence and overall planning. The number of different staff involved, especially in the upper school, was a factor in this.
- in the majority of the project schools the role of the careers officer in the design or review of the careers education programme was very limited; their involvement in delivery was more variable across schools.

Careers Service

- careers officers identified pupils' needs on the basis of stage of leaving, levels of attainment and pupils' adjustment to school. They were more aware than guidance teachers of the career guidance needs of specific groups such as winter leavers. Although pupils from different schools had different needs, this had little impact on the approach of

the Careers Service. Both careers officers and guidance staff were unsure if the Careers Service had the necessary flexibility to respond to different guidance needs because of the increasingly tight targeting of Careers Service work.

- careers officers' major task was scheduled interviews, largely focused on S4-S6 pupils. They offered drop-in clinics in five of the six project schools. They were involved in a variety of other activities including S2/S3 subject choice with pupils and attendance at parents evenings.
- there was some concern that because of Scottish Office guidelines, the Careers Service might reduce its work with S2 pupils.
- in all but one of the project schools, all or a large majority of S4 and S5 pupils were interviewed by the careers officer. A common set of priorities was used across the project schools; four schools used a screening form.
- the time gap between requesting an interview on a screening form and receiving one was a problem for some pupils. Although the priority system had been explained, many pupils were uncertain about how the interviewing system operated. Guidance staff and careers officers over-estimated pupils' awareness of interview arrangements.
- even where pupils understood and accepted that leavers should have priority for careers interviews, they felt strongly that others should have ready access to an interview. Parents also wanted their child to have more, and earlier, individual contact with the careers officer. There was parental and pupil support for the principle of automatic careers interviews for all pupils.
- much of the work of the Careers Service focused on pupils with obvious careers needs or difficulties. But if careers officers are to fulfil their full role, they also need contact with pupils with less obvious needs including those who have apparently made their career choice.
- apart from via the screening questionnaire, pupil self-referral to the careers officer was limited. Reasons included uncertainty about the purpose and approach of the careers interview and nervousness about interviews in general. Self-referral to the careers officer needed the encouragement of both guidance and subject teachers. Many pupils were not able to be proactive in seeking careers information or in initiating a careers interview.
- some careers officers identified a conflict in guidance from the Scottish Office about the basis on which Careers Services should design their interviewing systems.
- in five schools, careers officers received pupil profiles from guidance staff prior to interview. There was no evidence that Record of Achievement work was made available to careers officers; this is an area for development.

Careers officer/guidance teacher relationship

- in principle, the role of guidance teachers and careers officers is a complementary one. The careers officer was seen by pupils, parents and teachers as an unbiased specialist adviser; careers officers valued guidance teachers' greater knowledge of pupils (although this was identified by a very substantial proportion of guidance staff as limited). Pupils' awareness of the respective roles of the careers officer and guidance teacher varied across the schools, being greatest where the careers officer had been in post for some time.

- feedback from the careers officer to guidance was usually by a written summary of guidance, face-to-face discussion was very limited.
- teachers and careers officers identified three factors critical to an effective guidance/ Careers Service relationship: the building up of communication and trust; clarity about the responsibilities and standards required of each side (Service Level Agreements were seen as helpful) and good personal contact.
- careers officers thought that guidance teachers were less likely to give contradictory advice than were subject staff or senior management. Subject choice and post-school choices were two areas where guidance teachers and careers officers might give different advice.
- careers officers in all but one of the project schools linked mainly with one guidance teacher who organised interviews and reports. This was administratively convenient but distanced them from guidance staff as a whole. Organisational arrangements needed to work smoothly but they could perhaps be dealt with as part of guidance administrative support and the time of the promoted guidance teacher freed for a more developmental role with the careers officer.
- the careers officer was not integrated into the school system in four of the project schools; attendance at guidance meetings would have been welcomed.

Careers Service management and quality assurance

- the large majority of pupils who had had contact with the Careers Service were positive, thinking that the careers officer had extended their ideas and provided help in finding work, training or courses.
- the effectiveness of careers officers varied and dealing with this variation was seen as an important role for Careers Service management.
- schools judged the effectiveness of careers officers on: their ability to fit in with the school system; speed of response to teacher and pupil requests for advice; and ability to give realistic advice.
- careers officers and guidance teachers were working to different levels of accountability; careers officers' work was closely monitored with tight targets to meet. There was concern that such targets might decrease flexibility to respond to pupils' needs.
- Service Level Agreements between schools and Careers Services were being used to negotiate their respective responsibilities for careers education and guidance and were also being used by Careers Services as a means of evaluating their provision in schools.
- as part of the changes to the Careers Service, greater importance was being given to accountability and quality assurance, including more evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- maintaining a service to schools in a period of change was a challenge for the Careers Service. Other developments such as client entitlement statements and the implications of Higher Still for careers guidance were identified as further challenges.

Employers and guidance

- education industry liaison (EIL) activities and guidance were largely separate from each other, the main exception was work experience. EIL and guidance were managed in four of the six schools by different members of staff, and in these schools guidance teachers had little knowledge of the EIL co-ordinator and no formal links had been established.
- apart from work experience and the provision of mock interviews, there were a variety of other EIL activities across the project schools but no school was involved in all or the majority of them.
- while mock interviews by employers were valuable in improving pupils' self-awareness and presentation skills, some pupils did not take advantage of them because of lack of information from the school.
- there were varied models of organising and delivering work experience. Four schools certificated work experience via the SCOTVEC National Certificate module.
- teachers, parents and pupils identified a number of benefits of work experience, especially the opportunity to test out career ideas. Areas of concern included lack of variety in placements and greater emphasis on immediate de-briefing and feedback.
- careers officers were more critical of work experience believing that a single placement was insufficient to test out career ideas but that it could have a strong influence on pupils' career decisions. Their scepticism of the value of work experience as a career test was not shared by the majority of guidance teachers, pupils and parents.
- careers officers and several teachers raised concerns about a shortage of good work experience placements and the difficulty of offering work shadowing in S5 as a progression from S4 work experience. They also pointed to a decrease in visits to employers in S3 and S4, possibly because of pressures of Standard Grade work.
- teachers and careers officers noted the importance of TVEI in encouraging EIL activities and were concerned about the impact of its demise.
- employer links, particularly work experience, had an effect on pupils' vocational thinking. It was not possible within the constraints of this research to identify other EIL activities that were influential.
- there is considerable potential for greater integration between EIL and vocational and careers guidance; some areas of integration are identified in "Education Industry Links in Scotland 5-18: A Framework for Action" (Scottish CCC 1995).

Issues

- how can careers education be developed to offer more coherent provision and greater progression? How can careers education respond to the varied needs of senior pupils and what is an appropriate level of differentiation? How far should a careers education programme respond to pupils' wishes and how far should it seek to challenge and extend their thinking? To what extent should the careers officer be involved in the design and/or the delivery of careers education?
- on what basis should Careers Services design their interviewing? Are certain groups of pupils disadvantaged by the present arrangements?
- teachers, pupils and parents wished individual Careers Service contact with S2 pupils. How can the Careers Service respond in a situation where the guidance needs of pupils appear to be in conflict with official guidelines that give priority to the upper school?
- pupils and parents need a clearer understanding of the Careers Service, the role of the careers officer and when to initiate contact.
- pupils were not proactive in using careers information or initiating contact with the Careers Service. There is a need to help pupils realise their responsibilities in seeking information and guidance. How can this be done? Would more of a focus on skill development in careers education be useful? Pupils needed help specifically on how to use a careers interview productively.
- what is the best model for organising school-Careers Service links? Should one guidance teacher act as the main link? Is there a case for the organisation of the Careers Service input to be handled by a senior teacher or administrative staff?
- how can careers officers be more integrated into the school system and guidance team? How can greater integration between careers education and EIL provision be achieved? Would a whole-school policy for careers provision and EIL be a starting-point for this? Should schools and the Careers Service set up joint careers management teams?
- stability in Careers Service staffing was identified as critical in building a good relationship with guidance and in enabling development work in school. Do the current Careers Service arrangements encourage or discourage greater stability in staffing?
- will the targets set for the Careers Service and for individual careers officers reduce their flexibility to respond to pupils' guidance needs? Are the targets useful in encouraging careers officers to plan their work more effectively?
- What is the function of work experience? If it is used to test career ideas, how can schools prevent it having an inappropriate influence on pupils' career thinking? Is better de-briefing sufficient or do pupils need more than one placement?
- to what extent can information contained in the National Record of Achievement be used by the careers officer as part of the careers guidance process? How should the Careers Plan of Action relate to the NRA?

Chapter 10 Discussion and issues

Introduction

The central aim of the research has been to consider the extent to which guidance provision in the schools involved in the project met the guidance needs of pupils and their parents. We are conscious of the difficulties in trying to assess the effectiveness of guidance provision. Our approach has been to focus on the experiences and perceptions of both the consumers of guidance (the pupils and parents), and also the providers (guidance teachers, other relevant staff and careers officers), to relate their views to the guidance processes in operation in the schools, and to judge the situation in the project schools against national and regional policies and statements about guidance, including the HMI Performance Indicators for Guidance.

One of the main findings of the research is the extent to which pupils' opinion and experience of guidance was dependent on the attitude and approach of the individual guidance teacher in question. In this case, one might ask whether it is worthwhile to consider what, in addition to greater attention to the selection and training of the best staff, can be done to improve provision? Is guidance so individualistic that nothing at a system level would be productive? We would strongly suggest that while some individual guidance teachers would be effective in spite of poor structures and systems, and some would be ineffective even working within a well developed framework, the majority of guidance staff would operate more effectively if the conditions within which they work were further developed. They would also do so at less cost to themselves. Much of what we have to say in this chapter concerns such developments.

The need to develop structures and systems focuses attention on the management of guidance. Individual guidance teachers were so critical in determining the standard of guidance experienced by pupils partly because of weaknesses in the management of guidance. It may well be that guidance poses a more difficult, or, at least, a different challenge for senior management than do subject departments but what was most striking was the attitude of some members of senior management and many guidance staff to the issue. There was almost a reluctance to accept the need to manage guidance which, in part, seemed to stem from a feeling that attention to management issues would somehow detract from the caring, personal emphasis of guidance. The need to improve management of guidance is a recurring theme in this chapter.

We begin by considering several fundamental issues that the research has raised, we then discuss the relationship between guidance provision and needs in the project schools and move on to discuss a number of aspects of the operation of guidance that need to be developed. We end by looking ahead to some of the possible implications for guidance of the Higher Still plans.

Support for the guidance system

We found very strong support among pupils and parents for the existence of a guidance system. As far as pupils and parents were concerned, guidance provision was an essential feature of secondary education. We also found an extremely high level of commitment among guidance staff to pupils on their caseload and it was clear that they made every effort to respond to the needs of individual pupils, often working under considerable pressure.

The research does, however, raise several basic questions about guidance, in particular, who is guidance for, and issues about minimum entitlements and standards.

Is guidance for all pupils?

National and regional statements about guidance emphasise that all pupils come within the remit of guidance and that a basic aim of guidance is that each pupil should be known and treated as an individual. This is articulated in the first aim for guidance system put forward in “More Than Feelings Of Concern” that “each pupil knows and is known personally and in some depth by at least one member of staff”. This remains fundamental to guidance in Scotland. This basic concept that guidance should deal with all pupils and should relate to them on an individual level was reiterated in the various policy and other documents about guidance produced by the project schools. Staff were strongly committed to the principle of “guidance for all” and both pupils and parents believed that guidance should have a role with all pupils.

It was also evident from the project schools, however, that on the whole, guidance was not serving the needs of all pupils but tending to focus on the “crisis” or “problem” pupil. There was variation in this across the schools and at different stages of pupils’ school life, for example, provision at the primary/secondary transition was generally felt by pupils, parents and teachers to be effective. Nevertheless, we found considerable dissatisfaction among most of the guidance teachers we interviewed who felt that because of their time allocations and workload they were only able to be reactive in their work, concentrating on pupils with problems at the expense of the “ordinary” pupils. Most of the school staff interviewed queried whether the majority of pupils would perceive guidance as relevant to them and not just for pupils in trouble or obviously in need of help and support. In only two of the project schools were staff generally confident that they were reasonably well acquainted with pupils on their caseload.

The responses of parents and especially of pupils, bore out teachers’ misgivings, indeed went beyond them. Although the majority of guidance staff were not satisfied with their contact with their caseload, pupils were even less satisfied about the extent and quality of contact with their guidance teacher, especially in four of the six project schools. Pupils and parents in these schools also thought guidance focused on pupils in trouble or with problems.

As we have already noted, we found considerable variation in pupils’ experience and opinion of guidance depending on their guidance teacher. While pupils’ experience of guidance will inevitably vary depending on their particular guidance teacher, we would strongly suggest that the extent of variation experienced by pupils and parents in the project schools was not acceptable. If guidance is meant to cater for all pupils, then all pupils should be assured of at least a minimum standard in the provision they receive.

Issues

- **If the present aim of guidance to provide for all pupils is to be meaningful, then guidance needs to move beyond a reactive, problem-driven approach.**
- **Schools need to ensure a consistent, minimum standard of guidance provision for all pupils, irrespective of their particular guidance teacher.**
- **Priorities for guidance should be set at a national, regional and local level.**
- **Standards for guidance practice need to be agreed and regularly reviewed.**

The delivery of guidance to all pupils

If the present “guidance for all” policy is to be delivered in practice, a number of issues have to be addressed. One is what, in practice, should “guidance for all” mean, for example, does it mean that all pupils should have a specified entitlement to guidance support (with a time allocation costed in) or does it mean the availability of guidance staff to all pupils? Another issue that needs to be considered and made explicit is how well guidance teachers should be expected to know pupils on their caseload. A third is how can the agreed contact and relationship between guidance teachers and their pupils be best achieved? What is the role of an annual programme of one-to-one interviews? To what extent should they be replaced or supplemented by small group work? Should guidance staff deliver PSE to their own caseload as a way of building up a good relationship with them? What part should informal contacts with pupils play in this? What combination of these strategies would be most productive?

We found strong support among pupils and parents in the project schools for more regular one-to-one interviews. Nevertheless, it was also evident that a programme of annual one-to-one interviews did not, of itself, result in a meaningful relationship between pupils and guidance staff. The success of the interviews depended partly on their timing and, therefore, whether there was something meaningful to discuss, and partly on the extent of other contact pupils had with their guidance teacher. Pupils and parents also suggested small group sessions with guidance staff. It is worth noting that while a few guidance teachers in the project schools did hold small group sessions, their focus was heavily on one-to-one contact. Although pupils who were taught PSE every week by their own guidance teacher were more aware of guidance provision and its relevance to all pupils, it was less clear whether they necessarily felt better known by their guidance teacher. The evidence from the project schools suggests that a combination of approaches is likely to be the best strategy but also that the quality of the organisation and delivery of a particular approach is vital to success.

An aspect of the relationship between pupils and their guidance teacher that needs to be addressed concerns confidentiality and privacy. Our research indicates there was a difference in perception between guidance teachers and pupils about whether confidentiality would be respected or not. It was also clear that pupils wanted more privacy in dealings with guidance teachers than was recognised by staff. Reassurance about both confidentiality and privacy were critical to pupils’ willingness to approach their guidance teacher. Is it a case of different expectations about confidentiality? If so, then expectations need to be made explicit. Guidance staff also need to review their contacts with pupils and consider how they can respond to pupils’ need for greater privacy. The question of suitable accommodation may be a relevant consideration.

Guidance teachers in the project schools believed that a high level of pupil self-referral was an indication of successful guidance provision and they would have welcomed a higher level

of pupil-initiated contact than was the case. They put forward a number of reasons for the limited amount of self-referral, in particular, pupils' lack of on-going contact with, and easy access to, their guidance teacher. Pupils' responses echoed these views to some extent although other factors such as the approachability of the guidance teacher and concern about confidentiality also played a part in their willingness to go to their guidance teacher.

Issues

- **There is a need to consider and make explicit, what is meant in practice by “guidance for all”. National guidelines would provide the basis from which schools could clarify and agree this on a whole-school basis.**
- **How well should guidance teachers be expected to know pupils on their caseload and how can this agreed level be achieved?**
- **What is the role of individual interviews, small group work, PSE teaching and informal contacts in developing the pupil-guidance teacher relationship. How can these strategies be effectively organised and delivered?**
- **Guidance teachers and pupils do not share the same perceptions about confidentiality; expectations and boundaries need to be clarified and agreed. Schools appear to underestimate pupils' needs for privacy. Is the pupil perception fair and how should schools respond?**
- **If self-referral is accepted as a positive feature of guidance, how can schools encourage a high level of self-referral among pupils? Pupils' perceptions of the role of guidance and accessibility of the guidance teacher seem critical to self-referral. How can perceptions about guidance and access be improved to encourage appropriate self-referral?**

The identification of pupils' guidance needs

Lack of evaluation

Perhaps the most important point in considering pupils' needs and the extent to which guidance provision responded to these needs is the lack of any sustained attempt in the project schools to evaluate pupils' needs. Some staff referred to the range of pupil needs identified in “More Than Feelings Of Concern” and all noted various needs drawing on their personal experience as teachers and guidance teachers. A number mentioned other strategies to pick up on pupils' needs and in those schools achieving a programme of annual interviews with pupils, these provided at least a potential means of identifying need. But none of the project schools conducted a regular, comprehensive review of pupils' needs.

Most of the staff interviewed had been guidance teachers for some time and clearly had much relevant experience to draw upon but it is important to recognise the limitations of personal experience. This is particularly the case because the situation in the majority of the project schools meant there was little cross-checking and balancing of individual teacher's personal views and experiences. It also meant that individual reflections on pupils' needs were less likely to inform any planning process.

Focus on provision by stage

A feature of both national and regional documentation on guidance has been a tendency to focus on the guidance provision that should be offered and guidance teachers' duties or role as much as directly describing needs. We found the same tendency among the staff we interviewed; they quickly moved from identifying pupils' needs to describing provision at each school stage. Their response highlighted what seems to us to be one of the underlying characteristics of guidance in the project schools, that is the implicit nature of much that is assumed and carried out in guidance. Guidance practice seemed often to be based on a set of unstated assumptions that were assumed to be shared by guidance and other school staff.

Does it matter that staff tended to focus on guidance provision rather than pupils' needs and that practice seemed to be based on implicit assumptions among staff? We would suggest that it does, that the identification of pupil needs must come first and be the starting point for determining provision. The identification of pupils' needs also provides the basis from which to decide on priorities for guidance. Without a clear view of pupils' needs, it is not possible to make well-founded decisions about what should be given priority in the work of guidance teachers. The idea of a pupil entitlement to guidance would be helpful in this respect since such an approach starts from the needs of all pupils. The research identified a considerable gap in teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of guidance provision which is a further argument for greater attention to assessing pupils' needs.

An emphasis on provision at the various school stages was evident in staff's responses to the question of pupils' needs. This is perhaps not surprising given the way schools are organised around the delivery of stage-related curricula, but guidance staff also frequently commented about the variation in needs within year groups because of different levels of maturity. Is there an over-emphasis on provision by stage and does this hamper guidance teachers from considering individual needs?

Is guidance for the school or for pupils?

The stress on stage-related provision and needs also indicates that there are guidance needs that might be considered pupils' own self-generated needs, and others that are created externally because of the way the school curriculum is organised and schools' administrative requirements. The latter type of need is reflected in staff's emphasis on guidance provision by stage in answer to our questions about pupil needs. Is the distinction between pupils' own needs and school generated needs relevant in practice or is it merely a theoretical point?

We would suggest that there are implications in practice for pupils and S2 subject choice interviews illustrate this. There was some feeling among pupils and parents that the way in which S2 course choice interviews were conducted reflected the schools' administrative requirements to get a timetable arranged rather than pupils' need to have an opportunity to consider their best options. We also found that whether a guidance need is essentially a school rather than a pupil need can influence the priority given to an activity. It is obviously in pupils' interests that schools operate efficiently but it might be helpful if schools were more explicit about the purposes and priorities of various activities. This would allow them to be organised as effectively as possible for their main purpose and for that purpose to be communicated to pupils, parents and teachers.

More generally, we might ask the question to what extent is guidance serving the schools' needs rather than those of pupils and parents? The general perception among pupils was that guidance staff were not neutral but would automatically support their colleagues and the school. There was a greater feeling among parents than pupils that guidance staff should be more active as advocates on behalf of their pupils than they appeared to be. Some parents

believed that part of the guidance role should be to challenge the school system where it did not meet pupils' needs or was causing them unwarranted difficulties. Parents recognised the potential conflict in the guidance teacher's role, on the one hand having to represent the school's position on an issue, and on the other, being there to act in a supportive capacity to individual pupils.

The evidence from the project schools suggests that, on the whole, the balance is tilted towards guidance supporting the smooth running of the school. Is this the role that guidance should fulfil or should there be greater emphasis on an advocacy role for guidance whereby they bring areas of concern and difficulty for pupils to the attention of the school?

Issues

- **There is a need for more systematic and comprehensive assessment of pupils' needs. Schools should consider the most appropriate methods to use and how the results can be fed into their planning process.**
- **Is there currently an over-emphasis on defining provision and needs by stage of schooling that hampers guidance staff from considering individual needs?**
- **What is the correct balance between guidance serving the administration of the school and supporting pupils?**
- **Should there be a greater emphasis on an advocacy role for guidance? Is part of the remit of guidance to challenge the school system where it is not meeting the needs of pupils?**

The relationship between provision and needs

On the whole, guidance provision in the project schools seemed to be based on a generalised model of pupil needs. This was perhaps inevitable in the absence of whole-school reviews of pupils' needs and of guidance provision. It is possible to identify a number of aspects of provision that were directly related to the particular needs of pupils in individual schools (and we discuss these below) but these were relatively limited. It was difficult to see the impact of particular pupils' needs in the structure of guidance provision in each of the project schools. Given the reactive nature of much guidance work in the project schools, it may be that variation in guidance provision because of different pupil needs occurs most at the individual level in response to individual pupils' difficulties. This means that the relationship between needs and provision will be much less evident in structures and systems and more to be found in how each guidance teacher deals with individual cases. But it also means that the guidance response to variation in need is a partial one, linked to obvious needs or problems.

There were two areas where it was possible to see some direct relationship between pupils' particular needs and guidance provision. One was PSE provision, at least to some extent, and the second related to the response to pupils' socio-economic background.

Although a considerable amount of the content of PSE was included as a result of national and regional guidelines and also tended to reflect generally accepted year group needs, there were aspects of PSE provision that were based on pupil needs in the particular school. PSE in the senior school, especially, was where provision could be most clearly seen to be directly related to specific pupil needs. Here the academic profile and likely post-school destinations of pupils influenced both the content of PSE and also the organisation of PSE classes.

Nevertheless, there is an issue about the extent to which all pupils should follow a common core of PSE provision and how much it should differ in response to specific pupil needs.

Impact of pupils' socio-economic background on guidance needs

The socio-economic background of pupils was one of the major sources of variation in pupils' needs within and across the project schools that staff identified. In four of the six project schools, deprivation was seen as having an impact on pupils' guidance needs in a number of respects and staff noted that pupils from deprived backgrounds were more likely to be the focus of their attention.

The impact of pupils' background on guidance provision varied across the project schools, for example, in one school it led to the focusing of guidance on a particular cohort of pupils; in another school it prompted the introduction of additional interviews by guidance teachers with senior pupils; in a third school, it influenced the decision to use additional posts in guidance rather than in a subject area.

On the whole, staff did not identify particular needs experienced by middle class pupils. It may be that their answers about the impact of pupils' socio-economic background reflected the everyday pressures and priorities of guidance which responded to pupils with the most immediate or obvious needs or problems. In the absence of a comprehensive evaluation of pupil needs, it was not possible to be sure whether middle class pupils, or pupils from more affluent backgrounds, had unmet needs. But judging from the pupil groups and the responses of parents, this may well have been so. It is part of the wider issue we raised at the beginning of this chapter, that the focus of guidance is on the crisis or problem pupil to the exclusion of those who appear to be coping.

The general attitude of staff to the socio-economic background of pupils also reinforced the view of guidance as problem-driven because their underlying view seemed to be one that saw guidance as compensating for deficiencies in pupils' background. It was based on a deficit model rather than one which sought to build on the positive elements in pupils' family and community. There was some feeling among parents in three of the project schools that teachers tended to conceptualise pupils' behaviour in a more negative way because of their background and the nature of the school catchment than was warranted. A particular example was the extent to which drugs were seen to be a problem.

Issues

- **The structure and nature of guidance provision in the project schools did not appear to be determined to a major extent by particular pupil needs in each school.**
- **Are there particular pupils or groups of pupils whose needs are being overlooked?**
- **Pupils' socio-economic background did have a direct impact on guidance provision in a school, but is guidance unduly based on a deficit model which sees provision as compensating for deficiencies in pupils' background? Are alternative models preferable and possible?**

Time and workload

The recommended minimum time allocation for guidance staff is 40 minutes per week for every 15 pupils on their caseload. This was first put forward in 1971 and has not been changed since then. The large majority of guidance staff interviewed believed that their time allocation and workload prevented them from fulfilling their remit. As we described in chapter four, the time allocation and caseload of guidance teachers interviewed varied considerably, including within the same school. In none of the project schools did all of the guidance staff interviewed have the minimum recommended time. A majority in two schools did but only a minority in another two schools and none in the other two schools had the minimum time allocation. The position of some guidance staff was worsened because of a lack of protection of their guidance time. At the same time, guidance staff pointed to the increasing expectations of, and demands on, guidance. Both guidance staff and senior management recognised a need to establish priorities for guidance but there was no consensus about who should do so within the school. Both, however, believed that priorities also needed to be set nationally.

Given the variation in guidance teachers' time allocation and workload, including within the same school, it is not easy to assess the impact on their effectiveness, in particular, the effect on their contact and relationship with all of their caseload. Guidance teachers with the lowest pupil:time allocation were most likely to believe they lacked knowledge of their caseload, to be inaccessible to their pupils and to be particularly focused on problem pupils in their work. Their perceptions were borne out by pupils in these schools who were, in fact, more negative about their guidance teachers' accessibility. On the whole, there did seem to be a positive relationship between a better pupil:time allocation and the effectiveness of guidance provision although the relationship is not a precise one.

It was clear that most guidance staff were working under considerable pressure and that many felt that their guidance role impinged on their work as subject teachers. A particular aspect was that guidance staff needed an element of flexibility in their time allocation that was not necessary in subject teaching and which was difficult for subject departments to accommodate.

In considering how to move forward on the issue of time and workload, we would suggest that a monitoring and costing process should be undertaken as the starting point. Very few of the guidance teachers we interviewed kept, or were asked to keep, a record of how they spent their time. Without such information, it is impossible to assess whether it is feasible to develop strategies for managing time more effectively. A costing exercise would also provide the necessary basis for making decisions about priorities and where guidance time should be spent. But most importantly, it is much more difficult to argue convincingly for a higher time allocation without the evidence to support the case. In this we are echoing "More Than Feelings Of Concern" which stated that as a starting point for arguing their case for more time, guidance staff, with senior management, should "make a rigorous analysis of guidance priorities and be able to demonstrate that the time at present available is being used to maximum advantage before proceeding to consider what additional allocation may be necessary". It goes on to state that "we are confident that this kind of examination will generally reveal that insufficient time is available for the guidance work of the school".

The time/workload question brings us back to the issue of pupil needs and entitlement. We would support the approach put forward in the Managing Guidance Resource Pack. It advocates basing an analysis of guidance time on a pupil entitlement for guidance support and gives practical suggestions for how schools might go about doing this.

The staffing position as a whole in guidance teachers' subject departments also needs to be considered. As well as looking at the time allocation and workload of guidance teachers themselves, senior management should assess the effect of teachers' guidance role on their subject department and take this into account in its staffing levels.

The approach suggested in *Managing Guidance* is not a panacea for an inadequate time allocation, nor would any other strategy be, but our basic point is that without more rigorous attention to how guidance teachers use their time, it is very difficult both to make any improvements within the current allocations and also to argue a good case for additional time.

Issues

- **The research indicates a link between a better pupil: time allocation and the effectiveness of provision. Schools should consider a comprehensive review of pupils needs as the starting point for setting priorities for guidance staff and calculating a realistic time allocation to enable them to deliver the identified priorities.**
- **Once the appropriate time allocation is identified, attention must be given to ensure that this time is given to guidance teachers.**
- **Overall staffing levels in subject departments with guidance staff should be calculated taking their guidance commitments into account.**
- **Attention needs to be given to how guidance teachers can make best use of their time, including:**
 - ◆ **adoption of good time management strategies on their part**
 - ◆ **consideration of whether aspects of their work might be organised differently at a school level (eg dealing with attendance) or more appropriately carried out by auxiliary staff (eg some administration)**
 - ◆ **the possibility of dedicated administrative support for guidance staff.**
- **There is a need for guidance staff to keep a record of their time and activities.**

Demands and pressures on guidance teachers

The expectations and demands on guidance staff have grown considerably in the past decade in relation to, for example, pastoral guidance, curricular and vocational guidance, PSE and their role in the implementation of a number of cross-curricular initiatives such as Records of Achievement. At the same time, guidance teachers in the project schools received little guidance from management or from a regional or national level about the priorities for their work. Although there are national priorities on certain initiatives such as work experience, they have been set independently of each other and without consideration of guidance staff's overall remit. This piecemeal setting of priorities relating to single initiatives was perceived by schools to be part of the workload problem. There was also some feeling among staff that the sorts of problems they had to cope with in their pastoral work had become more complex and sometimes more distressing, causing them greater stress.

We have already noted that the majority of the guidance staff we interviewed did not receive, at least, the minimum recommended time for their guidance activities and their position within the school system caused further pressure. The large majority of guidance teachers

interviewed used their non-contact subject time for guidance work and tried to catch up on their subject preparation and marking out of school hours. A frequent comment was that they felt guilty about the negative effect of their guidance work on their subject teaching and subject department. At the same time some aspects of their guidance role were thought to be poorly understood by colleagues, for example, in relation to discipline. This could mean that subject staff had unrealistic expectations of guidance teachers or failed to understand why they should have their non-contact guidance time protected. More generally a number of guidance staff felt that in a school system which is based on subject departments, their work and skills as guidance staff without a subject specialism, tended to be undervalued. A particular issue that a number of APT(G)s raised was the difficulty sometimes encountered when negotiating with a PT in a subject area because of the difference in status.

Both pupils and parents suggested the idea of full-time guidance teachers, seeing this as a way to resolve time and access problems, and as something that would contribute to greater professionalism in guidance. None of the guidance and other staff interviewed supported the idea of full-time specialist guidance teachers. They believed that their credibility with colleagues depended partly on their perceived ability as subject teachers and that it was important for them to have contact with all types of pupils and not just those with difficulties or problems. The latter reason reflects the focus of guidance in the project schools. It is worth noting that in the region in Scotland which has some full-time guidance teachers, that they still have a teaching role with the full range of pupils but in PSE rather than their subject.

Issues

- **Should guidance teachers continue to have a role as guidance and also subject teachers? Should full-time guidance teachers be considered?**
- **If guidance teachers are to continue to be subject teachers, how can their dual role be better accommodated?**
- **The role of guidance teachers needs to be clarified and communicated to other members of staff.**
- **More attention should be given to the support needs of guidance teachers themselves.**

Quality and consistency of guidance provision

One of the main findings of this research is the extent to which pupils' opinion and experience of guidance were dependent on the guidance teacher in question and we have raised the issue of how to ensure a consistent minimum standard of provision for all pupils. Two inter-related aspects that are particularly pertinent to the issue of quality and consistency of provision are the accountability of guidance staff and the extent to which they take a team approach.

Accountability

The majority of guidance teachers in four of the six project schools thought they were not really accountable to others for their guidance work and in these schools, the management approach was to emphasise the self-accountability of guidance staff to varying extents. None of the project schools had any comprehensive procedure or system for monitoring the everyday work of guidance teachers. The review of guidance related targets in the three schools with a development plan was the main formal, but very partial method of evaluation.

None of the schools had started staff appraisal and had not yet given much thought about whether guidance teachers would be appraised in this role as well as their capacity as subject teachers.

On the whole, the majority of staff interviewed were not in favour of greater review of their work and of more emphasis on accountability. A common response was that guidance teachers needed autonomy if they were to be effective in their work. In considering the accountability of guidance teachers, it is important to make the distinction between autonomy and accountability. We would not disagree with the need for autonomy but would argue that it is possible to combine autonomy with accountability.

Related to the question of accountability and minimum standards is the issue of record-keeping, both in terms of guidance teachers monitoring their contact with pupils and also recording the nature and outcomes of that contact. A number of staff did not keep a systematic record of their contacts with their case-load and only in one school did guidance staff use a common record-keeping system. We would suggest that apart from the question of accountability, good record-keeping has a direct contribution to make to effective guidance, for example, to the quality of pastoral care or in identifying pupil needs and feeding these back to the school. There was, however, a tendency among some staff in the majority of the project schools to view record-keeping in a negative light, possibly because they associated record-keeping with burdensome administration, for example, in dealing with attendance.

A team approach

The extent to which guidance teachers operated as a team, working together following a common policy and approach, is clearly relevant to the issue of consistent standards of guidance provision. In two schools, the general view was that guidance teachers did work as a team; opinion was more varied in a third school; and the common response in the other three was that a team approach was lacking. The particular guidance structure (ie horizontal or vertical) did not appear to explain the existence or otherwise of teamwork. The lack of teamwork may reflect not just the individualistic emphasis within guidance but also, more generally, the individualistic culture in schools and the perception that teachers should be able to manage pupils on their own.

Nevertheless, a majority of senior management and guidance staff acknowledged the need for guidance teachers to operate as a team and the project schools had made efforts to achieve a common policy and system in areas such as attendance, truancy and subject choice. Cases might still be handled differently, however, sometimes simply because of the time allocation of the guidance teacher concerned; pastoral guidance was where the response was thought to vary most.

We do not believe that guidance staff should be closely tied to specified approaches that must be followed by everyone. The issue is what level of commonality of input and accountability is necessary to achieve consistency of *outcome* for pupils. There seems to be a large degree of acceptance by management and guidance staff of individualism in guidance on the basis that each guidance case is unique and each guidance teacher different in his or her style. The research suggests that this approach may be detrimental to pupils.

Issues

- **Schools need to consider how systems can be established that will ensure a consistent quality of provision for pupils while allowing the necessary flexibility and autonomy to guidance staff.**
- **How can the quality of the work of individual guidance teachers be monitored sensitively?**
- **What aspects of guidance work need to be agreed and followed in common and what can be variable?**
- **What strategies can be adopted to foster a team approach, for example, how might guidance meetings help, how can the role of PT(G)s be developed to contribute to this?**

The management of guidance

The role and background of senior management

The level of commitment of senior management, in particular the headteacher, was critical to guidance in the project schools. The importance that the headteacher and other member of senior management gave to guidance was vital to its profile and status in the school and to the level of resources made available. The attitude of senior management to the role of guidance and how they used it, was also important in determining the image and purpose of guidance among other teachers, pupils and parents.

There is some debate whether the member of senior management responsible for guidance should have a background in guidance themselves. We found no evidence in the project schools to suggest that it was necessarily beneficial for the guidance manager to have had experience in guidance themselves.

Attitudes to the management of guidance

Our research indicates that there are major weaknesses in the management of guidance. Is it the case that the management of guidance is a more difficult, or at least, a different task than the management of a subject department because of the individual nature of guidance and also because of the location of responsibility for many cross-curricular initiatives with guidance? Both of these factors cut across the basis on which schools are organised, that is, subject departments. Part of the explanation for the difficulties in management may well be this anomalous position of guidance within the school system. Nevertheless, we would argue that another critical factor is the attitude of some senior management and many guidance staff to the contribution of management to the guidance process. At its most extreme, the attitude seemed to be that the essence of guidance is concern for, and care of, individuals and that the application of management principles to this process, at best, takes time away from face-to-face work with pupils, and at worst, actually detracts from the guidance process through “hard-nosed” managerial attitudes to, for example, recording and monitoring of practice. This is a somewhat crude attempt to convey what was frequently an implicitly held view of management and guidance but which was apparent when we discussed issues such as accountability and record-keeping with staff.

We would argue the need for training of the members of senior management responsible for guidance and resources such as the “Managing Guidance” handbook are extremely valuable in this respect. But, even more importantly, there needs to be a change of attitude among

some staff to the management of guidance. They need to be convinced that management is not an inevitable evil but has the potential to enhance the guidance process and that the task is to ensure that this potential is realised.

Guidance structure

The project schools were evenly divided into horizontal and vertical guidance systems. We had thought that the type of guidance structure might well be an important factor in explaining differences in the nature and quality of guidance provision across the project schools. But the type of guidance structure did not appear to be a major explanatory factor even in relation to aspects where one might have expected the impact of different structures to be most apparent, for example, whether guidance staff operated as a team and parents' experience of guidance.

Remits of PT and APT guidance staff

Efforts were being made to achieve greater differentiation in the work of PT(G)s and APT(G)s in most of the project schools, usually by defining extra responsibilities for the PT(G). In particular, senior management was keen to develop the management role of PT(G)s. There was, however, a tension in half of the project schools between the management view and that of guidance staff about the appropriate working relationship between PT(G)s and APT(G)s. Guidance staff advocated a single level of post within guidance rather than a hierarchical structure.

The level of allowance for the post of APT(G) was raised as an issue by a number of PT(G)s who suggested that it had become eroded and was now no greater than that of senior teachers who carried much lighter responsibilities.

Policy and planning

Although all of the project schools articulated a "guidance for all" principle, on the whole, guidance was not able to fulfil this aim. The disjunction between policy and practice was most vivid in the two schools that were not able to deliver their stated policy of annual interviews with pupils. Such discrepancies between policy and practice devalues the policies, lowers morale amongst guidance staff by setting them unrealistic targets and are also likely to have a negative effect on the image of guidance in the school. Guidance policies are necessary but they also need to be feasible. This brings us back again to the need for each school to establish priorities for guidance and to cost the time and other resources necessary to deliver these priorities.

The involvement of guidance staff in the development of policy and in management decisions varied across the project schools. Guidance meetings in theory provided a forum for this but, in practice, tended to focus on administrative matters. It also seemed that the role of the PT(G)s in the development of policy and practice was relatively limited although most of the project schools were trying to enhance the management role of PT(G)s.

The project schools were at an early and varied stage of development planning but it appeared that the process was a valuable one. This seemed to be especially so where guidance staff had, as a department, reviewed and set targets for guidance. Development planning had a positive effect on the evaluation of provision as well as in developing practice. The review of development plan targets was the only regular formal method of evaluation in the schools, although limited to the specific targets of the development plan.

The guidance meeting has the potential to play an important role in the management of guidance but this potential value was not being realised in most of the project schools. One issue was whether guidance staff and the guidance manager shared a common understanding of the purposes of the guidance meeting. A second issue was whether the guidance meeting actually fulfilled its stated and agreed function. There was a need in several schools to agree the purposes of the guidance meeting and in three other schools to manage the meetings more effectively.

Issues

- **How can a more positive attitude to the contribution of good management practices to effective guidance be promoted?**
- **Does the management of guidance pose a particular challenge for senior management? Specific training in managing guidance would be helpful for members of senior management with a guidance remit.**
- **Should there be a single level of post within guidance? If not, how should the posts of PT(G) and APT(G) be differentiated? In particular, should the management role of PT(G)s be developed?**
- **There is a need to review policies on guidance to ensure that they are feasible and able to be delivered. This means consideration of how policies are to be delivered in practice by identifying priorities, setting objectives and specifying operational guidelines.**
- **The role of senior management and guidance staff in the process of policy development, identification of priorities and decision-making are unclear and subject to some disagreement. There is a need to clarify roles and responsibilities and establish effective mechanisms.**
- **The potential value of guidance meetings seems not to be realised. The purpose(s) of guidance meetings should be agreed between senior management and guidance staff and consideration given to strategies to run them more effectively. Staff development on effective meetings might be useful.**
- **Development planning can be of value to guidance and schools' development planning process should include guidance. What is the best way to do so? How can development planning be used to help guidance identify developments and set targets for guidance? The evaluation of targets should be part of the process.**

Communication

Guidance teachers and senior management relations

Contact with AHTs responsible for a house or a year group(s), most frequently over discipline, was an important aspect of the everyday work of guidance teachers. How the AHTs were organised and therefore how they linked with guidance varied across the project schools. One of the implications of the variety of structures was that there was no one organisational model that was clearly better than another in structuring the link between AHTs and guidance staff.

Discipline casework was the focus of guidance - senior management contact but lack of communication and consultation by senior managers was an issue for guidance teachers in the majority of project schools. It was felt this undermined the potential contribution of guidance to discipline and could sometimes mean senior management and guidance teachers were working at odds in their separate dealings with pupils.

Guidance and subject teacher relations

On the whole, guidance teachers felt that subject teachers had a better understanding of their role and were more positive about the value of guidance than in the past. Nevertheless, as we have already noted, there were still tensions about guidance teachers' time, outstanding issues about status and a lack of clarity about their role, especially in discipline.

Guidance teachers identified uncertainty among other staff about the guidance role in discipline despite clear policy statements. They noted that subject teachers were much more likely to refer pupils to them over disciplinary issues than about changes in pupils' mood or attitude.

Much subject teacher referral was on an informal basis and formal systems of referral had generally been restricted to disciplinary incidents. Guidance staff felt that subject teachers should be referring more pupils to them, on both an informal and formal basis and, especially, to alert them to non-disciplinary matters. Two schools had implemented a formal referral procedure to try and encourage subject teachers to contact guidance about other than disciplinary concerns.

The wider school culture which emphasises teachers' individual management of their class and ability to cope alone with difficulties appeared to be a factor limiting the extent of subject teacher referral. This suggests that a wider approach than the introduction of formal referral systems is required if subject staff are to play a greater role in the support of pupils. This is likely to include efforts to develop a climate in which teachers do not feel threatened to admit to difficulties in dealing with pupils.

Extended guidance team

The extent to which register teachers were willing and able to fulfil a more pastoral role varied across the project schools. Learning Support and English as a Second Language teachers saw themselves as in a good position to monitor pupils and alert guidance teachers if necessary, but it may well be that they were an under-used resource by guidance teachers.

In the two project schools with formal First Level Guidance both staff and pupils were positive about its benefit. Senior management in the other project schools all wished to develop a formal FLG system but a number of factors were preventing this: opposition from

teachers to the principle of involvement in FLG; a perceived lack of skills and forthcoming training and support; and resource and timetabling difficulties.

Issues

- **How can the link between senior management and guidance be best organised to enable good liaison on casework? Is there a need to review communications procedures to ensure a coherent approach?**
- **There is still a lack of understanding among subject teachers of the role of guidance teachers in discipline, how can their role be clarified and, in particular, communicated to other staff? Written policies do not appear to be sufficient, other strategies are necessary.**
- **How can all school staff be encouraged to make appropriate referrals to guidance? This is likely to require the development of a supportive climate in the school as a whole, as well as more specific initiatives such as referral systems for non-disciplinary matters.**
- **How can contact between guidance and other staff be moved beyond a focus on problems or crises?**
- **Learning Support and English as a Second Language teachers, especially, have a valuable role to play in extended guidance provision. How can the contact and co-operation between these staff and guidance teachers be further developed?**
- **Is further development of First Level Guidance feasible? In particular, is it likely without some increase in resources to give time, support and training to FLG staff?**

Staff support, training and development

The majority of guidance staff interviewed had been on some guidance-related in-service in the previous three years and under a third held a national qualification in guidance. None of the more recently appointed guidance teachers interviewed had had a formal induction. Most guidance staff identified a number of outstanding training and development needs. The position in respect of training raises a number of questions. One is whether guidance teachers should have a nationally recognised professional qualification in guidance. Some guidance staff, but more particularly pupils and parents, thought that guidance teachers should have a relevant qualification in the same way as subject teachers do. On the basis of the data we have, we cannot be definite about the relationship between guidance teachers' qualifications and their effectiveness. We did not think it appropriate to ask pupils to pass judgements on individual guidance teachers and, at a school level, there is no clear relationship between the proportion of staff with a national qualification in guidance and our judgement of the school's effectiveness.

A second issue is the extent to which there is coherence and progression in the in-service undertaken by guidance staff, much of their in-service seemed to be "bitty". The extent of progression in in-service training is particularly relevant because most of the guidance staff had been in post for a considerable time but their experience of guidance was limited to their present school. There was also generally little systematic opportunity for staff to pass on the knowledge and skills gained on in-service to colleagues. Although newly appointed guidance staff found working with more experienced colleagues valuable, the lack of formal induction for new guidance teachers was clearly a gap in provision.

The need for greater support in their work, especially when dealing with distressing casework, was identified by a number of staff.

Issues

- **Should all promoted guidance staff have a recognised qualifications in guidance?**
- **A more focused approach to the identification and planning of staff development to achieve greater coherence and progression is necessary.**
- **Structured induction should be provided for all newly appointed guidance staff.**
- **Attention should be given to strategies to ensure that staff who undertake training can pass on the knowledge and skills to colleagues.**
- **What is the appropriate balance between external courses and in-school provision using resource packages?**

Personal and Social Education

Status of PSE

All of the project schools were making considerable efforts to develop their taught PSE programme and there was a view that a more worthwhile PSE curriculum had evolved over the past decade. Both pupils and parents saw a need for PSE provision and that schools should fulfil a role in providing it. Nevertheless, the general view among staff was that PSE still lacked status and value in the eyes of pupils' parents and many teachers. However, we did not find this view borne out by parents who valued the role of PSE in tackling issues they saw as having a potential impact on their children. The evidence from the pupil groups suggested that whether or not pupils were dismissive of PSE was directly related to the quality of provision and the extent to which it was relevant to them rather than to a generalised view of the value of PSE. A number of teachers, however, felt under pressure to improve the credibility of PSE, for example, by introducing certification and emphasising content rather than process but both were seen as potentially damaging to the intrinsic value of PSE. On the whole, there was only limited support for certification among guidance and other staff involved in PSE. It was felt to be most appropriate, if at all, for the more vocationally oriented elements of provision.

Role of guidance

Although a majority of guidance teachers supported a leading role for guidance in PSE, this was not unanimous and there was a view, although a minority one, that it was not a legitimate role for guidance. Opinion also varied about the extent to which other teachers should be involved. Another perspective was that PSE was, in effect, "the guidance curriculum" which guidance should take ownership of in the same way as subject departments have their own curriculum. Whatever their views on the guidance role in PSE, virtually all guidance teachers saw involvement in PSE as secondary to individual contact with their pupils. One consequence of this was that although most guidance staff accepted, in principle, a role in PSE, in a situation where many did not think they had enough guidance time, there was some resentment about the time they had to spend on PSE activities. In at least half of the project schools, the nature of guidance teachers' role in PSE had not been fully resolved and some tension between the expectations of senior management and those of some guidance staff was evident.

Design and content issues

Pupils and parents identified the same range of topic areas that were covered in PSE programmes in the project schools but pupils were critical of how some of these topics were delivered, in particular, that they were not covered in a way that was relevant to their own circumstances and needs. They identified a number of topics not adequately dealt with: sex education; drugs; AIDS/HIV; alcohol; and, by S4 and S5 pupils, careers-related issues and study skills. Parents generally had not been given much information about PSE. A number not only wanted to know more about the content but also the timing of PSE input so they would know when to pick up on issues at home with their child.

The quality of the content, coherence and progression of PSE provision in the project schools was very variable. Staff in a majority of the project schools identified a number of outstanding difficulties and areas where development was needed. While pupil opinion of PSE was in line with general direction of teachers' estimation of provision, it was more negative.

The schools' attention was very much focused on the taught PSE programme and only one school carried out a regular curricular audit of other subject areas to assess the coverage of PSE topics elsewhere and to avoid overlap.

Responsibility for the design and management of PSE differed across the schools but it may well be that the approach most likely to achieve integrated, coherent provision is where one person has responsibility for the whole S1-S6 programme, that this person is not a member of senior management with this remit amongst a number of others, but is also someone with sufficient status, support and time to achieve results.

Three general issues about the content of PSE emerged from the research. One was whether the Record of Achievement initiative and, to a lesser extent, work experience was putting undue pressure on PSE time and squeezing out other parts, especially the social education elements. A second issue was differentiation; how should PSE respond to pupil diversity? This concerned both the variation in pupils' maturity, and also, in the upper school, pupils' different attainment levels and likely post-school destinations. A third issue was concern that PSE was too content focused at the expense of developing skills and understanding and the building up of the teacher-pupil relationship.

Delivery issues

The practical organisation and delivery of PSE provision was a continuing difficulty in the majority of the project schools. There was, as we have noted, tension between senior management and some guidance teachers about the role of guidance in PSE and there were difficulties in recruiting enough volunteer staff to help deliver PSE and in providing adequate support and training for them. The lack of training and support for non-guidance PSE tutors was seen as discouraging volunteers, but particularly, as having a negative effect on the quality of PSE provision to pupils. But the need for relevant training was not confined to non-guidance staff. Neither teachers nor pupils believed that guidance staff were necessarily better able to teach PSE, or, to train other staff to do so. Large class size in three schools compounded other factors affecting the quality of teaching. From the pupil point of view, there were major deficiencies in the teaching of PSE; the majority of pupils were negative about this. It is clear from the research that the quality of teaching in PSE is an area that needs to be addressed.

Issues

- **There is a need to achieve clarity and agreement about guidance teacher's role in PSE.**
- **The role of certification in PSE needs to be considered. Should PSE be certificated? Does certification enhance or detract from the value of PSE? Are there elements that would be more appropriate to certificate than others?**
- **If PSE is to meet pupils' needs it will require improvements in methodology and more effort to achieve greater coherence and progression. Attention should also be given to coverage of PSE topics outside of the taught PSE programme; audits of PSE should include both aspects of the PSE curriculum. There is a need to consider the management and organisational model that would best support the development of a more coherent and comprehensive programme.**
- **There are considerable difficulties with the practical organisation and delivery of PSE. In particular, the quality of teaching in PSE must be improved. All staff delivering PSE need more support and training and PSE classes should be of a size to allow appropriate methodologies to be used.**
- **There is a need to identify priorities for PSE provision given pressures from national and local initiatives such as Record of Achievement and work experience. Who should set these priorities and on what basis?**
- **Parents valued the potential of PSE and wanted more information about the content and timing of PSE input to allow them to work in partnership with the school. How should schools provide this information and how can they make use of the potential contribution of parents in achieving the PSE aims?**

The upper school

The general view among staff was that the more varied school roll and increasing complexity of the post-16 curriculum and post-school options posed a challenge for guidance. This concerned: curricular guidance; careers information and guidance; and inappropriate staying-on. Changes in the upper school were also seen as requiring the development of PSE provision to meet the different needs and more varied aspirations of senior pupils. Assessing the relative merits of possible curricular choices and of the different post-school options and keeping up to date with changes was identified as a challenge by all guidance teachers.

The general view among senior pupils in the project schools was that the extent of preparation they had received at the subject choice process in S4 and S5 was limited compared with input at S2. This was echoed by some staff and also by careers officers. S4 and S5 pupils of all academic levels identified a need for more careers education and guidance and a need for different timing of input. Senior pupils, including the most academic, wanted greater contact with the Careers Service and some academic pupils felt that they were disadvantaged by the current careers officer interview arrangements.

Traditionally, senior management has played a prominent role in the curricular and vocational guidance of senior pupils and we found this to be the case in the project schools. But the way the project schools organised information and support for senior pupils about the S4/S5 and S5/S6 transition and post-school opportunities raises the question whether pupils experienced integrated provision. The evidence from the pupil groups suggests that they did not. Although the precise arrangements varied across the project schools, some aspects of post-school options were covered as part of PSE and were the responsibility of guidance

while responsibility for other aspects, such as careers or FE/HE conventions lay elsewhere and were not part of the PSE programme. Typically, sessions on HE/UCAS were run by senior management or a senior teacher. In half of the project schools, senior management as well as guidance was involved in course choice interviews.

We are not suggesting that only guidance staff should deal with the curricular and vocational guidance of senior pupils but that more attention needs to be given to ensuring the different personnel work together so that the various elements of provision relate to, and build on, each other and that pupils receive more coherent information and support.

Issues

- **How can PSE provision be developed to take account of the different needs, aspirations and likely destinations of pupils? The extent of, and criteria for, differentiation need to be considered. Should differentiation mainly be in the context of careers education? The timing of input is another factor that should be reviewed carefully.**
- **Curricular guidance for senior pupils should be extended. This will require support and training of guidance and other staff involved in the process and also require better information systems. This is especially relevant because of the Higher Still Development Programme.**
- **A more integrated approach to the provision of curricular and vocational guidance for senior pupils is necessary. How can the respective roles of different staff be agreed and effective communication and liaison strategies devised?**

External agencies

There was some feeling among guidance staff that liaison with external agencies could be improved, either by the establishment of regular meetings or by making the existing meetings more effective. The exclusion of guidance teachers, in some cases, from joint agency meetings about pupils on their caseload, and lack of time to attend Children's Hearings and other meetings, were specific issues. Contact with other agencies to set up and attend meetings was a particularly time-intensive activity and one which was likely to impinge on guidance staff's subject as well as their guidance time.

Contact with social workers was seen as particularly difficult but guidance staff believed that external agencies were over-worked and under-resourced. It seemed that where Psychological Services had moved towards allocating schools a specific amount of time this had increased effectiveness because it had encouraged them to negotiate how the time could best be used.

The quality of input from the external agencies, especially Social Work, was viewed by guidance teachers as very dependent on the individual concerned. Staff turnover, therefore, had a particular impact. Guidance teachers identified a greater need for support from external agencies because of the increased emphasis on retaining pupils in school. Nevertheless, they felt there was some tension between their perspective on pupils and that of other agencies. There also appeared to be different expectations and understanding about the exchange of information about pupils and about confidentiality on the parts of guidance staff and of external agencies.

Issues

- **How can the awareness and understanding of the respective roles and approaches of schools and external agencies be improved? Expectations about the exchange of information and about disclosure need to be clarified and agreed.**
- **How much time is spent by guidance staff in support work to prevent pupils being excluded? What level of input from external agencies is necessary to support both pupils and school staff?**
- **The level and quality of support from individual workers to pupils and school from external agencies appeared to vary. What can be done to identify a base line provision to ensure that some pupils are not disadvantaged by different practices and resources?**
- **What is an appropriate role and level of involvement for guidance teachers in joint agency and other meetings?**

Parents and guidance

While some of the points from the research with parents have already been made in this chapter, there are a number of other points that we want to highlight.

Parents' satisfaction with guidance

Just over three-quarters of parents who responded to the questionnaire were very or fairly satisfied with guidance provision for their child, and two thirds were very or fairly satisfied with guidance provision for themselves. We selected parents for interview to reflect these levels of satisfaction but in discussing guidance with us, most of those interviewed identified expectations or support needs that they had not previously articulated. They, like most parents, had limited knowledge of the guidance system and had had little opportunity to reflect on it but, when asked to do so, moved beyond their questionnaire responses, and were more demanding of guidance. The questionnaire captured one level of response while the interviews gave parents the chance to go further in their thinking about the guidance system.

Lack of knowledge

We often had to explain the guidance system and the role of guidance teachers to parents in the research interviews. It must be of concern that many parents who were prepared to volunteer for an interview about guidance knew so little about it.

Parents' satisfaction with guidance in general, and with careers guidance and S2/S3 and S4/S5 subject choice in particular, related to how well they understood what was happening. It is crucial that both schools and the Careers Service ensure parents are better informed. This need for more information should not be seen only as something required to reassure parents. Guidance, PSE issues and careers advice are areas where parents expect to have a major influence and responsibility. A partnership between home and school, or parents and careers officers, will not work if neither knows the other, or is unaware of what the other is doing.

View of guidance

Although parents' perception of guidance was that it was currently problem-driven, their desire was that guidance should be for all pupils. They felt that guidance teachers should have a good knowledge of the children on their case load, should be approachable and encouraging, and from this would follow good quality information on their child's progress in academic, personal and social development. For most parents we interviewed, knowledge of their child underpinned the success of guidance communications to and from the home. This summary of parents' hopes for school guidance is very similar to the ideal model many guidance teachers and pupils suggested, and in line with the basic thrust of "More Than Feelings Of Concern".

There was strong parental support for guidance and for increased parental involvement at different stages. Although parents' level of satisfaction was reasonably high, there were, nevertheless, a number of suggestions for improvement. We were struck by the reasonable and constructive nature of most parents' comments on guidance. In making criticisms, parents often qualified these by showing understanding of the difficulty of the job of guidance teachers, the pressures staff were under and the problematic behaviour of some teenagers. Suggestions for improvement were mostly practical and constructive. We would suggest that evaluation of parents' views can give schools and the Careers Service useful information and suggestions.

Parents' guidance needs

Parents have needs in their own right although these were not directly identified by school staff. They needed to feel confident in the person responsible for their child's welfare, to be sure they would be contacted if any problems occurred and to find the guidance teacher approachable. Parents were anxious about bringing up their children and hoped that school provision could help deal with some issues such as drugs, sex and AIDS. They sought support from the school but were also prepared to give support to the school provided they understood what was happening in guidance, PSE and careers.

Parents' anxiety about their children's future was frequently compounded by a view that the world after school was threatening and lacking in opportunity. It is important to note that these are parents' perceptions. Although certain opportunities have reduced for young people compared with their parents' time, there is evidence that some parents over-estimate the degree of unemployment facing young people (Semple, 1994). Nevertheless, whether these perceptions are accurate or not, they are influential in forming parents' views and in structuring the advice that they give their children about post-school choices. This suggests a need for more information for parents on school-leaver destinations and post-school opportunities and, if necessary, help in interpreting this information.

Monitoring progress

One of parents' main expectations of guidance, and one that was not being adequately met, was that guidance should monitor their child's progress at school and provide regular and more detailed reports, alerting them early to any difficulty. Parents wanted guidance staff to monitor both curricular progress and also their child's personal and social development. Pupils too expressed a need for more feedback about their performance at school. Guidance staff were involved in the collation of school reports, in contributing to reports, and in identifying and following up pupils who were experiencing difficulty in their subjects or needing support but there was less evidence of more systematic monitoring of the progress of all pupils other than simply through noting subject results at the end of the year. There was

also little evidence of specific contact with parents to comment on good progress or achievements although this was something many guidance teachers would have liked to do.

It is notable that although guidance staff regarded S3 as a “flat year” in terms of guidance needs, parents were frequently anxious about their child’s progress as they embarked on their Standard Grade subjects and identified review of progress and feedback to pupils and parents in S3 as a major need. It seems that, on the whole, parents take a wider view of monitoring progress than do schools although the increasing use of profiling is changing this. The parent perspective is one that tends to emphasise the formative aspect, giving as much attention to pupils’ social as to their academic progress compared with the tendency of schools to focus on the summative evaluation of pupils’ academic achievements.

It may be that guidance teachers’ involvement in Record of Achievement work will give greater prominence to a more systematic review of all pupils’ progress. We would note, however, the reservations expressed by a number of parents that for the RoA process to be done effectively, more individual contact with pupils is necessary. Similar points were made by guidance staff. There is also an issue as to whether the tension that some pupils identified between the use of the RoA to market themselves to employers and further and higher education and its role in helping them to assess themselves and their plans honestly, may reduce its potential value as a way of enhancing the review process.

Issues

- **How can parents be better informed about the guidance system and role of guidance teachers and get to know their child’s guidance teacher? What strategies should be used? Parents suggested regular and repeated information, communication directly to them and publicity about the regular times to contact guidance teachers. Are these realistic?**
- **How can parents’ evenings be organised to improve parents’ access to guidance teachers and ensure the necessary time and privacy?**
- **How might parents be provided with improved information on their child’s progress? In particular, how should schools respond to parents’ wish for earlier and more continuous information on their child’s personal and social as well as their academic progress.**
- **What are the respective responsibilities of the guidance teacher, subject teacher and senior management in communicating with parents over their child’s progress and in gathering information on personal and social development in particular?**
- **There is a need to consider how to respond to parents’ needs in a number of areas including: subject choice; PSE; careers education and guidance; and support for their children on settling into classes, study skills and exam pressures.**
- **How can parents be consulted to help schools and the Careers Service review their guidance provision? This research suggests that parents beyond those usually involved in school activities would be willing to contribute.**
- **Parents have guidance needs in their own right, including a need for help from schools in dealing with the various social pressures to which their children are subject. How far can guidance be expected to respond to parents’ needs? Although parents wanted support from school they were prepared to work with the school. How can schools work in partnership with parents?**

Careers and the World of Work

Integration issues

In considering the relationship between guidance provision and the Careers Service and employer links to guidance, a lack of integration is one of the dominant themes that emerges from the research. This relates to lack of integration of education industry liaison activities and guidance provision in the project schools; a lack of integration of careers officers in the school system and with the guidance team; and, particularly for senior pupils, a lack of integration in the various elements of curricular and vocational guidance, including EIL activities, provided by different members of school staff and the Careers Service. Careers Officers, for example, knew very little about the careers education programmes in their school; some guidance teachers interviewing S4 and S5 pupils were unaware of the careers education being delivered to these pupils; and guidance teachers and Careers Officers were rarely involved in EIL activities. This lack of integration has implications for the quality of guidance and Careers Officers interviews, both in terms of the knowledge and awareness of the guidance teachers and Careers Officers, and also the preparedness of the pupil. More generally, the fragmented nature of careers-related provision would suggest a waste of resources since it means pupils are not being encouraged to make connections and their learning is not being reinforced.

There is a need to consider how to move towards greater integration between careers education and EIL provision, and between careers officers, guidance teachers and other school staff. At a general level, a whole school policy for careers provision and EIL might be a starting point.

Specific areas also need to be tackled, for example, how careers officers can develop good links with all of the guidance team. Schools and Careers Services need to look at strategies for doing so, such as the potential of the guidance meeting and joint in-service training. More fundamentally, schools might consider whether the way in which they structure the link with the Careers Service is the best way to achieve integration as well as a good way to make the administrative arrangements for careers officer interviews and other inputs. While a designated member of the guidance team is administratively convenient for both the school and the Careers Service, it can have the effect of distancing the careers officer from other members of the guidance staff. Should the administrative arrangements be handled by a non-guidance member of staff and guidance teacher time freed for work with pupils such as preparing careers profiles and for liaison with the careers officer on casework and developmental work?

There is an issue whether the very specific quantitative output targets set for the Careers Service may be a barrier to achieving greater integration. Is there a danger that careers officers' attention will be concentrated on meeting the targets set for interviews and group work so that other activities, such as attendance at guidance meetings and advising on careers education, that are not part of the official targets, will be side-lined given time constraints? Or is it the case that Careers Services are already meeting the majority of these targets but have not quantified them in this way in the past?

Issues

- **How can greater integration of education-industry activities and careers education and guidance be achieved and what is an appropriate level of integration? Is a whole-school policy for careers provision and EIL appropriate? Should schools and the Careers Service establish careers and EIL management teams? How far can Service Level Agreements assist with developing integration and joint management?**
- **How can careers officers develop closer links with guidance staff? What model for organising school-Careers Service links would be most effective in achieving this; in particular, should one guidance teacher act as link?**
- **Is there a danger that the quantitative output targets for the Careers Service will prove a barrier to greater integration?**

Focus of Careers Service work

The research has highlighted two aspects concerning the focus of Careers Service work. One is a possible shift away from work in the lower school and the second is the basis on which interview systems are organised.

Pupils and parents valued Careers Service involvement in the S2 subject choice process and wanted more individual contact with the careers officer. Guidance teachers also valued Careers Service input at this stage; they and, to some extent, careers officers wanted to maintain individual Careers Service contact with S2 pupils. Official guidance to Careers Services (Requirements and Guidance for Providers, Scottish Office 1993) does not identify S2/S3 subject choice as a key transition point so that work with S2 pupils does not have the same priority as work in the upper school where there are defined key transition points. How should the Careers Service respond in a situation where the needs expressed by pupils, parents and teachers for input in S2 appear to be at odds with official priorities that focus on the upper school?

It must be of concern that guidance teachers' and careers officers' perceptions of pupils' awareness of the interview system were at odds with pupils' uncertainty about it. Pupils and parents need to be better informed about how the interview system operates and how they can initiate contact with the careers officer but there is a more fundamental issue. The basis on which careers officer interviews are organised does not appear to satisfy the needs of pupils and their parents.

In the same way that pupils and parents did not think that the guidance system was catering for all pupils, they felt that some pupils were marginalised in Careers Service provision, for example, those who had apparently made a careers choice. Yet part of the role of the careers officer is to challenge assumptions and aspiration levels and young people go through periods of career certainty and uncertainty so it cannot be assumed that an apparently appropriate career choice means that guidance is not required. Pupils and their parents wanted an interview system that gave all pupils more ready access to an interview with a careers officer and some supported the idea of automatic careers interviews for all pupils.

On the one hand, the Careers Service is being faced with these demands from pupils and parents, on the other, it has to take account of official guidance on interview systems. These, however, are somewhat at odds with each other. The Requirements and Guidance for Providers document (SOED 1993) advocates a flexible interviewing system whereas the implications of the Secretary of State's more recent document "Training for the Future"

(Scottish Office 1995) are specific interview targets for S4, S5 and S6. There is a major dilemma here for the Careers Service about how it should organise the main element of its work in schools.

Issues

- **Is there a need to revise the official priorities set for the Careers Service which focus on the upper school in the light of pupils', parents' and guidance staff's identified expectations for an input in S2?**
- **The Careers Service and schools need to ensure that pupils and parents are better informed about interview arrangements and how to gain access to the careers officer. How can this be achieved?**
- **There is a need to ensure an effective exchange of information between the careers officer and the guidance teacher before and after the careers interview. It is also important to encourage pupils and guidance teachers, and pupils and their parents to discuss the action plans resulting from the interview.**
- **There is a continuing need to evaluate the basis on which Careers Services design their interviewing systems. Such evaluations should take account of the desire of pupils and parents for ready access to careers interviews for all pupils during their secondary education.**

Effective guidance/Careers Service relationship

Teachers and careers officers identified a number of factors critical to an effective guidance/ Careers Service relationship. A system to ensure that the organisation of Careers Service arrangements worked smoothly was necessary. However, as we have already noted, thought has to be given as to whether a system that is administratively convenient might have a negative effect on other aspects of the relationship between guidance teachers and careers officers.

Other factors in an effective relationship included good communication and the building of mutual trust and respect; clarity about respective responsibilities and standards; and good personal contacts. Stability in staffing was highlighted as basic to building up personal contacts and mutual understanding and trust. Relatively high levels of staff turnover, however, have been common in the Careers Service in most regions in recent years and were exacerbated at the time of the research by the inability of Careers Services to issue anything other than short term contracts due to the changes to the management of the Service.

The implementation of Service Level Agreements under which schools and Careers Services agree provision and the responsibilities of each in delivering this provision were generally seen as helpful in improving understanding of the minimum level of involvement and standards on either side. Nevertheless, careers officers recognised that there was some concern in schools that SLAs might restrict Careers Service input and, in particular, restrict flexibility.

Issues

- **Can greater stability in careers officer staffing be achieved to allow the development of effective relationships with schools? What is the likely impact of current changes to the management of the Careers Service?**
- **How flexible and responsive to local need can Service Level Agreements between individual schools and the Careers Services be in the light of Careers Service business plans and Scottish Office targets?**

Careers education

We have already discussed some of the issues concerning careers education in other parts of this chapter such as the need for greater coherence and progression; concerns about how to achieve an appropriate level of differentiation; and the information and training needs of teachers delivering careers education. We have also noted the lack of integration of many EIL activities with careers education and the extent to which careers education and EIL are managed and delivered separately.

A more general issue is the extent to which careers education should reflect pupils' and parents' wishes and interests and how far it should extend and challenge ideas. While we would argue that schools and the Careers Service need to work with pupils in identifying needs, as we point out in chapter five pupil identification of need is only one method and can only be a partial approach. A general dilemma for careers education, and other careers-related work, is how to strike the correct balance between provision that is geared to pupils' current wants, and therefore is perceived by them to be relevant, and the frequent need to encourage them to think more broadly about their future.

The common view of the careers officers interviewed was that pupils were generally unaware of the careers officer's role, the purposes of the careers interview and lacked the skills necessary to gain the maximum benefit from their interview. This lack of preparedness for interview reflected the lack of integration of careers education and careers guidance. It would also suggest that pupils were not making connections between other parts of their PSE provision and careers; for example, they are not applying general self-assessment and decision-making skills to vocational decision-making. How can pupils be better prepared for their interview? Do interviews need to be supplemented with other input from the Careers Service such as group work?

More generally, we were struck by the passivity of many pupils who seemed unable to take the initiative in seeking out careers information and available advice. The current approach in guidance is to stress helping clients to become more self-reliant and become "efficient actors" (Killeen, White and Watts 1992). There is also much discussion in education and training generally about empowerment, for example, in respect of Skillseekers. Our experience and that of guidance staff and careers officers was that pupils are not able to be proactive. This suggests that current efforts in PSE to help pupils take more responsibility for themselves and become more self-reliant are not successful. Can more be done in PSE? Or does this highlight the difficulty of reconciling the rhetoric of empowerment, individual responsibility for one's own learning and careers development with the situation of pupils in a hierarchical school setting in which they have very limited autonomy? This is not necessarily impossible but the issue needs to be confronted. Although there are problems with PSE, it is the most obvious area in schools where a different approach can be used with pupils and where the aims are to develop pupils' decision-making and self-assessment skills. But if PSE succeeds in doing so, what happens when pupils go to their subject class? Do they have the opportunity to apply

what they have learned in PSE? How can the methodologies and philosophy of PSE be extended to other subject areas to help pupils become more self-reliant and proactive?

Issues

- **To what extent should careers education and provision respond to pupils' wishes and how far should it seek to challenge and extend their thinking?**
- **How can pupils be better prepared for their careers interview? Should there be more training in interview skills and does the Careers Service need to supplement interviews with other input such as group work?**
- **How can pupils, more generally, be encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own careers development and become more proactive in seeking out careers information and advice? How can PSE contribute to this? Are wider changes needed in schools before pupils can become more self-reliant and less passive?**

Evaluation of provision

The evaluation of needs and provision has been a recurring theme in this report. A more "evaluation-conscious" attitude is developing in education generally, and development planning, in particular, is having a major impact on schools' awareness and thinking in this respect. Development planning is only a partial approach to evaluation and schools need also to consider more comprehensive evaluation. This is an area where schools might benefit from external assistance. In this respect, we wonder about the impact of local government re-organisation and the possible loss or decrease in advisory support for schools.

We have noted the different levels of accountability of careers officers and guidance staff and have argued that guidance staff should be more accountable in their work. But while evaluation should be a normal element of professional practice, a key issue is how guidance can be evaluated in a meaningful way and in a manner that enhances practice rather than hindering or distorting it. The current emphasis of the Careers Service targets is on quantitative output measures; this contrasts with the mainly qualitative HMI Performance Indicators for Guidance. Does the focus on quantitative outputs for the Careers Service run the risk of detracting from, rather than improving, provision? We would suggest that as well as attention to output measures, evaluations should also address the outcomes of guidance.

Issues

- **How can schools be supported in developing evaluation strategies? Will local government reorganisation mean a loss of advisory support for this?**
- **Is there an increasing gap between the nature of the evaluation of school guidance provision and of the work of the Careers Service? If so, what is the likely impact on the relationship between schools and the Career Service and for Careers Service provision in schools?**
- **How can guidance be evaluated in a way that enhances practice? Is there a need for a greater emphasis on the outcomes of guidance for pupils?**

Postscript: Reflections on Higher Still

Any current consideration of guidance in Scotland must take into account the Government's plans to reform upper secondary education in Scotland "Higher Still: Opportunity for All" (Scottish Office 1994) and we end this report by considering some of the implications of Higher Still for guidance. The timing of the Higher Still proposals, and especially of the more detailed statements about guidance, meant that we did not discuss them to any extent with guidance staff since they did not have enough information at the time of the interviews. Nevertheless, our research provides a basis from which to consider the role and position of guidance in Higher Still.

Higher Still aims to develop a unified post-16 system of units, courses and group awards; a key aim is to facilitate young people's progression through primary and secondary school and on to further or higher education or employment. Guidance is seen as critical to its successful implementation and in autumn 1995, a consultation document "Guidance Arrangements" was published by the Higher Still Development Unit. Other consultation documents, including one on Personal and Social Education, are also relevant to guidance. Higher Still offers both an opportunity and a challenge to guidance. It is likely to increase the importance and profile of guidance and to accelerate developments in practice but it also makes more demands of guidance.

A student entitlement for guidance has been proposed which would give students an entitlement to high quality guidance before entry to Higher Still and throughout their programme of study. Whether or not the proposals for a guidance entitlement as such are implemented, the Higher Still reforms will require high quality guidance support for all students (Guidance Arrangements, Higher Still Development Unit, Autumn 1995). As this document goes on to state "one effect of Higher Still is that curricular guidance becomes both more important and more complex ... [and] Higher Still will also open up new opportunities for students in terms of further or higher education or work. Vocational guidance, therefore, will be as important as curricular guidance". Guidance staff will not only have a key role in providing curricular and vocational guidance but are also seen as playing a major role in monitoring students' progress.

The Higher Still proposals for guidance emphasise quality guidance support for all pupils in the upper school and we welcome this. Nevertheless, there is a question whether it is deliverable within guidance teachers' current time allocations and whether it can be done without a negative effect on other aspects of guidance provision. The proposals have to be considered in the context of current provision. Our research has indicated that curricular guidance for senior pupils was less well developed than in the lower school and HMI inspection reports identify this as a relatively weak area. This suggests that to provide the level of curricular guidance required by Higher Still will require not only a considerable increase in guidance teachers' knowledge and expertise but also an increase in the time spent on curricular guidance with pupils. If this is the case, then other aspects of guidance teachers work may get less attention, for example, pastoral guidance with senior pupils.

What is the likely impact of Higher Still on work with younger pupils, in particular, if senior pupils have a stated entitlement to a certain level of guidance provision but younger pupils do not? We have argued in favour of a pupil entitlement approach but a situation in which only some pupils in a school have an entitlement is potentially damaging. The lower school is not part of the remit of the Higher Still Development Programme so it is not unreasonable that they have not developed an entitlement for younger pupils. Individual schools have the freedom to implement a guidance entitlement for all pupils and it may be that the specification of one for senior pupils will encourage schools to introduce a whole school

entitlement. But the response may well be patchy. The “Guidance Arrangements” consultation document notes the need to consider how the student guidance entitlement can be best delivered among other claims on guidance resources and a recurring theme of this chapter has been the need to establish priorities for guidance but to do so in the context where some pupils have a specified guidance entitlement and others do not, would seem to prejudice the process of priority setting from the start. Returning to the theme of “guidance for all”, we would suggest that a national policy on a general pupil entitlement to guidance is necessary to ensure that some pupils are not disadvantaged.

In this report we have commented on the pressure caused by guidance staff’s dual role as both guidance and subject teachers. In the context of Higher Still, guidance teachers will not only have to respond to its demands on guidance but also to its curricular demands in their capacity as subject teachers. This is a dimension that needs to be taken into account when considering the feasibility of guidance successfully delivering the guidance support being asked of them under Higher Still.

We have identified careers education as a weak area and pointed to the lack of integration of careers education and guidance. The Higher Still plans give weight to the need to develop more co-ordinated and integrated careers education and guidance in the upper school and, specifically the need to improve the content and coherence of careers education programmes. This illustrates both the opportunity and the challenge that Higher Still presents for guidance. On the one hand, Higher Still makes explicit demands on schools to provide quality curricular and vocational guidance to all senior pupils. On the other hand, given the current baseline of provision, the expectations of Higher Still will require considerable developments in practice if they are to be met. The plans also suggest a blurring of boundaries between curricular and vocational guidance with possible implications for the roles of guidance teachers and careers officers. It may be that Higher Still will give impetus to greater integration in the work of guidance staff and careers officers.

The proposals for PSE in Higher Still are likely to have a major impact on guidance since they will mean a large increase in PSE provision and the possible introduction of certification. The plans for PSE bring into prominence some of the current issues in PSE such as whether it should be certificated and, if so, which parts can be most appropriately certificated; and the nature and extent of guidance teachers’ role in PSE. If only some elements of PSE are certificated, is there a danger of a two-tier system developing within the same school where the certificated PSE provision has the priority for resources? The plans also pose a major challenge for schools. As this research has indicated, PSE in the upper school was less well developed than in the S1-S4 stage and there were considerable difficulties in the organisation and delivery of PSE, including the lack of training of the staff involved. The need for well trained staff to teach PSE will become even more pressing if PSE is to be formally assessed and certificated. These and other issues will need to be resolved if the expansion of PSE under Higher Still is to be successful.

Issues

- **Can the high quality guidance support envisaged under Higher Still be delivered within guidance teachers’ present time allocations?**
- **Will Higher Still lead to a re-focusing of the work of guidance teachers, for example, will it change the balance between pastoral and curricular and vocational guidance?**
- **What are the implications of a national policy on a guidance entitlement for senior pupils only? What is the likely impact on younger pupils? Should there be a national policy on a guidance entitlement for all pupils?**

- **Can or should PSE be certificated? Is there a danger that certificated PSE provision will have priority for resources? Are the Higher Still proposals for PSE achievable within current resources given the current stage of development of PSE in the upper school?**

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