THE STATUS OF TEACHERS AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

PART III of THE EVIDENCE BASE

SCHOOL-BASED CASE STUDIES: THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN CLASSIFIED CASE STUDY REPORTS

Introduction
This document forms part of the Evidence Base of the Teacher Status Project, a nationwide study of the status of teachers and the teaching profession in England. The research was carried out at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and the Department of Media and Communication, University of Leicester. It ran from September 2002 to December 2006, and was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) following a process of competitive tender.

The project had three main aims, and the methods used to address these aims are listed below: The aims were:

1. to establish a baseline and monitor changes in perceptions of the status of teachers and their profession, among teachers, associated groups and the general public, between 2003 and 2006
2. to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers' attitudes
3. to identify how perceptions of teacher status can be improved.

The Teacher Status Project: research design
The first aim was addressed through a series of cross-sectional national surveys of the opinions of the groups listed above, and a longitudinal survey of teachers’ opinions. The main surveys were conducted in the first and final years of the project. In the intervening years, a programme of school-based case studies and focus groups of teachers was carried out in order to address the second aim. Particular emphasis was placed on the perceptions of the individual teacher throughout the project. The media study, which also addressed the second aim, followed a similar pattern with surveys of national and selected regional press coverage of teachers, teaching and education conducted in 2003 and 2005. Interviews with education correspondents and a retrospective survey of press coverage dating back to 1991 were carried out in 2004. The third research aim was addressed within the surveys and case-studies and through a synthesis of their findings.

The research methods and findings are presented in the Teacher Status Project Evidence Base (RR831B) of which this document forms one part. The Research Brief (RB831) summarises the whole project, and a more detailed overview is provided in the Teacher Status Project Synthesis Report (RR831A).

The timeline below shows how the results reported in this part of the Evidence Base fit into the project activities as a whole.

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1 Originally the Centre for Mass Communications Research
### The Teacher Status Project research activities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| September 2002 -  
February 2003      | • Design, piloting and preparation of questionnaires for surveys of public opinion, teachers and associated groups (parents, governors and teaching assistants) and sample construction |
| March - September  
2003                | • Public Opinion survey I  
• Teacher survey I  
• Associated groups survey I  
• 1\textsuperscript{st} trainee survey  
• Media project ‘rolling week’ survey I |
| October 2003 –  
January 2004       | • Analysis of surveys (ongoing)  
• Development and piloting of case studies programmes and procedures |
| February - July  
2004                | • ‘Type I’ school case studies: schools selected according to school phase, size, region and achievement level from those which participated in the surveys  
• 2\textsuperscript{nd} trainee survey  
• Recruitment Managers email survey |
| September 2004 –  
July 2005           | • Longitudinal survey of teachers  
• Type 1 school-based case studies re-visits  
• Type 2 school–based case studies: schools selected for their particular status  
• Type 3 case studies: focus groups of teachers working in e.g. PRUs, in CPD and research, and minority ethnic teachers |
| March – September  
2005                | • Media project ‘rolling week’ survey II  
• 3\textsuperscript{rd} trainee survey (June)  
• Analysis of case study data (ongoing) |
| October 2005-  
February 2006      | • Preparation for 2\textsuperscript{nd} round of surveys |
| March – May 2006    | • Public Opinion Survey II  
• Teacher Survey II  
• Associated groups survey II |
| June – December  
2006               | • Continued analysis and writing |

Part III of the Evidence Base contains the following chapters:

Chapter 12 - Specialist Schools: a) Training, Specialist (Subject) and Beacon Schools and b) Academies

Chapter 13 - Poorly Performing Schools: Cause for Concern, Serious Weakness and Special Measures
Chapter 12: Specialist Schools: a) Training, Specialist (Subject) and Beacon Schools and b) Academies

Overview

This chapter addresses the second aim of the teacher status project, by gaining an understanding into the factors that influence the perspectives of teachers on their status. However, in this strand, this was done through exploring the perspectives of teachers working in schools that have been accredited with a particular status. More specifically, the research was conducted to:

- understand how a positive label and associated benefits of the school classification influences how teachers perceive their own status and the status of the teaching profession
- explore the perceptions of teachers within a) training, specialist (subject) and beacon schools and b) academies and understand what particular factors related to the school status influence their perceptions of their high or low status
- consider how perceptions of teacher status in these classified schools are similar or different.

The research was conducted through qualitative case study research in eleven schools. The main analysis, using Atlas-ti was conducted on data from semi-structured interviews conducted at two training schools, two beacon or specialist subject schools and two academies, supplemented by analysis of interviews at a further training school, two beacon/leading edge schools and two schools with technology college status (see Chapter 11 for more information on the schools). The main findings of the chapter are that:

- The teachers working within the specially classified schools demonstrated a higher and more positive sense of status than was found more typically in the type I results from teachers in our survey schools. The positive achievements and evaluations of the schools appear to spill over to engender a sense of high status of teachers working within the schools, whilst the ‘name’ of the school was also useful for their career advancement. Modesty was nevertheless encouraged to avoid divisiveness between schools.

- The classifications were advantageous because they provided the means to access more resources, and working within well-resourced schools clearly has a positive effect for teachers’ status. The resources allowed higher staffing levels, improved facilities, more opportunities for creative teaching and learning and promoted external respect. However, teachers experienced some negative reactions from other teachers working at other schools.
High status was also enhanced by the internal working conditions developed within the school, with clearly defined line management systems, delegation of important tasks to teaching staff and commitment to staff training. These factors encouraged a sense of professionalism and development, particularly when teachers had time to reflect on the business of teaching.

Staff members within the schools gained esteem through their external evaluations. Teachers enjoyed the fruits of well structured networking and AST (Advanced Skills Teacher) outreach with other schools and felt boosted by oversubscription. Although the general perception of media misrepresentation was still reported, the classifications of the schools and funding bids had given the schools a platform for media exposure.

Evidence

The analysis reports on the key issues emerging from the interviews under the following themes:

- personal/school status: impact of funding and resources on teacher status
- personal/school status: evaluations i) external
- personal/school status: evaluations ii) other teachers
- internal working relations: leadership, collaboration and trust
- internal work relations: recruitment and retention
- teaching and learning: training and CPD
- external relations: networks with other schools and universities
- external relations: parents, community and media perceptions

It first considers training schools, specialist (subject) and beacon schools, before considering the perspectives of teachers in some Academies.

Ai) TRAINING SCHOOLS and ii) SPECIALIST (SUBJECT) AND BEACON SCHOOLS

Personal/school status: impact of funding and resources on teacher status

Training schools

A crucial issue that emerged from interviews with teachers at Cormorant and Kingfisher training schools was the benefits they felt through achieving funding bids. Teachers at both schools reported how they had many different streams of funding, which they believed had a fundamental impact on the effectiveness of how they could do their work. At Cormorant for instance, the school had multiple statuses as not only a training school, but a leading edge and specialist sports school. The deputy was unequivocal on the importance of these statuses stating:
I can talk specifically about Leading Edge, or all these other statuses in general, but I think that it provides mechanisms, it provides funding, which, you know, should not be underestimated in any way, shape, or form.

The school had an impressive history of successfully bidding for different streams of funding, and the statuses worked as a lever to access and generate other funding. Combined with the funding from the sports status, the school had been able to fund a dance studio, construct tennis courts (achieved with the Lawn Tennis Association funding) and a full sized Astropitch (with Football Association funding). The school had also been able to invest money in levelling their playing fields with the specialist status funding. The deputy again summed up, ‘in other words, via sports college funding, we’ve brought in huge amounts of resources you know, millions of pounds of resources that we wouldn’t have been able to access so easily’. This latter comment refers to the benefits of a ‘combined status premium’, through which success breeds success, as the deputy commented:

Obviously, having, I think, you know, there is a combined status premium, if you like, that, you know, if you have lots of different statuses, actually the benefits for the school outweigh the sum of the parts. Because actually, you know, you are working with other schools and it’s counted towards Sports College and it’s counted towards Leading Edge, it’s, you know, all those different things. And actually, you know, I think it’s advantageous for schools to pile them up, as it were.

Kingfisher was another example of a training school successfully securing funding, as the Head said, ‘from all over’. She reported that the school was the recipient of fifteen streams of funding, securing money through the, ‘Excellence in Cities’ Initiative and the Learning and Skills Council, whilst the school had also bid to receive money for training students from all across the borough in basic skills. However, Kingfisher whilst also a training school, had a less impressive infrastructure than Cormorant; the headteacher described the buildings as ‘shambolic’ and ‘dreadful’, and explained how, ‘we’ve no playing fields. Our sports facilities are disgraceful’. Nevertheless, teachers expressed pride at the technological resources, and what this enabled them to achieve in teaching and learning:

It’s [the school’s] got horrible buildings and terrible facilities externally, but what we do inside particularly with technology, I think, is quite remarkable... I mean interactive whiteboards are part of our culture. Video conferencing is part of our curriculum; we do it; the pupils are used to it.

The funding has benefits for teaching and learning, and improving the staff:pupil ratio, as the deputy head at Cormorant expressed,

At times, you have to fulfil specific targets with some of the funding, but quite a lot of funding, and in fact most of it, goes to improve the staffing, teacher pupil ratio,
and the quality of staffing that you can retain.

The benefits for the funding for staffing were also evident at Cormorant, where funding from various sources was able to support many ASTs (some quoted 12, and others 14) as one teacher commented, ‘Now obviously, if we’re getting money in from all different sorts of sources, then you know, that can be quite beneficial for that purpose [having ASTs]. The high staffing levels had consequences for working conditions, and teachers compared their conditions favorably when they met up with other teachers working elsewhere. For instance the deputy explained how,

*When we go to talk in the County forum, it’s clear that the conditions that we’re working in are better than the conditions that most people are working in. I mean, because we’ve just got...People say ‘Well how do you get the time for that?’ and ‘How much time are you given?’*

These benefits were important as teachers’ esteem is raised through seeing their pupils make progress (see Chapter 7). Favourable conditions for pupils teaching and learning contributes to teachers’ feelings of wellbeing and status.

**Specialist (subject) and beacon schools**

As in the training schools, teachers at the specialist school also reported that the upgraded facilities afforded by their status had positive consequences for their teaching. At Cranog, the school’s specialist science status meant they were able to put in ‘state-of-the-art science labs’. Previously, the school had tried to refurbish the labs themselves but as they were over 30 years old, the extra investment to get the new labs, ICT equipment, interactive whiteboards through the specialist status funding was positively reflected upon. At Brambling, the school benefited from landscaped surroundings, funded through grants for the outdoor environment. As in the training schools, these material investments had knock-on effects for both teachers’ esteem especially through better conditions for teaching and learning.

The head at Nightingale referred to how the realisation that teachers there were well resourced made teachers feel fulfilled, as he said, ‘people appreciate that, they appreciate the resources and training to use them, and feels it skills them and makes them a professional’. A teacher at Cranog also expressed,

*If you come to this school the amount of training you get, as a result of us becoming a science college, the facilities that you can use, without question result in you becoming a better teacher and delivering better lessons.*

Another also felt it enhanced teachers’ esteem as they felt encouraged by parents’ comments about their use of the upgraded facilities:

*I think it raises their self-esteem because anybody that comes along and looks at what you’re doing with the kids and says ‘That’s brilliant I didn’t know kids could*
However, the extra investment in one specialist area potentially created a dominance of that subject in the school. One teacher at Cranog explained that the specialist science status meant that the science department - with its eighteen teachers - dwarfs other departments such as Maths & English which have only seven or eight teachers. It was also associated with benefits, such as having smaller classes, and enabled teachers to be sent to do various courses, with impacts on results. However other teachers explained how there were also advantages for the remainder of the school; for example, at Cranog, the science staff shared their additional facilities with the PE department, who worked closely with the science teachers. They had written schemes of work together, developed online lesson planning and web design, and shared equipment such as human skeletons, heart rate machines and treadmills. This was also the case at Nightingale, where although the specialism was in ICT, the benefits pervaded the whole school, rather than being seen as a specialism within the technology department.

Unlike in the training schools, teachers at Cranog and Osprey raised some concern about their reliance and dependence on the specialist funding, whose loss would impact gravely on the ‘extras’ that the schools were able to do. At Cranog the deputy head pointed out more seriously that now the school was in its third year of specialist funding, ‘If we can’t get renewal in a years time we will really be snookered because we have employed a number of staff on the back of the science college funding’.

At Cranog, although the science teachers’ esteem was enhanced by the specialist classification, the dependence on funding through the initiative consequently also placed immense pressure on them to achieve targets (which was also reported by teachers at Fieldfare). Indeed, when the previous years’ results were not as good as expected, the deputy had taken on the role of Curriculum Manager, with further impacts on individual teachers. A science teacher said,

*I keep getting, ‘the results have been good but you’re in a science college now and your results have got to be up here, up here, up here’. The pressure that’s coming as a result of that is magnified big style and that’s a heavy burden to carry.*

**Personal/school status: evaluations i) external**

**Training schools**

For teachers working at both of the training schools, the level of achievement and the positive external evaluation of the school spilt over to them personally; school successes were a source of personal status. At Nightingale for instance, the head referred to how, ‘teachers have a real pride in working here’ and the deputy head at Cormorant said:

*So because we have so many sorts of status, so many tests with us all the time, the*
staff here know that they are working somewhere that is deemed successful by the outside world. So you’re even, as soon as you join the school, you’re in a successful school...So I think people do feel very proud of the fact that they work here.

At Kingfisher, teachers also reiterated that working in a relatively rare training school provoked pride. The head felt the school was known because, ‘we do a lot of things that are a little bit different’ and commented with pride, ‘Nobody else has a refugee and asylum seeker unit like we do. Not in the country; not anywhere’. She mentioned how the staff like the fact that others have heard about the school, and stated, ‘you know if you’re working in a pretty grotty building, but if people know about your school and they know it’s doing good things, it raises their status’. An NQT reported how:

just in the same way that you praise a student for being good at something, you praise the school for being good at something and hopefully the teachers are going to be enthused and more competent and proud about that too’.

The deputy there also added,

Ann [the headteacher] I think is immensely proud particularly because there are so few in our area. You catch her saying of course we’re a training school and there isn’t one for miles around. You catch her saying it. So it does certainly, there’s a sense of pride that you’ve done you’ve been brave yet again. I go sometimes to specialist school things and still there aren’t many specialist schools like ours.

However, status was not gained purely as a result of the school’s label but was felt as a reflection of the good practice and achievements that went on in such schools. At Cormorant, the deputy felt the label, ‘obviously provides a bit of kudos and all those sorts of things to the school’ but felt it only provided, ‘a channel for the school improvement efforts that the school would be undertaking anyway’. He stated how Cormorant the statuses of the school did not reinforce his professional satisfaction but that, ‘being in a school which I think is successful does hugely, enormously’. He continued at length:

And so, in a sense, if I thought there was a mismatch between some of the external judgements and the reality, if I thought, ‘got that status but actually it’s pretty shoddy,’ you know, or ‘we’re a Leading Edge school, but look what we’re doing there.’ If I felt that, I don’t think it would give me any personal satisfaction at all, or professional satisfaction, that the statuses were there. The most important thing to me is that my feeling is that this is a successful, effective school...

Modesty was rather encouraged in light of the success of the school, as the deputy explained:

I think there is a healthy ability of teaching staff here to step outside of their...And not get carried away with ‘this must mean that we’re fantastic’, you know....At
the same time, I think people realise that we’re also quite effective at jumping through the hoops we need to jump through to get that... I don’t think our staff are swanning around going ‘Aren’t we fantastic because X says so, we’ve got that on our letterhead’, or whatever. I think people see them as mechanisms for sustaining effectiveness...

Similar sentiments were reported at Kingfisher, where the deputy even reported that the granting of the status was not particularly significant in a school that was so often successful:

There’s absolutely no question, because we never don’t get anything. So to be honest with you people don’t really think it’s [the training school status] that big a deal. I went through a patch right at the beginning of thinking I’ve got to raise the status. People have got to know just how bloody good this is. Then I thought well I’m fighting a losing battle here because people are going to say ‘oh yes training school status. Oh yes specialist school status. Oh yes this, oh yes that... oh we do this... oh we’ve got that’. Really the only one who was really surprised that we got the bid was me. Everybody else said ‘yes’ you know. And I wanted to crack open the champagne and everybody get really excited for me. They just said ‘well done’. What can you do? You know. And that is a product of this school. It’s not exceptional to do anything

However, it was also clear that teachers were somewhat ambiguous in their modesty. At Cormorant, the deputy complained about the expansion in school statuses and said, ‘But now people seem to be able to become a training school with a paragraph on the back of a postcard, and continued, ‘To be a specialist school is the norm now, rather than the exception, where there wasn’t at the time...you get a certain sort of change in terms of that’. At Kingfisher, the same sentiment was repeated, as an NQT commented on how the growth of the specialist school movement, ‘serves to water down the prestige of those schools’ whereas the limited numbers of training schools means they enjoy a special sense of status.

**Specialist (subject) and beacon schools**

Positive esteem derived from the schools’ special statuses and achievements were also observed in the specialist (subject) and beacon schools. At Fieldfare, the deputy reported how they felt ‘special’ because it was the first in the area to get specialist status. At Osprey, the head suggested,

In some ways it [the beacon status] has [impacted on status] because whenever you skill up people, it makes them feel better about themselves. It’s certainly impacted on the school because we’ve had people coming in because they know it’s a good school. So inevitably, if you work in a school that has a good reputation it enhances you and makes you feel better about yourself.
However, again, in both Osprey and Cranog, teachers stressed how the status allocation only served to illustrate the good practice that existed prior to the classification. The deputy at Cranog for instance explained that the school’s status was not enhanced due to its Science status, rather:

*I think it’s what the school stands for and what the school does. It’s our role in training, our Leading Edge status, it’s the good practice that already existed here that gave us the leg-up into the Science College status.*

Those at Osprey also stressed modesty, as a teacher reported:

*I think teachers are fairly modest people and they don’t go around shouting from the roof tops saying ‘I’m working in a beacon school’. People are very aware that there are teachers in other schools that are doing just as good a job. They don’t perceive themselves to be better than anybody else at all.*

This sentiment was also reported at Nightingale, where the deputy felt, ‘*there is a certain prestige in being successful, people don’t go around boasting about it, but we know we are doing a good job*’.

However, in the case studies, one clear exception emerged. Kestrel College was nationally renowned for its achievements in technology, particularly due to one teacher who had a good reputation for his work. However, the teacher felt low status and expressed frustration. He was annoyed at the lack of consistency caused by the high staff turnover and lack of well-trained teachers, which another teacher put down to the challenge of working there. Many of the children did not have English as their first language, as he stated, ‘*the children here take it out of you so much it would be impossible to do it long term*’. The design technology teacher also felt that the school was not progressing and complained, ‘*other schools just get better and better – WE are always going back to zero, you take two steps forward and you go back three*’. His pride was marred by disillusionment at what government initiatives were doing in his London school, which ‘*makes me want to just give up*’. He particularly expressed jealousy of academies’ resources. He commented,

*I’m angry, I’m angry with all governments and what they do. I’m angry that they make it so difficult to work in difficult schools, I’m angry at them, they always want schools to fail so they can build their bloody stupid Academies. I’ve seen Academies. They should all be knocked down or they should be starkly changed.*

**Personal/school status: evaluations ii) within the teaching profession**

**Training schools**

The teachers reported how their status was influenced by the disquiet they felt from within the teaching profession. For example, the deputy at Cormorant reported that there were initially strong political reactions to the idea of labelled schools. The school
suffered some stigma because as the Deputy explained there was ‘such a hostile reaction to the whole idea in the beginning’, and explained how, ‘we were pariahs for a good year and a half’. Consternation was particularly felt when the school originally applied to be an ‘advanced school’ (which then changed names to ‘leading edge’) She explained how other headteachers had,

basically said ‘Uh-uh. You don’t want to sort of start talking about Advanced schools, and less-advanced schools, and backward schools,’ and therefore they slightly shifted the focus... And they came up with the new name of ‘leading edge’ schools.

The head at Kingfisher also reported some uncomfortable reactions when the school became affiliated in the early 1990s. She recalled how, ‘becoming grant maintained was becoming a pariah plus’, and explained how ‘it was quite a difficult thing to do’. Even recently, in Kingfisher, the deputy also felt that when meeting with others from other non-training schools she felt somewhat uncomfortable. She felt rather embarrassed at meetings with teachers from other training schools because,

It makes you feel like a complete fraud..... Somebody came to me last Friday and they’d applied for training school status and didn’t get it. They looked at our bid and the guy actually said ‘well there’s nothing here that we can’t do and we aren’t doing already’...But for me I have found it quite hard.

Beacon and Specialist Schools

Much less was reported on this issue from beacon and specialist schools, although the head at Fieldfare reported how they were also subject to political opposition when they bid for specialist status. Teachers at Brambling also referred to embarrassment rather than high status sometimes when they go to courses. They mentioned that they do not refer to where they are from because other teachers pull faces and say, ‘you have a flourishing PTA, parent helpers, leafy suburbs – of course it works there!’

Internal working relations: leadership, collaboration and trust

Training schools

At both training schools, as in the type I research (see Chapter 7 and 8) positive internal working relationships and opportunities for development were integral to teachers’ positive sense of status. At Cormorant, a teacher said,

So you actually have, in a school like ours, excellent conditions for development, which is an important thing for teachers to be proud of their professionalism, to develop...I mean what we have here is very strong collaborative culture, and people feeling confident about what they can do, but not complacent about it, wanting to learn themselves, and improve.
At both schools, the headteachers were both particularly singled out as individuals who gained status through their approaches. At Kingfisher, the head described the school as ‘quite entrepreneurial which some people call mad’ (a ‘risk-taking’ character was also reported at Fieldfare school). This spilt over to encourage an entrepreneurial approach amongst teachers, as she said, ‘we really have the concept in the college of if there’s something going that has a pot of money attached to it, we can do it...’ And when teachers were successful at achieving their bids, this contributed to their positive feelings of status and esteem.

As in the type I research on teachers in schools drawn from the survey, teachers felt esteem through working according to a collaborative and flexible ethos. At Cormorant, one teacher expressed the positive consequences for how they felt about themselves and their work,

> the teaching here is relatively unstressful. I mean obviously it’s always slightly stressful, but because all the systems in school are so good, and the senior management are so supportive, and the relations with pupils are so good that actually gives you the space and time to be able to think and reflect.

At Kingfisher, the head also explained how she was more flexible in allowing teachers occasional paid time off to deal with family emergencies, because ‘you adapt the rules to make sure that your staff feel valued’. Teachers at both schools expressed satisfaction at the level of trust invested by management in teachers to carry out senior tasks autonomously. The leadership profile changes as a result of the status of the school as the heads themselves were tied up with other associated responsibilities. For example, the deputy at Kingfisher reported on how she was given the inset day to run, for example, and was told by the head, ‘right go build a day and come back and show me when you’ve done it’. Although she initially struggled with the task she felt it contributed to improving status as she realised that ‘I can do something even bigger and better than next time’. She even had full responsibility for the application for the training school status:

> You know it was a big thing. She [the head] basically said to me you go away and do it. You decide what’s on it...So she’s very trusting. Possibly too trusting sometimes. So really I had carte blanche to put what I wanted on it.

And whilst the delegation is felt to be largely positive and a boost for teachers, there are some negative consequences, as the deputy felt,

> I thought it was a waste not to have me in the classroom but the head’s view is that I need to make some more other people in the building really good teachers. And she’s right. And I really miss the building up of relationships with students, really miss that. I know it’s going to get worse.
Specialist subject and beacon schools

Teachers at specialist and beacon status schools also benefited from opportunities to enhance their status through delegation of tasks. At Osprey, the head teacher encouraged teachers to take on responsibilities, ‘because it gives teachers very good opportunities to develop their own leadership role’. Her belief in empowering the staff around her had positive benefits as, ‘the staff like that they are being skilled up so they can take responsibility’. This was also reported at Cranog, where one senior teacher was responsible for an enormous increase in the departmental budget. He had delegated other areas of work to other staff who benefited from increased salaries and ‘they certainly feel a lot more valued’. However he felt that, ‘my workload has doubled, as a result, my pay hasn’t, it hasn’t gone up at all’. The impact on workload was reported at Eider too, where the deputy felt that schools were spending too much time writing plans for often quite small pots of money.

However, at Fieldfare, the bid had positive effects on school relations as, ‘it gave us a sense of direction that the school hadn’t got prior to that’ (see also the example of Henry Hadow and Trevelyan High in type I). At Nightingale, staff similarly referred to a shared vision and as an AST referred positively to how the school was more of ‘a teaching community...there’s definitely a willingness to share’, which he contrasted with his former school where people felt, ‘this is my stuff, I’m going to keep hold of it’.

Internal work relations: recruitment and retention

Training schools

Working at a training school was seen as a means for teachers to enhance their careers and status. The head teacher at Kingfisher explained,

if you’ve worked in schools like these you can work anywhere. And my teachers get snapped up...because people realise if you can cut it in a school like this...

Not only was it beneficial to teachers’ careers, but contributed to the schools’ ‘empire building’, as the deputy referred to humorously at Kingfisher, which was especially important given the high cost of housing and the undesirable school location. Teachers gained a positive identity through working with disadvantaged pupils and the results are a source of immense pride, as the deputy expressed, ‘If you do everything that we’ve done in that context, it makes it even more incredible’. Echoing the type I findings in Chapter 7, she said,

It’s a remarkable experience working day in day out with these kids who you are their passport. It’s the only way they’re going to get out is through us...you’ve got to do it for a reason, haven’t you? It’s not for a bunch of white middle class kids whose parents take them to the Globe Theatre. It’s not for those kids that you make that sacrifice.

Specialist status and beacon schools

Teachers at the specialist and beacon status schools also reported that the school status attracted teachers looking to enhance their careers. At Cranog, some science teachers were even prepared to make sideways moves to be able to work in the school, as the deputy head explained,

> When you do advertise and you say you’ve got Science College status you can say you’ve got state-of-the-art labs, you can say that every room’s got an interactive white board, you can say that the department’s supported by a Web Designer, there are lots of opportunities for your professional development...we’ve just appointed a Head of Science, he wouldn’t have come here if he didn’t know those things about the school. You know what it’s like, you can’t get physicists and we managed to get two in one shot.

The same story was reported at Osprey, where the head reported for instance how an NQT had applied because of the beacon status, and that, ‘he was offered jobs at several other schools but he chose us because of the beacon status’. As in the training schools, teachers working in the schools felt that their association with the schools was helpful for future career progression. At Nightingale, an AST said, ‘it’s nice to have it on my CV, it will help me in my future career’, whilst the deputy at Cranog summarised:

> The school name is known and so when you apply for another job its ‘Oh you’re from Cranog, come in’. If you put Cranog on your CV you’re in with a good chance because people want our staff because they have good training experience...

Teaching and learning: inspections, systems and CPD

Training Schools

The status of teachers working in training schools was not unduly affected by inspections. At Kingfisher, inspections also were not presented as a source of worry, because as the head commented, the staff already had developed their own internal systems of checking, accountability and review of grades. However, at both training schools, staff reported positive status through the exemplary practices for staff training. The deputy head at Cormorant explained how being involved in the training process of new trainees had encouraged the school to develop high standards overall. She explained,

> I think that we have had, you know, and continue to have, very strong commitment to training... You’re encouraged, you have to have a very systematic operation to train pupils. And it has to be a lively, interesting, innovative environment for the faculty, who have such a good reputation in training to want to train their people with you. That helps standards within the department.
These ‘spill-over’ benefits were also reported by teachers at Kingfisher. An NQT there for example pointed out how as a result of being given the opportunity to train others, he felt that his own skills and career possibilities will be enhanced, for instance through gaining more ideas for his own teaching. Helping to train others boosted status, as teachers could read this as a sign of trust. The head commented how it was good for their professionalism as, ‘they feel...that we trust them to train teachers...they know that we would only put beginner teachers in areas that we have faith in’. This was confirmed by the NQT there, who felt greater confidence in his own skills as a result of his experiences in training others. Another commented that it was good for younger teachers who are seeking to enhance their CVs for future job opportunities.

It was clear that a related gain of working in a training school was the benefit to staff professionalism through needing to being familiar with up to date pedagogical recommendations. The deputy expressed the importance of training for all staff there and commented,

> Well I just think that one of the ways of raising teacher status is to give them more training and to have more opportunity for teachers to talk about the business of what they’re doing. You give status to the day to day activity of the teacher by finding time to consider it and to give it a kind of validity if you like. Lots of teachers go off into their classroom, do their thing, come into the staffroom and don’t talk about it which almost makes it sound like some sort of incidental activity. So talking about training ... makes it the core business of what we do and it is. When you become a training school you do more of that.

This echoes the ethos at Cormorant, where teachers working within the school were encouraged to develop their own career profile responding to their own personal skills and interests. At Cormorant, there was an overwhelming emphasis on reflective practice for all teachers that fed into their structured career progression, so the emphasis was, according to the deputy on ‘not standing still’, but on creating an environment in which ‘people feel[ing] confident about what they can do, but not complacent about it, wanting to learn themselves, and improve’. This was believed to help lessen potential problems of motivation and feelings of being, ‘stuck in a rut’ and ultimately helped enhance staff status.

Encouraging independent thinking not only benefits the pupils and the school, but contributed to teachers’ enhanced feelings of autonomy and professional satisfaction. The deputy at Cormorant expressed how training, ‘breeds confidence’ whilst learning and developing a professional language to defend practice and describe what teachers do, ‘adds to the professionalism of the person doing the job’. Another teacher involved in research at Cormorant expressed the advantages of this confidence:

> I think certainly the teacher’s own perception of their status, and the fact that they have something which is kind of valid to say, and which can be shared with other professionals, is definitely a good thing. And I think also it’s kind of against this idea of...being given schemes of work to teach, and being told what to do, which I
think is something which lowers teachers’ status. And this is something which really kind of gives people back their professionalism and allows them to kind of think kind of independently really.

Teachers at training schools referred to a number of innovative outputs they were involved in through professional development, including the production of handbooks and workshops at Cormorant. At Kingfisher, staff in the English department were trialling a new reading scheme based on computer quizzes, and the head teacher commented on how, ‘they’ve [teachers] gone absolutely mad with some new technology with the interactive whiteboards...And its brilliant and the kids love it’. Whilst benefiting students, the teachers also felt particularly enthused and stimulated, as she commented:

_They’ve left me behind. There’s a sort of excitement about it and there’s a culture of people will go out and see something and they’ll say ‘I’d really like to try that, can we have a go?’ and because I think that’s brilliant, lets let them have a go. We’ll find the funding from somewhere._

At Cormorant, there was an awareness that the teachers were fortunate to have such possibilities, as a teacher involved in research commented how ‘to make use of things like that [research] you already have to have some kind of status and be sort of treated in a particular way’. She continued,

_I can think of people I know who teach in London schools, and who would have been ideal candidates to do BPRS [see Chapter 19], who just had no knowledge of it, really. So yeah, I think that’s probably important. And possibly, in those places where teachers’ status needs raising most, those opportunities aren’t always obviously available for people who are just kind of so busy coping._

**Specialist (subject) and beacon schools**

Teachers at specialist or beacon schools felt that inspections had more negative effects on their status. At Brambling, the deputy expressed wider dissatisfaction about OfSTED, SATs and particularly the use of external moderators, suggesting that they undermined teachers’ confidence. She felt, ‘there’s been a detrimental effect on teachers’ self esteem. They don’t trust us, even us, at a well established school with experienced teachers, have had our confidence taken away’. These opinions were also reported by teachers at Eider, where it was felt schools could run more effectively if left to their own devices. One stated, ‘schools should be trusted more, given more freedoms – subject of course to inspection’. Another complained that OfSTED was, ‘a lottery’ and referred to how, it’s ‘six to eight weeks of worry which is transferred to the students too. Its upsetting, it’s totally wrong, it’s not what education is about. It’s destructive’. And the deputy at Brambling commented of SATs, ‘Children aren’t sausages, and what about those at the bottom? No matter how much effort you put in, its always wanting more.’

However, teachers at many of the specialist schools referred to how the success of the school enabled them to feel more empowered to be flexible in responding to these
systems. The teacher at Eider reported how the head takes an independent line, and stressed the importance of keeping external requirements in perspective. At Brambling, the deputy reported that the success of the school meant ‘we feel we can take risks and even fail as the main building blocks are in place’ and this view was supported by another teacher there who felt the beacon school status made them feel more confident to ‘do things YOU feel are right’...We have the confidence to say, ‘you may disagree, but this is the way we are doing this’. At Nightingale, the head reported how the school also has a shared vision about what makes good teaching: ‘autonomy within a shared vision’.

This sense of empowerment was informed by the perceived associated benefits of the school status for improvement of teachers’ professional skills. At Osprey, the beacon funding had enabled teachers to have many more professional development opportunities through school productions, art and drama activities, which was felt to be beneficial for their status. At Cranog, staff development was taken seriously, for instance, all staff at the school were offered the chance to do an M.Ed, with help towards the cost. In particular, the special science status meant that science teachers had to be involved in INSET sessions outside of the schools, and as a result they had become more competent at this. The deputy commented that as a result of the status,

I would say that there’s been a change in the professionalism of the staff in the science department, largely due to the new staff that have come in. Some of the older staff that have gone elsewhere were maybe not quite as focussed and as professional as some of the new staff who have come in. I would say that one factor in that has definitely been the science college status. We have a lot of very young staff in the science department now and I would say that they are very, very professional in their approach.

In particular, one added benefit of the science status for the rest of the school had been the development of online lesson plans, which adhered to a standard format. One teacher expressed how teachers did not find that this reduced their autonomy in lesson planning, as they had full responsibility for the quality of their planning. He said rather that the freedom offered to teachers under this ‘unique’ system raises their perceptions of respect. He continued, ‘certainly you notice a change in their outward confidence and also the way that you see other people talking to them. You just get that feeling that these people are valued for what they do and the people feel valued as well’. At Nightingale, the strict behaviour policy was also reported as a means of empowering teachers. The head summarised,

you buy so much goodwill from teachers once you start saying a) we are going to properly equip you and b) we are going to support you so you do not have to individually take on every behaviour problem.
External relations: networks with other schools and universities

Training schools
Teachers at training schools gained some benefits for their status through working in networks with other schools. Teachers at Cormorant, as a result of their success, worked in partnership with another local school that was, at the time, in Special Measures. The teachers worked as ‘buddies’ to help teachers at the other school with ICT, Maths and Special Needs. The mentoring process was not simply a one-way process, but teachers from the other school also came into Cormorant. The ASTs who were mainly involved in this outreach work benefited from this dimension of the Leading Edge status, as the deputy head teachers said, ‘it obviously gives us an opportunity to allow out very motivated teachers, particularly our ASTs to get experiences that they wouldn’t have otherwise by working with other schools’. The deputy explained how they gained esteem through being involved in the other school’s turnaround,

I would make no claim that we had any significant, you know, input into them coming out of Special Measures, but obviously it’s a factor amongst many factors that are there. And you know, it would be nice to think there was a little bit of that.

Both schools were also involved with universities or higher education institutions. A teacher at Cormorant referred to how they had good links with a local university; for instance she had been involved in interviewing people at the university for the next year’s PGCE course, which was positively reflected on.

Specialist (subject) and beacon schools
Again, teachers at both the specialist subject and beacon schools also worked with other schools in local networks. At Osprey, the head suggested that the beacon status gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their teaching expertise to the cluster of schools they work with and run events for other schools. Cranog was not only specialist status, but leading edge, and the deputy referred to how, ‘we are a centre of excellence and our staff train staff in FE, in the GNVQ model’. The school also hosted, ‘learning to learn’ sessions for pupils from other schools, and provided CD-ROMs for work schemes in other schools. A teacher reported that when he attended meetings with colleagues from other schools he escaped some of the pressure associated with the status. He said,

It’s a good science college and when I go to meetings with other science colleges and tell them, ‘I’m Head of Science at Cranog High School’ people are really interested. It’s only when I go outside the school that I stop feeling beleaguered and put down on and I actually feel quite special and really important.

Another important aspect of the work of the science department was the teachers’ work
with four feeder schools; for example, teachers visited local feeder schools regularly, they held special science events and arranged visits to industries. Overall, this gave science teachers an advantage over other subject areas, because they supported the middle school teachers in preparing the pupils for Key Stage 3 exams. One teacher expressed, ‘Certainly, it is giving science a bit of an edge because they can go and get a better understanding of how things are working across the middle schools’.

**External relations: parents, community and media perceptions**

**Training schools**

Amongst teachers at the training schools, it did not appear that relationships with parents and the community were particularly significant in influencing their status. However, at Cormorant, the deputy reflected on how the school classifications were important for parents because the labels send out ‘positive messages for…the community’ about the schools’ effectiveness. There were evident ramifications for enrolment, as the deputy stated,

> Obviously, you know, if you’re looking at just figures, you know, we get more and more oversubscribed, and say our profile is higher and higher, you know, we’re getting more and more applicants for all our years, etc, etc. But whether, to what extent parents care about badges and labels and things like that, I’m not so sure. I think if we were getting the exam results that we get and had the OfSTED reports that we’ve got, but we didn’t have any of those badges or labels, I’m not sure you would see any diminution in the eagerness to come here…If you take the example of the specialism, nobody applies to Cormorant because it’s a specialist sports college, would be my judgement.

At Kingfisher, parents were not influential in constructing teachers’ positive status, because as the head expressed, ‘communicating with our parents about what we do is really hard. A massive challenge’. However, teachers were looking forward to the extended schools initiative, and working in established partnerships with other professionals. The school had no health and social services on site, and the head explained, ‘and we don’t have a particular relationship with the police which we’d like to have because it’s quite helpful in this area, because it’s a bit of a rough area really’. She continued:

> So we would like to have close links with those three agencies and that’s what extended schools will bring to us. Yes we have massive provision in the holidays, after school, before school, weekends. But bringing the other agencies in because we’re still at the beck and call of social services and the relationships are not that good. We feel they don’t tell us anything and they feel we don’t tell them anything. It’s just not clever. We’d like to have designated people working with us.
In terms of external media depictions, teachers at both training schools echoed the general conception reported in type 1 schools drawn from the surveys that they felt there was a negative media portrayal of teachers. This was also reported by one teacher at the specialist school, who felt, ‘there’s a certain amount of sympathy with the teaching profession because of the media projection of the idea of a mob-culture in school’. At Kingfisher, an NQT for instance referred to ‘the media depiction of every school being violent and dangerous’ as one teacher at Cormorant expressed, ‘I certainly think in the media, the way teachers are kind of seen is more negative…I think there’s a perception that sometimes people go into teaching because they can’t do other things’. However, interestingly, she then added ‘I don’t really think you get that in this particular place’.

Teachers at both schools did refer however to the particular activities they were involved in to raise the school profile. At Cormorant, the deputy referred to the media attention they got, whilst at Kingfisher, when the school was getting funding term by term, ‘we were having to get ourselves in the press….We had to make a lot of fuss to get funding’. The schools also received a lot of visitors as a result of their status, and the deputy at Kingfisher reported how this made the teachers feel that, ‘after a while I think they think, ‘well actually, we must be something’’. The outward orientation offers a platform for teachers to begin to see themselves differently, as the deputy continued,

Eventually you can chip away at that kind of ‘I’m only a teacher and I’m not doing this right’, and you can do quite a lot by saying ‘we’ve got this visitor and they would like to talk to you’, and it’s like Aisha’s so unassuming and she’s so good and she doesn’t know it yet. So these kinds of things are so useful. Joe can say ‘who can they speak to?’ and there’s a number of people but I chose Aisha because I thought that would be really good for her.

**Specialist (subject) and beacon schools**

At other specialist schools, relationships with parents were quoted as more influential in shaping teacher status. At Osprey, a teacher felt that parents already had high expectations regardless of the school status, and that there were already supportive relations between teachers and staff. These supportive relations were remarked upon at other schools, for instance at Eider, the school was reported to have a high status in the community because of its high performance, and a teacher referred to how ‘parents were grateful to have their sons here, and feel we are doing a good job’. At Brambling, a teacher referred to how, through word of mouth, the school had developed a good reputation, which even attracted ‘parents [to] move into the area just to get their children in’. The school enjoyed supportive relations with parents, as the deputy reported that 98 per cent took up the opportunity to be involved in their ‘Inspire’ workshops to work alongside their children. And at Nightingale, being well resourced and gaining improved results through the technology status was felt by the head teacher to attract students and parents, as the school that year received 650 applications for 250 available places.

At Osprey, a teacher commented how, ‘possibly initially [beacon status affected perceptions], when we had a launch and parents were really pleased about it. Now it’s
just accepted, the novelty wears off and it probably doesn’t mean as much’. And yet whilst the head felt that the school had a good reputation despite the beacon funding, it, ‘has allowed us to do some very public, high profile things’. For instance, the beacon funding paid for an artist to work in the school, and London Underground were so impressed by one piece of work completed under the artist’s supervision that they made it into a poster. She added, ‘having that very public profile, it’s what we have to do in schools now, we have to tout our wares, which is a sad state of affairs but that’s the way it is’.

In Cranog, by contrast, the school received less publicity in external media, and the PE teacher reported how he did not feel that the school had made a big effort to promote itself. He pointed out that most specialist schools change the names of their schools to include their specialism, unlike at Cranog. He felt that, ‘the science department doesn’t lead the school as well as they should because of the status that they have been given’. When the school got specialist science status, the school however wrote letters to local pharmaceutical firms and have developed many partnerships with local chemical industries.

In the remainder of the chapter, we consider the perspectives of teachers in academies, to explore whether, and if so, how, similar issues were influencing their status.

B) ACADEMIES

Personal/school status: impact of funding and resources on teacher status

An overwhelming factor that emerged as influencing teacher status at the two academies studied was again the perceived importance of resources. Academies can receive around £2m sponsorship in addition to government funding and both academies in this research had benefited from investments in buildings. Teachers in Linnet Academy worked in a new building that cost over £15m, and teachers at Wren were due to move into a new building costing over £30m. The academies also faced different contractual arrangements to LA controlled schools. Like LA schools, they had freedom over internal resource allocation, although they were not bound by the national teacher pay arrangements and could have more diverse staffing structures. Their spending of the General Annual Grant could be spent on a wider range of activities benefiting the community.

Although the Academies did not receive more resources from the state than maintained schools, the fact that the buildings and equipment were new gave the impression to teachers interviewed in this research that they had more resources than other schools. For example, a teacher commented, ‘instead of having to photocopy pages twenty-four times because you’ve got one text book, we’ve got enough text books to go around, we’ve got computers’. Another key benefit was their autonomy over staffing arrangements, which was important for getting ‘more bodies into the school’. The teachers reported having more teaching assistants, which positively altered the adult: pupil ratio. These factors had positive implications for how teachers feel about themselves and the ability to get on with their jobs as a teacher at Linnet Academy commented, ‘I think it’s very important. The more resources that are at your disposal, in theory, the better you can do your job’. The
investment was also perceived to have other knock-on benefits in terms of enhancing teachers’ status; for instance, the music department at Wren Academy benefited from purchasing state of the art music equipment and a teacher commented,

*I think this does give me a little more status, as a music teacher experimenting with new independent learning strategies. I definitely think it would give me a little more status, I think it would look good on my resumé.*

This experience was also anticipated at Linnet Academy, where staff members were particularly excited about the prospect of working in the new building. Teachers variously referred to this as ‘a huge bonus’ and ‘hugely seductive because it’s just fantastic’. Teachers were also particularly excited by having the opportunity to work with up to date ICT provision and better facilities. Some also reported benefits from a perceived increase in autonomy over how those resources are allocated, as the deputy revealed, as one teacher said, ‘for me, the stimulating thing is the opportunity to work in this type of modern business managed environment, where we are responsible for our own budgets, staffing’. At Linnet Academy, a teacher stated in response to questioning on whether the new building will affect his status,

*It will make me feel better about going to work every morning I’m sure. I’m sure I’ll wake up in September thinking oh, ok, let’s go and see what this new building’s about. It’s more exciting for me. It’s more of an opportunity to work within those facilities and the astroturf and flood lights and new sports hall and all this other stuff that’s going to be in there. For me personally that’s career wise is quite good as well, to be in charge of sport within those facilities and having that opportunity to do that. I think it will make me feel better about myself.*

**Personal/school status: evaluations i) pride**

For teachers at the academies, a key reason for their feelings of increased status emerged precisely as a result of their former experiences working in difficult circumstances at predecessor schools. A teacher at Linnet Academy stated, ‘when you’re involved in the programme and you come from a situation where there was so much negativity, you can only see the positives…I see and feel a huge drive of positive things’. To be part of such a dramatic turnaround had clear implications for how teachers felt and were externally perceived, as the same teacher continued:

*It impacts hugely on how I feel about myself. I actually feel like I matter now. I love it. I know that when I go and introduce myself to people they’re going to be like ‘oh!’ It’s different. I feel different and I feel that people react to me very differently. Not just because of the promotion but because of the name of the school. We had a very poor reputation before. Now that reputation hasn’t gone, but there’s a feeling of things are happening. That’s lovely.*

Similarly, the deputy head said,
my peer group who aren’t teachers thought it was very impressive that I was going to work in an academy. [Do] I think is it impressive? I think it’s a good thing to do. I don’t know if impressive is a word I would use necessarily. So that’s the perceptions from outside and this is an amazing thing.

However, as much as the teachers felt a boost in their reputations through working at the school, they downplayed the possibility that this made them better than others. One teacher even maintained, ‘I don’t really see myself as having a status, ‘That’s not the important thing to me, feeling that other people must think that I’m some sort of important person. What’s important to me is that I’m doing what I like doing and I’m supported in what I want to do’, reflecting findings in Chapter 7. Another commented on the ways in which their status rested on being able to instigate change for their pupils, explaining, ‘...as a teacher, you’re impacting on future generations. To me that is status’. As in Cormorant, there was a desire to preserve a sense of egalitarianism across and between schools, as another teacher particularly pointed out:

*I don’t really like the word ‘status’ I’m not very keen on that and what it can suggest, that we’re better than anybody else. I don’t think we’re better than any other teacher in any other school. If we start thinking like that then it’s not going to help any other school or help the profession. It’s all down to the management of the school, how it’s structured and the ethos of the school.

Personal/school status: evaluations ii) within the teaching profession

At both academies, although the teachers felt higher esteem working there, some teachers reported problems in relations with other local teachers. The deputy at Wren Academy compared the establishment of the Academies with his experience in setting up a CTC (City Technology College) nearby. He felt that it took time to break down barriers of opposition from parents, communities and teachers, as he recalled:

*It was a painful experience in terms of friction, resentment etc. It took a long time to break down the barriers between the CTC and the local education authorities and the perception of teachers in other schools. And there’s a little bit of that, based on envy, ignorance and prejudice, people making assumptions about things without knowing the true facts, and the jealousy because they weren’t part of it.*

He recalled how other schools had refused to cooperate with the CTCs: *‘ridiculous things, like other schools not playing against our football teams and not even holding the schools’ FA meeting in our school. They wouldn’t even set foot across our doors’. It was important to note that the deputy believed that similar reactions were being shown against academies, although on not such an extreme scale. Certainly this perception is supported by another teacher at Wren Academy, who stated that whilst the outreach work involved the academy in the local community, he also felt that some teachers from other schools were envious when visiting the academy (see Chapter 12 for the point of view of a teacher working outside of an academy). He felt that these opinions arose out of
conversations that may have occurred between teachers who did not move from the predecessor school to the Academy which may have generated some animosity towards the Academy. He also explained,

We did have some schools who came and I was very uncomfortable with their perception of the school, and I didn’t know why they came, quite frankly, very negative, very envious. What I have to be careful of is that any decisions made do not impact on the students, and whilst I am not prepared to work with those that don’t wish to work with us, we’re still making arrangements to bring their students in via other means, for example in the summertime without that member of staff.

At Linnet Academy the same attitudes were reported by another teacher, who explained, ‘I think it’s possibly creating some animosity amongst certain people... I know various teachers in [the inner city area] and they’re kind of like ‘what are you getting all this money for when our building is falling to pieces and this is happening.’ It is felt by teachers that resentment is expressed because of the new facilities at Linnet Academy and the good results achieved by the school. Another teacher explained the reactions she felt when dealing with teachers from other schools and commented,

we find it’s resentment. If the tables were turned I’d feel the same because they feel that we’ve just been given more than our fair share...So there’s a huge amount of resentment there.

Internal working relations: leadership, collaboration and trust

When teachers joined these academies, they expressed that it required their adoption of different working practices. At Wren Academy, the deputy explained how teachers knew that by joining the academy, effectively they were signing up to a completely different way of working: ‘It wasn’t a continuum, it was very definitely one school closing and everyone choosing to adopt a new structure, a new ethos, new working practices, a new contract, so it wasn’t more of the same’. Thus teachers working there faced new line management structures and subject responsibilities. One teacher there felt that this clear structure meant, ‘It’s all worked out properly so you know who to go to...It’s more organised and structured here than in other schools I’ve worked at’. On the other hand, the new organisation meant that some staff lost former responsibilities, and although they did not suffer reduced salaries, they felt a loss of status through doing so. The deputy explained,

I can think of one member of staff who’s a little frustrated by the fact that he’s now not in charge of something. I said, you’re in charge of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4. ‘Yes, but I used to be in charge of ski trips, D of E [Duke of Edinburgh]’. He’d got everything under that umbrella but we don’t have that type of structure here, so they’ve lost that and with it they lose a little bit of status.

At Wren Academy, the practices were different because each department was responsible
for their own curriculum area. However, the flexibility of the self-determined internal systems also involved teachers having no staffroom, and much longer working hours. This was imagined by some teachers to put off others from working there, as one teacher explained how former colleagues, ‘are at home mowing the lawn by 4 o’clock and I’m lucky to get home for 7’. However, in common with the other teachers at the academy, he also felt that this work pattern enhanced teachers’ professionalism and status they could command, especially when combined with other expectations around dress code. He explained,

*The teaching staff as a whole are incredibly professional, I’m not saying they’re less professional anywhere else but here it’s enhanced it. All staff wear suits and all sixth formers wear suits as well, this raises the ethos of the business environment. The working hours are more akin to industry. I know this raises our level of status ... that makes a difference to a parent who can get hold of us.*

Teachers at Wren Academy also regularly stressed the importance of the Academy’s ethos for their sense of professionalism. One young teacher there described how, ‘*the school ethos here is achievement, stretching yourself and doing well. I’m proud to work in a place like this, I see it as an opportunity not to be missed and so do the children*’. He felt the school had a nurturing and friendly approach to the children and ‘*because of the ethos here, the children celebrate achievements and want to see each other do well, that’s what made me stay, this is the way education should be*. A teacher also expressed how, ‘*every system in the school, any little iota in the school has a policy and that policy is shared so there’s a support mechanism*’ whilst another teacher also felt that the rules and regulations were more strictly adhered to than in other LA schools.

As a result, there had been ‘*a massive change in attitude*’, which impacted on teacher status as teachers built better relationships with pupils, rather than having to deal with behaviour (for the relevance of behaviour to status, see Chapter 7). Teachers expressed how they felt privileged to work at the Academy, as one commented on the benefits, ‘*I didn’t know what to expect when I first came, until I took my first lesson and the children thanked me for the lesson on their way out*’. Compared to students at other schools, the Academy’s students saw teachers ‘*as a source of knowledge ... they’re very inquisitive, in other schools students see you as someone who’s occupying their time*’. Another compared their experience to that imagined in maintained schools, and cited a colleague who had said, ‘*Oh the kids tell us to ‘F-Off’ 5 times a day*. That’s a reality in many schools, I would never work in *that* type of organisation’. A change in school discipline policy was also reported at Linnet Academy, and this had, ‘*completely changed the ethos of the school*’ and promoted respect amongst pupils.

**Internal work relations: recruitment and retention**

When Linnet Academy was established, almost an entirely new cohort of teachers came in. Most of the new staff recruited at Linnet Academy were NQTs or ‘first teach’, and the high staff turnover gave the remaining staff the opportunity for more rapid promotion and higher status. One teacher reported how, ‘*I was only teaching for two years when I came*
here as head of PE...which is pretty unheard of and I got trained up whilst I was doing the job’. Although at Linnet Academy there is now more stability in staffing than in the past, there is still high staff turnover, particularly because the teachers get promoted elsewhere.

At Wren Academy, staff from the predecessor school on the site could also opt to remain at the academy after the takeover, although the deputy reported that prior to its opening, teachers felt some apprehension. Similar to the experience at Linnet Academy, according to the deputy head, just twelve of the teachers chose to remain, whilst three had since left. One teacher there also complained that, in contrast to the Linnet Academy experience, the flat management structures of the Academy meant there was little chance for promotion, so ‘I don’t expect the academy to have high staff retention’. However, remaining staff were able to be involved in recruitment.

At Wren Academy it was believed that new staff members were attracted by the academy status, ‘….because it is known that with academy status comes some special funding’. They were also perceived to be lured by the higher wages ‘…coming out of university with all those debts hanging over your head then that’s what you’re going to look for at the end of the day isn’t it?’ although it was suggested that more recently, potential new staff were also attracted because of the innovative ways that academies worked.

**Teaching and learning: training and CPD**

Teachers reported that they felt positively about the opportunities for their teaching due to certain school practices within the two academies studied. For example, at Wren Academy the fact that there were no more than twenty-four pupils in every class meant teachers could be more flexible and responsive to student needs. One teacher also expressed how the academy encouraged more experimentation than would be possible at maintained schools. He said,

*They want you to experiment and bring new ideas. I’ve started to develop a new assessment technique using hand-held PCs...hopefully it will be used all around the whole school. There are lots of opportunities like that and learning different teaching techniques, we all have to watch each other teach quite often, we’re given a lot of opportunity to develop here. I think I’ve got a lot of freedom.*

A teacher at Wren Academy felt that teachers there had a higher interest in training and skills than those in LA schools. He suggested that teachers in other schools were unable to keep up with the latest technological advancements in teaching and learning because they did not invest time into reading current periodicals. Another explained,

*One of the skills you need as an individual is to be an autonomous learner and as a teacher to be able to identify your own shortcomings in order to be able to provide yourself with the training. The teachers that I tend to find [in other schools], whilst they’ve got very capable teachers, they might not have been able*
to equip themselves with the training to teach some of the key things that we need to teach these days.

Certainly in the Academies, it was clear there was a lot of team work within the departments to develop new ideas. There was support for innovation; for example, the technology teacher at Wren Academy won several awards (including regional teacher of the year) and had published CD-ROMs demonstrating his work.

External relations: networks with other schools and universities

Both academies were also involved in outreach work with other schools, and again, as in the other schools (Chapter 10) they gained esteem through doing so. Staff at Linnet Academy held inset days for primary schools and went out to deliver PE training. Staff members at Wren Academy were also particularly engaged in delivering wider training in IT to teachers and students coming from other schools. The visitors used the academy’s facilities, and teachers looked at the on-line curriculum and developed their own expertise at using the software. The deputy expressed how this meant that, ‘they go back to their schools trained and enthused’, and felt it went some way towards breaking down the barriers between the different types of institution. However, another teacher felt that when working with other teachers to share ideas they may have seen him as having a different status to themselves because he worked at the academy. Reiterating the ideas of the previous section, he said ‘I think that’s because I’ve got opportunities that they haven’t, it’s not that they couldn’t develop these ideas themselves but I’ve got the equipment to do it’.

External relations: parents, community and media perceptions

Undoubtedly, the academy status had made an enormous difference to parental interest at Wren Academy. Teachers explained that parents were in favour of the change to an academy, and the community had benefited from associated increases in property prices. In both academies, there was a desire for a wider involvement of the academy in the local community than developed in the previous schools, and this was seen as a positive opportunity. A teacher at Linnet Academy explained the benefits of the academy were not just to students but were ‘twofold’, explaining, ‘it’s the community as a whole. So the actual community will have facilities like golf and it adds to the facilities within the community, I think is one way of looking at it’.

In particular, the technology specialism and sponsorship link of Wren Academy with industry helped involve the local community in school life. One of the teachers at the Academy was Director of Careers and Industrial Links, and he had built on his previous career as a businessman in the area to make contact with local businesses and engage them to work with the school. He suggested that this had positive effects for teachers’ status, reporting: ‘It does raise teachers’ status. The IT teacher is absolutely delighted by the response of the first that’s joined his programme. I think he feels good about it’. In Linnet Academy, there were also plans in place for when the school moved to its new accommodation in September. A teacher referred to how she was expected to bring in
outside agencies to, ‘more or less set up our own children’s trust’, whilst the PE teacher had innovative plans to, ‘not just [offer] your regular, football, netball etc’. but to exploit other sports facilities which involved the local community. He wanted to bring sports coaches into the academy in the morning, introduce yoga, take people golfing. Another teacher commented, ‘he’s looking to just use the facilities around us. And again because the money is probably there to do that, it’s an area we can move into’.

In terms of parental support, the popularity for Wren Academy was evident in the fact that the academy dealt with over 700 applications for 170 Year 7 places. And the nature of parental collaboration had changed in line with the new policies, as teachers were required to meet parents of all students in their tutor groups, to ‘start what is expected to be the beginning of a successful relationship’. Teachers were required to produce reports for parents every 4 weeks and see parents within 48 hours of a request, and this maintained an ongoing teacher/parents relationship. One teacher there felt the relationships provided her with more leverage over the pupil, although she felt surprised initially:

As soon as I started the job I was shocked because I had to meet every single parent within the first week, so that encouraged the teacher/parent link straight away... and now if I need to speak to any parent, they’ll probably be behind me, I’ve had no problems, they’re probably behind the academy more than the child.

However, the same could not be reported for staff-parent relationships at Linnet Academy, where a teacher reported that, ‘I think if you ask 90 per cent of the parents they wouldn’t have a clue, to be perfectly honest with you [what an academy means]’. Another felt that parental support,

is very lacking here...a lot of the parents of the students that come here have absolutely clear dividing lines between home and school. Once the student has walked out of the front door, whatever they do, whatever happens to them it is the school’s responsibility. That’s a very difficult barrier to break down.

At Wren Academy, teachers felt undoubtedly that parents thought the academy provided special opportunities, and as a result, they had higher expectations, which placed more pressure on them. A teacher at the academy argued,

I think it puts pressure on us, I don’t know if they think we’re some sort of wonder teachers that’s going to instantly change their child into a brain-box. Apparently the old school, L J Sampson, well people wouldn’t send their children here but that changed as soon as they changed the name to Wren Academy but a lot of the teaching staff didn’t change. There’s something about the name, they might expect higher standards.

The pressure for immediate success was also felt to be constructed through the media; whilst Wren Academy had a high profile (through coverage on television) a teacher referred to the bad press that generally came with academies. Teachers expressed how
they felt they were part of an experiment, and whilst they felt some external esteem from working there, the ultimate credibility of the Academies depended on as yet unknown results, which made them feel they had to prove their worth. The deputy at Linnet Academy referred to how he felt in particular that other heads in schools across the borough were disparaging about the academy because, ‘all week there’s been something every morning in the newspaper about academies’. One teacher at Linnet Academy felt the status of the school even resulted in a lower sense of prestige for him as a result of the particular challenges faced:

I: Is there any kind of prestige attached to working within the academy?
T: The opposite I think personally. Because academies are supposed (and I say supposed)...they’re classed as failing schools if you like or schools where they have got very bad results. A lot of people just look at league tables and they [don’t] realise the kind of kids you’ve got there and the kind of area you’re teaching in and the kind of problems, the socio-economic problems within the area you’re teaching in, I don’t think they realise that when they actually make comments on it...plus all the press that gets these academies like the ones in Middlesbrough not doing particularly well. That’s always in the press you know what I mean? So the bad press that comes with them as well.

There was, as a result, a sense of uncertainty about whether teachers could enjoy a more privileged status either now or in the future. As the deputy head at Linnet Academy expressed:

I think it’s a huge grey area at the moment because no one really know where they’re going to go. I think potentially there’s room within the academy system for the inflation of the status of teachers. However if 17 flagship academies reveal that actually gains aren’t being made and the whole thing gets pulled well we’re going to be part of a very unusual experiment.

C) CONCLUSIONS: COMMON ISSUES FOR POSITIVELY ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

In conclusion, the in-depth case-studies of classified schools (training, beacon, specialist and academy) showed that:

• Teachers felt that the labels and statuses of the schools were associated with accruing resources. This had clear implications for the nature of teaching and learning possible, staffing levels and opportunities for CPD. It was overwhelmingly clear than better resources made teachers feel positively esteemed, although targeted investment in certain school subjects is associated with higher expectation too.

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2 It should be noted that Academies are not classed as failing schools. However, it is clear that this teacher believes they are perceived as such, based on interpretations of league tables and socio-economic characteristics of pupils there.
• The success of the school had direct impacts on how teachers perceived their own status. A successful school provoked pride and kudos, although modesty was also encouraged. This was also the case in the academies, where both the turnaround of the former schools had positive implications for how teachers felt. Nevertheless, teachers downplayed notions of being higher status than others.

• Some hostile reactions were observed within the teaching profession to staff in schools pursuing new statuses. This was particularly the case in the two Academies visited, where, despite receiving similar funding to maintained schools, the visibility of new resources was reported as provoking some local resentment.

• The duties of the senior management widened with the school status and therefore required delegation of management duties. However, opportunities for other teachers to be involved in leadership, high level administration and training were felt to reflect a level of trust in other teachers, and made them feel positively esteemed (see Chapter 7).

• In the two academies visited, the adoption of new school policies was reported as influential to status. The longer working hours, a firm discipline policy, clear internal staffing structures and smaller class sizes were felt to enhance staff professionalism.

• The school statuses were reported as enhancing teachers’ possibilities for career progression. In Academies, high staff turnover had been a problem, although the academies were proving attractive to NQTs.

• Training and CPD were a high priority at these successful schools, particularly at the training schools, where the process has positive consequences. Staff within these schools report that they were encouraged to think independently and creatively, and this is seen was an indicator of high status and professionalism. Staff members were given lots of opportunities to develop, with resources found to support this if necessary.

• Outreach work with other schools was experienced positively by teachers, who enjoyed sharing good practice. This was a possible source of status.

• The schools’ success was influential in pupil enrolment, and many schools (and particularly one of the academies) were oversubscribed. Most had good relations with parents, including at one of the academies where these were managed in a highly structured way. The school status was believed to raise parental expectations however, and placed more pressure on some teachers.

• Media exposure was apparent for these schools, although not unusually so. Teachers at the academies felt a sense of uncertainty over the future of the academies, which was worsened by media interest.
Chapter 13: Poorly Performing Schools: Cause for Concern, Serious Weakness and Special Measures

Overview

This chapter again aims to address the second aim of the teacher status project, by exploring in more depth some of the factors influencing teacher status through an exploration of the perspectives of teachers who work in schools that have been subject to LEA and/or government intervention. It considers how a label of being a school ‘causing concern’ and the associated improvement programmes in schools at various stages of emergence from Special Measures influence how teachers perceive their own status and the status of the teaching profession. More specifically, the research was conducted to:

- understand how the label of a poorly performing school and associated programmes related to the classification influences how teachers perceive their own status and the status of the teaching profession.

- explore the perceptions of teachers working within schools variously classified as serious weakness and cause for concern, and understand what particular factors related to the school status influence their perceptions of their high or low status.

- consider how perceptions of teacher status in these classified schools are similar or different.

The research was conducted through qualitative case study research in five schools, all of which had been in special measures, and which were variously categorised as ‘serious weaknesses’ or ‘cause for concern’ (see Chapter 11 for more details on the schools). The main findings of the chapter are that:

- The teachers working within the specially classified schools demonstrated a lower sense of status than was found more typically in the type I results on teachers from schools drawn from our survey, and in the positively labelled schools (Chapter 12). The reputation and poor evaluations of the schools, the low parental evaluations, low enrolment related to the poorly resourced working conditions impacted upon the regard within which teachers felt they were held. Many teachers felt embarrassment at their school’s name and that they personally were seen as lesser teachers because of the poor school results.

- The process of Special Measures classification was associated with widespread demoralisation within the schools. Not only did it set in place disruption through high levels of staff turnover, but OfSTED inspections were experienced as promoting low morale amongst the remaining staff. Teachers felt particularly disempowered by not being given the opportunities to explain their teaching in context and the process was felt to be divisive for internal school relations.
• The changes in teaching and learning associated with moving out of Special Measures, often involved the imposition of rigid systems, which were felt by the majority of teachers to undermine their professional autonomy and lower their confidence and status.

• However, school improvement and coming out of special measures was reported to promote higher status and a boost in esteem. Staff reported how they benefited from funding which improved their teaching and learning opportunities and mobilised as a team to improve the school. It also attracted some new teachers and senior managers, who were attracted by the challenge of working in such schools, seeing it as an opportunity to enhance their career prospects.

Evidence

The analysis reports on the same key issues as reported in the previous chapter:

• personal/school status: impact of funding and resources on teacher status
• personal/school status: evaluations i) external
• personal/school status: evaluations ii) other teachers
• internal working relations: leadership, collaboration and trust
• internal work relations: recruitment and retention
• teaching and learning: training and CPD
• external relations: networks with other schools and universities
• external relations: parents, community and media perceptions

Personal/school status: impact of funding and resources on teacher status

Teachers at the poorly performing schools faced a different financial terrain to the former schools, and it was evident that teachers believed strongly that limited resources also had implications for their status and ability to do their jobs. Financial issues were referred to as a source of worry and problems; Corbin faced financial pressures when the small school allowance was stopped (due to county policy) at the same time as the school went into Special Measures, which meant the school lost £100,000 in three years. When the head took over the school, he felt the financial situation had consequences for addressing the school’s difficulties:

_I had a quarter of a million pounds of debt to get rid of which meant I was cutting corners on appointments. I couldn’t use money to bribe the best people to come and work here, all these things and I was just scratching around._

At Harrier, the deputy head reported that the school also had a financial deficit and had ‘been underfunded for a long time’. He explained,
I can see that the actual fabric of the building has been neglected for a long period of time...In fact the school buildings, from what I can gather, are very much as they were when the school was built in the 1960s. So there’s been very little investment. I think if the school has always been in a situation as though in a failing tag then the LEA are not going to be putting money into it. I think it’s been a victim of its own failures really. We’re hoping to reverse that trend.

At Corbin, a teacher felt the school’s lack of resources partly explained the general low level of enrolment,

One of the reasons...why parents weren’t choosing to send their children to us was because the environment wasn’t...it’s a warm friendly place but it was tatty. As a year five, six parent if you’re going round to Neilton and Padley or the other schools that you’ve got choices of, they look shinier, newer, with obvious investment and we came off worse.

Through being in Special Measures however, Corbin had seen investment which meant that, ‘the school does look a lot sharper with new windows, carpets. All that sort of stuff does lift the environment’. At Chough, according to the head, ‘the computer provision was absolutely diabolical in the school’, so in 2003, the school was networked, and every staff member has a networked computer in their classroom and the teachers were given laptops. According to the deputy, this meant, ‘the pupils themselves then of course will be challenged more. They will be taught better’. It is interesting to note that at Harrier, the deputy felt that investment was a reward or recognition of hard work, as he said:

I hope that at a time they will reward that improvement with some hard cash because that’s what this school is crying out for. It’s crying out for school improvement in terms of buildings, resources and that sort of thing.

Although Fulmar had also received additional resources when it was put into Special Measures, a number of teachers there felt concern about the expiry of funding for ‘Excellence in Cities’ in 2006, which meant that its city learning centre (which was shared by other local schools) would likely close. This centre was believed to improve the prestige and image of the school, having ‘been a great improvement for this school’. This was echoed at Asquith, where a teacher welcomed the ‘Excellence in Cities’ initiative’s funding for three years, but commented that after this time, she worried, ‘and then what?’

Personal/school status: evaluations i) external

It is unsurprising to find that the link between personal status and status or achievements of the school reflected in Chapter 12 is reflected also in a less positive way at poorly performing schools. At Corbin, teachers acknowledged the school had comparatively lesser status because of its place in the league tables, ‘As you can see a school like Padley which is high up in the league tables has been seen as an excellent school and ours isn’t.'
That’s one sort of status’. Yet, crucially, poor school results meant that teachers felt they were perceived by others as poorer teachers, as two teachers at Chough expressed,

T1: I think you take the results as a reflection of whether you’ve been successful or not. So if the results are poor then you feel like you’ve failed in some way.

T2: Or that you’re not getting it right. What’s unfair is when you’re judged alongside other schools that have totally different catchment areas and the level of achievement they’re working with is totally different. It’s value added but it doesn’t really take into account differences. I know it’s free school meals and all of that but that’s in theory, the harsh reality is that it doesn’t seem to take differences into account.

Unsurprisingly at the less well achieving schools, much discussion was on the impacts of evaluations through OfSTED inspections. Across all four schools, teachers talked about the personal and sometimes devastating effects of the inspections when their school was in Special Measures, which they felt lowered their status. People complained about aspects of the procedures which were judged to be unfair or unhelpful, as a teacher at Chough commented that, ‘it’s almost like kicking you when you’re down’, whilst the head at Asquith resented the impact of OfSTED on people, and felt that the process was ‘completely opposite to what I’m doing. I’m in the construction business; I’m not in the demolition business.’

Similarly, when Fulmar was designated as Special Measures, the termly visits were described by the deputy head as both ‘professionally rewarding’ but also ‘with some aspects professionally appalling’. This latter comment referred to how staff morale was destroyed when judgements were made on lessons even though the whole lesson had not been observed. At Harrier, the head also objected to the manner of the inspections, commenting, ‘they hammered the staff here. I was absolutely appalled. I reported it because I said I just can’t believe that you can do that. Because they were getting so into them’. Moreover, at Chough, a teacher felt the inspections were unrepresentative and had little effect, as teachers were,

put under too much pressure and too much stress. When you’re being observed, the stress kicks in and sometimes you don’t work to your best because you’re so stressed and you’re panicking.

At Chough teachers stated the inappropriateness of targets for some pupils, as one said, ‘it’s not for want of working, it’s just that they’re not capable’. And at Asquith, a teacher complained about the ‘strangling’ effects of the National Curriculum and targets, ‘as it’s not going to make any difference because you can only work with what you’ve got. If Joe hasn’t got the ability to read to a level four, there’s nothing you can do’. She felt rather, they should, ‘give teachers their professionalism back: to respect what we say’. Another teacher at Chough echoed that the inspections did not allow for these contextual explanations and were therefore ultimately damaging to their professionalism,
People are making judgements about me and I feel like I want to defend myself. I want to say ‘well I’ve chosen to do it this way because...’ Because somebody might look at a book [to assess teacher’s marking] and say ‘well what does that mean?’ and if it’s not taken in context, if I’m not there to explain it I feel that people are making judgements about my quality of teaching.

Another teacher at Corbin echoed this sentiment, expressing how the inspections limited the extent to which adaptive and contextual strategies developed by teachers in the school could be used,

I suppose I did [feel a loss of flair]. There are some lessons where you come in and [usually] if the kids are on a high you don’t do the starter that you prepared to do because you change your mind half way through the lesson...You felt you couldn’t do that...It was very stressful.

Teachers did recognise some benefits of the process as two teachers at Chough commented: ‘If the inspections didn’t take place, the problems that were fundamental to our problems wouldn’t have been discovered, wouldn’t have been alleviated, so in a twisted way, OfSTED was a benefit’. More senior members of staff were more accepting of the process, because at Chough and Harrier, there was acknowledgement that, as the new headteacher at Chough stated, ‘being classified as under-achieving was right, we were under-achieving’. Similarly, at Harrier, a teacher in middle management was not surprised that the school was put in Special Measures. However, it was felt that there was much variability in the process, as a teacher at Corbin compared how, ‘one of them [inspectors] was very nice and the other would just walk into the room. Not even walk in and say ‘can I come in’, he’d just walk in. He’d sit down, get up and walk out. And that’s kind of like you don’t matter’. Another teacher there felt that,

Each time we have an HMI, this [aspect] was so much better but they were all looking at something else. It was just like you were standing there not having done your homework. You’ve done what they asked you to last time but they’re not bothered with that anymore. They’re looking at something else and that was demoralising.

In particular, the process was seen as having little benefit to teachers, as a teacher at Clough felt, ‘I think that rather than working against you, it should be something that works with you, something that gives you support and move you forward’. In particular, the lack of feedback left teachers unaware of how to improve, as a teacher at Corbin points out,

I don’t know say we got a satisfactory lesson and I would have liked to have said to him ‘well why was it only satisfactory?’ but you don’t get that. So it’s not helping you to improve....You know your lesson was ok because it wasn’t one of the failing ones and it wasn’t one of the excellent ones but where exactly in the middle you sat and why you sat there was a total mystery to you...
However, despite the negative impact of the inspections, when improvements started occurring and the school was finally removed from Special Measures, teachers felt a sense of achievement. The Head at Harrier said, ‘the biggest boom for us was that 94 per cent of our youngsters got five A to Gs with English and Maths. That to me tells a big story because it was 68 per cent. It just shows what you can do if you’ve got the right strategy’. The process of improvement and moving out of classifications was also associated with improved status. A teacher at Corbin expressed:

*It was like waaaay! We had to jump so high to get out of Special Measures, which I think is the other thing..... The bar was so much higher to get out that once we’d got out it was like ‘yes we’re probably better than them’ [another school they are federating with]. It was a bit of a boost because you think, ‘yeah we’ve done it, we’ve fitted the criteria, we can do it’, but you were expected to really jump high to get out. Everybody was very relieved and very happy.*

At Chough, the head reported that people were euphoric when results improved, ‘so staff know that what we’ve done helped make a difference, they can make a difference’. At Corbin, the same process was reported by a teacher, who pointed out, ‘we feel better really because we feel better in ourselves about how things are going’, and the headteacher said, ‘teachers now feel good about themselves for being out of Special Measures. For being in Special Measures doesn’t make them feel very good at all. They need to be a very resilient bunch’. This message was maintained by the senior staff following the process, as a teacher at Corbin commented,

*But as the Head said it’s every time that they come, they’re raising the bar. To come out of Special Measures you’ve got to be really good. They don’t want you to slip back when they’ve gone. So I’m sure we have kept that standard. There has been a bit of slippage since. But it’s certainly a much more positive feeling.*

**Personal/school status: evaluations ii) within the teaching profession**

It was not only through evaluation in the inspection process that teachers felt lower status, but teachers across all of the schools referred to the negative reactions they felt subjected to from other teachers. At Chough, for example, two teachers discussed:

*T2 Being classed as under-achieving you thought people were looking at you thinking ‘Oh that school’s underachieving, therefore the teaching isn’t very good quality’. You feel like you’ve failed. You’re thinking that it’s going to be difficult to prove otherwise.*

*T1: We went on courses where we were mixing with teachers from other schools; they’d ask, ‘So which school are you from’, and you sort of mutter it quietly, it’s rather an embarrassment...when we were being introduced and he said we were from Chough you sensed everyone ask [negatively], ‘Chough?’ You are very aware of how other schools and their teachers perceive you and I think when we got the OfSTED it had a very negative effect on us.*
This was also reported at Harrier and Fulmar. At Harrier for example, a teacher reported that she felt there was a poor perception of the school from other colleagues in the city. She said, ‘12 months, 18 months ago you wouldn’t want to say where you were from because the first thing the whole of your colleagues would do from other schools was go ‘[draws in breath]’. Similarly, at Fulmar, an AST referred to how when she came into contact with other teachers that, ‘there is a reaction, a snobbery- of ‘oh, you work in Fulmar, don’t you?’ and the implication that you are not as good a teacher’. Another teacher there reflected how inside the profession, some teachers understood what it meant if the school was classed as poorly performing but complained of the general public’s reaction,

Outside of that, I’ve found it quite difficult to explain to people why we’d been classed that way. And I think that if you’re classed as Special Measures people tend to think, ‘oh it’s because the school’s a load of rubbish’, and they don’t realise that it’s particular areas that are cause for concern and it might have nothing to do with the teaching whatsoever.

This was repeated at Kestrel College, the technology college where a teacher explained, ‘some people are under the impression that if you work in an inner city school you must be rubbish because you can’t get a job anywhere else’.
Internal work relationships: leadership, collaboration and trust

Teachers at all four schools were common in blaming poor leadership for the schools’ situations and suggested that this had had devastating wider impacts for their esteem. A teacher reported at Fulmar how when in Special Measures, the school had, ‘some weak teachers, and poor management, causing good teachers to leave…the head and deputy didn’t offer support at the time, possibly because they were under pressure themselves’. The experience of problematic leadership was echoed at Chough, where the poor staff morale running up to (and compounded by) the OfSTED inspection was down to uncertainty about a difficult former head teacher:

*It was ‘Yes he was coming back no he wasn’t, yes he was’ and it kept on like this and nobody knew what was going on. The morale was low, teachers were exhausted, absolutely physically and mentally exhausted. It was awful; everybody was so unhappy.*

However, other staffing problems were felt to be caused subsequently by the classification as a failing school, which created internal frictions within the school. An evidently angry teacher at Fulmar pointed out,

*It was very depressing, even when your own department was not seen as failing-you were all, ‘tarred with that brush’. I don’t think I’ll ever recover, I used to be confident, I felt proud; the HMI knocked me.*

The deputy at Fulmar also confirmed how he felt that the failure of inspections could be divisive in a school. At Corbin, the head teacher also believed that the process of putting schools into Special Measures, ‘has a negative effect on the teachers that are doing a good job in the school’, and another teacher there felt that the process was divisive to the egalitarian spirit. She complained,

*Then it’s kind of like if there are two failing lessons, whose are they? Then there’s always the beating up, ‘oh it must be mine, or it must have been his’. It does sort of put you down. Or we had two excellent lessons and you think well, ‘bully for them’. You’re like ‘you caught them on a good day’. It put you in a hierarchy almost.*

Two other teachers at Chough referred to how the process created an atmosphere of paranoia and sensitivity to criticism in the school:

*T2: I think everybody understands that it’s necessary. I think things need to be made more positive than negative but seeing the positive side of it’s not always easy if you’re always criticised for doing something.*

*T1: I think we’re very sensitive, we take the slightest bit of criticism very personally and very much to Harrier and I think we’re very over-sensitised. Most*
of us take the praise but if there’s the least little thing we get very upset.

However, the experience of improvement was again reported to have a positive impact on remaining staff relations. The deputy head explained how the team effort in making a difference meant, ‘you’re making a contribution and you think you’re turning things around and you work as part of a team, then I think you get a lot of satisfaction’. At Chough, also the head reported how, ‘When the chips were down we worked together, the staff pull together fantastically now’. At Corbin, there was a similar emphasis on the close relationships of the staff, particularly after facing closure, which although demoralising, according to one teacher, ‘brought us all together’. Overcoming the recent experiences with OfSTED also meant, as a teacher described, ‘that we’re much closer because of what we’ve been through if you like’, and this was enabled by after-hours social contact.

**Internal work relationships: recruitment and retention**

Teachers at the schools also commonly reported how they had faced severe staffing problems, which had impacts on the performance and esteem of the rest of the staff body. At Fulmar for example, the deputy explained the reaction to the period of inspections in 1997, stating, ‘teachers were despondent, we lost good teachers who did not want to be associated with the school, also it was difficult to recruit staff’. Since then at Fulmar, there had been staff despondency and a high staff turnover during the period of Special Measures, including the loss of many teachers in 2004 when the head left (as the teachers no longer felt the responsibility to stay). The AST there reported how her department had formerly been run by a supply teacher for two years, with the teacher not following the syllabus or documenting what had been done.

This story is echoed in all the other schools. At Harrier, nine staff left when they were classified as Special Measures, as the head commented, ‘I came in May and in the July nine staff left. Almost everyday someone said ‘I’ve got another job, I’ve got another job’. The deputy head also reported difficulty in recruiting staff, and an NQT recounted how her college lecturers reacted to her accepting a post there, as she said, ‘they do think you shouldn’t go there because that school is not right for an NQT’ (a theme repeated by a teacher at Fulmar, whose former colleagues advised her not to apply to Fulmar, ‘as it would be a bad career move’). Chough also suffered enormous staffing disruptions linked to the classification as a teacher explained:

> It certainly makes them feel a low self-esteem, the feeling of, ‘shall we get out? shall we move?’ Then the sickness rate goes up because the teachers are stressed. Then you have to have Supply Teachers, some of which are good but some are absolutely terrible.

However, many teachers retained by the schools reported feelings of personal responsibility to remain as part of the team. For example, at Corbin, the maths teacher commented, ‘but being in Special Measures there’s a tiny bit of you that thinks blow it, why should I bother?...I’ll go and be a maths teacher somewhere else. But the longer you
stay in a place the more responsibility you feel to your students I suppose and your colleagues’. That said, she confessed that she was still regularly ‘keeping an eye on what jobs are around’.

On the other hand, teachers at several of the schools suggested that the difficulties ultimately led to longer-term staffing benefits, as teachers wanted to make a name for themselves came to the schools. This contradictory story - of experiencing both difficulties recruiting with the label but attracting staff wanting to turn the school around - was reported at Corbin and Harrier. Thus although a teacher at Harrier reported difficulties in recruitment and retention, he acknowledged,

It can work in two ways I think. Dynamic teachers who almost want to make a name for themselves, they can move into areas like that and certainly do very well and attempt to improve themselves as members of staff, to even get a reputation that they can work in a hard school.

Many teachers who came to Harrier expressed how through teaching in a school in Special Measures they felt a greater job satisfaction than in other schools. They suggested they moved for the ‘challenge’, fulfilment, enjoyment and satisfaction of working there (see Chapter 7 for vocational aspects of teacher status) and referred to how they moved to overcome feeling stale elsewhere. Teachers articulated the in-built disadvantages that their students faced, and expressed the esteem gained through their role, as a teacher at Harrier stated,

What I would pride myself on is someone in the teaching profession is an educator....At the end of the day our product is examination results for our students. The only way that they can compete in the world outside our doors is that....So they can compete with the likes of the grammar school students if they happen to come across them in a job interview.

The label was thus somewhat of a double-bind; a lure for new teachers looking for a challenge but negative for those who were in the school at the time, as the deputy at Harrier stated:

I guess if you’ve been a teacher and you’re taking a school into Special Measures then yes I would think that would have a detrimental affect on them. If you’re a teacher that’s come into a school to help turn it around and you succeed then I think it could have a positive impact on a teacher’s morale and career advancement.

Indeed, the head at Corbin reported that when the school came out of Special Measures, ‘a lot of the schools wanted my staff. A number have now moved...they’ve gone for jobs ... and they’re getting them because of the experience they’ve been through’.

Teaching and learning: professionalism and CPD
An important issue raised by teachers was the impact of the inspections on their sense of professionalism and confidence in teaching and learning. At Harrier, a teacher acknowledged the need for accountability but a teacher at Corbin explained that the feeling of being ‘checked’ in the process was damaging to her confidence and sense of professional judgement. She stated,

You have to write this and you have to give in the lesson plan so it feels like you have to do it and you feel like you’re being watched and are you sticking to it rigidly? And did you do this and didn’t you do that? And you do lose, I suppose, a bit of your own confidence. It’s like you’re being checked all the time.

Teachers at other schools also reported felt that their level of control and autonomy had been diminished. At Chough, a teacher commented, ‘everything we did was very much under scrutiny: planning, observations, work scrutinies. Everything had to be polished and perfect.’ Although she felt that this ensured there was more coverage of the whole curriculum, she, and another teacher at the school discussed:

T1: I personally feel I lost a lot of confidence in the way I tackled things because if it didn’t fit into the little niche that was being demonstrated.

T2: You questioned everything and wondered if what you were doing was right, and with me one of my things was being able to plan and I thought ‘if my planning’s not up scratch, the people don’t trust me to plan, in my way, then how do they expect me to teach?’

T1: You’re losing your professionalism

Teachers at the school had spent a lot of time revising their lesson plans and making sure that concepts such as ‘learning outcomes’ were understood. However, the head justified this rigidity, and felt that autonomy and creative use of lesson plans could only be used where teaching was at a good enough level. She said, ‘I do think you have to be rigid…I think where you are actually dealing with people whose lessons are at best satisfactory, there has to be a structure in place to sustain that. But you shouldn’t allow the really creative teacher not to move on’. At Corbin, a teacher similarly expressed how they had to learn a new mode of communicating their teaching practice, commenting,

in a way it’s like learning the rules of the inspection so that you can talk more confidently to the inspectors when they come in. So you’re speaking their speak and rehearsing, if you like, with friendly advisors the sort of things the inspectors are going to be asking you.

Thus, despite the negative perceptions of the OfSTED inspections, teachers in all four poorly performing schools reported an improvement in teaching and learning as a result. At Fulmar, the school had introduced termly and half-termly reviews and an active discipline policy which enabled teachers to call the SMT on walkie talkies to remove disruptive pupils and an attendance initiative with a fast track to the court system, which
had raised attendance. This had meant more consistency and a feeling of empowerment amongst teachers. However, at this school and at Corbin teachers still felt their authority was undermined when children challenged them, whilst at Harrier, there had also been a serious problem when classroom management issues got out of hand; parents got involved and staff and pupils received physical threats.

At Chough, termly lesson observations and online monitoring of results enabled clearer planning. However, the head reported that many staff struggled with these new initiatives at first, finding them pressurising, as they said, ‘they really weren’t happy...I think they thought it needed to be less, the pressure should be off them’. At Corbin, similarly, certain types of lesson plans had to be followed, and a teacher reported, ‘There was a lot of ‘I’m not doing that’ kind of thing’. Another reported how they felt that the management at the school had become ‘a bit hard’. When introducing the set lesson plans, there had been a backlash over some of the ideas, and there was disagreement even amongst NQTs and the SMT about what starters and plenaries in the lessons were. She explained, ‘It got a bit complicated. So you just had to tell everybody to do the same. It got to the point where it was, ‘whether you like it or not, if you do this then we’ll get out of Special Measures. If you don’t do this, we won’t’. The expected styles of teaching were less of a problem for newly or recently qualified teachers, but a teacher at Corbin suggested that for older teachers, ‘it was far more stressful and far more scary, and having people in the room was just not what they were used to’. Another teacher felt this had implications for their professional autonomy,

and what it didn’t do, I don’t think it really allowed the individualness between lessons and between subjects. It should, and it will, once you get used to doing it, but when you’re being forced into doing a starter and they kind of say, ‘well these are starters’, kids walk in and every lesson they’re doing this and every lesson... or plenaries in every lesson they’re doing this. I suppose it became a little repetitive to them. You lose that kind of flair kind of thing.

Yet whilst the head thought that, ‘there was less autonomy and control than I’d ever come across’, he believed, ‘they will become better teachers as a result’. Previously there had been a culture of questioning policies, whereas the classification meant, ‘we could say everybody’s going to do the same thing. So in that way...and people responded’. Yet, he also expressed how,

I think it makes people less professional myself. My view now would be that people have lost some of their...they’re less good at problem solving. They’re less good at initiative. I think we’ve made them slightly too dependent.

At Harrier, the management team also introduced staff performance reviews every six months and teachers were monitored on using three part lesson plans. This meant that heads of faculty and departments went to view what went on in particular classrooms. A teacher reported that some felt uncomfortable with this:

But I think staff, once they closed the door of their room, feel that that’s their
empire and as long as they can go out the door with their head held high, they’re ok. I think a lot of staff felt very threatened by that. To be truthful it’s maybe because they weren’t doing the job that they should be doing.

It is noticeable that staff at all three of the less well achieving schools spoke less of CPD and training experiences, although there were signs of more training being offered. At Chough, a teacher referred to how she had become more confident using ICT after an OfSTED recommendation. And at Harrier, the head commented how they’ve been able to grant professional development requests by teachers, ‘and these were things that weren’t there before which were bread and butter for most schools’. Asquith was also benefiting from successful involvement in the ‘Excellence in Cities’ initiative, which was welcomed by staff, although one teacher was militant that the school should have been entitled to the money in any case, and argued, ‘why have we got to jump through hoops to get what we really should be doing in schools?’

External relations: networks with other schools and universities

In terms of networking, teachers at three of the poorly performing schools commented on links with other schools. At Fulmar, a teacher had felt observing lessons at a beacon school was inappropriate to the issues facing teachers at Fulmar. However, the head at Chough reported positively on her experience being paired up with a consultant who was Head of a Beacon School, who had observed lessons and discussed ways of developing the subject areas. Another teacher at Chough responded positively to her experience when attending a writing workshop with teachers from other schools, especially in comparing how many things they had in common in teaching.

It was at Corbin that the most benefits were felt from partnerships. The school were part of a city network with five other schools, which as the head explained meant, ‘more and more people were talking to others’. Another local school had agreed to federate with Corbin to avoid its closure and the head expressed immense gratitude for the head and governors’ work, stating, ‘there’s no doubt that without their energy and enthusiasm we’d have died. It’s incredible what they did’. Corbin also had positive links with another local training school, as teachers were paired up with other staff there. This helped the school not only in terms of sharing good teaching and learning practice, but also in terms of boosting both the school’s reputation and teachers’ status and esteem when improving. The head explained,

What that also did for my teachers and leaders of all levels was people suddenly discovered well Corbin is that place that nobody wants to go to and it’s no good but actually it’s not [like that. Rather] ‘those teachers know a hell of a lot’, ‘they’re very good’, ‘I’ve learned this from them’. Our good practice then started going out across the city. My special needs department just told me about another thing they’ve done today that everyone’s talking about. So it goes both ways and my staff (although they’re in Special Measures and were getting help and support) were also able to demonstrate that they could do things very effectively.
Three teachers were also made ASTs within the school which had a wider benefit for the image of the school as a whole, as the head commented,

So you can twist it round to say OK you don’t think we’re good but actually it’s three people that are brilliant. Actually, the others aren’t that far behind....It also helps the teachers feel good about themselves.

Their experiences in the network had noticeable impacts in staff confidence in the school. The head reported how six or seven of Corbin’s teachers delivered a training day and:

everyone thought it was inspiring. It had all come from them [the teachers] so they had taken on leadership in terms of teaching and learning and were able to demonstrate it to the staff. So we’ve almost become self sufficient. We don’t need anyone anymore.

External relations: parents, community and media perceptions

Teachers at all four of the poorly performing schools felt low status deriving from parents low expectations formed on the basis of the schools’ reputation. At Fulmar, an AST reported how the school suffers a bad perception, whilst many parents do not attend parents evenings and ‘don’t tend to rate us’. At Harrier, the head explained how some of the less supportive parents responded to the school’s classification with an, ‘oh yes, I knew it was a rubbish school. It doesn’t surprise me. I can’t believe those things are going on’. At Chough, a TA also reported how the school suffered a poor reputation with parents, and parents had always been reluctant to send their children there, even prior to the OfSTED inspection. Other parents had told her that headteachers at feeder schools had advised the parents not to send their children to the school. At Corbin, a similar story was revealed as teacher also reflected on their reputation:

It’s always been... I mean I grew up in Cambridge and I went to the school further up the road and it’s always been ‘oh not that school. That’s where all the idiots go’ for want of a better expression. I think it had and still is to a certain extent a bit of a dumping ground for the kids... here are some parents who choose to send their children here because it’s a small school. But a large number are kind of default. So it is definitely skewed to the lower ability range.

Perhaps as a result of these perceptions, teachers commonly reported sometimes strained relationships and little support from parents. At Harrier, the headteacher explained that, ‘most of the parents were very negative, so was the community about the school. And that is an uphill struggle really’. At Chough, a teacher expressed how despite the hard work of the staff, ‘we have a group of children that come from a poor area. The parents aren’t interested…it’s sad, the children that are achieving here are the children of parents who are willing to put a little time in’. At Fulmar, it was reported that the classifications made little difference to parents, and when the school was moved ‘up a notch’ into ‘Serious Weakness’, this was ironically perceived to be of greater concern by parents. Parents
generally were reported to have little contact with school, and little knowledge or interest, generally, in school issues.

Rather than being anything to do with their classification in Special Measures, the poor relationships were explained at three schools as a result of parental experiences of their own schooling. Teachers felt they were fighting a ‘them and us’ attitude, as a teacher at Harrier explained,

*I also think that there is something about the establishment in a school, parents within an area like ours maybe didn’t do particularly well themselves at school and didn’t have particularly a good time of it at school and so project those ideas onto the school as it is now. Therefore any situation that their child gets into, it becomes a situation where it seems to be a large number of cases, them against us…I do feel that a lot of our parents feel that teachers are vindictive, spiteful, because their children get into trouble. Moving into Special Measures, I think, enhanced one or two of those prejudices really.*

However, she also reported how other parents gave the school a chance before moving their children, and the head commented, ‘everything since we’ve been in Special Measures that I’ve heard from parents has been very very positive about the current situation of the school…parents realise the school wants to move forward’. Attempts at positive partnerships were also being developed at Harrier, where the deputy reported that,

*I think the parents here know that they’re in a difficult community anyway. I think they know there are problems outside the school. There are problems of an evening….I think the parents understand that. I think what the parents value though is the fact that we’re trying our best to do something to support them.*

Indeed, the important role the school could play in the community was often part of their improvement plan. The deputy at Harrier was planning a sports college bid with the idea that it would be influential in the wider community in driving up standards of health and self esteem, although felt that this was not supported by the more academic framework of specialist schools.

More positive relationships were also reported at Corbin, where teachers were aware of the problem of parental perceptions. A teacher there explained,

*People are automatically defensive because of their own experiences. So you have to understand that really and work at being helpful. That’s so much of what we do is trying to be helpful and talking to parents at parents’ evenings and saying ‘look we’re all on the same side here. We all want the best for your child’. It isn’t them and us.*

In fact, they were pleasantly surprised by the mobilisation of the parents and community to fight against the school closure. A teacher recounted how the school had been under
threat of closure before, ‘so even though when it said Special Measures and it might be closed, the parents were like, ‘no we can get out of this again’. The work-experience coordinator spent time in town and around the city and reported how, ‘people say, ‘it’s awful what they want to do to Corbin isn’t it?’ In this case, the fact that the school had been established for over 65 years and people remembered their own experiences there was an advantage and the community support helped the staff morale. A teacher said, ‘everybody’s with us you see; that sort of support...we feel better really because we feel better in ourselves about how things are going. Another teacher explained,

Well we were already working together but it showed us how much support we’d got in the community, parents and other people were concerned for us. We had a petition of over 21,000 signatures. I think that beats what they did for the local motorway petition.

However another teacher at Corbin also explained that at the threat of closure, ‘a lot of parents did start to move their kids. They kind of jumped’. At Harrier, when the school was classified as Special Measures, the school also lost some students and Fulmar was also undersubscribed and unable to attract pupils from beyond the boundary of the local estate. It had to fight against the threat of closure because of the low enrolment.

Some of the negative labelling was not helped by the media. At Harrier, a teacher felt the media, ‘have done huge damage...I think pretty much all journalism at the moment about education is fairly negative’. But it was at Corbin that the most damaging effect for teachers at the school was reported. When the school was going to close, the senior staff were told that the school would not be named in the press. Yet in reality, the head said, ‘The following morning coming into school my staff said ‘it’s all over the radio Corbin is closed. The eight o’clock bulletin...Corbin will be closed. That’s how the students found out. That’s how my staff found out’. The news was the first item on local radio and on the front page of the newspapers, echoing when, ‘you go into Special Measures, they splash you on the front page, picture of the school, picture of me [head]’. Yet four weeks later when, ‘I was able to tell them we were out of Special Measures, they put it on page seven’. However, the head also explained how they were able to utilise local press interest to their advantage, thus the head had spoken on the radio. When the heads of the schools knew they were going to federate, they also called the education correspondent of the paper and invited them to the school to interview them. The head said, ‘we deal with the press very positively’. Indeed, the federating of the schools was felt by the headteacher as a positive opportunity to wipe the slate clean, and turn around their negative reputation. He reported,

For status I think it’s probably a very positive move because there are very few of these federations in the country. For once instead of Corbin being one of the few schools in Special Measures, it could be one of the few schools in an innovative and innovated development. They’re [teachers] in partnership with a leading edge school. They’re doing something that the DfES is very interested in and it gives them a chance to feel a bit more special for a change.
Conclusions: common issues for poorly achieving schools

In conclusion, the in-depth case-studies of classified poorly performing schools showed that:

- Teachers felt that their esteem and status was affected by the underfunding they perceived poorly performing schools had suffered. New investment was greatly required and when given had positive impacts for teaching and learning and teachers’ esteem.

- The poor status of the school was believed to reflect on the teachers working there, in opinions from those both within and without the teaching profession. Staff professed to feel some embarrassment at their schools’ names.

- The OfSTED inspections were unanimously experienced by teachers in these schools as having devastating effects on teachers’ esteem. Although the process was recognised as necessary and ultimately having positive long-term effects, the nature of the process was felt as counterproductive and detrimental to the teachers involved. There was a lack of feedback and negative evaluations had terribly demotivating effects on staff. It also created hierarchies within schools, undoing the sense of teamwork that others reported contributed to high status (Chapters 7 and 9).

- The process of improvement and movement out of Special Measures had positive impacts on staff esteem.

- Teachers retrospectively constructed stories of weak leadership that impacted on staffing relations and teachers’ esteem. The inspection process was also felt to have a divisive effect. Staff who had ‘pulled through’ in getting the school out of Special Measures enjoyed a strong team-spirit.

- The stigma of going into Special Measures was reported as creating difficulties for existing staff through problems attracting new staff. These factors compounded the schools’ initial difficulties and worsened the problems there. However, it was also reported that schools in Special Measures were attractive to staff who wished to make a name for themselves and wanted a challenge in working in such schools.

- Staff felt that the improvement process imposed rigidity on their teaching practice. This was felt by teachers to undermine their confidence. However, the new systems seemed to work in helping the schools get out of Special Measures, even if the process risked disrupting the flair of individual teachers.

- Some benefits were felt through partnerships with other schools, particularly when it was also used as an opportunity for teachers in the poorly performing schools to demonstrate their own skills.
In external relations, teachers at these schools felt the schools were poorly perceived by parents, and reported unsupportive relations. There were some attempts to overcome a ‘them and us’ attitude.