

# Sabbaticals for Teachers: An Evaluation of a Scheme Offering Sabbaticals for Experienced Teachers Working in Challenging Schools

Dick Downing, Ruth Watson, Fiona Johnson,  
Pippa Lord, Megan Jones and Mary Ashworth

National Foundation for Educational Research

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# Executive summary

## Background

As part of its continuing professional development (CPD) strategy, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) set up a scheme offering sabbaticals to experienced teachers working in challenging schools. The project primarily aimed to create opportunities for experienced teachers to undertake a significant period of development to enhance their own learning and effectiveness, and bring subsequent benefits to their pupils and their schools. It started in September 2001 and was planned to run until the summer of 2004, with the intention that as an introductory scheme it would provide models of good practice that might inform the extension of the scheme to other groups of schools. National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned to evaluate the introductory scheme. Low uptake of the scheme in its early stages resulted in modifications to the scheme criteria and to the evaluation brief. Consequent upon the need to maximise school budgets, and changes in the DfES priorities for CPD, a decision was made in the summer of 2003 not to extend the scheme to other schools, and instead it will cease in July 2004.

## The establishment of the scheme

The scheme suffered from a hesitant start caused by a number of factors including:

- uncertainty concerning local management and support for the scheme
- the timing, nature and targeting of publicity
- resistance to releasing experienced teachers from schools that identified staffing stability as a priority
- suspicion amongst eligible teachers that sabbaticals would result in extra workloads.

Consequently, only a proportion of eligible schools engaged with the scheme and some were able to support multiple sabbaticals since others did not use their entitlement. Thus the sample in this research were self-selecting through their engagement with the scheme and might be seen as predisposed to more enterprising forms of CPD.

## An overview of sabbaticals in the sample

In a sample of 130 sabbaticals studied by NFER, 97 were taken by primary schools, 14 by secondary schools and 19 by special schools. (Many more primary schools than secondary schools were eligible under the scheme, and sabbaticals were allocated by school rather than by number of eligible teachers.)

Although schools were free to decide how much time to allocate to each sabbatical, and how that time should be grouped (a block of time, scattered days etc):

- sixty per cent gave the maximum 30 days to the participating teacher

- twenty-five per cent allocated the time as a six week block
- over one third of the total in the sample enabled the participating teacher to take at least three weeks as a continuous block of time.

About two-thirds of participants were class teachers, the remainder being evenly divided between headteachers and deputy or assistant heads. Over two thirds of participating teachers had been teaching for more than 13 years. Rarely was it necessary for schools to choose between competing proposals from teachers, but there is evidence that as the scheme progressed, and teachers witnessed colleagues benefiting from sabbaticals, the appetite for them grew.

### **The aims of sabbaticals**

The scheme gave schools and participating teachers great freedom in identifying their aims.

- the personal and/or professional development of the participating teacher was the primary aim in 44 per cent of sabbaticals
- in 28 per cent of cases the aims appeared to be equally balanced between those for the participating teacher and the school itself
- in 87 per cent of all cases, aims broadly or closely related to the school's development plan.

Aims such as reinvigoration and refreshment rarely appeared in written aims, but were widely expressed in interviews as an expectation and as an outcome of sabbaticals. Such aims appeared to have a lower status in the eyes of participating teachers suggesting that they may underestimate their right or duty to address their own needs rather than focussing disproportionately on the needs of the school. The vast majority of participating teachers either defined the aims themselves or were involved in their definition.

### **The sabbatical experience**

Both minimising disruption within the school and enabling maximum benefit from the experience informed the scheduling of sabbaticals, but could not always be reconciled. Some teachers had to sacrifice some of the quality of their sabbatical experience to maintain the stability of the school and their pupils. It was widely believed that this problem was particularly acute for schools in challenging circumstances.

Over 40 per cent took place in two or more locations, and almost half of all sabbaticals involved visits to other schools or educational establishments, these being highly valued as development opportunities. Almost 60 per cent of sabbaticals involved information gathering, research and development of the participants' own skills and knowledge.

About half focussed on teaching and learning issues, with about a quarter looking at whole school issues such as school management, ICT or curriculum development. The specific areas covered ranged from pastoral and child centred issues through to



administration and management strategies. About a third of sabbaticals addressed issues that one might particularly associate with challenging schools, such as behaviour, special needs issues or matters associated with disadvantage.

There was a widespread perception that sabbaticals resulted in more work rather than less for the participating teacher. This was accounted for by preparation for the sabbatical (including arranging work for the supply cover), catching up after a sabbatical, and in some cases completing a sabbatical task after the end of the period of time out.

### **The outcomes from sabbaticals**

Outcomes were categorised according to an existing typology of CPD outcomes (Harland and Kinder, 1997) but were not grouped into its hierarchical structure.

- improvements in confidence, refreshment and self-esteem were reported in 87 per cent of sabbaticals
- sixty-four per cent reported increased motivation for the participating teacher
- raised skills and knowledge were claimed in 87 per cent of sabbaticals
- eighty three per cent of participating teachers reported changes in their own practice.

Institutional outcomes for the whole school were reported in over 80 per cent of the sample, fulfilling the intention that sabbaticals bring benefits to schools and their pupils as well as to participating teachers.

- in 83 per cent, there were reports of the school developing as a professional learning community as a result of the sabbatical
- attitudes of other staff members towards teachers who had taken sabbaticals were often enhanced
- a range of other institutional outcomes, including improved school relationships with parents or the wider community, were reported
- in 56 per cent it was claimed that the sabbatical had resulted in actual changes in practice within the wider school staff.

Certain outcomes were associated with particular features of sabbaticals. For example:

- changes in practice, for both the individual and the institution, were associated with high levels of consensus (between participating teacher and the SMT) concerning the aims of the sabbatical
- strong evidence of individual changes in practice for participating teachers, and affective outcomes for them, was associated with locating sabbatical activities away from the school
- however, institutional changes in practice were more associated with locating sabbatical activities within the school.

Changes in career plans or in the perceived career prospects of the participating teachers were claimed in 72 per cent of sabbaticals. Although nine per cent the

participating teacher planned to leave teaching, more teachers were confirmed in their commitment to teaching as a career. Other members of SMTs had derived career enhancing experiences as a result of headteachers taking sabbaticals.

Evidence from 39 follow-up interviews suggests some longevity of sabbatical outcomes.

- in 37 out of 39 sabbaticals interviewees suggested that the impacts have been sustained
- boosts in confidence and motivation for the teacher had been sustained for 30 sabbaticals
- changes in practice of the participating individual that had not emerged from previous interviews were reported in nine of the follow-up interviews
- a number of career changes may have been related to the experience of sabbaticals, more involving promotion than departure from the profession
- many interviewees reported a long-term impact in terms of institutional outcomes and some specific new institutional outcomes since the end of the sabbatical were reported, suggesting that institutional changes may take longer to materialise
- successful sabbaticals were seen to have stimulated a demand for more sabbaticals and 24 of the 39 follow-up interviews revealed that further sabbaticals had taken place.

Even allowing for the fact that there may have been positive bias associated with the self-selecting nature of the sample, these results indicate that sabbaticals had brought substantial benefits to individuals and schools.

### **Management issues**

Good planning and communication were seen as essential to the smooth running of sabbaticals, and of the school in the absence of an experienced member of staff.

- providing external supply cover was seen as a major concern in most schools, and was avoided in almost half by providing internal cover, or other strategies
- planning for the timing of the sabbatical emerged as an important consideration for schools
- support for teachers undertaking sabbaticals varied greatly, with some LEAs offering services well beyond the level that the scheme demanded of them
- the extent of reporting and dissemination varied greatly, often depending on the nature of the sabbatical itself
- limited monitoring of the scheme may well have resulted in some funding being re-directed within schools for purposes other than sabbaticals.

### **Key messages from the scheme**

The following key transferable messages emerge from the evaluation of this scheme:

- there was widespread support for the opportunity for schools and participating teachers to define their own aims and activities, backed by significant

evidence that developing the individual teacher frequently went hand in hand with delivering school development plans

- the opportunity to ‘look outside the box’, for example by visiting other schools or organisations, was not only valued by teachers, but tended to produce a range of highly desirable outcomes for the schools. Being released during normal school time made it possible for teachers to visit other schools in working time
- though some headteachers had feared that releasing a teacher for a sabbatical would result in less work being done, there is considerable evidence that teacher approached sabbaticals very diligently and undertook more work by doing a sabbatical. The extent of reported outcomes might support this finding.

Although the scheme offered funding to pay for supply cover, there is evidence that in many cases an alternative to additionally funded supply was used, suggesting that schools, when motivated to do so, may be able to create the time to release teachers for time-out activities.

The benefits of sabbaticals were widely endorsed, both by headteachers and participating teachers who had experienced sabbaticals, and although most headteachers doubted the likelihood of being able to offer sabbaticals in the absence of a fully-funded scheme, some were actively exploring the possibility, in the light of positive experiences resulting from this scheme.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The scheme

As part of its continuing professional development (CPD) strategy (DfEE, 2001), the DfES set up a scheme offering sabbaticals to experienced teachers in challenging schools. The programme started in September 2001 and was planned to run until the summer of 2004, with the intention that, as an introductory scheme, it would provide models of good practice that might inform the extension of the scheme to other groups of schools.

The project primarily aimed to create opportunities for experienced teachers to undertake a significant period of development to enhance their own learning and effectiveness, and bring subsequent benefits to their pupils and their schools.

The scheme was available to teachers working in challenging schools, defined as those where 50 per cent or more of pupils were eligible for free school meals (or equivalent measure in non-maintained special schools). By the end of the second year of the project this criterion had been adjusted to 35 per cent eligibility.

Teachers eligible for a sabbatical were those who:

- held one of the following roles in schools: teacher, advanced skills teacher, assistant or deputy or head teacher
- on 1 September 2001 had a total of five years service in schools where 50 per cent or more of the children were eligible for free school meals - absence or maternity or parental leave counted towards the five year period
- were employed full-time or part-time in such a school, which could be a maintained primary, special or secondary school, or a non-maintained primary or secondary special school.

The headteacher and governing body had responsibility for deciding who would have a sabbatical, when it would be undertaken and what professional development activities would be involved during the sabbatical period. In the case of an application from a headteacher for a sabbatical period, the decision would rest with the governing body.

A limited number of sabbaticals were made available (around 4,000) and LEAs with eligible schools received an allocation of sabbaticals from the DfES sufficient to provide at least one sabbatical opportunity for each eligible school over the three year period. The stated role of LEAs was basically that of distributing the allocation over the period. Schools requested funding from their LEAs once a sabbatical had been agreed for a teacher by the headteacher and governors.

The DfES funding provided £6,000 per sabbatical. It was intended that this would cover all the costs of the sabbatical and would primarily pay for teacher supply costs.

Details of the purposes, eligibility criteria, terms and conditions, provision under the scheme and some suggestions of how the scheme might operate were provided in a guidance document distributed to schools in July 2001(DfEE, 0517/2001).

## **1.2 Background to the scheme**

The scheme is one part of the DfES's framework for teachers' CPD as described in *Learning and teaching: a strategy for professional development* (DfEE, 2001). As well as setting out to help schools provide effective professional learning for all staff, this document conveyed the DfES's commitment and policies to enhance the CPD of individual teachers. Funds were made available to support teachers' individual development priorities: for example, Best Practice Research Scholarships, Teachers' International Professional Development and Professional Bursaries, and pilot programmes for Early Professional Development in the second and third year of teaching.

The aims of this emphasis on professional development were:

- to ensure the quality of what takes place in the classroom by sustaining and developing teaching techniques, knowledge of curriculum subjects, capability with new technology and the skills required in different leadership positions
- to engender a commitment to professional development in all staff members in schools – because this has been seen to impact positively upon on the collaborative culture of the school, its capacity for continuous self-improvement, the quality of teaching, staff's desire for continuous learning, and self-esteem
- to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for life-long learning, easier to achieve if they see their teachers regularly involved in learning
- to attract and retain good graduates in the profession (paraphrased from DfEE, 2001).

This particular element of the strategy envisaged a wide range of possible forms for the sabbaticals to be undertaken. They could be undertaken in concentrated blocks of time or intermittently, and could be shared by more than one teacher. The release time could be used, for example, for placements with private sector or community organisations, for school-based study, or for research study with a higher education institution.

This introductory sabbaticals scheme, although envisaged to extend to other groups of schools in the future, was targeted at teachers in challenging schools. Such teachers often need access to imaginative and enterprising strategies, and need to nurture their own and colleagues' motivation and resilience. They may also need to develop particular understanding of the lives of their pupils, and the contexts in which they live. In such schools, many of which are concentrated in localities suffering multiple deprivation, teacher recruitment and retention have presented additional challenges. Such schools often have particular, but not necessarily common, challenges to face.

Although well-tried in countries such as Australia and the USA, the introduction of a national scheme of sabbaticals open to bidding by individual teachers was a new venture in this country. Sabbaticals are a well-established practice in higher education, where benefits such as increased productivity, improved teaching programmes, enhanced academic reputations and improved morale and commitment are all claimed as a result (Miller and Kang, 1998). School teachers have much less frequently been given access to this form of professional development. Where they have been available abroad, intentions and outcomes relating to teacher burnout, labour turnover, rejuvenation, teacher persistence and attitudes have often been the focus of research (Gaziel, 1995; Franse, 1994). The potential downsides of taking sabbaticals are also recorded in the literature (Holmes, 1998 re school teachers and Miller and Kang, 1998 re higher education) and controversy in the USA over the appropriateness of sabbaticals at a time of funding scarcity has also been addressed (Nassau, 1995). In 2002 opponents in New York were advocating withdrawing the right to one year sabbaticals on 70 per cent pay for teachers with over 14 years service, for study or ‘the restoration of health’ (McMahon, 2002), as a means of reducing expenditure. (Sabbaticals have traditionally been treated as ‘R and R’ (rest and recuperation) in the USA rather than as development opportunities as has been the case under this DfES scheme).

The sabbaticals scheme started in September 2001 and was planned to run until the summer of 2004 with the intention that, as an introductory scheme it would provide models of good practice that might inform the extension of the scheme to other groups of schools. However, in response to a combination of the low uptake of the scheme in its early stages, changes in the DfES’s CPD priorities, and pressures to maximise school budgets, the DfES made a decision in the summer of 2003 to terminate the scheme. Instead of the scheme eventually being extended to other groups of schools, the budget would be transferred to the block grant for schools.

In writing this report NFER has been conscious of the changed outlook for sabbaticals in the future; that instead of them being specifically funded through a central scheme, their future uptake will depend on their prioritisation within schools themselves. This highlights the need to make clear to potential enablers of sabbaticals the benefits (and possible pitfalls) of such experiences, and this report focuses on how the experiences of sabbaticals might inform the future use of *time-outs* for teachers as an effective tool for CPD and school development.

## **1.3 The evaluation**

### **1.3.1 Evaluation aims**

The evaluation of the scheme, undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) between March 2002 and March 2004, aimed to:

- research the impact of the sabbaticals on the participating teachers, their schools and pupils
- assess the appropriateness of the sabbaticals experienced by examining the relationship between the different types, forms and processes of sabbaticals and the evident outcomes.

As such, it investigated five aspects of the sabbatical scheme:

- the appropriateness of range and types of professional development activity (placement, research, school-based etc) engaged in through the sabbatical funding
- the appropriateness of the eligibility criteria, funding allocation and preparation, administrative and support arrangements
- the balance between the sabbatical activity itself and the time for critical reflection and integration of the experience into the individual's professional and institutional work, including through report writing
- the relevance of the sabbatical experience to, and its effect on, individual teacher's career development, morale and issues of retention and longer term, the effect of the experience on teaching/teacher effectiveness and perceived benefits to pupils
- the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the sabbatical scheme at school level.

### **1.3.2 Evaluation methodology**

The evaluation methodology underwent considerable adjustment between the proposal and the completion of the project. Initially it was intended that a sample of 200 sabbaticals would be drawn, and that these would be studied through analysis of documents associated with each sabbatical, telephone interviews with stakeholders in 154 schools and case study visits to 46 schools. A plan was devised whereby schools would be identified in a limited number of LEAs, representing different demographical features, and that the involvement of the LEAs would provide part of the research data.

**Telephone interviews** would be conducted with individuals involved in each of the schools in the larger sample. In each case, the individual participating teacher, the headteacher, the governor responsible for staff training and the CPD coordinator or mentor/supervisor (where identified) would be interviewed. Where the head teacher was proposed for the sabbatical, the deputy head would also be interviewed. The LEA officer responsible for administrating and supporting the scheme would also be interviewed as part of the survey of LEA involvement.

**The case study visits** would involve face-to-face interviews with the individuals listed above for telephone interviewing, plus an interview with another member of the teaching staff. It would also include interviews with a sample of pupils most closely working with the individual teacher, and where possible or relevant, at least one interview with a representative of the host organisation for the sabbatical, such as a private sector or community organisation, an HE institution, a host school or other body. For this sub-sample, a follow-up telephone interview with the headteacher explored sustained or emerging outcomes from the sabbatical experience.

Data derived from these collection methods was then processed into a sabbatical profile for each of the sabbaticals studied. These recorded the responses of each interview on each research issue, identified any contradictions in their responses, and included researcher summaries of each set of responses. These profiles then became



the basic unit of data for analysis and were entered into a qualitative data computer programme, MAXQDA, for analysis.

Interviews were also conducted with a sample of 15 LEA officers who had been responsible for the administration of the scheme at a local level, and their perceptions have informed the overall analysis.

### **1.3.3 Adjustments to the methodology**

The eventual data collection methodology for individual schools conformed to the plans, but the sample selection changed radically. It transpired at the beginning of the data collecting period that very few schools could be identified in which the sabbatical had been completed. (The scheme had been announced in July 2001 and schools could only have considered, planned and carried out sabbaticals since the September of 2001, less than seven months prior to the start of the data collection exercise.) As a result, the project steering group, after considerable discussion, asked NFER to revise the proposal for the first part of the project only. It was agreed that no data collection on the sabbaticals themselves should be undertaken during the Summer Term of 2002, and that some of the time allocated to that task prior to then should be used instead to investigate two new research questions:

- what are the factors that might account for the low-uptake of sabbatical opportunities during the academic year 2001/2?
- in broad terms, what strategies have been devised by LEAs, schools and teachers to increase the level of take-up?

Analysis of the responses to these questions could then be used to discuss issues surrounding the wider strategic approach adopted for the introduction of the scheme. Findings from this phase of the research are summarised in Chapter 8 and will be referred to throughout the report. As a consequence of this additional work, it was agreed that the sabbatical sample size be reduced to 150 (111 by telephone interviews and 39 by site visit).

In response to the decision to terminate the scheme, and mindful of the continuing low uptake of the scheme, the DfES asked NFER to furnish a set of brief cameos of completed sabbaticals that might serve as examples to other schools considering undertaking sabbaticals. Once data collection concerning completed sabbaticals resumed in the Autumn of 2002, it proved extremely difficult for the DfES to obtain information from some LEAs concerning completed sabbaticals. The process of assembling such information was eventually taken over by NFER. The above changes in circumstances resulted in an eventual reduction in the sample size to 130.

It is not known what proportion this represents of the overall number of sabbaticals taken under the scheme. Given that the sample comprised those schools that were predisposed to avail themselves of the opportunity, findings might be treated with some caution.

## **1.4 Report structure**

The report begins with:

- an overview of the sabbaticals in the sample (Chapter 2)
- a summary of the characteristics of the teachers participating in the scheme (Chapter 3).

The following three chapters proceed chronologically, starting with:

- the aims of sabbaticals (Chapter 4)
- the activities undertaken (Chapter 5)
- the outcomes derived from sabbaticals (Chapter 6).

Thereafter:

- Chapter 7 reports analysis of the relationship between different types, forms and processes of sabbaticals and their evident outcomes
- Chapter 8 addresses some of the managerial and administrative issues surrounding sabbaticals, focussing particularly on how school facilitate time-out for teachers to develop their own interests and address school needs
- the report concludes by looking forward to the possibility of schools using the lessons learned from the experience of sabbaticals to enable time-outs for teachers as a CPD or school development tool in the future (Chapter 9).

An appendix offers ten case studies of sabbaticals, illustrating the range of activities undertaken and outcomes achieved.

# Chapter 2

## An overview of sabbaticals in the sample

### 2.1 General overview of sabbaticals in the sample

Given the parameters of the scheme, a predictably wide range of sabbaticals took place. This report summarises the variations in aims, planning procedures, activities and outcomes. A unifying factor was that sabbaticals entailed time out of the classroom (although, as will emerge, even this was questionable in some cases). This chapter therefore starts with an analysis of the time allocated to sabbaticals, and is followed by consideration of the features of the schools that engaged with the scheme.

#### 2.1.1 Scheme guidance concerning time for sabbaticals

The scheme envisaged a maximum of six weeks being made available for a teacher to *'undertake a significant period of development to enhance their own learning and effectiveness, and bring subsequent benefits to their pupils and their schools'* (DfEE, 0517/2001). Although the meaning of sabbatical is not defined within the guidelines, the Little Oxford Dictionary definition, *'a period of paid leave for study or travel'* might well summarise the common understanding of the term. It transpired that in many cases a more accurate definition might have been *'time out from normal duties'* since the time spent did not always amount to leave, the activity taking place on school premises and addressing a school priority task. While six weeks was defined as the maximum term, no minimum was set, and all sabbaticals were eligible for an allocation of £6,000, irrespective of the period of *'paid leave'*. The scheme guidelines also indicated that *'the time can be use flexibly, e.g. one day a week through the academic year; three blocks of two weeks and so on'* (DfEE, 0517/2001).

The guidelines also suggested that teachers should submit an outline proposal, though the length of time to be spent on sabbatical activities was not one of the items suggested for inclusion in that proposal. It was not possible in all cases for researchers to obtain the written proposals. In some cases it was claimed that no proposal had been written, and that a brief form only had secured the allocation of funding. In other cases interviewees were either unable or unwilling to locate the proposal. Where interviews were conducted by telephone, copies of the proposals were requested, but were rarely forthcoming. Given the considerable demands that the research process made on staff in already challenging schools, this was perhaps understandable. For only 56 per cent of sabbaticals was it possible to study details from the written proposal, and in a few of these cases the details were read to the researcher over the telephone.

Those written proposals that were analysed as part of the research varied greatly in their precision on the matter of time to be taken out of normal duties. The actual amount of time envisaged was rarely stated, although in many cases an outline budget indicated that 30 days of supply cover would be required.

Interview data, rather than documentary data, was generally much more informative concerning time taken out of normal duties to undertake sabbatical activities, though in a few cases the information from the participating teacher was at variance with that from the headteacher. In other cases, especially where the sabbatical was spread over a period of time or where the activity took place partly on school premises, the data provided was not entirely specific. In such cases researchers made an estimate based on the best information available.

### 2.1.2 The allocation of time to sabbaticals

The following two tables summarise the total time taken in each sabbatical and the way the time was either spread over a period or taken as a block.

**Table 2.1 Overall time taken for a sabbatical**

Number of days taken in total	Percentage of sabbaticals	Number of sabbaticals
30 days	60	78
18 – 29 days	15	20
5 – 17 days	18	24
Less than 5 days	6	8

Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
(N = 130) Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and hence do not necessarily add to 100.

**Table 2.2 Maximum number of days taken consecutively for a sabbatical**

Number of days taken consecutively	Percentage of sabbaticals	Number of sabbaticals
30 days (six weeks)	25	32
15 – 25 days	12	16
5 – 14 days	15	20
2 – 4 days (less than one week)	18	24
1 day	22	29
Less than one day	7	9

Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
(N = 130) Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and hence do not necessarily add to 100.

Given the liberal nature of the scheme's guidelines, it is perhaps encouraging to discover that:

- sixty per cent of all the sabbaticals in the sample allocated the full 30 days to the participating teacher or teachers (eight of these were shared sabbaticals)
- twenty-five per cent of the sabbaticals studied entailed the full allocation of six weeks in a continuous block of time
- thirty-seven per cent enabled the participating teacher to take at least three weeks as a continuous block of time for sabbatical activities
- more than 50 per cent of all the sabbaticals in the study involved a teacher taking at least one continuous week out of normal duties.

During the research into low uptake of the scheme, the educational and logistical difficulties of releasing experienced teachers in challenging schools were cited as the main reasons for not taking up the opportunities offered by the scheme. It is understood that the original scheme as drafted by the DfEE proposed that sabbaticals should last for six consecutive weeks. This was changed as a result of negotiation with headteacher representatives to enable sabbaticals to be spread over a longer period of time because this was believed to be more manageable in challenging schools. Chapter 8 will explore how participating schools were able to manage this situation.

The reasons for choosing particular time scales are considered in Chapter 5. However, some interviewees regarded anything other than a substantial block of time as not qualifying as a sabbatical at all, and some felt that even six weeks did not qualify as a sabbatical, believing that a full school term would be needed to have a real effect. Scattering single days over a period of time to undertake school development priority tasks may not conform to everyone's view of a sabbatical, but may well have been a reasonable and justifiable interpretation of the terms and conditions of the scheme.

### **2.1.3 No-time sabbaticals**

In five of the cases that were investigated there was no evidence that a sabbatical, if defined as time taken out from normal duties, had taken place. They were part of the sample simply because the schools had attracted a grant of £6,000 under the scheme. Although activities were identified that might justify the grant allocation, it is difficult to regard these cases as sabbaticals:

- one headteacher refused to permit participating teachers to be interviewed, and suggested that they would not have been aware that they were taking part in a sabbatical scheme. No evidence was offered of time taken out of normal duties
- one headteacher took the sabbatical himself but did not take any time off normal duties for designated sabbatical activities
- in two schools the sabbatical activity took place entirely during a half term
- one part-time teacher fitted all of the sabbatical activity into normal non-contact time
- in a secondary school the sabbatical grant was used to over-staff a department, which may or may not have increased the amount of non-contact time for staff members.

Defining what constitutes a sabbatical simply by quantifying the time spent on it is problematic. The scheme guidelines indicate that the funding allocation '*should cover all costs of the sabbatical and is primarily to pay for teacher supply costs*' (DfEE, 0517/2001). The cases listed here clearly involved no supply cover costs, nor did they involve the participating teacher being released from normal duties. While in some of the cases the funding may well have been fully deployed (for overseas travel costs or over-staffing a department), and while considerable benefits may have accrued from the designated activities (such as using non-contact time to devise a teaching scheme), to suggest that these were sabbaticals by any conventional definition might be misleading.

#### **2.1.4 Shared and Multiple Sabbaticals**

In 15 of the schools studied, two or more teachers shared the resources allocated for one sabbatical. In total, 37 schools in the sample were granted more than one allocation of £6,000, in one school the total being 12 separate sabbatical grants. Four of the sabbaticals studied are second sabbaticals in the same school. Thus, although 130 sabbaticals were studied, these relate to only 126 schools.

Since shared and multiple sabbaticals in the same school lead to uneven data, the 15 shared sabbaticals are not included in the analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This section explores the nature of both shared and multiple sabbaticals in relation to aims, activities and outcomes. Because of the considerable demands being made on challenging schools engaged in this research process, only one of the participating teachers was interviewed in nine of the 15 shared sabbaticals. The data concerning aims, activity and outcomes in such cases relates only to that individual teacher and the impact of their sabbatical. Thus, in shared sabbaticals, although the activities and outcomes described related to only one individual participant, that person may only have attracted a proportion of the resources made available to support a sabbatical. Therefore, any findings within this section should be viewed as tentative.

##### ***Shared Sabbaticals***

Two types of shared sabbaticals emerged in the sample. The more popular approach was to split the funding between the teachers involved and allow them to work on individual projects. This was the case in ten schools in the sample in which the funding was shared between anything from two members of staff to one case in which all members of staff were involved. (This latter case perhaps defies any conventional definition of sabbatical.) Just over half shared the sabbatical allocation between two participants. Where sabbaticals were shared in this way, time was usually divided equally between the participating teachers.

The second approach was to have more than one member of staff working simultaneously on the same project. In three of these schools two teachers worked together on a single project, two of which involved visits abroad and one which involved the research and development of policies and practices in relation to special needs. A fourth involved two teachers working together on a school development priority area. The fifth sabbatical of this nature was shared between the headteacher and four curriculum co-ordinators who together visited two schools to explore inclusion policies for ethnic minority pupils.

The reasons for sharing sabbaticals varied. Some headteachers were reluctant to lose a single experienced teacher for the full period of 30 days. Some wanted to ensure that as many eligible teachers as possible benefited from the scheme (perhaps not realising that low uptake in many areas had resulted in schools attracting more than one allocation). The generally small amount of continuous time off for any one teacher in shared sabbaticals might suggest that the aim of minimising disruption was significant (though a very few heads suggested that a block of time off for a teacher generated less disruption than scattered days away from normal duties).

The overall outcomes and impacts emerging from both categories of shared sabbatical do not differ from those identified in Chapter 6. Although the shared sabbaticals studied are not included in the statistics relating to this typology, analysis suggests that they are comparable.

### ***Multiple sabbaticals***

As with shared sabbaticals, instances of multiple sabbaticals can be separated into two distinct categories. Firstly, a number of schools in the sample had more than one sabbatical taking place concurrently. Secondly schools in the sample are known to have had, or be planning more than one sabbatical scheduled to take place consecutively. Data was not collected on the number of sabbaticals undertaken in each school since the allocation process was on-going, and the majority of the information given by schools was additional. Again, the findings within the section should be viewed as tentative.

Multiple sabbaticals running concurrently were more commonly a result of LEA encouragement, as opposed to by request from participating schools. However, a number of simultaneous sabbaticals did take place as a result of schools' requests for additional funding. (The practice of allocating several grants resulted from low uptake of the scheme by schools in general, thus favouring the minority making use of the scheme). Headteachers asked for additional sabbaticals of this nature when more than one teacher had expressed an interest, with an equally viable idea, or when it was felt that the proposed project would benefit from the input of more than one member of staff.

Schools accessing the scheme in consecutive years frequently did so in response to the success of previous sabbaticals. Some schools were aware from the start that more funding would be available to them (through awareness raising of low uptake by the LEA) and had initiated a 'rolling programme' for eligible teachers. This consecutive approach was favoured by schools which perceived the absence of a single teacher to be less disruptive to the school than those allowing simultaneous multiple sabbaticals.

The scheme's guidelines for LEAs recommended one sabbatical per eligible school, during the introductory period. It is worth noting that LEA variations emerged in terms of the overall uptake (and therefore of the possibility of allocating multiple sabbaticals) as well as schools' awareness of the possibility of applying for additional funding.

## **2.2 Schools in the sample**

The following sub-sections describe some of the features shared by, or distinguishing schools in the sample.

### **2.2.1 Geographical spread of sample**

Because of the difficulties in locating completed sabbaticals referred to in Chapter 1, the original intention to sample from a limited number of LEAs, selected to represent different levels of eligibility and geographical spread, proved impossible. A much wider trawl was needed to assemble the sample. Sabbaticals were studied in a total of 29 LEAs, these mainly being those with a considerable allocation of sabbatical

funding. The LEA with the largest allocation of sabbaticals, based on the number of eligible schools under the scheme, and three other LEAs which had been very proactive in promoting the scheme, furnished on average 13 sabbaticals each. In the remaining 25 LEAs, between one and eight sabbaticals were studied.

The large majority of sabbaticals studied were located in:

- the M62 corridor – i.e. Liverpool to Hull via Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire (67 sabbaticals)
- London (24 sabbaticals)
- the West Midlands (18 sabbaticals)
- the North East (12 sabbaticals).

(This sample is roughly in proportion to the overall allocation of sabbaticals to each of those regions under the scheme, although the North East is slightly over-represented.)

The role of LEAs in promoting, supporting and monitoring the scheme is explored in Chapter 8.

### **2.2.2 Types of schools in the sample**

While it was originally intended that the sample of schools would proportionately represent school types and schools serving the different age groups, the difficulty of identifying schools that had completed sabbaticals meant that, in effect, the research team studied all completed sabbaticals as and when they became available. It is not apparent whether the sample proportionately represents schools of each type that eventually made use of the scheme in each area. However, it is acknowledged that there are many more primary schools than secondary schools that fulfil the free school meals criterion, irrespective of their size, and that these are therefore represented in far greater numbers in the sample.

The sample involved in this study comprised:

- ninety-seven primary schools
- fourteen secondary schools
- nineteen special schools.

### **2.2.3 Challenges facing schools in the sample**

When asked to identify what they saw as the particular challenges facing their own schools, most headteachers tended to list a considerable range of factors. These fell broadly into a number of categories.

- general school issues, including the school having been in (and in one case, still being in) serious weakness or special measures, overcrowding or falling rolls, cited in about one tenth of the schools
- staffing issues, including high staff turnover, difficulties in providing cover and high staff stress levels, cited in one tenth of schools, but with slightly more choosing to highlight their staffing stability



- family circumstances including deprivation, high mobility rates and issues concerning parenting, cited in almost two thirds of all cases
- pupil learning issues including high English as an additional language (EAL) levels, cited by a quarter of headteachers, the ability range to be accommodated (cited by one tenth) and attainment levels
- pupil personal issues including behaviour (cited by a quarter), emotional problems (cited by one tenth) and attendance
- environmental issues including isolation and high local crime rates (cited by a quarter)
- special needs levels as a challenge for the school, also cited by a quarter, about half of which focussed on the problems of integrating special needs pupils with mainstream classes.

While this breakdown of identified challenges is unlikely to present any particular surprises, it may inform the question of how and why teachers identified their own development needs when selecting the focus of their sabbatical activities, or how, if at all, schools chose to address their particular challenges through the scheme. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 5.

These perspectives from headteachers also illuminate the reluctance of many heads and teachers to take time out from their normal duties: many would see the above challenges as being best addressed by stability in the relationships between pupils and their teachers. It might be argued that interviewees in schools that had chosen not to set up sabbaticals had opted for development through stability, while the schools participating in the scheme had chosen a higher risk option, seeking eventual developmental returns as a reward for enduring temporary disturbance.

### **2.3 Summary and conclusions**

The scheme allocated £6,000 per sabbatical and schools were given relative freedom regarding allocation of time and money. There was no requirement that the full six weeks be made available as time-out from normal duties or that the full £6,000 be spent on the sabbatical. Analysis revealed considerable variation in the length of time that was allowed for each sabbatical, and the way that time was grouped, either as consecutive days or scattered days. It was found that:

- almost two thirds of all the sabbaticals in the sample allocated the full 30 days to the participating teacher or teachers (eight of these were shared sabbaticals)
- almost a quarter of the sabbaticals studied entailed the full allocation of six weeks in a continuous block of time
- over a third enabled the participating teacher to take at least three weeks as a continuous block of time for sabbatical activities
- half of all the sabbaticals in the study involved a teacher taking at least one continuous week out of normal duties.

Five of the sabbaticals apparently involved no time being taken out from normal duties. In such cases it is difficult to justify their definition as sabbaticals according to any criteria at all, other than that they attracted a grant of £6,000. A small minority of

schools allocated such a small number of days, to be taken as separate days or even part days, that it is questionable whether they could be called sabbaticals.

However, given the freedom allowed to schools in determining the nature of their sabbaticals, it is notable that so many schools allocated the full 30 days envisaged, especially in circumstances where the absence of an experienced member of staff might be expected to itself become an additional challenge in already challenging schools. This commitment to, and belief in, the concept of sabbaticals contrasts sharply with the findings concerning the reasons for low uptake in the initial period of the scheme. However, it is unclear to what extent attitudes or circumstances were the determining factors in the choice to use the scheme.

Thirty seven schools were granted more than one sabbatical allocation of £6,000, a bonus resulting from low uptake in other schools. In one school the total was 12 separate sabbatical grants. In most such cases, each sabbatical funded one individual's sabbatical activities. By contrast, in 15 of the schools visited two or more teachers shared the resources allocated for one sabbatical.

The sample involved in this study comprised:

- ninety-seven primary schools
- fourteen secondary schools
- nineteen special schools.

Headteachers in participating schools identified a number of challenges, many of which were addressed specifically through the sabbaticals undertaken.

# Chapter 3

## The participating teachers

### 3.1 Introduction

The guidelines for the scheme identify potential beneficiaries of the scheme as *'teachers with at least five years experience in challenging schools'* (DfEE, 0517/2001). Research into low uptake of the scheme revealed that in many schools either the headteacher was reluctant to release teachers for sabbaticals, or eligible teachers themselves were reluctant to apply. Even in schools that chose to engage with the scheme, the selection of a teacher to participate was not necessarily as the guidelines envisaged. *'The management of the selection and allocation process at school level needs to be conducted openly and fairly with staff being consulted about the criteria for allocating a sabbatical'* (DfEE, 0517/2001). While there were very few indications that the selection process had created friction or dissatisfaction (in one case it emerged that teaching colleagues were not informed that their head of department had been given a sabbatical until after it had started and this generated animosity) the guidance above may not have been followed to the letter. This chapter examines how the scheme was publicised, how the participating teacher was selected (or identified) and who ended up taking sabbaticals.

### 3.2 How the scheme was publicised

Headteachers were informed about the scheme through the distribution of printed material towards the end of the Summer Term 2001, immediately prior to the first year of operations. It emerged during the early stages of the research that in some cases this information went no further than the headteacher.

In the sample of schools studied for this evaluation, each of which received at least one grant of £6,000 to fund a sabbatical, the process of informing eligible teachers about the possibility of their taking a sabbatical varied greatly. In just over half of the sample it was claimed that all eligible staff had been informed. (In a very few cases there was some discrepancy amongst interviewees on this point, with some teaching colleagues claiming that they had not been aware of the scheme, though in such cases that person may not have been eligible under the scheme.) In most of those cases, teachers were informed verbally at a regular staff meeting or briefing, and in fewer cases eligible staff were given copies of the publicity material sent to schools. There is very little evidence of discussion concerning the criteria for selecting the teacher to participate, the process usually being referred to as one of informing rather than consulting.

In five schools the scheme was made known to a limited proportion of those teachers who were eligible, these almost always being the senior management team (SMT). One head indicated that s/he understood that the scheme was targeted at senior managers and therefore only informed those staff members. Members of the SMT are

likely to be amongst the more experienced teachers, but it is not clear in such cases whether other eligible teachers were overlooked, either deliberately or accidentally.

In 26 schools the headteacher identified the person or persons whom s/he felt was most suitable to participate and only informed that person or persons. One participating teacher noted that the headteacher had avoided publicising the scheme to other teachers, presumably to avoid friction or disappointment. In one such case the head consulted the SMT who collectively identified the teacher to approach, but in the other cases it would appear that the decision was made unilaterally by the head.

In a very few cases the process of informing staff was even more limited. One headteacher chose not to allow the participating teachers to be interviewed as part of the research process because s/he believed that the teachers were not aware that they were engaged in sabbaticals. In another the interviewed participating teacher expressed very little knowledge of the scheme, not realising that the activities that s/he was undertaking were at least in part funded through the scheme. This was a situation in which sabbatical funding contributed towards the cost of another CPD activity in which the teacher was already involved.

In the 22 cases in which the headteacher took the sabbatical it was not always clear how the scheme had been publicised. It was clear that a quarter of them had informed other eligible staff, in at least one case the headteacher then took the sabbatical because no other requests emerged. In two cases the headteacher took the first opportunity and then obtained funding for other members of staff to take sabbaticals. At least three heads were prompted by their LEA officers to take the sabbatical themselves, apparently after the information concerning the scheme had elicited no response from any staff in the school. One such headteacher had been exhorted by an LEA officer to *'think more creatively'* about how to access the scheme. Another headteacher was disarmingly honest about the approach s/he had taken. *'In a way I kept it to myself. I saw it and thought, I'm gonna jump on that!'*

### **3.3 The selection process**

The guidelines for the scheme state that *'the headteacher and governing body have overall responsibility for deciding who will have a sabbatical, when they will undertake their sabbatical and what their professional development activities will involve during their sabbatical period'* (DfEE, 0517/2001). The guidelines go on to address in some detail the criteria for assessing and selecting a sabbatical proposal. Given the initial low uptake of the scheme, the apparent reluctance of eligible teachers to participate and the need for LEA officers to encourage schools to *'think more creatively'* to access the scheme, it is not surprising that the need to choose between more than one proposal from eligible teachers rarely arose.

In almost 80 per cent of all cases there was effectively no competition between staff for sabbaticals. Two prevailing circumstances meant that very few selection processes were needed: in one-fifth of cases the headteacher identified the teacher to participate without reference to other eligible members of staff; and in almost half of all cases only one eligible teacher put themselves forward as a possible candidate. In some cases the distinction between these two factors was difficult to discern and it appeared that other teachers may not have submitted proposals because it was clear that a

teacher had already been identified or targeted. In a number of cases where more than one teacher applied for a sabbatical the resolution was to share the resources between all those applying. In the sample there were 15 shared sabbaticals, but in some of those cases the sharing resulted from a pre-emptive management decision that sabbaticals should be shared, rather than the need to respond to more than one proposal. It was usually stated that sharing was chosen as a strategy to spread the opportunity wider, though this may also have been a strategy to avoid conflict or disappointment in cases of competition.

In only 16 cases was it apparent that there had been an open competition between rival proposals. Where a decision had to be made between competing proposals this was usually made by the headteacher, with governors being rarely involved in that process. In only one case was the claim made that the process was in any way democratic.

*The selection process worked in that it was selective. It acted as a mesh and some proposals did not get through. This could be because they were too ambitious, or because they did not take account of other issues, such as CPD or the SDP. Part of the effective working of the process was in teachers redrafting their proposals with their colleagues or with me, so that a peer review of the various schemes took place and teachers made connections with work planned by their colleagues. Also, some were rejected, so the selection process was seen as something that had to be negotiated - it was not a rubber stamping exercise (headteacher interview).*

The most frequent reason given for selecting one proposal above another was that it related more directly to the school's own priorities. In a small number of schools, the years of service of the proposing teachers was regarded as the main criterion for selecting between competing bids. Indeed, one school that had succeeded in securing a number of sabbatical allocations was in the process of working its way through the entire eligible staff, starting with the most senior member, but with the headteacher waiting until last. In that case, all eligible teachers were expected to take a sabbatical in their turn, and given every encouragement to pursue their own interests or passions.

In future, dedicated funding through the scheme will not be available. Headteachers may or may not decide to provide time-out for teachers to complete CPD or school development activities. The following considerations informed the choice by headteachers of the person most suited to time out from normal duties:

- members of staff in need of a break from their everyday role in the classroom
- those colleagues likely to deliver school change
- teachers who had already commenced on a project or task which would benefit from additional time.

While it was clear that an open selection process, affording equal access to all eligible members of staff, had not been conducted in all schools, there is little cause to believe that this generated friction or discontent on the ground. It may be that by avoiding raising expectations, conflict was avoided, but in any case the demand for sabbaticals from teachers themselves seems to have been limited. Without embedding sabbaticals into teachers' terms and conditions (an approach suggested by several interviewees in

this research), it is difficult to imagine a system of sabbatical allocation that did not centre largely on the discretion of the headteacher. However, a more proactive approach by headteachers in informing teachers of the value of sabbaticals both to themselves and to the school, might have elicited more interest and resulted in a wider spread of schools benefiting from the scheme.

### **3.4 The characteristics of participating teachers**

One of the clearest and most detailed set of criteria for the scheme concerned the eligibility of teachers to participate. Three separate criteria were specified.

Teachers eligible to apply for a sabbatical are those who:

a) hold one of the following roles in school: teacher, advanced skills teacher, assistant headteacher, deputy headteacher or headteacher (DfEE, 0517/2001)

- in almost two-thirds of all cases (81 sabbaticals) the participant was a class teacher
- twenty-three assistant or deputy heads took sabbaticals
- twenty-two headteachers took sabbaticals themselves
- two non-teaching support staff, technically not eligible under the scheme, were given sabbaticals
- in two cases it was not possible to identify any participating teachers
- of all the 130 participating teachers, 59 identified themselves as members of the school's SMT.

b) on 1 September 2001 have a total of five years service in schools where 50% or more of the children are eligible for free school meals. Absence on maternity or paternal leave will count towards the five year period (DfEE, 0517/2001)

- a considerable majority (92 cases) of the participating teachers had been in teaching for over 13 years
- twenty-six had been in teaching between seven and 12 years
- seven had fewer than seven years experience
- sabbatical funding was claimed for one teacher with only four years in teaching
- researchers failed to identify the number of years in teaching for three teachers, and as above, in two cases no participating teachers were identified.

c) are employed full-time or part-time in such a school, which could be a maintained primary, special or secondary school, or a non-maintained primary or secondary special school in England, on 1 September 2001 (DfEE, 0517/2001)

- five of the participating teachers were part-time members of staff.

Females were in the majority (3:1) in taking sabbaticals, reflecting the fact that more primary schools, in which women teachers predominate, were eligible under the scheme.

The teacher eligibility criteria presented some problems for headteachers. What should happen in cases where a teacher's previous school had moved into the eligibility range of 50 per cent FSM during the previous five years? How accurately could a headteacher ascertain whether a newer member of staff had met the criterion through service elsewhere? These were rare instances, and were generally handled using common sense.

### **3.5 Summary and conclusions**

The process of informing eligible teachers about the possibility of their taking a sabbatical varied greatly.

- in just over half of the sample it was claimed that all eligible staff had been informed
- in 26 schools the headteacher identified the person or persons who s/he felt was most suitable to participate and only informed that person or persons
- in the 22 cases in which the headteacher took the sabbatical it was not always clear how the scheme had been publicised.

Given the reluctance to use the scheme, from both headteachers and class teachers, it is perhaps not surprising that the need to choose between more than one proposal from eligible teachers rarely arose.

- in almost 80 per cent of all cases there was effectively no competition between staff for sabbaticals
- in only 16 cases was it apparent that there had been an open competition between rival proposals
- the most frequent reason given for selecting one proposal above another was that it related more directly to the school's own priorities.

Headteachers, deputy and assistant heads and class teachers who had been working in challenging schools for five years or more were eligible to take sabbaticals under the scheme.

- in almost two thirds of all cases (81 sabbaticals) the participant was a class teacher
- twenty three assistant or deputy heads took sabbaticals
- twenty two headteachers took sabbaticals themselves
- two non-teaching support staff, technically not eligible under the scheme, were given sabbaticals
- of all the participating teachers, 59 identified themselves as members of the school's SMT
- five of the participating teachers were part-time members of staff
- a considerable majority (92 cases) of the participating teachers had been in teaching for over 13 years, 26 had been in teaching between seven and 12 years, and seven had less than seven years experience
- women teachers were in a majority of 3:1 in taking sabbaticals.

While the selection or identification within schools of teachers to undertake sabbaticals did not generate friction or conflict, a more proactive approach by headteachers might have resulted in the opportunity being shared by more schools.



# Chapter 4

## The aims of sabbaticals

### 4.1 Introduction

The DfES sabbatical scheme provided a rare opportunity for teachers and schools to identify their own development priorities without funding inhibitions, thus providing a valuable insight into their preoccupations and priorities concerning CPD and school improvement.

This chapter considers the aims and expectations of the sabbaticals. Written aims and objectives were obtained in the form of proposal documentation for 70 of the 130 sabbaticals studied. It was possible to examine written aims for a further three sabbaticals from the final reports supplied. In addition, interviewees' perceptions of aims and expectations were collected for all 130 sabbaticals, albeit in hindsight, although the 15 shared sabbaticals are not included in this analysis.

An overall broad typology of different aim types is suggested, based on the key beneficiary(s) of the sabbatical. The relationship of the aims to the participating teacher's CPD plan and/or the School Development Plan (SDP) is discussed; and there is a brief look at who defined the aims. Examples from a more detailed typology of aims are then presented, including an analysis of clusters of aims. Interviewees' expectations for the sabbatical experience are also examined.

Whilst the typologies of aims and expectations are based on the whole sabbatical as the unit of analysis, this chapter also considers the level of consensus about the aims of the sabbaticals between: a) written and spoken aims; and b) the different interviewees (mainly headteachers and participating teachers). It also highlights where sabbatical aims changed as the sabbatical progressed and the types of aims that were explicitly not identified for the sabbaticals.

The chapter concludes with a summary of key points and any implications for devising sabbatical aims raised by the analysis.

### 4.2 Different aim types

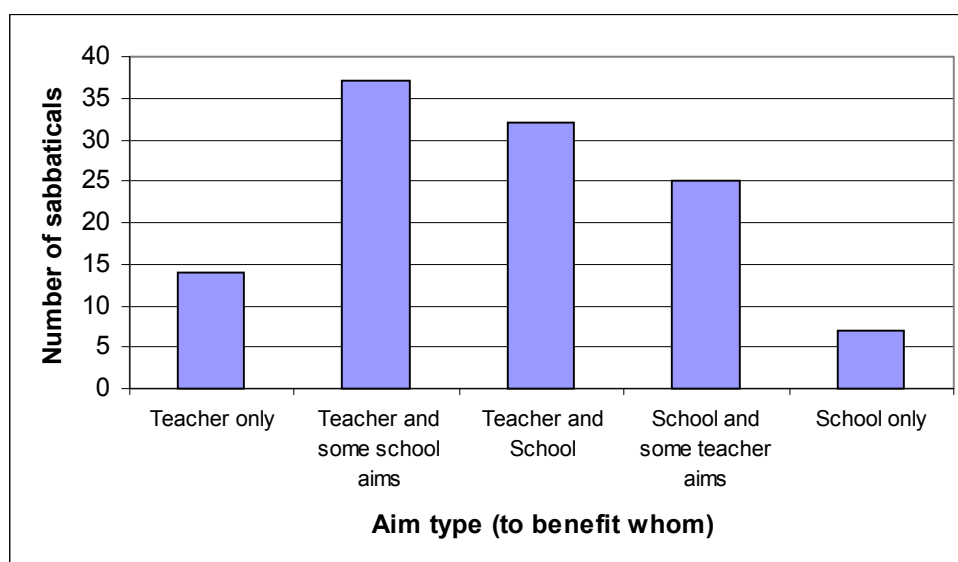
#### 4.2.1 Aims and benefits for whom?

The DfES sabbatical guidance for headteachers stated that sabbaticals should aim to address both the needs of individual teachers whilst bringing '*subsequent benefits to their pupils and their school*' (DfES, 2001). The extent to which the aims of the sabbaticals in the study sought to address this is now discussed.

A broad typology of aims emerged from the written and spoken data based on the (hoped for) key beneficiary(s) of the sabbatical. As Figure 4.1 shows, five key aim types were identified:

- i) solely personal aims of the participating teacher, with no specific aims for the school – with 14 sabbaticals (12 per cent), this was the second smallest category
- ii) aims relating to the personal and professional development of the participating teacher, with some aims for the school – with 37 sabbaticals (32 per cent), this was the largest category
- iii) aims equally for the participating teacher and the school (32 sabbaticals, 28 per cent)
- iv) aims relating to the development of the school, with some aims for the participating teacher (25 sabbaticals, 22 per cent)
- v) aims relating solely to the benefit of the school, with no specific aims for the participating teacher – with just seven sabbaticals (six per cent), this was the smallest category.

**Figure 4.1 Number of sabbaticals by aim type**



Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
 NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The five categories are mutually exclusive.

Thus, overall, sabbatical aims were weighted marginally towards the professional development of the participating teacher rather than the school.

These aim types were defined as mutually exclusive, relaying the overall emphasis of the aims, although clearly there was some overlap when more peripheral aims and objectives were considered. Indeed, one caveat to bear in mind is that the documentation for the written proposals often meant that proposers were required to fill out aims of the sabbatical that would include benefits to themselves, to the school and to the pupils. Thus, the majority of the sabbaticals studied claimed to have aims at almost every level – i.e. for the participating teacher, for other teachers in the school, for the pupils and for the school as an institution. For example, many sabbaticals aimed to ‘benefit teaching and learning’ in the school in some way or other, and a

common assertion was that it was hoped to ‘raise standards’. However, it is the underlying purpose of the sabbatical that has been analysed here so that sabbaticals could be placed into one of these five categories (although as we shall see in section 4.5, the level of consensus over what these driving aims were varied between interviewees and between written and spoken aims within the sabbaticals themselves).

#### 4.2.2 The relationship of sabbatical aims to professional development and school development plans

The extent to which sabbatical aims related to development plans (such as the participating teacher’s own CPD plan or the school development or improvement plan) varied.

Regarding the participating teacher’s individual CPD plan, whilst many sabbaticals were hoped to contribute to the individual’s CPD (i.e. the sabbatical viewed as a CPD tool), it would appear that most aims were actually non-specifically related to meeting CPD targets – i.e. although generally related to CPD, specific targets within the plan would not necessarily be addressed through the sabbatical. However, it was pointed out by interviewees at several schools that teacher CPD targets formed part of the School Development Plan (SDP), and so both would hope to be addressed. This amalgamation of individual CPD plans into SDPs perhaps disguises some of the relationship between sabbatical aims and actual targets or aims in the individual’s CPD plan.

Regarding SDPs, the aims of the majority of sabbaticals were deemed to ‘fit in’, and in contrast to the teacher’s CPD plans, there were sabbaticals with aims specifically related to the school’s development plan. Indeed, the stated aim of some sabbaticals was actually to meet part of the SDP or target. For example, one sabbatical aimed to set up working links with local colleges as part of its long-term development plan to extend its provision up to age 16. So, taking the SDP as the marker here, varying levels of association with sabbatical aims emerged, as Table 4.1 shows.

**Table 4.1 Relationship of sabbatical aims to school development plan**

<b>Relationship of sabbatical aims to school development plan</b>	<b>Percentage of sabbaticals</b>	<b>Number of sabbaticals</b>
Not related to the school development plan	10	12
Broadly related to the school development plan	37	43
Closely linked to the school development plan	50	58
Closely linked to LEA priorities	1	1
Not known	1	1

Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*

NB – *Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and hence do not necessarily add to 100.*

The majority of sabbaticals appeared to be closely or broadly linked to the SDP. It was rare for sabbaticals to be unrelated to the SDP in any way (just ten per cent of the sabbaticals). Of the 58 sabbaticals closely linked to the SDP, six were specified as

being related to OfSTED priorities (i.e. with aims to address an area highlighted for improvement by OfSTED at a recent inspection).

It was possible for sabbatical aims to be linked to the SDP, but still to emphasise the participant's development: for example, the sabbatical which aimed to enhance record-keeping on children with SEN (matching the school's priorities) but which seemed driven by the participant's personal and professional interest in IT and database design and a need to develop professionally in this area as a means for preventing stagnation in his career. Similarly, the sabbatical that was closely related to the school's curriculum and resource development priorities in the area of ICT provision (as recently highlighted by OfSTED), but which focused on the development of the participant's own ICT skills and resource awareness as an initial means to that end. (Note that in this case, the key driving force was, in fact, the school's needs; whereas the previous example seemed driven by the participant's needs.)

In general though, the degree of linkage to the SDP predicted aim type (based on aim types 1 to 5 given in section 4.2.1). As one might expect, the majority of the 58 sabbaticals closely linked to the SDP had aims weighted towards the school end of the spectrum (i.e. 39 of these sabbaticals had aim types 3, 4 and 5). Headteachers considering time-outs for teachers as a CPD or school development tool might be encouraged by the extent to which the two went hand-in-hand in the sample schools.

### 4.2.3 Who defined the aims?

Although the scheme guidelines charge the headteacher and the governing body with overall responsibility for determining who will take a sabbatical and what activities it will entail (DfEE, 2001), in practice the definition of purpose involved considerable collaboration.

The sabbaticals were split into different categories according to who defined the aims. (Note that for the purposes of Table 4.2 below, where the participating teacher was a headteacher, these have been counted in the 'participant' category. This is because the purpose of this analysis is to see the extent to which participants defined their own aims, and the extent to which they were defined by someone else).

**Table 4.2 Who defined the aims of sabbaticals**

Who defined the aims	Percentage of sabbaticals	Number of sabbaticals
The participant	59	68
The participant with SMT (either headteacher, deputy head or other SMT)	18	21
The headteacher and/or SMT	19	22
The LEA	3	4

Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*

NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and hence do not necessarily add to 100.

As can be seen from Table 4.2, the majority of participants defined their own aims for their sabbatical. In addition, a further 18 per cent of sabbaticals had aims defined in part by the participant, albeit in conjunction with the SMT. However, on the other side of the coin, two-fifths of sabbaticals had aims that were either to some extent, or totally, defined by another party (i.e. the second, third and fourth rows in the above table).

Note that 20 of the sabbaticals were undertaken by headteachers, and all but two had aims defined by the headteacher alone (i.e. counted in the first category – aims defined by the participant – in Table 4.2). The two exceptions to this had aims defined by the headteacher in conjunction with a) the LEA advisory service and b) the governors. Therefore, as participants in the scheme, headteachers were more likely to define their own aims than other participants.

The sabbaticals with aims that were defined by the LEA included ones that were set up by the LEA. As such, they had pre-determined aims and objectives. However, participating teachers in these sabbaticals generally emphasised some of their own aims as well, in line with the proposed activity. For example, whilst the overall aims of sabbatical visits to another country, set up by one LEA, were to learn from another education system with schools in ‘challenging’ circumstances, the several teachers who took part had various additional personal aims for the trip, for example: to enrich one’s role as a student teacher mentor; to learn about the headteacher’s role in another country; and to compare and contrast the two systems as a personally interesting exercise.

### **4.3 Details of aims and objectives**

The aims and objectives of sabbaticals pertained to both what was hoped to be achieved (i.e. outcomes and benefits) and how outcomes were to be achieved (i.e. how the sabbatical would be undertaken in terms of activity). Sabbatical aims were coded onto a detailed typology that took account of both written and spoken aims. These are discussed below under aims for the teacher (section 4.3.1), aims for the school (section 4.3.2), aims for other parties (section 4.3.3) and hidden aims (section 4.3.4). An initial analysis of clusters of aims in each of the five key types (teacher, mixed, school etc) is then presented in section 4.3.5.

#### **4.3.1 Aims for the participating teacher**

There were seven key categories of aims for the participating teacher – five of which related to what was hoped to be gained, and two of which emphasised ‘how’ the sabbatical would be carried out (see notes in Table 4.4). These categories of aims for the participating teacher covered a range from the personal to the job-related.

**Table 4.3 Aims for participating teachers**

<b>What was hoped to be achieved</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Personal learning (22 sabbaticals)	To increase knowledge about the arts; to undertake learning linked with the participant's MA; to increase IT skills as an area of personal interest
To increase motivation and confidence and to reinvigorate (24 sabbaticals)	To reinvigorate (21); to boost self-esteem or give value to the participant (7); to raise confidence (5); to increase job motivation (2)
To inform and raise own awareness (13 sabbaticals)	About own school or pupils (9); about IT (5); about access to or making links with other organisations (4)
To develop specific knowledge and skills for job (63 sabbaticals)	To increase knowledge and skills related to teaching and learning styles (24); in administration and management (20); about special educational needs (13); about ICT (19); about other curriculum subjects (11); about pupil inclusion (7); about behaviour management (6)
To enhance one's role (21 sabbaticals)	To enhance the participant's role that they are already in (e.g. early years coordinator) (21); to become a trainer (6); to make a career move (4)
<b>How it was hoped to be achieved</b>	<b>Examples</b>
To do a course (16 sabbaticals)	To complete a course (such as a diploma, MA, MEd, MPhil) (9); to attend short courses, lectures, lessons or workshops (5).
To observe others' practice (39 sabbaticals)	To observe others' practice in administration and management (20); teaching and learning styles (11); about special needs practice (8); about other pupil groups (6); about ICT (5); about other curriculum subjects (3); about behaviour management and pupil support (4); about pupil inclusion (2).

Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*

NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The numbers in brackets in the first column show the number of sabbaticals with those aims clearly agreed by all. Examples and numbers in the second column are given if mentioned at all and are not mutually exclusive sub-categories of the aim to which they pertain. Hence numbers in the second column can sum to more than that given in the first column.

### 4.3.2 Aims for the school

There were nine key categories of aims for the school – seven of which related to what was hoped to be gained, and two of which emphasised 'how' the sabbatical would be carried out. These are given in Table 4.5 from sharing the learning with other staff, through curriculum development, to whole school improvement.

**Table 4.4 Aims for schools**

<b>What was hoped to be achieved</b>	<b>Examples</b>
To share good practice with others (10 sabbaticals)	Sharing the learning within the school (20)
To develop skills and knowledge in other staff (8 sabbaticals)	Mainly related to IT
To develop curriculum and resources (21 sabbaticals)	To develop curriculum subject areas or key stage areas (16); to develop ICT (4); to gain resources (5)
To develop planning and management strategies (28 sabbaticals)	To improve management strategies (13); to develop assessment and record-keeping strategies (10); to develop curriculum planning (9)
To improve networks (7 sabbaticals)	To improve links with other schools or education community (6); with other establishments (4); with the wider community (2)
To improve standards – academic, attainment measures (20 sabbaticals)	To ‘ <i>raise standards</i> ’ in general (16); to raise attainment levels (8); to raise standards in ICT (5); to raise standards in other curriculum areas (6)
To improve standards – teaching practice and learning (26 sabbaticals)	To ‘ <i>benefit teaching and learning</i> ’ in the school (22); to improve pupil support (5); to improve curriculum delivery (4); to become an expert provider (2)
<b>How it was hoped to be achieved</b>	<b>Examples</b>
By evaluating and monitoring the school’s practice (14 sabbaticals)	To evaluate and monitor the school’s practice (15); to see where the school needed to change its practice (5)
By producing something (20 sabbaticals)	A scheme of work (8); ICT-related product (8); a policy or manual (7); assessment-related (3); a training programme (1).

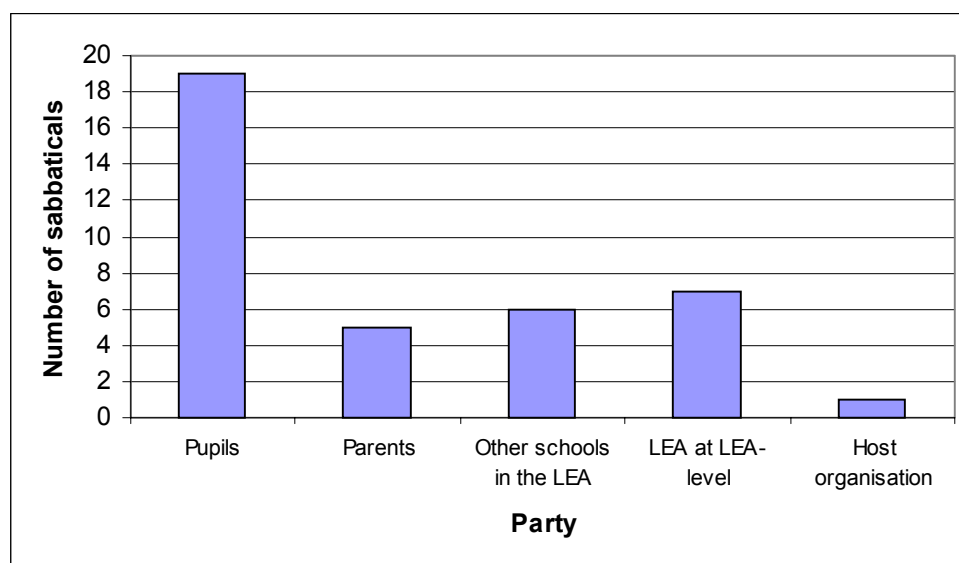
Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*

NB – *Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The numbers in brackets show the number of sabbaticals with those aims clearly agreed by all. Examples and numbers in the second column are given if mentioned at all and are not mutually exclusive sub-categories of the aim to which they pertain. Hence numbers in the second column can sum to more than that given in the first column.*

### **4.3.3. Aims for other parties – pupils, parents and the LEA**

Specific aims for parties other than the teacher or the school existed. As shown in Figure 4.2, these included pupils, parents and the LEA.

**Figure 4.2 Sabbatical aims for parties other than the teacher or school**



Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*

NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The five categories are not mutually exclusive.

Nineteen sabbaticals' aims included specific benefits and hoped for direct outcomes for pupils (as opposed to those coming via teacher CPD). For example, aims to improve pupils' IT skills, enhance their personal and social skills (such as behaviour and concentration), or give them wider learning opportunities or raised profile such as e-mail access to pen-friends. However, it must be noted that almost all the sabbaticals were felt to be relevant to pupils in some way. For example, a refreshed teacher (irrespective of his/her aims for the sabbatical) would hope to come back with more energy to teach, and thus benefit the children; or changes in classroom practice or record keeping would be hoped to eventually benefit the pupils.

Five sabbaticals had specific aims to benefit parents. For example, aims were cited to increase parental participation and to increase parental understanding or awareness of a particular part of the provision at school (such as careers education).

A small number of sabbaticals had key aims relating to developments within, and benefits for the LEA; seven at LEA-level and six for all schools within the LEA. Although many sabbaticals aimed to visit another organisation (see Chapter 5), aims relating to the host organisation rarely featured in either the written proposals or the spoken data.



#### **4.3.4 Hidden aims**

There were some aims that seemed to be perceived as less valid than others – such as refreshment, time out and retention. They appeared to be ‘hidden’ in the data collected: for example, spoken about but not written, or associated with lower levels of agreement between interviewees. However, there were also some aims which seemed hidden to a greater degree, and these were related to a sabbatical being a reward – either as time-out or money. For example, a headteacher who had worked hard to get his/her school through special measures saw the sabbatical as a means for reward and refreshment through learning about other education systems on a trip to another country; and another sabbatical trip was regarded as an opportunity to reward the participant who felt they had missed out on other professional development opportunities due to various other school development commitments.

Hidden monetary aims included a sabbatical which aimed to give release time to a department; a sabbatical which aimed to improve teachers’ use of ICT by buying laptops for teachers, but whose staff had low consensus about the sabbatical and indeed low awareness about the sabbatical scheme; and the sabbaticals described as making ‘creative use’ of the funds to deliver school improvement.

#### **4.3.5 Clusters of aims**

The detailed aims and objectives of the sabbaticals were correlated with the overall main aim type (i.e. type 1 to 5, as presented in Figure 4.1 earlier).

- the most common aims for type 1 sabbaticals (solely personal) were those related to personal learning; i.e. learning for one’s own interest
- the most common aims relating to type 2 sabbaticals (professional development) were to develop the participant’s knowledge and skills, to observe others’ practice, to reinvigorate and to benefit teaching and learning in the school
- type 3 sabbaticals (equally for the teacher and school) had aims related mainly to developing the participant’s knowledge and skills, to produce something, to improve teaching and learning in the school and curriculum and resource development
- aims for type 4 sabbaticals (those with mainly school aims but some for the teacher) were most commonly to benefit the participant’s knowledge and skills, to evaluate or monitor the school’s practice, to raise standards and to improve teaching and learning in the school
- finally, type 5 sabbaticals (solely school aims) stated aims mainly to do with developing planning and management strategies within the school.

However, it was still possible to hope for benefits for the participant (such as personal learning) even where the key aims were weighted towards the school (categories 3, 4 or 5). Such anomalies tended to occur when a school-based activity would be used as the medium for the sabbatical (such as developing a scheme of work) but which the participant was happy to do or personally interested in. Indeed, the personal interest of the teacher was often seen as the key to such sabbaticals.

Twenty sabbaticals had key aims to produce something – such as a website or a scheme of work. The majority (14) of these sabbaticals were of types 3, 4 and 5 (i.e.

weighted towards the school-end of the five types of sabbatical aims). However, there were six sabbaticals that hoped to produce a product but that seemed to relate overall to the personal and/or professional development of the participating teacher. For example, one sabbatical that hoped to produce resource materials for the school for teaching on ‘the local community’ seemed to have at its heart the personal interests of the participating teacher with regards to her own interest in local history and an immediate need for refreshment. Interestingly, the area of development on this sabbatical – curriculum and resource development in geography and history – was not a school development priority.

Headteachers contemplating the use of time-out for teachers may be encouraged by the extent to which personal and school aims could be linked, and by the number of school aims in the sample. That so many teachers chose themselves to identify aims to benefit the school indicates the dedication with which time-out opportunities were addressed.

#### **4.4 Expectations of the sabbatical experience**

Schools embarked on sabbaticals with not only aims in mind. Expectations of the sabbatical experience were that it would:

- provide reinvigoration and refreshment (pertains to 31 sabbaticals)
- provide time to get something done (30 sabbaticals)
- be helpful to the school (19 sabbaticals)
- be time away from the classroom (16 sabbaticals)
- be personally fulfilling (11 sabbaticals)
- widen the participant’s experiences in general (six sabbaticals)
- be an opportunity to develop links with other schools (four sabbaticals).

(Numbers in the above list are based on explicit comments made by interviewees and do not necessarily mean that the remainder of the sabbaticals in the sample did *not* expect it – rather that they did not mention it).

The most common expectations were that the sabbatical experience would be ‘reinvigorating’ and provide ‘time’. Expectations for reinvigoration included to be refreshed, to be rejuvenated, to gain fresh or new ideas, and to return to the classroom with ‘new eyes’. Mixed in with these expectations for refreshment were notions of time-out, time away from the classroom and a break from routine.

*I felt she needed the opportunity to revitalise. Over a period of time, when you’re in a special measures situation ... some people can get into a situation where they only hear the negatives ... she needed the opportunity to get a sense of herself back as a professional (CPD coordinator).*

To be away from the classroom but looking at other’s practice was also expected to be refreshing, and hopefully ‘*confirming*’ of one’s practice:

*You're so isolated even within the authority, within your own little school and your own little world that it's nice to get out and see what somebody else is doing (participating teacher).*

Expectations of 'time to get something done' were, however, more common than time-out. Such expectations included time to do something 'properly', time to do something that had been waiting to be done for ages, and time to complete a course (such as an MA).

*... to do something that I would have had to have squeezed into my working life – rather than have the time to do it without feeling a conflict between something else that I should be doing at this moment in time (participating teacher).*

That the sabbatical should be a personally fulfilling and enjoyable experience was expressed by a small but not insignificant number (11), for example:

*If I was going to be given time out of class, I wanted to enjoy it and do something different to my normal teaching, but I also felt very strongly that I wanted it to benefit the school as well (participating teacher).*

Interestingly, expectations for personal fulfilment were generally also coupled with expectations for helping out the school, as above:

*I wanted to do something that would give a bit of time out of the class and to follow through something that would be useful to the school as well as me personally and my own professional development (participating teacher).*

Thus, expectations for the sabbatical experience perhaps hinted at reasons why participants were hoping to undertake sabbaticals. Whilst these were not always explicit within the aims of the sabbatical, they were generally explicit within comments about expectations for the experience (such as reinvigoration, personal fulfilment and to benefit the school, as discussed above).

In addition to the positive expectations depicted above, there was one key downside in participants' views on what the sabbatical might hold for them. Despite the opportunity to be away from the classroom, there were five sabbaticals where the participating teacher's chief expectation was that it would be a worrying time – for example, being worried about leaving the pupils, or worried about the 'high expectations' on them to achieve or present something:

*I was frightened that after the six weeks I would be expected to put in [other] things, such as INSET (participating teacher).*

Headteachers contemplating time-out for teachers may need to reassure their staff that refreshment, reinvigoration and re-motivation are valid aims in terms of CPD and are of equal value with aims that appear to contribute more to school or pupils.

## **4.5 Consensus and changes**

Having explored differences between sabbaticals, this section considers similarities and differences pertaining to the aims within the sabbaticals studied – by examining the perceptions of the various interviewees. Section 4.5.1 looks at these various levels of consensus about the aims, any hidden aims and the possible implications of these. Section 4.5.2 briefly considers examples of sabbaticals where aims changed as the sabbatical progressed, and section 4.5.3 presents the arenas that were identified by some interviewees as explicitly *not* associated with the aims of their sabbatical.

### **4.5.1 Levels of consensus**

The written proposals and interview data were scrutinised for levels of consensus about the aims. Sabbaticals were then categorised as having broadly high, medium or low levels of consensus on two counts: firstly between written and spoken data; and secondly between the different interviewees. Levels of consensus were based on the following criteria:

- high – sabbaticals in which the various parts or parties (written, spoken and different interviewees) portrayed the same aims with similar emphasis
- medium – sabbaticals in which the various parts or parties relayed somewhat different aims but with the same overall emphasis (i.e. some disagreement over exactly what might be achieved and how, but agreement about who would benefit – the school or the teacher); or sabbaticals in which the written and spoken aims concurred but where different emphases were placed on the reasons behind the sabbatical by the various interviewees
- low – sabbaticals with marked differences between the various parts or parties about the actual aims and in particular about the key reasons for undertaking the sabbatical.

#### ***Levels of consensus***

As shown in Table 4.5 below, there were predominantly high levels of congruence between the participant and other interviewees about the aims of each sabbatical. However, the interview data also highlighted areas of incongruence between the participant and other interviewees about the aims of that sabbatical. (This might be expected given that the interviewees are speaking in hindsight, having done the sabbatical; the various parties are more likely to see the sabbatical and its aims from the same viewpoint after the event).

**Table 4.5 Number of sabbaticals with varying levels of congruence between interviewee types**

<b>Levels of congruence between interviewees about sabbatical aims (i.e. between participants and other interviewees)</b>	<b>Percentage of sabbaticals (out of 95 non-shared sabbaticals)</b>	<b>Number of sabbaticals</b>
High	56	53
Medium	37	35
Low	7	7

Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*

NB: *Data in this table is given out of the 95 non-shared sabbaticals where more than one interviewee spoke about aims. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and hence do not necessarily add to 100.*

There were three main areas of incongruence between interviewees. By far the most notable area, with 19 examples of medium and low levels of congruence, was where the headteacher or other non-participating interviewee stressed the aims and potential benefits to the participant (such as professional development or refreshment) whilst the participating teacher emphasised aims for the school. There seemed to be no association between who defined the aims of the sabbatical and this particular area of disagreement in the aims. Instead, the disagreement appeared to come from teachers' views that, with such a scheme, they wished to benefit the school. Whilst this relayed the best intentions of teachers in their profession – *'ultimately you're in the job for the benefit of the children, so if you do something that will benefit the school it will benefit the children'* (as one teacher put it), at worst, it revealed a message that teachers may feel required to benefit the school through a sabbatical, perhaps at the expense of themselves. Several headteachers felt quite perplexed about this situation. The following examples, taken from the same sabbatical, demonstrate this area of incongruence:

*I wanted them to get something out of it ... I think that is a big problem with teachers, they always say 'What is the school going to get out of it?' instead of 'How is it going to help me develop?'* (headteacher).

*I wanted to be able to spend some time investigating [key stage 2 test results] ... if there was anything we could do to raise standards ... [addressing the school aims] that was the priority; that was the whole point of it* (participating teacher about the same sabbatical).

On the other hand, there were some sabbaticals where the disagreement about the aims was that headteachers emphasised school aims while participating teachers stressed personal aims. Most of these sabbaticals were of the types related mainly to the personal and professional development of the participant (i.e. types 1, 2 and some 3) and were ones where the participating teacher had defined their own aims, so it is likely that the cause of low consensus was related to the natural tendency of the teacher to talk about themselves, whilst the headteacher would talk about the school. However, this area of incongruence may be of concern, and one might conjecture that these headteachers were relaying some sense of dissatisfaction with teachers using the scheme primarily for themselves.

From the participating teacher's point of view, such disagreements could eventually prove frustrating, especially if expectations were thwarted by the aims of others during the planning process.

*I think I had in mind that a sabbatical meant more like a retreat, or a time when it was going to be a refreshment for me in my own personal life which I could then interpret into school life. But it hasn't been that at all (participating teacher).*

The third area of low consensus between interviewees about sabbatical aims was where the headteacher felt the sabbatical was about the retention of the participant, but where the participating teacher made no reference to this need. As such, the sabbatical could be viewed by headteachers as a reward and refreshment for their staff (as discussed under section 4.3.4 above). However, headteachers themselves could also feel that refreshment was not deemed a valid purpose of a sabbatical. As one headteacher put it: *'I'd have loved to have given her six weeks to find a new lease of life. She now needs to find new hobbies and new interests in life. But I felt that was not allowed'*.

#### ***Relationship between level of consensus and who defined the aims***

One of the most striking correlations associated with the level of consensus was the relationship between consensus and who defined the aims of the sabbatical. The highest levels of consensus were where the participant defined their own aims (32 out of the 53 sabbaticals with high levels of consensus had aims defined by the participant). This pattern was even stronger where the participant was a headteacher – consensus about the aims was high. Where the level of consensus between the interviewees was lowest, then it was more likely that the aims had been defined to some extent by a party other than the participant (half of the sabbaticals with mid to low consensus had aims defined to some extent, or totally, by another party).

#### ***Levels of congruence – implications***

Whilst levels of congruence, then, were inevitably influenced by the degree to which participants talked about themselves, or perhaps a natural tendency to talk about oneself more than to write about oneself, other factors such as who defined the aims, and how participants construed the purpose of the scheme, were also important. Policy-makers may well have felt that refreshment was *'taken as read'* as part of the scheme (as one participating headteacher put it), but it is not insignificant that refreshment hardly featured in written proposals. It may point to a notion that refreshment and personal development are seen by teachers as having less validity as aims than those such as sharing good practice. (It may also be that the experience of the sabbatical made teachers aware that they had needed some benefits of time and refreshment, and hence spoke about them in hindsight.)

It was evident that it may be necessary to address this apparent lack of validity in viewing a sabbatical as refreshment from the top (policy-makers) down. Views from within the teaching profession indicated that some teachers felt compelled to use such

a scheme to benefit the school, even where their headteacher stressed the potential benefits to the participating teacher.

However, striking a balance in the message about the purposes of the sabbatical scheme (and any further use of time-out as a CPD strategy) might be delicate. One of the key findings of the investigation into low uptake of the scheme was that lack of uptake related to headteachers' concerns that the scheme focused on the participant, taking them away from their duties and therefore a loss to the school; while teachers felt the scheme was about benefiting the school over and above themselves. Thus, too much emphasis on personal refreshment from policy-makers might discourage headteachers from wishing their school to take part; whilst too much prominence on the benefits to the school might deter teachers from applying.

Headteachers contemplating the use of time-out might consider the significance, according to the sample schools, that participating teachers and schools placed on being able to identify development aims themselves, rather than having them imposed from outside. Teachers, in particular, felt validated as professionals and addressed aim-setting responsibly, showing dedication to their school and pupils.

#### **4.5.2 Changes in sabbatical aims**

A small number of sabbaticals had aims which changed – some during the proposal stage of the process and others once the sabbatical was underway.

Examples of sabbaticals with changing aims during the initial stages included two where aims that had been originally defined by a participating teacher, were overruled or added to by the SMT and the governors. In both cases, levels of congruence between interviewees were low, as changes had been made to both the aims and the actual planned activity.

Examples of aims changing as the sabbatical was underway, were those where the aims seemed over-ambitious once the activity was started.

#### **4.5.3 Aims not required of sabbaticals**

In a small number of sabbaticals, participants and other interviewees explicitly excluded aims about certain aspects of development. For example:

- not for individual CPD for the participant (five sabbaticals)
- not for school development (three sabbaticals)
- not for career development/promotion (three sabbaticals)
- not for personal interest of fulfilment (two sabbaticals).

The extent to which these appear to deny benefits to the individual teacher may be a further indication that the profession underestimates its right to develop or be fulfilled.

## 4.6 Summary and conclusions

The key points raised in this chapter are:

- five different aim types emerged ranging from solely personal aims, through aims for the teacher and the school, to solely school aims
- the most common types of sabbatical were those with aims related to the professional development of the teacher (with some school aims), followed by those related equally to the teacher and the school
- however, the majority of sabbaticals were either broadly or closely linked to the school development plan
- the majority of participants defined their own sabbatical aims – 60 per cent, this proportion was even higher where participating headteachers were concerned – 90 per cent of sabbaticals undertaken by headteachers had aims defined by themselves alone
- however, there remained a notable portion of sabbaticals with aims defined to some extent, or totally, by another party (40 per cent)
- who defined the aims tended to correlate with the level at which aims were targeted, for example, where headteachers and SMT defined the aims for the participating teacher, aims tended to be at school-level
- the most common expectations (but rarely defined as aims) for the sabbatical experience were for reinvigoration, refreshment and time to get something done
- on the whole, high levels of agreement about the sabbatical aims were evident between interviewees, however, the key area of disagreement between interviewees was that between headteachers and participants on the degree to which sabbatical aims were about the school (often, headteachers stressed that the sabbatical was about personal and professional development for the participant whilst the participant felt the main aims were for the school)
- as such, both refreshment and personal benefit seemed to be perceived by participating teachers as less valid than other aims such as those to benefit the school
- aims relating to refreshment, reward, retention and personal benefits were hidden to varying degrees.

Three key implications are raised by this chapter. Firstly, for schools undertaking general professional development projects in the future, to consider who defines the aims of the project. Greater consensus and understanding of what the project is about appears to occur when the participants themselves are involved in defining the aims. Certainly, the highest levels of disagreement occurred when another party defined the



aims for the participant, resulting in some dissatisfaction with not only the aim, but the experience itself.

Secondly, headteachers contemplating specific time-out opportunities for their staff to pursue CPD or school development projects, should be encouraged that the two can go hand-in-hand and that teachers appear to show dedication to school development when defining CPD aims for themselves. There may be a need to address perceptions of the validity of various aims. Refreshment, reinvigoration and time were all aims hidden in varying degrees by interviewees, and rarely featured in written proposals. Many teachers felt obliged or required to benefit the school perhaps at the expense of themselves.

Thirdly, for policy-makers, there was possibly a need for greater clarification at policy level about sabbaticals as a scheme for teachers who teach in challenging circumstances or as a scheme for schools with teachers who teach in challenging circumstances. The difference is marginal, but the message it puts across can be perceived in very different lights: is this for the school or the individual? However, for those participating, the scheme was almost without exception held in an extremely positive light.

Funding schemes offering such freedom of choice for schools and teacher are rare. This scheme has offered a valuable insight into what teachers and headteachers, unencumbered by budget restraints, identified as development needs for both individual teachers and schools. By being enabled to define their own aims, rather than having them preordained, schools have revealed their preoccupations, or possibly their own 'wish-lists' for development. And as one headteacher put it: *'these things help you throw off the shackles of the national curriculum and allow you to fly'*. We shall see what sorts of things allowed teachers to fly in Chapter 5 on activity and content, and examine the extent to which teachers and schools flew in Chapter 6 on outcomes.



# Chapter 5

## The sabbatical experience

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the nature of the activities undertaken by teachers on sabbaticals and considers the following characteristics of the sabbaticals included in the research sample:

- the overall time spent by teachers on sabbaticals and how this time was allocated
- where sabbaticals took place
- the nature of the activities undertaken
- the content and foci of sabbaticals.

For analysis purposes the 15 sabbaticals shared between two or more members of staff in one school are not included in the typologies above, as they often took place in several locations, activities and foci, depending on the number of teachers involved in each. A summary of such sabbaticals is presented in Chapter 2, section 2.1.4.

### 5.2 Time allocation and the timing of sabbaticals

The issues surrounding the time allocated to sabbaticals have been discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1.2. This section discusses timing issues primarily from the perspectives of the participating teachers and in relation to sabbatical activities. Timing in terms of school-centred management issues is considered in more detail in Chapter 8, section 8.3.1.

Decisions on appropriate time scales for individual sabbaticals appeared to be influenced by two main factors:

- what was seen by the participating teacher and the school management as least disruptive to the school
- what was deemed as most appropriate and effective in terms of the sabbatical activity.

Though both were seen as key considerations in the planning and management of sabbaticals, it was not always possible for participants to resolve both concurrently.

*In terms of being a teacher, the safest option would be to have a day a week, but in terms of making the sabbatical of any value, I think you need a minimum of four or five days at a time to clear your head and really focus on what you want to do (participating teacher).*

The data suggested that senior managers, and participating teachers with specific whole-school responsibilities, were unlikely to take a full six-week block as they were required in school on a regular basis.

*It was made very clear to me that I could only have one day occasionally out of school. It was felt that otherwise it would cause too much disruption, because I held a responsibility post [head of RE] (participating teacher).*

Of the 46 sabbaticals identified as having been taken in a consecutive block of 15 days or more, only five were undertaken by headteachers and a further six were undertaken by deputy or assistant heads (approximately a third of all the sabbaticals in the study (45 sabbaticals) were taken by members of school SMTs). The managerial commitments of senior teachers were seen as difficult to cover, regardless of the time of year at which the sabbatical was taken. Thus, minimising disruption appeared to be the prevalent aim.

*There is no easy time to cover an assistant head, but the last half term is easier (headteacher).*

Experienced class teachers were more likely to take a substantial block of consecutive days, as they and the school management generally felt more confident that a supply teacher could cover their absence (35 class teachers took sabbaticals of this nature). There was also a sense amongst the cohort taking sabbaticals of this nature that consecutive days were less disruptive than sabbaticals spread out over time. It was felt that the children responded better to the continuity of a supply teacher for a sustained period. Teachers themselves were able to concentrate wholly on the sabbatical activity without persistently having to resume their normal duties.

*I would only have done it as a six week block. Otherwise you prepare for your class, get left with the marking and certainly left with the responsibility (participating teacher).*

For all sabbaticals, careful planning was deemed necessary to ensure that teachers' absence from normal duties resulted in minimal disruption to the school. This meant finding an appropriate time in the academic calendar, particularly for sabbaticals taken as consecutive days. Participating teachers cited that this was often the latter half of the summer term. In secondary schools, teaching commitments were often reduced at this time of year. Therefore, the need for external supply to cover the participating teacher was reduced.

*In primary schools, teachers were reluctant to leave their classes during, or in the run up to, end of key stage tests. (This was particularly relevant for teachers of year groups 2 and 6.) One headteacher commented on the seasonal variations affecting the availability of supply teachers, noting that it was 'virtually impossible to find' effective supply cover during end of key stage tests.*

*Despite careful planning, a number of cases emerged in which participants had been required to return to school in the course of their sabbatical. The reasons cited included problems with supply cover, general commitments such as staff meetings and parents' evenings and in one case, a school burglary. Whilst in a few cases this was*

*seen as unacceptable by the participant, the majority felt it was an inevitable part of being a teacher and a full six-week sabbatical, however taken, was a luxury not a given.*

You don't get the full six weeks, but it's a school and you can't expect to - things happen all the time (*participating teacher*).

Sabbaticals identified as spread were, for the most part, extended over the academic year or over a minimum of one term depending on the overall time allocated. A set day each week was established as sabbatical time in approximately a quarter of the spread sabbaticals, often determined by the availability of supply, but this was usually flexible if the teacher was needed in school.

Although both the timescale and the timing of sabbaticals appeared to have ultimately been influenced by a desire to minimise disruption to the school, a number of patterns emerged linking perceptions of appropriate timescales to the nature of the sabbaticals. As discussed, interviewees on spread sabbaticals frequently structured their sabbatical days to coincide with pre-arranged courses and visits or other activities such as overseas exchanges organised by the LEA. In at least ten cases the timescale of the sabbatical appeared to have been purposefully structured to ensure maximum outcomes for the participant and the school. For example, teachers wishing to incorporate sabbatical learning back into their practice during the course of the sabbatical, or to carry out successive data collection exercises for research in their own schools, chose to spread the allocated time over a longer period. This was seen as enabling the teachers to reflect on what they were doing, apply the learning and conduct ongoing evaluations of any changes they were implementing.

*I think with the things that she's done she had to evaluate what she was doing as she went along, and she could only do that over a period of time* (headteacher).

Conversely, teachers looking to immerse themselves in an activity removed from their existing role, or gain refreshment from the experience, were more inclined to take a six-week block. Eleven teachers interviewed recommended that, in order to achieve reinvigoration and ultimately to meet the scheme's aim of teacher retention, participants needed to be allowed to access sabbaticals of this nature.

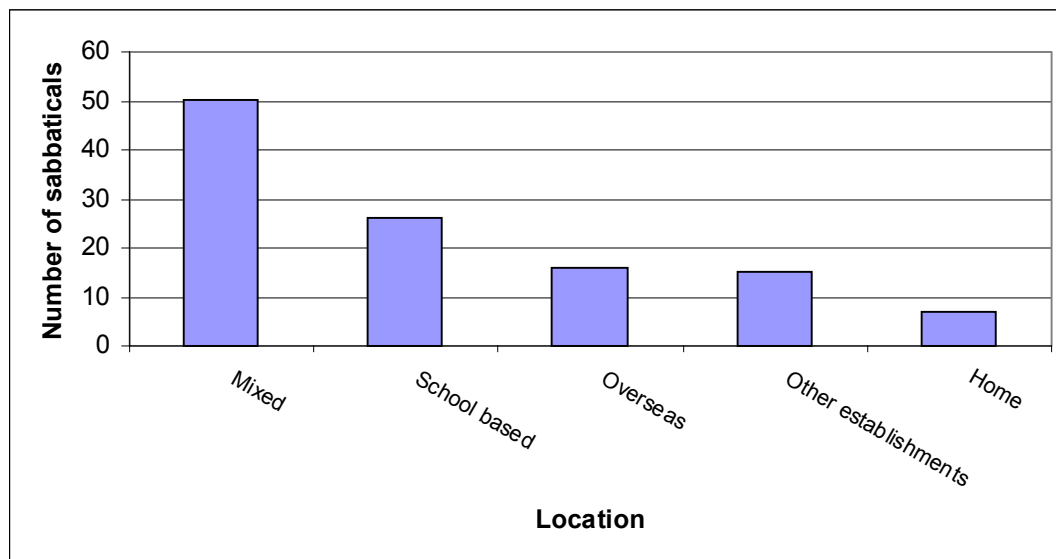
### **5.3 Where sabbaticals took place**

The general definition of a sabbatical, which appeared to have been adopted by the majority of the participants, can be seen as 'time spent released from normal duties' although this did not necessarily imply time away from school. A list of the types of locations in which this time was spent is set out below:

- mixed
- school based
- overseas
- other establishments
- home.

The Figure 5.1 shows the overall spread of the sabbaticals studied, in accordance with the above typology.

**Figure 5.1 Where sabbaticals took place**



Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The five categories are mutually exclusive.

### 5.3.1 Mixed

The most common approach was to conduct the activity in a variety of locations. Fifty (43 per cent) of the sabbaticals studied could be classed as ‘mixed’. Sabbaticals in this category included all those in which the allocated time had been spent in two or more different environments. A high proportion of these were school-based accompanied by visits to other schools and establishments and/or attendance on courses and conferences. For example, one sabbatical, exploring the use of multimedia resources for language teaching, consisted of background research in school and time spent at the local City Learning Centre for the participating teacher to familiarise him/herself with the resources available.

Three of the mixed sabbaticals consisted of time spent in school and at home, with participants working in school when they needed access to equipment or data.

The most popular activity undertaken on sabbaticals with mixed locations was secondary research (section 5.2.3 below), in which teachers gathered a diverse range of information on the subject they were studying. For example, in one sabbatical the focus of the secondary research was performance management. The participating teacher visited a local business, the police force and a neighbouring school, in addition to attending a residential course and working both at home and in school conducting background research into the topic area.

### **5.3.2 School-based**

Twenty-seven (23 per cent) sabbaticals were conducted within the participants' own schools. For the most part these were addressing an area specific to the school's development. For example, one teacher spent the sabbatical time auditing, decorating and rearranging the school library. This category also included sabbaticals in which the participants carried out their own research in their schools (see section 5.3.3 below).

The value of conducting sabbaticals within school was questioned by a number of interviewees who felt that real time-out could only be achieved by leaving the school environment for a period of time. This was reinforced by interviewees who had conducted sabbaticals of this nature and had found that they were often called upon to resume their normal duties:

*If something happens, it is very hard to detach yourself if you are on the premises (participating teacher).*

Because of this, the distinction between taking on an extra school task and taking a sabbatical was not always clear.

*I have a 50 percent timetable and I fitted the sabbatical into the slots when I wasn't actually teaching (participating teacher).*

This may reveal a less than committed attitude to the concept of sabbaticals.

### **5.3.3 Overseas**

Sabbaticals that are classed as taking place overseas include those in which a proportion of the time was also spent in the UK. For example, five of the 16 overseas sabbaticals included preliminary or post-visit research in the UK. Countries visited included USA, Canada, Chile, Bangladesh and various European states. The majority of overseas excursions included visits to schools, universities and education authorities. Teachers choosing to go abroad for sabbaticals of this nature were primarily looking to learn from other education systems.

An example of a more personal sabbatical emerged in which the participants 'explored' Europe on a two week tour taking in Paris and Rome, to increase their own cultural knowledge, with the intention that this could be beneficial when teaching geography modules.

Seven of the sabbaticals which involved overseas visits were conducted in conjunction with existing schemes. For example, one sabbatical, in which the participant spent time researching cacti in Chile, was jointly funded by the Company of Goldsmiths as part of their Mid-career Refresher Scheme. In one LEA, from which a number of schools were included in the research, an overseas exchange programme had been set up. Sabbatical funding enabled a number of participating teachers to access this programme.

There was a consensus amongst participants using the scheme for overseas visits that they initially were unsure as to whether or not this was an appropriate use of the

funding. One teacher expressed her disappointment that she had not been more creative with the funding:

*I took the finances to be for cover, I didn't actually draw on that because I didn't think I was entitled to anything else... I might have gone to other places, even overseas (participating teacher).*

Despite the flexibility of the scheme's parameters, this may account for the limited number of sabbaticals in this category.

#### **5.3.4 Other establishments**

Teachers in 15 sabbaticals chose to conduct their activities entirely in other establishments. These included other schools, other educational providers and non-educational organisations such as businesses or social services. For the most part, the activity undertaken in these organisations consisted of work experience or general observation of practice. This is explored in more detail in section 5.3.3. The perceived benefit of spending sabbatical time in other organisations, particularly non-school environments, is summed up below:

*You suddenly find there's a whole world out there that you didn't know about, because all you could do was think, eat and breathe school (participating teacher).*

#### **5.3.5 Home**

Seven of the sabbaticals studied were conducted wholly within the participants' own homes. The type of activities deemed appropriate for home study included re-writing subject policy documents, completing written assignments for higher degrees and internet and background research on a particular subject. Working from home allowed participants to feel completely removed from the school environment and presented many with entirely new ways of working. Interviewees frequently commented that this took some time to get used to:

*I didn't realise, just how institutionalised I had become. I found it difficult to work at home. I felt I had to keep showing my face in school – I thoroughly enjoyed the sabbatical but it took me a long time not to feel guilty. I felt I was playing truant (participating teacher).*

Once home based sabbaticals were underway the benefits of being out of school were apparent:

*He could focus on it without constant disruptions from school; he felt he was being given the opportunity to do a job properly (teaching colleague).*

#### **5.3.6 Overarching issues**

Forty-nine per cent of the sample, excluding shared sabbaticals, included visits to other schools or educational providers, both here and in the UK. This significantly high percentage suggests that this was something the teaching profession felt was a



valuable exercise for both professional and school development. Since term dates are largely the same for all schools, time-out from one's own school in school time constituted the best opportunity to visit other schools during the school day. Many interviewees commented on the insular nature of working in a school and the lack of opportunity to mix with other teachers. The perceived value of conducting sabbatical activities within other schools is summed up below:

*It's a win-win situation. Whatever you see, you either know that what you are doing is right or you find out something new that will have a positive impact on your practice in the future (participating teacher).*

It was felt that teachers working in challenging schools often needed extra reassurance that they were doing the best they can for their pupils in the circumstances in which they work.

*It is a good way of seeing that you are not the only ones facing the problems and issues you face (participating teacher).*

#### **5.4 Activities undertaken on sabbaticals**

Data was also collected on the exact nature of the activities undertaken on sabbaticals. Whilst the scheme guidelines offered suggestions for activities, there was a high degree of flexibility.

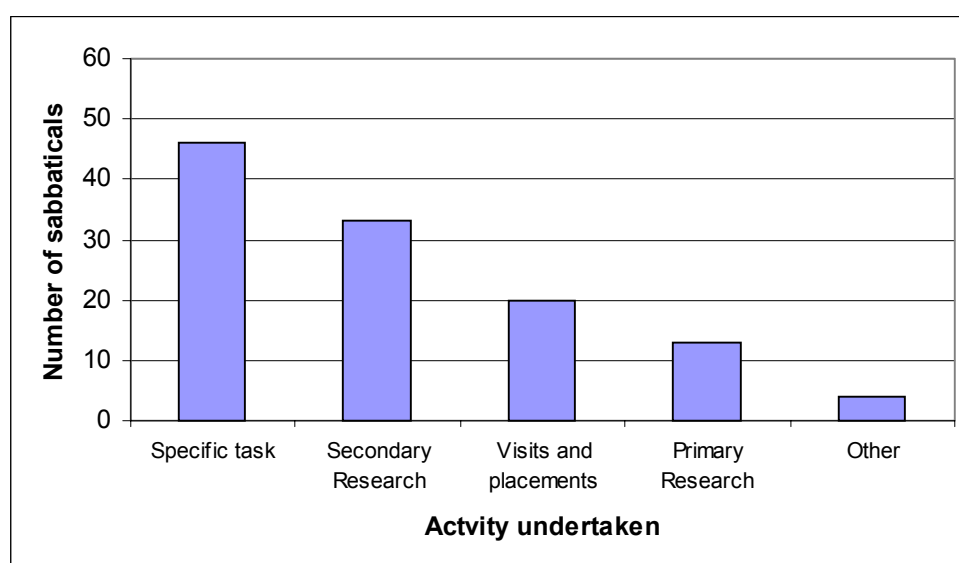
*With most initiatives you are told what you are going to be doing, whereas with this initiative it was a blank piece of paper (participating teacher).*

This resulted in a wide diversity of approaches. The following range of sabbatical activities emerged:

- specific tasks
- secondary research
- primary research
- visits and placements
- other.

Figure 5.2 shows the overall spread of the sabbatical studied, in accordance with the above typology.

**Figure 5.2 Activities undertaken**



Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The five categories are mutually exclusive.

#### **5.4.1 Specific tasks**

In 44 sabbaticals (38 per cent) the participants undertook a specific task. These can be broken down into two types. Firstly, 33 sabbaticals focussed on tasks to support school improvement. Examples included:

- setting up and developing school websites
- reorganising or establishing school libraries
- rewriting subject policies (often in light OFSTED Inspections or the introduction of new government strategies)
- establishing programmes for increasing parental involvement.

Secondly, a further 11 focussed on professional development activities, in which the participants used the time for personal study. For example:

- attending courses (examples included GCSE Spanish and the Kodaly method of music teaching)
- completing a National Professional Qualification of Headship (NPQH)
- completing modules relating to further degrees, including MAs and one PhD.

Whilst a number of teachers used a proportion of the sabbatical time to attend short courses, this was usually as part of a wider information gathering exercise or secondary research and, as such, is discussed in the following section.

#### **5.4.2 Secondary research**

This category accounts for 36 (31 per cent) of the sabbaticals studied and includes:

- background reading on particular topics
- attending conferences and short courses
- collating information from the internet
- visiting other schools, businesses and organisations (educational and other) to gather information or see examples of alternative practice.

All of the sabbaticals in this category consisted of a mixture of one or more of the above listed activities, with the intention of building up knowledge of the area being studied. For the most part, visits and attendance on courses and conferences constituted the main sabbatical activity and background reading and internet research was often conducted in any ‘spare-time’, for example between scheduled visits.

One example of secondary research was a sabbatical in which the participating headteacher used the time to expand her knowledge of pupils’ learning styles. The research involved background reading of relevant material (including existing research); attending a conference on kinaesthetic learning; looking at what other schools were doing and how they adapted their curriculum to suit a range of learning styles; and speaking to one of the educational psychologists within the LEA who had an advanced understanding of learning styles. Overall, the aim was to be able to make informed choices about the way forward for the school.

*It really was gathering knowledge and adapting it to how I thought the school could use it and what the benefits would be to the school. It’s good to shift your feet, get out there and have the opportunity to see what’s happening (participating headteacher).*

In a second example the participating teacher chose to research strategies for raising boys’ achievement. The research started with a cross-referencing of the school’s PANDA (OfSTED’s Performance and Assessment Reports) statistics on boys’ achievement with that of other schools, to see how they fared against the national picture. Having established that the school’s data on boys’ achievement was ‘*not that different*’ the participant then visited other local schools to see how they tackled the problem and also spent time reading research reports, DfES guidelines and other relevant material relating to the issue. The research culminated in the dissemination of strategies to colleagues in the school and the participant continued to monitor the impact of these.

As the examples above show, teachers undertaking secondary research frequently cited having gained ideas which they were then able to transfer into their own school settings. A number of secondary research sabbaticals culminated in a written report or useful documentation of the information gathered. For example, one participant researched the induction and education of asylum seeker children and produced a directory of useful organisations and potential sources for teaching materials which was then made available to colleagues. A second participant researched performance management strategies and wrote up the findings of the secondary research as guidelines for conducting effective performance management reviews. (Outcomes and impacts resulting from sabbaticals, including material and provisional outcomes, are explored further in Chapter 6).

### **5.4.3 Primary research**

This category comprises the 13 sabbaticals in which the participants undertook their own research. It excludes general information gathering and background reading (secondary research) and consists of empirical research with structured methodologies.

One example of this approach was a sabbatical in which the participant investigated the effects of 'Brain Gym'. A group of pupils in the school were tested before and after they were exposed to Brain Gym techniques and any improvements in ability were noted. To ensure reliability and validity, the teacher conducting the research set up a control group, which was not exposed to the technique. Although the participant in this case also did some secondary research into Brain Gym and what it entailed, the main focus of the sabbatical activity can be seen as primary research.

Another primary research sabbatical also explored the effects of kinaesthetic learning techniques (this was a separate sabbatical to that described in section 5.3.2 above). In this case the emphasis of the research was on the possible effects of kinaesthetic teaching approaches on pupils' engagement in numeracy lessons. The methodology employed included questionnaires, observations and action research.

A further example of a primary research sabbatical was one in which the participant investigated perceptions of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for looked after children. The participant interviewed a sample of looked-after children to establish their understanding of PEPs, their experiences of them and the value they placed on them. The results of the research were written up for Social Services and the LEA.

### **5.4.4 Visits and placements**

Although a number of sabbaticals in previous categories involved visits to other schools as part of the information gathering process, a separate category of visits and placements emerged. The 19 sabbaticals in this category are distinct in that the participating teachers intended to spend time on a work placement or to visit and study the establishments concerned, as opposed to completing a specific task or visiting organisations with a specific research brief in mind. Work placements ranged from time spent in non-educational establishments, for example a garden centre, through to more education-related establishments. For example, one participant spent a six-week placement working in a hospital school. The overall aim was for the participant to gain an understanding of how the hospital school worked in terms of both teaching approaches and management and organisation. The participant undertook observations and shadowed members of staff, but spent the majority of the placement working as a teacher on the hospital wards. This hands-on experience gave the participant a valuable insight into the issues surrounding the teaching of sick children in hospital environments, which could be transferred back into mainstream schools.

Other sabbaticals in this category did not entail the full six weeks in one school, but often involved visits to more than one establishment, as well as time between visits to assimilate the experience.

The opportunity to work with other professionals, both from within education and from other sectors, was highlighted as a key element of this type of sabbatical. Working with other educational professionals is discussed in section 5.2.6. Working with professionals in other industries provided participants with new perspectives on working practices and allowed them to draw comparisons between education and other sectors. Sabbaticals of this nature did not appear to have resulted in any teachers sensing they had chosen the wrong career path. On the contrary, it often assured them that they enjoyed the job they were in.

Sabbaticals in this category required a degree of involvement from host organisations. The involvement, as perceived by the sabbatical participants, ranged from simply facilitating the visits and placements, to more hands-on supporting or mentoring roles. It would also appear that sabbaticals of this nature were mutually beneficial to both parties, particularly where a longer-term work placement was involved. Not only did the participating teachers have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills, the host organisations often gained an enthusiastic team member, who brought new perspectives to the work they were doing. This is illustrated in one sabbatical in which the teacher spent a six-week placement with the Social Services Child and Family Services team. Although the participant's aim was to widen her understanding of how this service operates, she had a lot of experience of multi-agency working and felt that her skills would be wasted if she merely observed practice.

*I am a qualified teacher with 20 years experience - I didn't want to be doing work experience (participating teacher).*

The social services team manager was also keen to access the experience of someone within education and agreed to allow the participant to spend the placement working as a team member.

*They wanted someone who could link and help improve strained relationships between schools and social workers (participating teacher).*

By working in this way, both parties gained a valuable insight into the boundaries and constraints under which the other operated, which may affect future practice.

#### **5.4.5 Other**

Two of the three sabbaticals in this category involved the participants providing training to others, in one case within their own school, and in the other case to teaching professionals in India. In the remaining sabbatical the funding had been wholly absorbed by an existing project being undertaken by the participant, who was already on secondment.

#### **5.4.6 Activities facilitated, as opposed to generated, by the scheme**

A distinction could often be made within the sample, between sabbatical activities that were formulated for the scheme and sabbaticals in which the scheme was seen as a way of facilitating existing or pre-planned activities. In some cases the activity was, in a sense, mandatory for example, re-writing schemes of work to incorporate new initiatives and the sabbatical time would ease the pressure on the participating teacher.

*He [the headteacher] knew the workload I had in front of me and he had heard about the scheme and he suggested that I use it for this purpose (participating teacher).*

In other examples, the activity fitted with existing work being done in the school but allowed the participants to develop it further, knowing that they had sufficient time and funding available. It seemed probable that such extensions to activities would not have happened without the scheme and the existing related work would have been capped at an earlier stage. However, there are isolated examples in which the activity would have happened anyway and the sabbatical funding was seen merely as an extra resource. This included one sabbatical in which the funding was shared between six teachers. Each teacher took approximately £1000 to boost existing funding, such as Best Practice Research Scholarships, under which they were already carrying out research or completing higher degrees.

*Professional development is what we are geared up to do. It wasn't anything different; it just helped us with what we were already doing (headteacher).*

#### **5.4.7 Opportunities for reflection**

When discussing the structure of their sabbaticals in the interview data, participants were asked to consider the extent to which their sabbatical had allowed them the opportunity to reflect on the things they were doing and learning. The majority commented that their sabbaticals had consisted of an adequate balance between activity and time for reflection, albeit incidental as opposed to planned or scheduled reflection time in the majority of cases.

However, it is possible that positive responses to this question revealed more about the everyday pressure of teaching than the benefits of the scheme itself. Any amount of time to step back and think about your practice was seen as a luxury in the existing work scenario and the non-contact time provided by the sabbatical scheme was invaluable reflection time in itself.

*There is often time to do activities at school but you can't reflect on it, that's why the time off timetable was so important (participating teacher).*

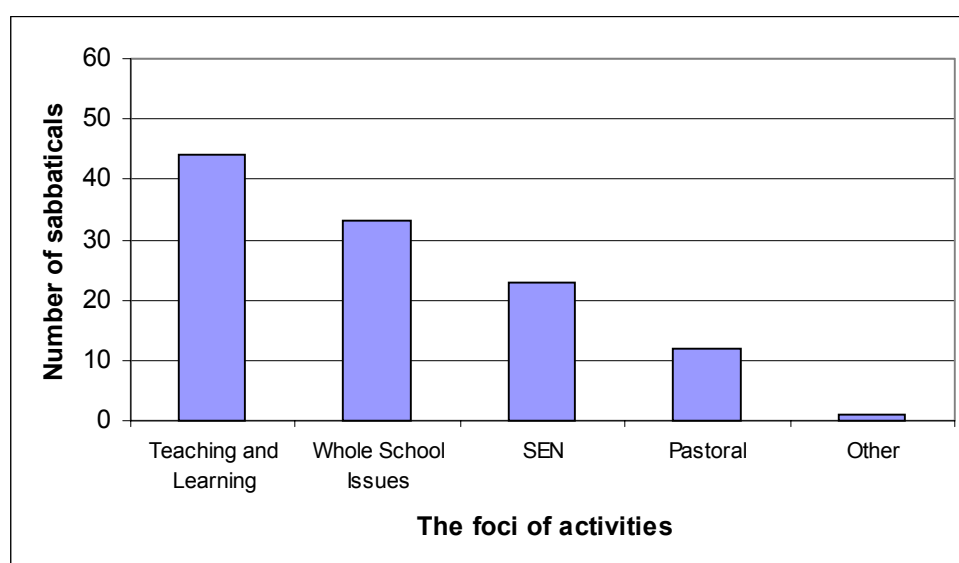
### **5.5 The content and foci of sabbaticals**

In order to understand the stimulus for the activities discussed above, the following list of the foci of the sabbaticals studied was developed:

- teaching and learning
- whole-school issues
- SEN
- pastoral
- other

Figure 5.3 shows the overall spread of the sabbaticals studied, in accordance with the above categories.

**Figure 5.3 The content and foci of sabbaticals**



Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals. The five categories are mutually exclusive.

With the exception of one sabbatical, in which the teacher worked in a garden centre, the content of all sabbaticals studied could be perceived as having an education focus, with a clear connection between the activity and the intended educational impact.

### **5.5.1 Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning was the focus of 52 (45 per cent) of the sabbaticals studied. This is a broad category, which may account for its frequent occurrence in the data. However, it was also seen by a number of interviewees as the key to effective school improvement.

*Teaching and learning is always the most important thing in this school*  
(headteacher).

Included under this heading are such topics as work related to learning styles, teaching techniques and the development of specific subject areas and associated resources. It excludes whole-school resources, which are discussed in section 5.4.2.

A popular subcategory within this was Thinking Skills or related kinaesthetic learning styles such as 'Brain Gym'. Twelve sabbaticals took this as their focus. Ten of these sabbaticals, which focussed on kinaesthetic learning styles, consisted primarily of secondary research – attending courses and conferences and background reading. In two further examples the participants carried out a primary research projects to test the impact of Brain Gym on pupils' learning abilities. (See section 5.3.3 above for more details.)

Specific subject development was the focus of 24 sabbaticals. In four such sabbaticals the emphasis was on improving the teachers' own knowledge and skills in order to

improve their delivery of the subject area. Six sabbaticals concentrated on rewriting subject policies to incorporate curriculum changes, new initiatives or to generally improve provision. The remaining 16 sabbaticals in this subcategory focussed on developing resources and researching LEA provision, and were often undertaken by subject co-ordinators.

The specific subjects studied in the 24 sabbaticals in this subcategory included both the core and foundation subjects. The most popular subjects studied were the arts, being the focus of five sabbaticals.

The final 16 sabbaticals looked at teaching and learning in its wider sense and included the exploration of practice in other schools, both in the UK and overseas, and research into new initiatives and existing pedagogical approaches.

Examples included:

- a trip to America to see how the US education system differed to the UK system, particular emphasis was placed on the exploration of teaching and learning although wider school issues, including management approaches, were also researched
- a visit to the northern Italian town of Reggio Emilia renowned for its forward thinking and exemplary approach to early childhood education
- researching the practical implications and perceived benefits of multisensory learning in the primary setting
- developing an understanding of the Sure-start initiative and exploration of any elements which may be transeferable into the school.

### **5.5.2 Whole-school issues**

This category covers sabbaticals that addressed issues intended to benefit ultimately the school as a whole. This was the focus of 29 of the sabbaticals studied. The category contains sabbaticals with a management and leadership focus, as well as sabbaticals concentrating on school improvement in general.

The strategic areas covered by sabbaticals in this category were:

- human resources including performance management and staff motivation – five sabbaticals
- increasing the school's use of ICT in planning and teaching and learning – nine sabbaticals
- the development, evaluation or auditing of whole-school resources – eight sabbaticals
- school improvement in general, including curriculum development, whole-school reviews and bids for Arts Marks/Technology College Status – seven sabbaticals.

Sabbaticals concentrating on the development of resources that were not specific to subject areas were also included in this category for example, designing a school website, auditing and restocking the school library or researching resources for improving outside play areas.



There was a general consensus that schools should benefit from individual teachers sabbaticals in some way and by concentrating on a whole-school issue teachers felt that they were justified in taking the sabbatical.

*In order for the school to gain something from the sabbatical, the sabbatical has to address a need that the school has (headteacher).*

Once again, the apparent need for teachers to justify their absence from normal duties, either to themselves, to colleagues or to their pupils, was reinforced by the data.

### **5.5.3 Special educational needs**

Special educational needs were the focus of 22 sabbaticals. Only six of these were conducted by teachers in special schools. In these schools the main focus of SEN sabbaticals was to improve the way in which the pupils were taught, including developing appropriate resources and teaching styles. The remaining 16 of the SEN sabbaticals were conducted in mainstream schools. In these cases the focus was more on the integration of special needs pupils into the mainstream structure of the school, including strategies for SEN assessment, recording and reporting. The category of SEN was widened to include the education of children with English as an additional language, asylum seeker or looked-after children. These subcategories together account for seven of the SEN-focused sabbaticals.

### **5.5.4 Pastoral**

This category of sabbaticals is an accumulation of all topic areas associated with pupils' personal and social development. It includes 11 sabbaticals looking specifically at pupil well-being, behaviour management strategies and ways of assisting children with transition. In one such sabbatical the participating teacher investigated ways of tracking pupils' social progress through the use of personal profiles. These profiles were designed to accompany academic profiles as children progressed through the school.

In another the participant investigated the transition between foundation stage and Year 1. As well as considering how to ease the educational transition for pupils, the teacher concerned also looked at more pastoral issues based on the similarities and differences between the two environments, the structure of the day and the balance between the autonomy and support given to children.

Another pastoral topic area focussed on increasing parental and/or community involvement in the school and in the children's education. This was the focus of four individual sabbaticals and included developing strategies such as interactive homework, parent open days and home school links in the foundation stage.

### **5.5.5 Other**

Only one sabbatical had a focus not covered by the above categories. In this case the teacher had worked in a garden centre, indulging a personal interest in gardening with the explicit aim of doing something unrelated to the role of a teacher. This was the

only sabbatical to emerge with a non-educational focus, although the perceived educational outcomes of this sabbatical were in hindsight substantial, as described in Chapter 6.

### **5.5.6 Sabbaticals related to school challenges**

To an extent, the types of sabbatical foci outlined above can be seen as a reflection of the issues and circumstances in the challenging schools targeted by the scheme.

SEN sabbaticals often mirrored the identified challenges set out in section 2.2.3. Over a quarter of headteachers specifically referred to the challenges of working with pupils with SEN or other particular pupil learning needs, including EAL, asylum seekers and looked-after children. As discussed above, these issues were the focus of 22 individual sabbaticals.

Sabbaticals with a pastoral focus also concentrated on similar issues to those raised as challenges by headteachers. Over a quarter of headteachers interviewed cited behavioural problems as a challenge. Over a third referred to wider pastoral challenges such as pupils' family backgrounds and lack of parental support. As discussed above, 11 sabbaticals focussed on issues relating to these challenges.

Teaching and learning and whole-school issues can be seen as areas less specific to challenging schools. However, teaching and learning sabbaticals in the sample often concentrated on developing new teaching approaches and understanding learning styles, an issue that may be more relevant in schools where traditional teaching methods have not always proved to be effective.

*It is a challenge to reach the potential of all the children. You find those where, for whatever reason, you haven't managed to ignite that flame in them, and you know they have got hidden talents in there (headteacher).*

The whole-school issues considered in sabbaticals can be seen as generic to all schools. However, it was commonly perceived by staff in these challenging schools that there was less time available to concentrate on leadership and management and related issues such as assessment, recording, reporting and planning in the day to day running of the school, because the social needs of the pupils are so great.

*I am not saying that other heads don't need time but in challenging schools so much of your time is taken up being a social worker that educationally you don't always have time to do research or look into other things (headteacher).*

## **5.6 Summary and conclusions**

The aim of this chapter was to give an overview of what took place on sabbaticals by way of a description of types of activities and examples relating to the key aspects of the sabbatical experience.

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the sabbaticals included in the research sample.

- sabbatical timescales and timing were determined by the desire to minimise disruption to the participating schools. However, in some cases the nature of the activities undertaken also required particular timescales to be applied
- sabbaticals took place in a diverse range of locations, from the participants' own schools through to overseas, including the mountains of Chile. Most frequently sabbaticals consisted of visits to or time spent in two or more locations (43 percent)
- the flexibility of the scheme gave teachers the opportunity to undertake a wide variety of activities. For the most part activities focussed on information gathering, research and the development of the participants' skills and knowledge (57 per cent)
- the content and foci of the sabbaticals studied was also wide ranging and often related in some way to the particular challenges faced by the cohort of eligible schools. The specific areas covered included teaching and learning, pastoral and child centred issues through to administration and management strategies and frequently focussed on benefiting the school as well as the individual teacher.

Schools made full use of the freedom afforded by a scheme that enabled them to determine the activities appropriate to their own needs. In some cases the activities might be regarded as very conventional, and in others much more radical approaches to CPD were apparent. Whether or not the activities in all cases could be described as CPD-orientated, as opposed to SDP-oriented, is questionable. However, as Chapter 4 indicated, the relationship between the two was often very close. Chapter 6 will explore the extent to which individuals, and schools as institutions, derived beneficial outcomes from the activities undertaken.

The appendix to this report contains ten case studies of completed sabbaticals which illustrate the broad range of activities undertaken and how these were perceived to generate positive outcomes.



# Chapter 6

## The outcomes derived from sabbaticals

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the outcomes that were perceived by interviewees to have resulted from the sabbaticals in the sample and considers:

- a typology of outcomes upon which the analysis is based
- the outcomes of sabbaticals for the participating teacher
- the outcomes of sabbaticals for the school
- career outcomes for the participating teacher
- unexpected outcomes
- negative outcomes
- longitudinal issues that emerged from the follow-up interviews.

The chapter finishes with some summary conclusions and a consideration of sabbaticals as a model for CPD.

For each of the sabbaticals studied, interviewees were asked first to give their overall perceptions of the benefits and outcomes of the sabbatical in their school, and were then prompted to state whether there had been outcomes relating to specific areas. Given that sabbaticals were always intended to '*enhance the learning and effectiveness of participating teachers*' and to '*bring subsequent benefits to their pupils and their school*' (DfEE, 0517/2001), it was deemed appropriate to enquire about outcomes that related to the individual participant, followed by enquiries about outcomes that impacted upon others within the school, or the school as a whole.

As in other parts of this report, shared sabbaticals have not been included in the analysis because they each may embrace a diversity of outcomes for different participants.

### 6.2 A typology of outcomes

The benefits perceived to have been achieved through schools' participation in the scheme were classified into groups, according to a previously published typology of CPD outcomes (Harland & Kinder, 1997). This classification was developed from a three year longitudinal study of staff development in primary schools with a focus on the science curriculum. The typology focused on changes in practice as the fundamental aim of the CPD programme being studied, classifying other effects as first, second or third order outcomes, according to their likelihood of bringing about this development. For the purposes of this research, however, it was felt that the wide range of opportunities offered by teachers' sabbaticals, and the diversity of aims cited by participants, meant that ultimate outcomes other than the development of teaching

practice might be considered equally valid. For this reason this chapter will employ the typology without making use of the hierarchical structure explored in the original model.

A number of other features distinguish sabbaticals from more traditional CPD activities. The stated purpose of the sabbaticals scheme was to create opportunities for the development of participating teachers, and subsequently to bring benefits to their schools (DfEE, 0517/2001). The information presented in Chapter 4 of this report, shows that many schools designed sabbatical projects which placed as much weight on the benefits to the school as the benefits to the individual teacher, with some focussing almost entirely on school aims. Certainly, the scale of project that the sabbaticals scheme was able to facilitate, and the extended timescale over which projects could run, meant that there was great potential to address aims which went beyond the development of an individual. In light of this, the analysis that follows places greater emphasis than the original model on ‘institutional’ outcomes (i.e. those which are manifested in the school as a whole). The range of outcomes featuring in the model devised by Harland and Kinder is described in Table 6.1 below.

**Table 6.1 A typology of CPD outcomes (Harland & Kinder, 1997)**

<p><b>Informational</b> This refers to the acquisition of professional facts or news. Unlike the development of increased skills and knowledge it does not assume a deeper or critical understanding of the new material.</p> <p><b>Material and provisionary</b> Physical resources acquired as a result of the sabbatical, including curriculum resources, equipment and books.</p> <p><b>New awareness</b> Defined as a perceptual or conceptual shift from previous assumptions. This may relate to perceptions of appropriate content and delivery of a specific curriculum area, or to more general expectations about pedagogical or management issues.</p> <p><b>Affective changes</b> Positive emotional responses to the sabbatical experience, for example as a result of involvement in the activities themselves, the development of new knowledge or practices, or the experience of spending time away from regular duties.</p> <p><b>Motivational changes</b> Enhanced enthusiasm for their work, or increased motivation to implement the results of a sabbatical experience.</p> <p><b>Value congruence</b> This refers to the process of acceptance and internalisation of a new set of values highlighted by the sabbatical experience</p> <p><b>Skills and Knowledge</b> Developments in professional skills and knowledge.</p> <p><b>Changes in Practice</b> This includes changes in actual practice in any area, including teaching methods, developments to the curriculum and management systems.</p> <p><b>Institutional</b> Outcomes relating to the development of other members of staff could encompass the full range of outcome types for the teacher. In addition, sabbatical activities may generate outcomes concerning wider whole-school issues, and these include development of school structures, ethos, management and staffing as well as outcomes that might be viewed as more traditional school-level professional development.</p>
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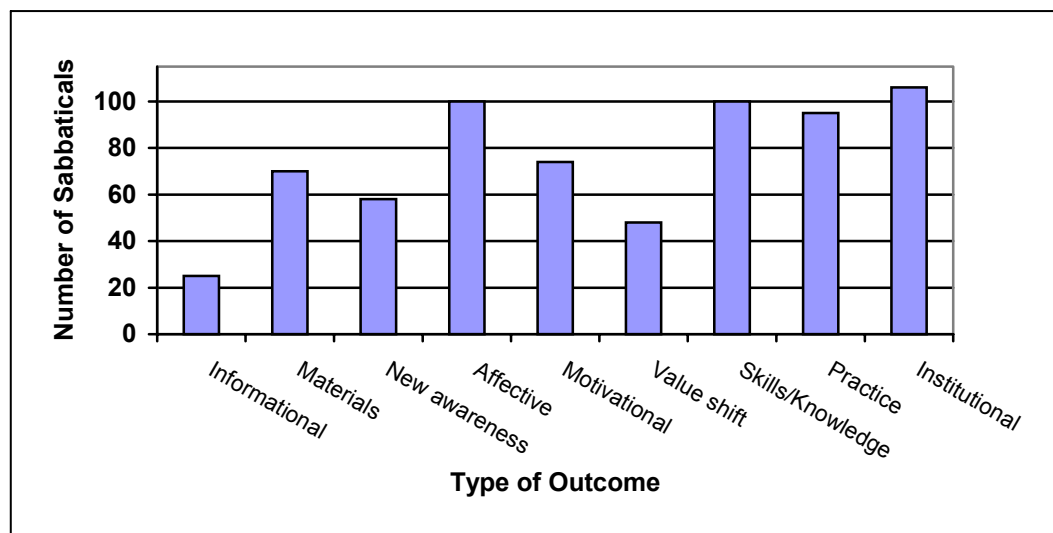
### 6.2.1 Levels of congruence and data treatment

In order to give some indication of the extent to which sabbaticals were able to bring about each of these outcomes, the number of sabbaticals for which interviewees endorsed each of the elements of the above typology were counted. As interviews with several different interested individuals were carried out with regard to each sabbatical, it was first necessary to establish to what extent there was congruence between interviewees regarding the outcomes of a specific sabbatical. Comparison of the comments made by different interviewees showed that generally levels of agreement about the type and significance of outcomes were very high. In only nine out of 115 sabbaticals was there found to be any substantial disagreement about what outcomes had emerged from the sabbatical. In light of this high level of congruence, for the purposes of analysis outcomes were attributed to sabbaticals on the basis of any of the interviewees mentioning them during the initial interviews, or (for the 39 schools which were followed longitudinally) at follow-up. Specific findings taken from the 39 follow-up schools, relating to the longevity of outcomes and the extent to which effects of sabbaticals dissipate or gather momentum over time, will be examined in a separate section (6.8) at the end of this chapter.

### 6.2.2 Sabbaticals reporting professional development outcomes

The number of sabbaticals in which each of the outcome types are endorsed can be seen in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1** Numbers of sabbaticals reporting professional development outcomes



Source: *NFER interviews conducted with the sabbatical scheme participants (2002/3)*  
NB – Data in this table is based on analysis of 115 non-shared sabbaticals.

The sabbaticals generated very high reports of outcomes for the participating teacher in the areas of affective outcomes, skills and knowledge and changes in practice where reports of outcomes were made for more than 95 sabbaticals. A high number of sabbaticals (106) similarly generated a report of at least one type of outcome for the institution.

The following section examines in more detail the outcomes described by interviewees under the typology described above. For two of the outcomes (informational, and material and provisionary) it proved impossible to distinguish in interviewees' accounts between benefits for the individual teacher and those for the school, principally because information sources and resources acquired for the teacher themselves were generally then available for the use of other teachers. Hence, these are discussed in section 6.3, as 'outcomes benefiting the teacher and the school'. Other outcomes specifically for the participating teacher are discussed in section 6.4, followed by institutional outcomes: those affecting others within the participating teacher's school, or the institution as a whole (section 6.5).

## **6.3 Outcomes benefiting the teacher and the school**

### **6.3.1 Informational**

Interviewees representing 25 sabbaticals (22 per cent) made reference to their acquisition of new information as a result of their sabbatical. Of all the outcomes this was one of the least frequently cited, perhaps reflecting the fact that it represented a very basic-level outcome from projects that generally had more far-reaching effects. It seems probable that many teachers overlooked the acquisition of new information when reporting the outcomes of their sabbaticals: some even expressed the view that their collection of information was '*not really an outcome*' (participating teacher). Information gained covered a wide range of different areas. Some examples are listed below:

- local courses available for adult learners
- lists of useful websites for teachers
- the curriculum used in other countries
- details of galleries with facilities for school parties
- information relating to performance management.

### **6.3.2 Material and provisionary**

The acquisition of new resources or materials was more frequently cited. This was an outcome of 70 sabbaticals (61 per cent). There was some confusion amongst participants as to whether the purchase of equipment and materials was an appropriate use of sabbatical monies, and it appeared that different LEAs had made different rulings on the subject. In many cases, the materials and equipment emerging from the sabbatical had not been paid for from sabbatical money, but rather, aspects of the sabbatical activity had highlighted or created the need for resources, and these had been paid for from other school funds. In other cases, the new resources had been developed by the teacher on sabbatical, and had not had a monetary cost beyond that of the teacher's time. Example of the types of resources acquired included:

- books, including in one case a whole school library
- a newly developed website for the school or department
- play equipment for the playground
- equipment for specific curriculum areas, e.g. PE or ICT



- new schemes of work
- laptops for the use of teachers.

## 6.4 Outcomes for the participating teacher

The following section discusses the sabbatical outcomes relating specifically to the teacher carrying out the sabbatical.

### 6.4.1 Individual outcomes: New awareness

Fifty-eight sabbaticals (50 per cent) produced references to the development of new awareness on the part of the participating teacher. The most frequently cited focus of this new awareness was on the needs of specific pupil groups, for example those with special educational needs, gifted and talented pupils and ethnic minorities. Other frequently cited topics of new awareness were approaches to education and teaching in other countries, administration and management approaches:

*What we saw [in the USA] was a right to funding. If a child turned up in a school with special needs they were automatically dealt with – you weren't told next week, next year or bid again (participating teacher).*

*One lesson was about backing off a bit as a head – people will do things effectively without me lashing a whip at them. I realised that we were burning ourselves out if we carried on as intensively as we had been. The boat would still sail even if we weren't at the back pushing it (participating headteacher).*

### 6.4.2 Individual Outcomes: Affective

Affective outcomes were also mentioned for the largest majority of sabbaticals (87 per cent, 100 sabbaticals), along with outcomes in individual skills and knowledge. The most frequently cited affective outcome was improved confidence (59 per cent, 68 sabbaticals). This often developed alongside specific new skills, although the effect of having new experiences and dealing with new challenges also seemed to have wide-ranging effects on teachers' confidence (see e.g. Case Study 5).

*The main outcomes – I've seen a huge increase in [the participating teacher's] self-confidence. Before, she was not very confident in addressing staff and things like that, and I've seen her grow over the last year in her confidence in terms of leading the foundation stage in this. She would never have led a teacher day 18 months ago – and she's done that, and done it with clear goals and confidence (headteacher).*

The sense of reinvigoration and refreshment was also mentioned by a large number of interviewees (42 per cent, 48 sabbaticals), although this was sometimes described as an unintended outcome, perhaps reflecting schools' unwillingness to claim it as a planned aim of their sabbaticals (see Chapter 4).

*It wasn't planned that [refreshment] was what the sabbatical would be about, but it was an outcome. It gives you a boost of energy (participating teacher).*

The longer term effects of sabbaticals on teachers' energy and invigoration were less clear. A theme of several comments about the refreshment element to sabbaticals was that the benefit could be relatively short-lived.

*When [the participating headteacher] got back, for the first few weeks he was very calm, took everything in his stride and he got through the paperwork and kept on top of it, but as time goes on you can see everything getting back to the way it was (school secretary).*

Evidence from follow-up interviews concerning 39 sabbaticals indicates considerable endurance of affective outcomes (see section 6.8).

A third very frequently mentioned category of affective benefits was enhancement of self-esteem (38 per cent, 44 sabbaticals). This was often linked either to recognition of a teacher's skills and abilities by others, or to their own recognition of the value of what they already achieve within their professional life: a confirmation of their existing practice (see e.g. Case Study 8). It is interesting to note that many interviewees felt that this was a very beneficial outcome, even where it did not lead to any change or development of professional practices. Might this hint at a cohort of teachers in challenging schools with chronically poor self-image? There were certainly instances in which exposure to the outside world seems to have been necessary to enable some teachers to realise that they were competent professionals.

*I ended up with confirmation that the way in which we were going in terms of assessment, recording and reporting was pretty much the right way to go. I can't say I came away with hundreds of new ideas but I came away feeling that what we are doing is good and had seen that similar things had had impacts in other schools (participating teacher).*

A few teachers made reference to enjoying an enhancement of their image or status in school through the sabbatical. Simply doing a sabbatical seems to have been viewed by some colleagues as a courageous step into the unknown, leading to a corresponding shift in perceptions of the participating teacher: *'I think [colleagues] see me as more of an "adventurer" than before'*.

Other less frequently cited emotional benefits included simple enjoyment of the sabbatical activity, and satisfaction from seeing how the sabbatical had helped others in the school to develop. One participating headteacher comments: *'For me, it has been personally rewarding to see the growth in the staff's ICT skills'*.

The association between individual affective outcomes and features of the process of sabbaticals is explored in Chapter 7.3.3.

### **6.4.3 Individual Outcomes: Motivational**

Interviewees representing 74 sabbaticals (64 per cent) described noticeable changes in the participating teacher's level of motivation or enthusiasm as a result of their sabbatical. In around half of the cases the change was manifested in general levels of enthusiasm, but increases in motivation in relation to particular aspects of teaching were also mentioned by many interviewees. Keeness to implement change in the

school, based on new knowledge and skills, were commonly described. For example, improvements to school management or the teaching of a particular curriculum area.

*For the past few years maths has been ticking over with no major problems. So the sabbatical gave me that extra boost to get really enthusiastic about the subject again and to get the staff fired up about it (participating teacher).*

Other areas of increased teacher enthusiasm were to disseminate or motivate other teachers in the school, and for further professional development for themselves.

*That was the biggest boost to my confidence ever, to know that what I had done, other people were interested in. That motivated me further to share the research I had done and the experiences I had had, good and bad, with other teachers (participating teacher).*

*It's rekindled some flames of professional study. I'm now a learner, and that helps me identify with the children that I'm expecting to learn. It's given me an insight into my pupils' way of learning, and it's encouraged me to have a new vision and maybe return to furthering it in the future (participating teacher).*

Evidence from 39 follow-up interviews in schools that had completed a sabbatical suggested that a clear majority of the headteachers interviewed believed that the impact on motivation had been sustained since the completion of the sabbatical. However, seven of the 37 heads who referred to this issue pointed out that the participating teacher was, in any case, motivated, this perhaps being one of the reasons for them having taken the sabbatical in the first place. While for most, motivation had been sustained since the sabbatical, for two participating teachers, motivation was perceived to have been increasing: in one case because the sabbatical had led to a successful Artsmark bid, and in another because the success of the new development initiated through the sabbaticals was beginning to be realised. Sabbaticals led to successful development, and this generated confidence and motivation in a virtuous circle.

#### **6.4.4 Individual Outcomes: Value shifts**

Interviewees representing 38 sabbaticals (33 per cent) described a process by which they came to accept, or internalise the learning that they had brought from their sabbatical experience. For some this represented a dramatic shift in their thinking with regard to a specific aspect of pedagogy or management, whilst for others it was a more subtle shift in their way of thinking or approaching their work.

*It has enabled me to look around for other courses to help with my professional development, and also to realise that it is not an age thing. For as long as we're in the profession we're entitled to that support and we also have a responsibility to avail ourselves of that support for the benefit of the children – because things are always changing (participating teacher).*

*I saw the importance of different things in a different light – I changed my priority of what was important. It was about the enjoyment of reading not*

*getting through the reading books ... It's affected my attitude towards the reading system. I'm not sure it's changed my values at all (participating teacher).*

In addition to the 38 sabbaticals where value shifts were described, in 13 further sabbaticals interviewees stressed that the sabbatical experience had reinforced or extended values and beliefs that they already held. In the majority of cases where values were reinforced, the sabbaticals scheme had afforded teachers the opportunity to pursue an area of particular personal interest. Often, with time available to thoroughly consider an idea, an aspect of pedagogy or an accreditation system, the result was an affirmation of what they had thought before the sabbatical.

*I was glad that my particular view was borne out by the research that I'd done, that I really felt that's where we should be heading (participating teacher).*

#### **6.4.5 Individual Outcomes: Skills and knowledge**

Of 115 non-shared sabbaticals studied, developments in the skills and knowledge of participating teachers were described in 87 percent (100 sabbaticals), making this, along with affective outcomes, the most frequently cited outcome. Developments in skills and knowledge covered a very wide range of different areas, with many participants referring to several different skills and knowledge developments from one sabbatical.

When the skills and knowledge outcomes were broken down in terms of the topic or area of development, it was found that the most frequent focus of the development was on teaching skills. Twenty-three sabbaticals reported developments in skills and knowledge in the teaching of particular curriculum areas, and 20 sabbaticals in the teaching of specific pupil groups.

*I think the sabbatical has definitely given me new skills especially in making and teaching 3D art. I hadn't really tried 3D art before and now I feel it is my forte, more than the painting I'm used to doing (participating teacher).*

*[The participating teacher] is moving the special needs on in the school in a very exciting way. She is now equipped with the skills and resources and, significantly, knowledge, in order to move that process on (headteacher).*

A further 29 sabbaticals reported developments in the use and teaching of ICT (see e.g. Case Study 3). Other frequently cited areas for individual skills or knowledge outcomes were regarding teaching strategies or learning styles (14 sabbaticals) and developments in behaviour management (4 sabbaticals).

*The reading that I could do and the courses I went on definitely gave me a deeper understanding of the way the brain works (participating teacher).*

*I've gained a greater understanding of learning and behaviour difficulties. I've gained a lot of knowledge of specific learning disabilities such as autism and dyspraxia. I looked a lot in London at behaviour management – analysing*

*why behaviour happens, looking at what has gone on before and what goes on after* (participating teacher).

Participants on 14 sabbaticals reported that their skills and knowledge had increased in terms of their own learning, or in the area of personal development.

*There was a lot about giving instructions. How you give instructions to someone who doesn't understand ...I was given far too many things to do and when I didn't know the simple things. I panicked just like children do* (participating teacher).

*Feeding back to the governors about the sabbatical gave [the participating teacher] an opportunity to explore a side of her management role she hadn't had a lot of experience in* (headteacher).

*I think I've developed my interpersonal skills, and I think it taught me to be more disciplined* (participating teacher).

Thirty-three sabbaticals reported increased skills and knowledge in the area of administration or management styles or approaches.

*I learned a lot more about managing and structures and ideas* (participating teacher).

Further but less frequently reported developments in individual skills and knowledge included leadership or communication (16 sabbaticals) and new approaches or networking (15 sabbaticals),

*It has been hugely valuable for me – it has made me an expert in relations and communicating with parents. But it has also taught me a lot about how to set homework effectively – for a primary school that is a really important issue* (participating teacher).

*This school has now got a person to clarify all these grey areas. I have contacts with people [e.g. within social services] that I can call on for advice and information and it has given me the confidence now to work with children from a more knowledgeable position* (participating teacher).

Undertaking a sabbatical provided a wealth of opportunities for participants to improve skills and develop knowledge in a wide variety of areas. Most importantly, these developments were not restricted to one sphere in particular, but frequently encompassed advances in skills and knowledge in several different areas.

#### **6.4.6 Individual Outcomes: Changes in practice**

Interviewees described changes in the participating teacher's professional practice in 95 sabbaticals (83 per cent), making it one of the most frequently cited areas of development. The most frequent theme of these changes was in the teaching of specific areas of the curriculum, and in almost half of the sabbaticals where this was

mentioned the changes involved use of ICT either as a subject in its own right or as a tool in teaching other curriculum areas.

*I teach media so I have been able to use my knowledge of Flash in my media studies lessons. The children previously weren't able to do animated characters. They were only able to do computer drawings but now because I have this extra knowledge they are able to animate them and thereby get extra marks (participating teacher).*

*It has made me more aware of where children are in terms of speaking and listening and perhaps more understanding of children's development. I'm able to pitch things at a better level – not just in the middle but for lower and higher achievers. I'm able to use drama in speaking and listening in a more effective way (participating teacher).*

*I've changed the way I teach for the benefit of my whole class. Rather than my own voice and me standing in front of the classroom, I'm getting the pupils engaged, standing up, moving round, having brain breaks, hands-on maths activities. I am now more aware of my practice, and I try to put music on, use PowerPoint to show what they are doing that day [for the visual learners], using different stimuli and a more pacey style (participating teacher).*

The study of new teaching methods or pupils' learning styles often led to changes in the way that teachers approached teaching and learning in the classroom, and these changes were commented on by pupils in several schools.

*It [thinking skills] is a little bit harder and a little bit trickier, because you have to come up with ideas. Yesterday we were doing games and it was tricky (pupil).*

Another frequent theme of these changes related to the ways of improving communication and relationships within the wider school community for example, involving parents in their children's education, implementing strategies to build relationships with specific groups of pupils (for example ethnic minorities and those with special needs), and setting in place procedures to improve communication within the staff. Often these changes were linked to a greater understanding on the part of the participating teacher of the background and needs of others in the school community.

*It's affected me in my relationship to my children here – it's made me more aware of what's going on with them. Seeing them outside of school, and their home background, I have more of an awareness of what I'm saying and how I'm saying it (participating teacher).*

Subsequent changes in teaching practices (not reported in the initial interviews) were reported in nine of the follow-up interviews. Six of these related to specific subject or skills areas (including the arts, maths and IT) such as an increase in the amount of arts teaching by one teacher, while the other three were more general ('improved methods of teaching', 'sharper and more reflective' and 'motivating boys more'). In three cases it was reported that new relationships with parents were being developed by the participating teacher, perhaps more evidence of the outward-looking nature of

sabbaticals. Four interviewees reported changes in management styles or roles. These were largely focussed on developments in the ways that participating teachers supported other members of staff, often in the implementation of strategies identified through the sabbaticals.

Although relatively few new changes in practice by the participating teachers were reported in these follow-up interviews, there was new evidence of developing practice being recognised, as in the case of one teacher who became the subject of a DfES video of good practice (see section 6.8.1) and of an HMI visit to a school where the coordinating and teaching performances of two participating teachers were strongly praised.

Identifying the causes of changes in practice can be problematic (see Chapter 7.2), especially when dealing with individuals who have chosen to avail themselves of a developmental opportunity. Given the nationally low uptake of the sabbaticals scheme, one must assume that only the most motivated schools and individuals embarked on sabbaticals. It is not surprising then that some headteachers referred to the tendency of their participating teachers to change their practice as a matter of course when faced with new and positive stimuli. Their sabbaticals provided them with such stimuli, but they may well have sought out the potential for development either with, or without, a funded scheme.

## **6.5 Outcomes for colleagues and the school**

Effects of CPD are not limited to the teacher involved but often have further-reaching effects within the school. This is perhaps particularly true of sabbaticals where the potential scale of the project, and the amount of time available, is such that effects can be far-reaching, often with scope for a considerable dissemination component. A large number of sabbaticals had time for dissemination built into aims and planning, and a small number were devoted almost entirely to the development of skills for the whole staff rather than a specified participating teacher (see Chapter 4). Even in the case of sabbaticals where the stated aims had been strongly focused towards the development of the participating teacher, school benefits were apparent in the large majority of cases.

Figure 6.1, observed in section 6.3 of this chapter indicated that all the sabbaticals produced accounts of the effects of the sabbatical on development in the wider school. These developments echoed the full range of outcome types described for the teacher. Some interviewees who had not been directly involved in the sabbatical themselves described quite dramatic changes in their own attitudes and practice. A number of perceived outcomes did not relate simply to the professional development of other individuals on the school staff, but to the development of the school as an institution.

In the following sections reports of the institutional outcomes are categorised and examined according to the typology of outcomes described in Table 6.1. Impacts on the school's self-image as a learning community; on the way it managed its own staffing; and on its relationship to the wider community were all registered, and these are also discussed in the following sections.

### **6.5.1 Institutional Outcomes: New awareness**

Interviewees representing 40 sabbaticals (35 per cent) made reference to the sabbatical bringing new awareness to the school. The focus of the development was most frequently on teaching and learning styles (nine sabbaticals), methods of teaching pupils with special needs (eight sabbaticals) and the delivery of specific curriculum areas (eight sabbaticals).

### **6.5.2 Institutional Outcomes: Affective**

Affective changes for non-participating staff in the school or for the school as a whole were, as might be expected, less commonly cited by interviewees than affective changes for the participating teacher. However, the number of projects resulting in improved morale or emotional benefits in the wider school (30 sabbaticals, 26 per cent) might still be considered to be high, considering that these effects are on individuals who did not directly enjoy the benefits of a sabbatical.

As was the case for participating teachers, affective changes were often attributed to enhanced confidence amongst staff as a result of the development of their knowledge and skills. This often occurred through formal or informal dissemination, or through the development of teaching techniques and resources by the participating teacher.

*People are a bit more positive, because sometimes it was 'Oh, no, geography – I don't know anything about it.' and people didn't feel confident in themselves. I think that has changed because we have been giving quite a lot of ideas, practical help and suggestions (participating teacher).*

SMT members also spoke of an enhanced pride in the school due to improvements brought about by the sabbatical or enjoyment of the recognition that these improvements could bring. One CPD coordinator described how the school had previously been known locally as 'the school in special measures', whereas now they were better known as 'the school doing work with parents'. Effects on pupils' enjoyment of school and behaviour were also reported as a result of sabbatical projects, perhaps stimulated by changes in practice:

*There has been a big rise in self-esteem for the pupils. In some cases we purposefully chose children displaying challenging behaviour [for a special 'designers in schools' project]. Because their energy has been channelled in a good and positive direction, they are no longer at risk of permanent exclusion (participating headteacher).*

### **6.5.3 Institutional Outcomes: Motivational**

Often the enhanced motivation and enthusiasm of participating teachers was found to 'rub off' on other members of staff in the school. One headteacher comments:

*It gave [the participating teachers] a wonderful buzz. They came back absolutely full of it. That generated enthusiasm and interest for the rest of the staff (headteacher).*



Improvements to motivation and enthusiasm beyond the participating teacher were referred to in 33 per cent of sabbaticals. In some cases the changing attitude of one person could be very influential. One headteacher described how a member of staff, having taken a sabbatical, returned with a change of attitude that provided a lead for other members of staff.

*Persuading people who have been in a school for a long time that things can be done in a different way is the biggest problem. 'We don't do it like that here' or 'We tried it like that here and it didn't work'. Someone who would have been entrenched in that camp has changed and his influence on the peer group of middle management has been quite significant (headteacher).*

In other cases the new knowledge and skills brought back to the school by the participating teacher proved motivating in itself. For example, in one school, the effects of the participating teacher disseminating his new approaches to teaching autistic pupils was to inspire his colleagues to develop the ideas further (see e.g. Case Study 6).

#### **6.5.4 Institutional Outcomes: Value shifts**

In 23 cases (20 per cent) interviewees reported changes in the values or beliefs of individuals in the wider school as a result of a sabbatical project. One teaching colleague described how the training received in the use of ICT from the participating teacher, together with additional equipment that had been purchased as a result of the sabbatical, had revolutionised her/his attitudes to new technology.

*For me, it has meant a belief in contemporary technology that I simply didn't have before. I was resentful. I was negative. I would use pencil and paper far more readily than any kind of technology. I have done a complete about-turn, which is lovely! I actually understand what I am talking about and I have an interest in learning more (teaching colleague).*

#### **6.5.5 Institutional Outcomes: Skills and knowledge**

Developments to skills and knowledge within the school were cited in 42 per cent of sabbaticals. In many cases this was a result of the participating teacher carrying out formal training or dissemination sessions with other staff. In other cases participating teachers had passed on their new skills and knowledge in an informal way, through conversations about their experiences. There were a small number of sabbaticals in which training other staff was the principle aim of the sabbatical (eight sabbaticals – see Chapter 4).

Altogether, where skills and knowledge had been developed in other staff in the school, it was most likely to be in the areas of teaching styles and strategies (14 sabbaticals), ICT (13 sabbaticals) and other curriculum areas (ten sabbaticals).

#### **6.5.6 Institutional Outcomes: Changes in practice**

An often-cited institutional outcome type was a change in actual practice (reported in 56 per cent of sabbaticals). The focus of such changes was most frequently in the

delivery of curriculum subjects (reported for 24 sabbaticals) where it should be noted that this was often the aim of the sabbatical. The teaching of pupils with special needs was cited as an institutional change in practice in 14 sabbaticals.

*Our planning has had to change to take account of the different learning styles, and the resources have changed too. Also our lessons are more active. We don't just keep them sat at the table – more active teaching has come about (teaching colleague).*

In 13 sabbaticals, interviewees reported enhancements in the use of ICT in the school, either in the teaching of different subject areas, where benefits accrued to staff and pupils, or through training for staff members to enable planning and monitoring. Ten sabbaticals reported the introduction of new teaching strategies within the school as a whole, which had benefits for pupils.

*If they [pupils] are not too good at whatever they are doing they know they can look forward to a fresh start with the next activity (teaching colleague).*

*We've seen children become engaged in their learning, take on board the different ideas about types of learning, a willingness to try without right answers (headteacher).*

Other institutional changes in practice reported include improvements in management role (five sabbaticals), improved communications, people management or relationships (five sabbaticals), a change in behaviour management or other pastoral developments (three sabbaticals) and changes in assessment strategies (three sabbaticals).

*[The participating teacher] has set up another layer of relationships between teachers in this school and that school. Whereas we had set some structural ones up, e.g. SMT or head of faculty working together, we hadn't identified other groups of people who could. So it's been a benefit to both schools (headteacher).*

*[We have] more focussed practice in early years. The assessments are manageable, meaningful and well-planned. There are now a range of strategies that can be used to support the children from very early on and that in itself will have a knock-on effect. If those foundations are laid, as the children move through school, we will have benefits year on year (headteacher).*

The fact that over half of all sabbaticals studied had led to tangible changes in the practice of other teachers in participating schools, demonstrates the power of teacher sabbaticals to bring about the development of teachers who had not themselves participated in the scheme.

The association between institutional changes in practice and certain factors in the process of sabbaticals is explored in Chapter 7.3.1.

### 6.5.7 School as a professional learning community

The research sought to ascertain the contribution that sabbaticals might make to the development of schools as professional learning communities. The Effective Professional Learning Communities project, based at Bristol and Bath Universities, offers the following definition:

*'An effective professional learning community has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning.'* (EPLC website)

Interviewees were asked whether the experience of the school being involved in the sabbaticals scheme had had any wider positive effect on schools' attitudes towards professional learning. Interviewees representing 96 sabbaticals (83 per cent) said that there had been such an effect in their school, making this the most frequently cited school-level effect. The research accepted interviewees' interpretation of the definition of 'professional learning communities'.

Two distinct types of contribution to effective learning communities were referred to in the interviews: firstly, those supporting access to CPD and providing staff with opportunities to attend externally provided CPD, and secondly, those supporting the sharing of good practice by providing and supporting internal INSET, including the informal sharing of learning.

In approximately a third of the schools that reported an impact on the school as a professional learning community, it would appear that the former contribution was identified. In these schools, sabbaticals formed part of an impressive overall CPD package stimulated by an existing ethos of the school as a professional learning community, although it was often stressed that the sabbatical contributed to this ethos as well as emerging from it.

*It's part of a number of other things. Lots of assistants take degrees, there is a lot of encouragement for ongoing learning. It has emphasised the fact that the school values continuing learning* (headteacher).

The impact on the school as a community that shares and develops its learning internally was also highlighted. In a very direct way the sabbatical had contributed to professional learning in many schools by leading to training sessions run by the participating teacher for his or her colleagues on a subject related to their sabbatical activity. This was mentioned with reference to 17 sabbaticals.

*The staff wanted to learn more about Brain Gym. The participating teacher has done staff meetings and twilight sessions so other colleagues could learn bits of Brain Gym to use* (headteacher).

Such transference of understanding and/or knowledge happened formally through timetabled sessions, as above, and informally through staffroom conversations.

There were also examples in which it was perceived that the sabbatical experience had supported the wider community of schools in their collective professional learning, by enabling participating teachers to meet other teachers on their own ground, often during working hours, to share perspectives and expertise (see Chapter 5.3). In such cases, those taking sabbaticals not only brought new insights back to their own schools, but in some cases shared their own perceptions with staff in the schools they visited. In a hospital school where some teachers were about to be redeployed into mainstream schools, staff welcomed the opportunity to discuss the differences in working contexts. One participant visited a beacon school to discover new techniques for teaching reading in the early years, but in return brought valued insights to the beacon school.

*It is very useful to see how things happen in different types of schools, so even though this was a beacon school, and not in any way challenging, it would have provided another perspective (year co-ordinator, host school).*

Such contributions to the wider professional learning community of teachers was only made possible by being able to visit other schools during the normal working day.

### ***More sabbaticals***

Enhanced enthusiasm for sabbaticals amongst other staff was very highly endorsed in the data. Some interviewees also described effects of the sabbaticals on the attitudes of non-participating staff to CPD more generally. Representatives of 34 per cent of sabbaticals referred to a more general shift towards viewing professional development as something that can be quite imaginative and have wide ranging benefits for the individual and their school.

*A lot of the staff have found areas they want to pursue – links they have made with teachers in other schools that they want to build on or whole areas they want to research further (headteacher).*

An impact on the school as a professional learning community, with specific reference to the uptake of sabbatical opportunities, was more frequently cited in those schools known to have had multiple sabbaticals. The success of one sabbatical was often seen as leading to the implementation of further sabbaticals, as the initial participant had effectively ‘tested the water’ for others and would be able to support their colleagues. The cumulative effect on CPD was outlined by one headteacher.

*They have shown us that if you do take time to step out of the situation and take some quality time away from your professional commitments, you can move things on. For both projects the feedback has been very well received by other members of staff (headteacher).*

### ***Development of expertise***

Where more than one sabbatical occurred, with the same or similar content and focus, interviewees reported an increased school commitment to the topic area, as well as higher institutional impacts related to an increase in knowledge. Where multiple

sabbaticals occurred with contrasting foci, this was also seen as institutionally beneficial, as one headteacher comments:

*I think that the sabbaticals have made us a lot more focussed on those three key areas. The school now has mini-experts in those three fields (headteacher).*

### ***Benefits of non-contact time***

One important development, which arose in some schools as a result of the sabbatical experience, was the recognition by headteachers or SMTs that non-contact time was beneficial to staff and could lead to valuable outcomes.

*It made us commit this year to giving every teacher one day a week non-contact time as recognition of the stress and challenge involved and recognising that work can get done during that time which otherwise would get done out of school time and add to the exhaustion of teachers (headteacher).*

### ***Evidence of impact on the school as a professional learning community from follow-up interviews***

When interviewees were asked in the 39 follow-up interviews, what impact the sabbatical had had on the school as a professional learning community, the response was most frequently that it was limited, with the implication that an appetite for sabbaticals came from a strong learning community rather than vice versa. One interviewee suggested that the sabbatical had stimulated more visits to other schools that may not otherwise have happened. Another headteacher believed that the sabbatical had made staff realise that there were other ways of undertaking CPD than simply going on courses. Although the scheme itself would no longer be available, a considerable proportion of interviewees cited a desire to continue to offer sabbaticals or scaled down opportunities for time-out for professional development. Issues which have emerged for consideration by schools contemplating time-out are included in Chapter 9.

### **6.5.8 Staffing changes**

In 16 sabbaticals (14 per cent) changes to staffing within the school (other than for the participating teacher, see section 6.7) had resulted from some aspect of the sabbatical activity. In many cases these changes were short-lived, and involved another teacher within the school taking on the roles of the participating teacher during their absence. Even where these changes had not lasted beyond the end of the sabbatical, however, interviewees often commented on how beneficial the experience of trying out a new role could be for other teachers in the school. In some cases this had an impact on the career prospects of the staff taking over the temporary role.

*While I was away other people got a chance of running the school. The governing body are interviewing for a new head today and my deputy is out there being interviewed, so at least managing the place for a short time has given [her/him] the confidence to go for it and that has to be a good thing (participating headteacher).*

In addition, in four schools the sabbatical activity had led to the need for additional new support or teaching staff to be employed to maintain the work carried out during the sabbatical.

### **6.5.9 Developments in community relations**

Improvements in relations with some aspect of the local community were mentioned concerning 35 sabbaticals (30 per cent). Most commonly interviewees referred to better relations with:

- parents
- the local community as a whole
- other local schools.

Improvements to the involvement of parents in the school were perceived to be of particular value to the learning of pupils, and parents themselves greatly appreciated the opportunity to be more closely involved with their children's learning.

*You have got more control, because you understand the maths – like, the maths we learned are totally different to the maths today. With [son] when he came home with maths, I couldn't do them, but now with [daughter] when she comes home with her maths, cos I am learning it, I can help her more (parent).*

Meanwhile, building a strong rapport with the local community was also perceived to be self-evidently desirable.

*Since [the participating teacher] has come back, we have actually established a community association, so parents and other people who live in the community have more of a stake in the school now. That has been a direct spin-off (school governor).*

### **Links with other schools**

One headteacher described the benefits for senior management of maintaining links with local schools in similar circumstances.

*I have to say if you are in challenging schools you do need to have a support network. Because as a head – where do you go? If you've got real issues, say parents et cetera where do you go? I mean yes, you can go to the LEA, but on a more immediate basis, you need to have a bit of support from peers really (participating headteacher).*

Similarly, effects on the school as a professional learning community could also go beyond the school as an isolated unit, binding it to a larger learning community of schools. Teachers from 22 schools spoke of gaining, or maintaining, links with other schools that benefited professional learning either through the formal route of providing training, as in the case of one school where the participating teacher was now listed as a provider of training for ICT co-ordinators for the whole borough (see e.g. Case Study 3), or more informally through sharing support and ideas. In a few

cases these links had led to the initiation of joint projects between schools. The headteacher of one school described how the sabbatical had led to improved links with the secondary school fed by her primary school through the development of a joint literacy programme for transition work. This resulted in a greater sense that the school was working within a wider professional community.

It would appear that many sabbaticals have involved some element of looking to the outside world, either to other schools, or to other businesses, or to the community that the school serves. Time out from normal duties has therefore often meant time to think and look 'outside the box' rather than to focus more deeply on the internal workings of one's own job or working environment. 'Extraspection' seems to have accounted for a large proportion of the outcomes from sabbaticals.

## **6.6 Career outcomes**

Many sabbaticals had a considerable impact on the perception of participating teachers of their career prospects, and indeed in some cases appear to have affected a teacher's career path.

### ***A more attractive prospect***

Interviewees representing 83 sabbaticals (72 per cent) mentioned a change in the participating teachers' career plans or prospects as a result of their sabbaticals. Most commonly, reference was made to the fact that professional and personal development resulting from the sabbatical meant that the teacher would be a more attractive prospect to other employers both within and outside the teaching profession. This was mentioned as an outcome of 31 sabbaticals (30 per cent), although in many of these, the interviewees stressed that the participating teacher had no intention of moving on.

*It's probably made me more likely to be an attractive proposition on a new staff, I suppose, but I wasn't really intending to move (participating teacher).*

### ***Departure***

In ten cases participating teachers referred to specific plans to leave teaching, although these were not usually as a direct result of the sabbatical. Two teachers unequivocally stated that their intention to leave was prompted by the sabbatical experience. Of those who were considering other careers following their sabbatical experience, the majority were going (or hoping to go) to another job in the field of education, for example educational psychology, or education administration. Thirteen teachers had secured new posts or promotions at other schools since going on their sabbaticals, and of these seven felt that their involvement in the sabbaticals scheme had contributed to their appointment. In some cases there was regret, and even annoyance on the part of other staff in their school that the participating teacher had used the sabbatical as a springboard for moving on. But in other schools the loss of the teacher was seen as an inevitable, and not undesirable, side-effect of helping staff to develop.

*I was encouraging him for deputy headships and things like that, but he was reticent to do that and I think what it has done, it's kind of made up his mind for what he should be doing (headteacher).*

### **Retention**

In contrast to this, a number of interviewees made reference to the fact that the experience of doing a sabbatical had enhanced their commitment either to their current post or to teaching as a whole. This effect was often attributed to a sense of being 'valued', 'treated as a professional' or having the sense that they, or their role, could develop without them having to move elsewhere.

*I am a committed teacher anyway and would not want to do anything else than what I am doing. But it has brought me up to date and made me feel as though I am still doing an up-to-date job, even though I have been teaching for a long time (participating teacher).*

One teacher described how the sabbatical had contributed to making a decision to stay in teaching at a time when s/he was feeling very demoralised by a reorganisation in school that had effectively led to her/his demotion from the SMT.

*I know now there is a place for me. I was devastated when I found out about the changes but I know and other people know I am needed. Without the sabbatical though they would have lost me, and that would have been a mistake (participating teacher).*

### **Role enhancement**

Many teachers referred to the sense that their current role had been enhanced or enlarged by the sabbatical experience. In around half of sabbaticals, interviewees made a reference to changes in the way that other staff in the school viewed the participating teacher as a result of their involvement in the scheme. In the majority of cases these comments referred to the teacher being viewed as more skilled or knowledgeable in the areas related to their sabbatical activity. Participating teachers reported being more likely to be approached by colleagues and support staff for help and to being seen as the 'expert' in a particular field.

*The dinner ladies now come to me to ask anything. The sports assistant comes to me as an ongoing thing, and that in itself has sort of raised my profile in the school (participating teacher).*

*People think I am more knowledgeable about IT than I was. They think I am a bit of an IT guru (participating teacher).*

Some teachers felt that they were able to carry out their existing roles more effectively and with greater satisfaction.

*It didn't affect my career progression. I think it perhaps affected my view of what I might be doing over the next few years, in the sense that the action research is part of that plan. In a sense, that's the career development. It won't mean a different title or a different pay scale, but in terms of my job satisfaction I think it will increase that (participating teacher).*



### ***Evidence of impact on career changes from follow-up interviews***

Evidence from 39 follow-up interviews carried out with a sub-set of schools that had undertaken sabbaticals suggested that there had been subsequent developments in teachers' careers and that a number of these career changes may have been related to the experience of sabbaticals.

Promotions were reported for six of the 39 participating teachers, subsequent to the sabbaticals. In half of these it was asserted that the sabbatical had not been a substantive factor, although in two of those cases it was suggested that increased confidence resulting from the sabbatical may have led to the pursuit of promotion. One teacher was promoted to join the SMT in order to implement changes identified in the sabbatical.

Three teachers were reported to have crossed the pay threshold subsequent to sabbaticals, the development achieved through the sabbatical being offered as significant evidence in the application. Given that the scheme was aimed at teachers with five years experience, it might be that those eligible for threshold payments figured prominently in the cohort of participating teachers.

Six teachers either took on new responsibilities (apparently not linked to promotion) or had enrolled in new courses since their sabbatical, perhaps reinforcing evidence of a propensity for self-development amongst those taking sabbaticals.

Departure from teaching was reported in the case of five teachers, though in one case this amounted to a reduction to part-time in order to create a better work-life balance, prompted by the experience of a sabbatical. A sixth teacher was actively seeking to leave, the sabbatical having failed to re-invigorate a flagging career. In only one case was it suggested that the sabbatical experience had been at least in part an impetus for the departure. (It should be born in mind that this data was obtained through follow-up interviews with headteachers who in some cases did not speculate on the cause of departure).

## **6.7 Outcomes specific to shared sabbaticals**

What did emerge, in addition to the existing typology of outcomes, was the way in which sharing sabbaticals was perceived as both inhibiting and facilitating factors in the overall success. Inevitably, sharing sabbaticals meant less time could be allocated to each person, thus a higher proportion of teachers sharing sabbaticals cited limited time as an inhibiting factor on the overall impact of their sabbatical. This was a particular issue for teachers who initially planned for a whole entitlement and were later required to scale down their project in order to accommodate other members of staff. As one teacher commented, it would be helpful for headteachers to decide in plenty of time exactly what each teacher would be entitled to.

*I initially planned for six weeks and was told just before I was due to start that I would only have three weeks, therefore I couldn't achieve everything I set out to achieve (participating teacher).*

Conversely, a number of teachers who shared their sabbaticals commented that they were able to support each other in all stages, from planning to report writing. As one teacher stated, not being the only teacher having time-out was very positive.

*It helped with the strain of it as well, whilst it was lovely to be off, you did feel guilty and it was nice to share that with someone (participating teacher).*

The aspect of support was primarily, although not exclusively, the case in sabbaticals in which the participants worked together on the same project. Working together provided the opportunity to discuss ideas and assess any proposed changes before implementing them back in school. It was also seen as easier to implement changes if they were the product of more than one person's learning:

*It's a lot easier to bring something into school it's not just seen as your own idea. If it's just your own idea you're not always confident that you're suggesting the right thing. It's a lot easier if you can say 'We both think' (participating teacher).*

## **6.8 Unexpected outcomes**

Most of the outcomes credited to the sabbaticals might have been predicted to follow on from the aims set out at the onset of the sabbatical. However, a small number of interviewees reported unexpected outcomes that had not been anticipated when the teacher embarked on the sabbatical project. While there may well have been an array of unexpected outcomes across the projects that received sabbaticals funding, this section discusses only those sabbaticals where interviewees made explicit reference to surprising or unexpected outcomes in the data.

Twenty interviewees mentioned unexpected outcomes in the interview data. The types of activity from which unanticipated outcomes seemed to have arisen most frequently were visit and placements activities. Here, nine interviewees spoke of unexpected outcomes. Both the headteacher and participating teacher on one of these sabbatical projects, for example, suggested in their interviews that the main benefits to come from the sabbatical were not those envisaged in the proposal, which had focussed on literacy development, and that although those aims had been met, other unexpected effects had been greater such as new awareness, the opportunity to look at the school with fresh eyes, new uses for the school grounds and a host of spin-off sabbatical projects that were being undertaken by other staff.

One sabbatical was avowedly not about educational development, but about re-charging the teacher. However, six weeks working in a garden centre resulted in new insights concerning the experience of learners.

*All the things that I learned were about doing something new, and being a new learner. I've been here [in the school] longer than anybody else, so I know how this place works, people know me - I've got a tremendous measure of control in my life here and I know how to manage that most of the time. I was in a completely different situation where I had very little power at all, if none, which is a good situation to be in, and most people don't do that. To go from a*

*power base which is quite strong to having no power whatsoever was a very useful thing to do (participating teacher).*

Unexpected follow-up projects and developments were reported by five further interviewees. Participating teachers had also picked up new skills or developments on visit and placements such as behaviour management techniques or ICT skills that they had not expected to develop. Similarly, the host organisations reported outcomes that had not been anticipated in proposal aims.

The largest proportion of comments by interviewees about unexpected outcomes concerned the ways in which their sabbaticals had exceeded their expectations (mentioned for ten sabbaticals). Often participants had been surprised by the amount of work, or the number of outcomes they had been able to achieve.

*The sabbatical went beyond what we expected to be honest. Simply because I think [the participating teacher] used it extremely well. I was certainly very impressed with what she produced (headteacher).*

Four interviewees reported unexpected affective outcomes; they had been surprised by how much they had enjoyed their sabbatical experience and how invigorated they felt as a result.

*I used every minute of it. I used to start at half-eight, and it would be four o'clock when they came in and I would have shorter breaks that I actually have in school. I just got so engrossed in it. It was probably more than I expected like that, because it did become addictive, you know, to have quality time (participating teacher).*

Two interviewees described changes in the way that the participating teachers were perceived by other staff members, which had not been anticipated outcomes at the outset of the sabbatical.

*Some of them [other staff members] have come out and said "It has really helped" and so that has been a bonus – not something I expected (participating teacher).*

The sabbaticals scheme created an environment in which it was possible to be surprised by unanticipated outcomes. In some cases participating teachers would find that plans outlined in their proposals had to change through circumstances that could not be controlled for. However, particularly teachers who were presented with the opportunity for 'extraspection' were brought into contact with a range of practices or alternatives to discover. Thus, having the chance to 'look outside the box' sometimes brought surprising outcomes for the teacher, as well as the school.

## **6.9 Negative outcomes**

Not all of the outcomes mentioned by interviewees were positive, although it should be stressed that in the vast majority of cases where negative outcomes were mentioned interviewees emphasised that negative effects of the sabbatical had been far outweighed by the benefits.

Some kind of negative outcome was mentioned in relation to 66 sabbaticals (57 per cent). Of these, 48 mentioned negative outcomes for the participating teacher and 34 mentioned negative outcomes for the school as a whole or others within it.

### **6.9.1 For the participating teacher**

A few teachers felt that their role had ‘grown’ as a result of the sabbatical, and that they were still expected to carry out activities that had been part of their sabbatical after the end of the project, resulting in an additional workload burden.

*As I got into the project it got bigger and bigger and bigger, and anything to do with lunchtime then became my responsibility. I thought ‘Well, this is just going to be something that becomes my job’ (participating teacher).*

For many teachers the sabbatical had been a refreshing and exciting experience, and some reported finding it hard to settle back in to their routine jobs and ‘pick up’ their work on their return.

*On the downside, coming back into school after a full six weeks away and taking my planning files from the supply teacher was the worst feeling in the world. I maybe shouldn’t say that. It was really weird and overwhelming. I wasn’t expecting it at all because I love teaching ... It only took a couple of days to recover (participating teacher).*

However, most of what were referred to as negative outcomes from sabbaticals appeared to be problematic or undesirable effects relating to the process or execution of sabbaticals, rather than outcomes following from them. In particular, where negative effects on the participating teacher were described, almost half of teachers felt that the execution of the sabbatical had presented them with an extra burden or workload. It seemed to be a frequent experience for sabbatical teachers that some of their school duties continued on top of their new sabbatical duties during times when they were ‘on sabbatical’. Classroom teachers often continued to set or mark work, whilst headteachers and deputy heads sometimes reported having to deal with unforeseen problems. Teachers frequently cited a build-up of work on their return to school, particularly where there had been difficulties with providing satisfactory supply cover for their absence.

Another negative outcome mentioned by a substantial number of teachers was feelings of guilt that they had ‘let down’ their pupils and colleagues by being absent from their usual roles. Many teachers had strong feelings that they were neglecting their pupils by their absence, even though they often recognised that these were emotional responses rather than rational appraisals of their actions: ‘*I had to re-educate myself that it was okay to take time out of school to do this, which was something I found very challenging*’.

### **6.9.2 For the school**

Similarly, where negative outcomes were described for the school these were often related to the simple fact of losing an experienced teacher from their usual role for the

period of the sabbatical. This was mentioned as a drawback of ten sabbaticals, but it was rarely considered to have presented serious problems for the school. The quality and effectiveness of supply cover was seen as paramount in smoothing the sabbatical process and inadequacies in this regard were the source of another sizeable set of negative comments.

Several interviewees commented that pupils in challenging schools (and in particular, special schools) were least able to adapt to change. Thus, the effects of disruption on pupils' learning and/or behaviour were cited by interviewees in 14 schools. This was perhaps the aspect of sabbaticals that was most negatively appraised by interviewees. Several felt that pupils' learning and behaviour had not fully recovered from the loss of the staff member at the time of the interviews.

The only negative impact identified in schools with multiple sabbaticals was the increased disruption to the school resulting from teachers taking simultaneous sabbaticals. No negative impacts emerged as relating specifically to successive sabbaticals.

### **6.10 A longitudinal perspective – additional points from follow-up interviews**

Perspectives gleaned from the follow-up interviews concerning outcomes have been included in the appropriate preceding sections of this chapter. Some further comments of a more general nature are included here. Probably as a result of the passage of time, more institutional changes of practice were reported, along with more references to career developments for participating teachers.

Greater numbers of institutional outcomes were reported in the follow-up interviews than had been the case with individual outcomes, perhaps because institutional changes generally take longer to materialise. Many of the follow-up interviewees reported a continuation of the outcomes already reported, though in one case the headteacher felt that the effects could be diluted over time, and that a second sabbatical on religious education might be needed in ten years.

Many interviewees reported an increase in the amount of dissemination taking place, in some cases backed by the re-scheduling of the participating teacher's time so that s/he could take time to train colleagues in the area of development. According to one headteacher, *'it's an upward spiral'*. But sabbaticals were frequently seen as one component of a development process.

*We've got eight teachers who are lead learners who will disseminate within their departments. This is affecting practice, but the sabbaticals, the behaviour, the teaching and learning are all linked together. All this has made staff aware of what's going on in their classroom; it has developed their awareness, their confidence and the ethos within the school. I would say that the whole thing is linked. The sabbaticals are not a separate thing. People are very keen to continue with what they've started (headteacher, follow-up interview).*

Some specific new outcomes were reported that had not emerged at the time of the original interviews. The establishment of a sports club for less-able pupils and of a working party on gifted and talented children, involvement in a wider schools' learning network and a variety of ICT related outcomes were reported.

Successful sabbaticals were seen to have stimulated demand for more sabbaticals and 24 of the 39 follow-up interviews revealed that further sabbaticals had been undertaken. This is, in part, a reflection of the fact that so few schools chose to engage with the scheme, thus making more opportunities available for the committed few, but it also indicates that schools greatly valued the experiences, and were keen to invest time in order to obtain valuable returns.

### **6.11 The sabbaticals scheme as a CPD model**

As described in Chapter 1, section 1.2, the sabbaticals scheme was launched as part of the DfES's framework for teachers' CPD described in *Learning and teaching: a strategy for professional development* (DfEE, 0517/2001). The framework was designed to help schools provide effective professional learning for all staff and the document conveyed the DfES's commitment and policies to enhance the CPD of individual teachers. The aims of the emphasis on professional development were:

- *to ensure the quality of what takes place in the classroom by sustaining and developing teaching techniques, knowledge of the curriculum subjects, capability with new technology and the skills required in different leadership positions*
- *to engender a commitment to professional development in all staff members in schools – because this has been seen to impact positively upon the collaborative culture of the school, its capacity for continuous self-improvement, the quality of teaching, staff's desire for continuous learning, and self-esteem*
- *to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for life-long learning, easier to achieve if they see their teachers regularly involved in learning*
- *to attract and retain good graduates in the profession* (paraphrased from DfEE, 2001).

It was apparent that the sabbaticals undertaken through the scheme were effective in addressing the aims of the strategy. Concerning the first aim:

- change in practice for individual teachers (reported in 83 per cent of sabbaticals in the sample) was in teaching specific areas of the curriculum, often ICT
- seventy-two per cent of sabbaticals looked at new teaching methods or pupil learning styles and led to changes in the teacher's approach
- twenty-nine per cent of sabbaticals had reported developments in administration or management styles and approaches
- twenty-five per cent of the sabbaticals reported enhancements in the use of ICT
- twenty-one per cent reported changes for the whole school in the delivery of curriculum subjects.

- twenty per cent of sabbaticals reported improved knowledge and skills in the teaching of curriculum areas
- seventeen per cent of sabbaticals reported improvements in teaching specific pupil groups

Concerning the second aim of the DfES's CPD framework (listed above) many schools supported access to CPD by using sabbaticals to provide staff with opportunities to attend training, and many others by sharing good practice and providing and supporting internal INSET, including the informal sharing of learning derived from sabbaticals.

For schools in challenging circumstances, the sabbaticals scheme provided an opportunity for a staff members' professional development, but also presented a big risk. Thus, it was often only those schools that already had a commitment to the professional development of staff (as discussed in section 6.6.7) that were willing to undertake sabbaticals in their schools.

## 6.12 Summary and conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to give an overview of the perceptions of the benefits and outcomes of the sabbaticals in the participating schools, as self-reported by the interviewees in each of the sabbaticals studied here. The following key points emerged.

- schools and participating teachers achieved a wide variety of outcomes within the typology of CPD outcomes. In the majority of cases sabbaticals led to outcomes in many areas
- for the participating teacher, there was a high frequency of reporting of the development of new skills and knowledge, affective benefits (including a sense of refreshment, and enhanced confidence and self esteem), and actual changes in their practices, encompassing both teaching and management. This strongly supports the view that sabbaticals contribute to '*enhancing participating teachers' learning and effectiveness*', one of the key stated purposes of the scheme (DfEE, 0517/2001)
- the most frequently cited institutional outcome related to the contribution of the sabbatical to the development of the school as a professional learning community, enhancing teachers' attitudes to professional learning. There was increased enthusiasm for sabbaticals and a shift towards viewing professional development as something that could be imaginative with wide-ranging benefits. More tangibly, included in this type of outcomes were training sessions run by participating teachers, and the establishment of links with other schools
- other frequently mentioned institutional outcomes included developments in skills and knowledge and changes in the practice of other teachers in the school and the school as a whole. This demonstrates the success of the teacher sabbaticals in '*bringing subsequent benefits to pupils and schools*' (DfEE, 0517/2001)
- outcomes relating to the career development of the participating teacher were referred to in almost three quarters of the sabbaticals studied. Such

developments included the enhancement of a current role in school, promotion to a new role, and promotion to a new post in another school. In a very small number of cases the sabbatical may have consolidated a teacher's decision to leave the teaching profession but these cases were greatly outnumbered by reports that the time out of the classroom had made teachers more appreciative of their jobs.

Even taking into account the fact that the outcomes described above were identified through self-reporting by participating teachers and their headteachers, both of whom may well have had a vested interest in 'talking up' the positive effects of the activities that they had instigated, there was a clear sense from these interviews that sabbaticals had brought substantial benefits to individuals and schools. These perceptions were corroborated in many cases by those of teaching colleagues, school governors and in some cases, pupils. A sense of excitement and achievement was often apparent in the discourse of the participating teacher and in the headteacher concerning the sabbatical and its effects. In some cases words such as '*acknowledgement*' and '*recognition*' were used, suggesting that some teachers felt that the scheme validated them as skilled and valued professionals as well as offering them opportunities to develop further. Other teachers referred to the sabbatical as a '*privilege*' to welcome the fact that a sabbatical had been granted to them, and in recognition that not all those within the profession would get such an opportunity.

The reported outcomes of teacher sabbaticals clearly demonstrate the range and depth of benefits that can be gained by projects of this nature which allow teachers time out from their usual duties, to pursue a well-defined project.



# Chapter 7

## An analysis of outcomes in relation to other features of sabbaticals

### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 described the range of outcomes that were reported to have derived from the sabbaticals studied. For most sabbaticals a wide range of outcomes were reported, although the strength or profile of those outcomes may have varied. The majority reported the achievement of the aims set for the sabbatical, and often that hopes and expectations had been exceeded. Many identified outcomes that went beyond those which had been intended or expected. The purpose of the scheme – to provide opportunities for the professional development of participating teachers and to produce subsequent outcomes to benefit the school and the pupils – were clearly met in many cases. Over half of all the sabbaticals studied reported both individual and institutional outcomes.

However, the research also sought to compare the strengths and weaknesses of the different models of sabbaticals in delivering outcomes. By interrogating the data, would it be possible to ascertain whether certain models of sabbatical would be more likely to produce particular outcomes? Could it be demonstrated that characteristics of the participating teacher or of the school led to certain outcomes? Other than delivering the specific objective of the activity undertaken, did particular activities lead to particular outcomes?

In almost every case, interviewees were clear that the sabbatical in their school had produced the outcomes intended. This chapter reports the findings from a range of methods used to explore the significance of process and contextual factors in supporting positive outcomes.

Section 7.2 reports the perceptions of interviewees from the entire sample of schools concerning factors that they themselves perceived to have been important in generating a successful sabbatical experience.

Working on the more detailed data from the sub-sample of 39 case studies, section 7.3 reports factors common to sabbaticals that revealed very strong outcomes in particular areas, specifically in relation to affective outcomes for participating teachers, and to changes in practice for the school as an institution or for the individual participating teacher.

Section 7.4 discussed the possible impact of contextual factors on the effectiveness of sabbaticals.

Section 7.5 offers some analysis of the routes by which outcomes emerge, illustrating how in some circumstances outcomes build as chains of effect.

Section 7.6 summarises the findings of the chapter.

## **7.2 Interviewee perceptions of factors generating positive outcomes**

This section considers the relationship between sabbatical processes and specific outcomes as seen from the perspective of interviewees. The range of positive outcomes (described in chapter 6) was extensive. The factors that were most commonly identified as contributing to positive outcomes were:

- school related factors
- attributes of the individual participant
- the opportunity to tailor sabbaticals to suit individual needs
- accessing agencies or individuals beyond the school.

Each of these factors is examined in more detail below.

### **7.2.1 School related factors**

In approximately half of the sabbaticals studied (60 cases), interviewees cited school-related factors as playing an important role in generating positive outcomes. In 35 cases, the school's ability to manage the participant's absence effectively was highlighted as a positive factor. This included schools which had access to, or were able to find good quality supply cover. (Chapter 8 enumerates the methods used to achieve this.) Teachers who were aware that their absence was being covered by competent staff were able to concentrate on their sabbatical activity without the constant worry of how their class was being taught.

*I had complete confidence in her [the supply teacher]. That really helped me focus on what I was doing, and not have my mind on two things at once (participating teacher).*

The school's ability to redistribute their areas of responsibility for the course of the sabbatical was regarded as an important aspect of the school's ability to manage a participant's absence. Again, this allowed for fuller concentration on the activity being undertaken, which led to increased positive outcomes.

In 29 sabbaticals the importance of the school's support for the sabbatical scheme was highlighted. This included support from school managers, governors and teaching colleagues and appears to have been beneficial in initiating sabbaticals as well as ensuring that they were positive experiences with positive outcomes.

*We all agreed on what sabbaticals were for; the staff involved knew that they had the support of the deputy and myself. They knew that we weren't going to be on their backs about the disruption to their classes because we had agreed the scheme and we were going to put systems in place to cover them (headteacher).*

The support from schools in accommodating sabbaticals was frequently referred to by interviewees as part of an overall commitment to supporting professional development.

*The head here is very keen on personal development anyway and she is very keen that teachers do qualifications and things like this; she is always very encouraging (participating teacher).*

In a further 14 cases, a strong association between the sabbatical focus and the school development plan or the ethos and vision of the school was cited as a factor in generating positive outcomes. Again, this was largely perceived to be associated with the increased support that this generated.

Those schools that chose to take up the sabbatical opportunity were already a self-selecting sample of schools eligible under the scheme that were committed to, and able to accommodate this form of CPD. The interviewees referred to above were drawing attention to an approach within the school that embraced and supported a form of CPD that many schools could not accommodate. It would appear that a collective commitment to supporting an individual's professional development, in the expectation that this would benefit the school, was an important contextual factor.

### **7.2.2 The attributes of the individual participant**

The importance of the individual participant's characteristics in generating positive outcomes was highlighted in 15 cases. In some cases this was associated with the participants' professionalism (including organisational and time-management skills), other interviewees felt positive outcomes were related to more affective characteristics (for example: confidence, motivation and determination). It is worth noting that improved organisational and time-management skills were also cited as outcomes resulting from participation in sabbaticals.

Interviewees suggested that professionalism and strong personalities increased the quality of the sabbatical experience itself, and its subsequent impact in school.

*He [the participant] is good at making connections, he's confident and professional; his personality also lends itself to enthusing colleagues (CPD Co-ordinator).*

Commitment and motivation were frequently perceived as leading to an overall determination for the sabbatical to succeed.

*I was determined to have a successful time on sabbatical. It would have been successful – I think – whatever barriers were put up in front of me, I would have got round them (participating teacher).*

In a further 37 cases, the participant's motivation and commitment was cited as a key factor in generating positive outcomes. In many of those cases it was claimed that the opportunity to define their own aims and activities contributed directly to their motivation.

### **7.2.3 The opportunity to tailor sabbaticals to suit individual contexts**

The opportunity to develop projects for sabbaticals which met with individuals' own development needs and interests, or the priorities of the school in which they worked, was cited as a possible factor in generating positive outcomes in 30 cases. As discussed in Chapter 2, interviewees welcomed the opportunity to do something they saw as relevant to themselves or the school, as opposed to something dictated to them.

*I felt it was my sabbatical and it was whatever I wanted to do and that was supported by the head (participating teacher).*

Interviewees expressed appreciation for the opportunity the scheme allowed for professional autonomy in defining priority areas for CPD.

*There is also an issue of recognising the professionalism of teachers to actually design and do something which is significant to them (headteacher).*

By determining their own CPD, it would appear that participants were more likely to be interested, enthusiastic and committed to the projects they undertook, particularly where sabbaticals focussed on individual areas of interest or identified development needs. (The association between addressing school needs and positive outcomes is explored in 7.2.1)

### **7.2.4 Accessing agencies or individuals beyond the school**

Thirty-one sabbaticals highlighted the benefits of working with external agencies or having contact with other professionals (including other teachers). This included spending time in educational or other establishments, and interacting with other teachers and professionals from different sectors. (Full descriptions of the places visited and the contacts made in sabbaticals are included in Chapter 5.)

The relevance to positive outcomes here appears to be the opportunity that these experiences provided for teachers to see new ways of working, and the knowledge and skills they were able to accumulate from other people's expertise.

There was also the suggestion that contact with other professionals contributed to individual affective outcomes by adding a degree of credibility to the work being done.

*It was really nice being viewed as a professional by people in the world outside teaching (participating teacher).*

In seven sabbaticals the support from the LEA was cited as a contributory factor in generating positive outcomes. The perceived benefit of LEA intervention falls into two categories. Firstly, the perceived value of assistance in setting up successful projects:

*The LEA organisation was excellent. For a school in challenging circumstances that's what we needed because we're inundated with paperwork, and they organised everything (headteacher).*

Secondly, the perceived value of receiving continued LEA support:

*It gave you a forum for showing off what you had done, swapping ideas, and feeling comfortable about doing it. You felt as if you had the approval of the authority and you weren't just skiving (participating teacher).*

Overall, interviewees were more likely to cite contextual factors as contributing to positive outcomes than the processes that they themselves chose to undertake. Participating teachers acknowledged the role of the school and their colleagues in enabling their success. Their colleagues, and in particular their headteachers, were inclined to acknowledge the qualities of the participating teacher. The context set by the DfES through the scheme itself – enabling individuals and schools to identify their own needs – was also acknowledged as a key factor. The main exception to that pattern was that so many identified their choice to look beyond the school in their quest for development opportunities as the key factor generating positive outcomes. Sabbaticals were clearly valued by interviewees as an opportunity for time away from the school environment, as well as from normal duties.

Having explored the views of interviewees concerning links between outcomes and particular aspects of process, researchers sought to ascertain whether other aspects of the data pointed to similar or different associations.

### **7.3 The association of 'strong' outcomes with sabbatical process factors**

Almost all schools reported a wide range of outcomes from sabbaticals (see Chapter 6). As a consequence, it proved difficult to establish a relationship between the effectiveness of sabbaticals and particular process factors. A range of variables had been established, including time-allocation, nature of aims, planning arrangements, role of participating teacher, nature of sabbatical activity, location of activity and subject area or focus. The outcomes had been classified according to the typology described in Chapter 6. The full range of variables was cross-referenced with the full range of outcomes from each sabbatical to ascertain any patterns.

Few patterns existed, and where they did, the differences in outcomes for sabbaticals when measured against specific variables were usually marginal. For example, except where the time allocated was minimal, all types of time allocation proved fairly evenly effective in generating different outcomes. Spread time sabbaticals were slightly more likely to lead to institutional changes in practice, and longer sabbaticals were slightly more likely to result in affective outcomes for the participating teacher, but the differences were marginal. Inevitably, specific types of aims were more likely to result in related outcomes. Because of the widespread reporting of large numbers of outcomes, the results of this method of analysis were neither particularly revealing nor persuasive. However, as well as indicating an overall absence of association between process factors and particular outcomes, this extensive interrogation of the data did reveal certain specific lines of enquiry that were deemed worth pursuing.

Given the preponderance of reporting of multiple outcomes, researchers devised an alternative analytical question. Did sabbaticals in which particularly strong or high

profile outcomes had been reported share any common features when compared to sabbaticals in which such outcomes were absent or had only been listed, but without a high profile in the discourse of interviewees? The analysis to answer this question was based on the 39 case studies for which follow-up interviews took place. For these sabbaticals data gathering had obtained greater corroboration from a larger range of interviewees and provided additional evidence concerning the sustained or developing nature of the outcomes for individuals or schools some time after the completion of the sabbatical. Researchers identified criteria whereby they could classify a sabbatical as presenting high profile outcomes in particular categories.

Working from the tentative leads revealed in the analysis of the whole sample, researchers identified three types of outcomes for which a clearer finding of relationship to particular process features might be established. These were:

- institutional changes in practice as outcomes
- individual participating teachers' changes in practice as outcomes
- affective outcomes for individual participating teachers.

Not only were there indications that these outcomes may have been affected by particular process variables, but it was also deemed that they might be of particular interest to schools contemplating time-out as a form of CPD.

### **7.3.1 Process factors contributing to institutional changes in practice**

In the overall sample of sabbaticals, 56 per cent of schools had reported institutional changes in practice as a result of the sabbatical. (See Chapter 6.5.6).

Seventeen schools within the sub-sample of 39 case-study sabbaticals were identified as having strong institutional changes in practice.

The criteria for categorising these sabbaticals were:

- the overall number of institutional changes in practice
- the weight given to these by interviewees
- the extent to which corroboration between interviewees was evident in reference to changes in institutional practice
- the sustained nature of these outcomes as identified in the follow up interviews.

By checking the various process variables against sabbaticals deemed to have strong institutional change in practice outcomes, three factors emerged as significant:

- type of sabbatical activity
- location of sabbatical
- level of consensus of aims.

### ***Type of sabbatical activity***

Over half of the 17 sabbaticals with strong institutional changes in practice featured primary and secondary research as their main activity. (A description of the categories of activities can be found in Chapter 5).

Such sabbaticals were more than twice as likely to report strong institutional changes in practice than those where the participant had engaged in other activities.

For the most part, institutional changes in practice resulting from research appear to stem from dissemination of the participant's newly acquired knowledge of a particular topic. One participant described the dissemination which took place after her sabbatical, which consisted of researching the new baseline profile initiative.

*This is something that will impact on the whole school. This has enabled me to inform them [colleagues] of what we are doing and how it impacts - so it has been a learning curve for them as well (participating teacher).*

Results emerging from primary research also provided persuasive evidence to support the institutional changes proposed by participants.

*I set out to prove, with actual scientific data, that Brain Gym worked and I did achieve that...I think it sold the idea to the rest of the school (participating teacher).*

### ***Location of activity***

In the sub-sample of 39 case-studies, school-based sabbaticals were twice as likely to result in strong institutional changes in practice than sabbaticals where the activity was located elsewhere.

The main reason cited for school-based sabbaticals impacting on institutional changes in practice was the fact that colleagues in the school were more likely to be aware of the work that was being undertaken.

*They were aware that I had had this sabbatical time and they thought that it was time very well spent (participating teacher).*

In some cases, being school-based meant that changes in practice could be implemented over the course of the sabbatical, particularly when the time-out was spread over a period of time.

### ***Level of consensus of aims***

Approximately two thirds of the sabbaticals reporting strong institutional changes in practice also reported a high consensus of aims (in comparison to half of the sabbaticals in the sub-sample). No sabbaticals identified as having strong evidence of institutional changes in practice reported a low consensus of aims, suggesting that agreement on the purpose of sabbaticals was a significant factor. Support from colleagues and the SMT for exploring new ways of working, which was more likely

in sabbaticals with a high consensus of aims, was seen as an essential factor in establishing institutional changes in practice:

*The school's willingness to take a little bit of a risk with this, as part of a learning process for the school (participating teacher).*

### **7.3.2 Process factors contributing to 'strong' changes in practice for participating teachers**

In the overall sample of sabbaticals, 83 per cent of schools had reported changes in practice for the participating teacher as a result of the sabbatical. (See Chapter 6, section 6.4.6).

Researchers identified 12 sabbaticals from the 39 case-study sub-sample that had evidence of 'strong' changes in the practice of the participant. The criteria for assessing the strength or the level of the individual's change in practice are listed below:

- the extent of individual changes in practice
- the extent of corroboration between interviewees
- evidence of the longevity of changes in practice from the follow-up interviews.

Three factors emerged that may affect the generation of individual change of practice outcomes:

- the location of the sabbatical activity
- the content and focus of the sabbatical
- the level of consensus of aims.

#### ***Location of activity***

Three quarters of the sabbaticals that were judged to have resulted in strong changes in practice for the individuals concerned took place away from the school, in mixed locations such as within other organisations or overseas.

These sabbaticals were twice as likely to result in 'strong' changes in practice for the individual than were school-based projects.

Reports of changes in teaching practice often occurred as a result of the opportunity to look at new or different teaching strategies. For example, an overseas visit resulted both in changes in the use of ICT in a teacher's practice as well as in her/his behaviour management.

*It's changed the way I teach. Instead of being on top of the kids all the time, if the rest of the class are learning and it's just one kid out of order, try to deal with that one without disturbing anyone else. It's more laid back there [in the host country] (participating teacher).*



It may be that change is better stimulated by ‘looking outside the box’ rather than remaining focussed on the existing situation in a school. However, it is notable that while sabbaticals that took place away from school were more likely to result in changes in practice for the participating teacher, school based sabbaticals were more likely to produce institutional changes in practice.

### ***The content and focus of the sabbatical activity***

Three quarters of the sabbaticals that fell into the ‘strong’ individual changes in practice category focussed on teaching and learning, and the remaining quarter looked at special educational needs.

Sabbaticals that focussed on teaching and learning were considerably more likely to result in strong individual changes in practice. For example, one project in which multi-sensory learning approaches were adopted resulted in the teacher’s belief that her/his teaching had improved: *‘I knew there was a group of children who were in danger of specific learning difficulties whose needs I can now address’* (participating teacher).

Three quarters of the sabbaticals with strong changes in the individual’s practice centred around primary and secondary research activities. Activities such as reading or observing practice often resulted in the teacher forming new ideas to try out in the classroom. Similarly the teacher’s approach to the learning process might change.

*I think I’ve become a better teacher. The mode of delivery, the way I was doing it. I think that’s coming about in all subjects, but it’s just that I saw the way of doing it through this [the sabbatical activity]. I would say I’m a completely different teacher to 3 years ago. I’m not so worried about getting things down in books. I’m more worried about how we go about learning, not what we come out with at the end* (participating teacher).

### ***Level of consensus of aims***

Two thirds of the 12 sabbaticals that made up the ‘strong’ individual changes in practice as outcomes category had a high level of consensus between interviewees regarding the aims of the sabbatical. None of the sabbaticals in this category reported a low consensus of aims, suggesting that agreement between interviewees on what the sabbatical intended to achieve influenced the strength of the individual change in practice that came about as a result of the sabbatical.

### **7.3.3 Process factors contributing to reports of ‘strong’ affective and motivational outcomes for individuals**

In the overall sample of sabbaticals, 87 per cent reported affective and motivational outcomes for the participating teacher (see Chapter 6, sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3).

Researchers identified 20 schools, from the cohort of 39 case study sabbaticals, as having ‘strong’ affective and motivational outcomes. The criteria for assessing the strength of outcomes were:

- the participating teachers' strength of expression in describing the affective and motivational outcomes
- the extent of the corroboration from other interviewees
- the longevity of these outcomes as identified in the follow up interviews.

Examination of the parts of the interview data where individuals talk about affective and motivational outcomes revealed several common factors in the sabbatical process itself:

- the location of the activity
- the content or focus of the sabbatical activity
- and the level of consensus of the aims.

### ***Location of activity***

More than three quarters of the sabbaticals that were credited with 'strong' affective and motivational outcomes took place away from the school itself, either in mixed locations, within other organisations or overseas and such sabbaticals were considerably more likely to produce strong affective outcomes than school-based sabbaticals. This finding is supported by analysis of the data for 115 sabbaticals, which revealed that all the sabbaticals which involved a visit overseas resulted in reports of affective outcomes and similarly, activities that took place in other organisations generated reports of affective outcomes for all but one of these sabbaticals.

Exposure to working environments (school or other profession) beyond a participating teacher's individual school appeared key to producing reports of strong affective and motivational outcomes. Teachers responded positively to the opportunity to make links with other schools and/or practitioners and to experiencing different approaches to problems they were facing.

*I think it did me a lot of good to be out of school. To be out of this school environment for a few weeks and look at how things are done in other schools. It was good for me to get out personally and meet other people, and people from different authorities as well (participating teacher).*

The experience of 'looking outside the box' was also very motivating. Visiting other organisations meant exposure to a different ethos or working environment. For one teacher this prompted a return to the school with an augmented sense of the value of the teaching profession.

*It made me feel that education was one of the right things I could have done with my life, and I knew after the [host organisation's name] week, which was highly interesting the entire time I was there, but I knew I couldn't have done something like that because I would never have believed in it ...At least in education you do know what you are here for. It was good to have that confirmed (participating teacher).*

The affective and motivational outcomes attributed to overseas visits seemed to be related to a confirmed sense of ‘doing well’, that being a teacher in an English school compared favourably with colleagues abroad.

### ***The content or focus of the sabbatical activity***

Sabbaticals that were in some sense child-centred were more likely to produce strong affective and motivational outcomes for the individual than those that encompassed broader school aims. Projects dealing with special educational needs and pastoral issues, as opposed to pedagogy and school management, generated ‘strong’ reports of affective and motivational outcomes.

[The participating teacher] *is so enthusiastic about it and hyped up about it [a practical curriculum for SEN] and so excited, that I think part of that has rubbed off on the rest of the staff* (school governor).

*It gave me the confidence that we are along the right lines, even if we aren't getting it absolutely right – with something like attendance I'm not sure you can get it absolutely right anyway* (participating teacher).

It may be that people or child-focussed activities are generally more likely to bring about affective outcomes.

### ***Level of consensus of aims***

Approximately two thirds of the 20 sabbaticals that were deemed to have resulted in strong affective and motivational outcomes also appeared to have high consensus between interviewees regarding the aims of the sabbatical. None of the sabbaticals identified in the strong category reported low consensus of aims, suggesting that agreement on the purpose of the sabbatical contributed to positive affective outcomes for the participating teacher. Similarly, the majority of those projects in which there had clearly been some consultation at the outset, between the participating teacher and other interested parties in the school, as to what the sabbatical should aim to do, were classed in the strong affective and motivational outcomes category.

The analyses reported in sections 7.3.1-3 above suggest some significant associations between outcomes and process factors. High consensus of aims, where aims were defined by the participant and shared within the school, appears to have resulted in highly productive CPD outcomes. Different locations for sabbaticals seem to have been associated with different sorts of strong outcomes:

- in-school activities are more likely to be associated with strong institutional changes in practice, and
- out-of-school activities are more likely to be associated with strong affective outcomes and strong changes in practice for the individual.

## **7.4 Contextual factors and their impact on sabbatical outcomes**

Section 7.3 offered some evidence concerning the association between certain process factors and the outcomes of sabbaticals. It has to be said that an analysis of a large

number of outcomes and their relationship to process factors, using the full sample of 130 sabbaticals, revealed few significant associations between factors and outcomes.

Researchers turned their attention to the possibility that contextual factors, not specifically related to the sabbatical itself, may have been significant. As a result of the freedom offered to schools and individuals, the unique context of each school frequently shaped the purposes for which the sabbatical was used, the way in which it was undertaken, and the outcomes that were sought. It might therefore be assumed that contextual factors, both practical and attitudinal, also affected the overall impact of sabbaticals. Indeed, interviewees themselves identified contextual factors as significant in producing positive outcomes, as reported in section 7.2 above. The following findings are drawn from other parts of the data.

### *Attitudinal context factors*

Since only a proportion of eligible schools took up the scheme in the first place, it can reasonably be inferred that those in the sample were amongst those most predisposed to this type of CPD (see sections 6.5.7 and 6.7). However, researcher perceptions suggested variation in enthusiasm even amongst those within the sample. Some schools needed considerable encouragement from LEA officers, some individual teachers engaged more reluctantly than others, and all schools found the experience of managing a sabbatical challenging in varying degrees.

Headteachers were asked to recollect their initial impressions of the scheme on first hearing about it. Of the 37 who responded to this enquiry amongst the case study sub-sample, the response from eight was one of caution or scepticism. Their initial response focussed on the difficulties to be overcome, rather than on the opportunities afforded. In contrast, 19 of the sub-sample used very enthusiastic language to describe their first impressions. Expressions such as ‘brilliant’, ‘a powerful tool’ and ‘a golden opportunity’ abounded.

Half of these respondents initially associated the idea of sabbaticals with benefits to the individual teacher, with about a quarter initially foreseeing school benefits, and a quarter foreseeing benefits for both the individual and the school.

However, there was no evidence to suggest that any of these variations in attitude to the scheme related directly to the strength of outcomes achieved, be they changes in practice or affective outcomes. For example, cross referencing data does not indicate that those that most enthusiastically embraced sabbaticals were more likely to report strong outcomes concerning institutional changes in practice than those that were initially cautious.

### *Practical contextual factors*

All of the schools involved were in challenging circumstances, and it would be inappropriate to differentiate between different degrees of challenge faced by different schools. It is therefore not possible to ascertain whether the type or degree of challenge affected outcomes. The type of school, (primary, secondary or special) did not seem to affect the strength of outcomes, all types reporting each type of outcome in similar proportions. It is likely that the extent of any staffing problems (shortage,

stress levels etc) may have affected the effectiveness of sabbaticals, for the reasons described in 7.1 above, but no further data is available to support that assertion.

### ***The scheme as context***

The nature of the scheme under which all of these sabbaticals took place, as devised and funded by the DfES, was clearly regarded as fundamental to generating positive outcomes by many interviewees. Teachers had become accustomed in recent years to having their CPD prescribed, for example the training to implement the national numeracy and literacy strategies, and the ICT training provided under the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). As indicated in section 7.2 above, the freedom and flexibility afforded by this scheme not only allowed schools and individuals to address those issues that they regarded as highest priority in their own context, but also generated a sense of professional autonomy and trust that some believed had been lacking for some time.

In effect, the scheme operated as an experiment in ascertaining what CPD issues schools themselves would choose to address if unencumbered by financial constraints. The outcomes indicate the commitment with which they took the opportunity to address their self-identified needs.

*We've always got something on our wish list, so we are always looking for ways to meet them. We thought it was a brilliant opportunity (Headteacher).*

### ***Conclusions***

Although the research thoroughly sought to identify features of sabbaticals that might relate to greater effectiveness, the findings suggested that the differences in outcomes for sabbaticals when measured against specific variables were marginal. Similarly, a study of contextual factors differentiating schools also provided little indication of impact on the extent or strength of outcomes. This leads one back to the nature of the scheme itself, and the freedom of choice that it granted to individual schools and teachers. Most schools reported a very wide range of welcomed outcomes, some appearing to have experienced quite profound changes as a result of sabbaticals. It may well be that the ability to tailor sabbaticals to the unique needs and circumstances of each school was the unifying factor that caused there to be such widespread and enthusiastic reporting of positive outcomes.

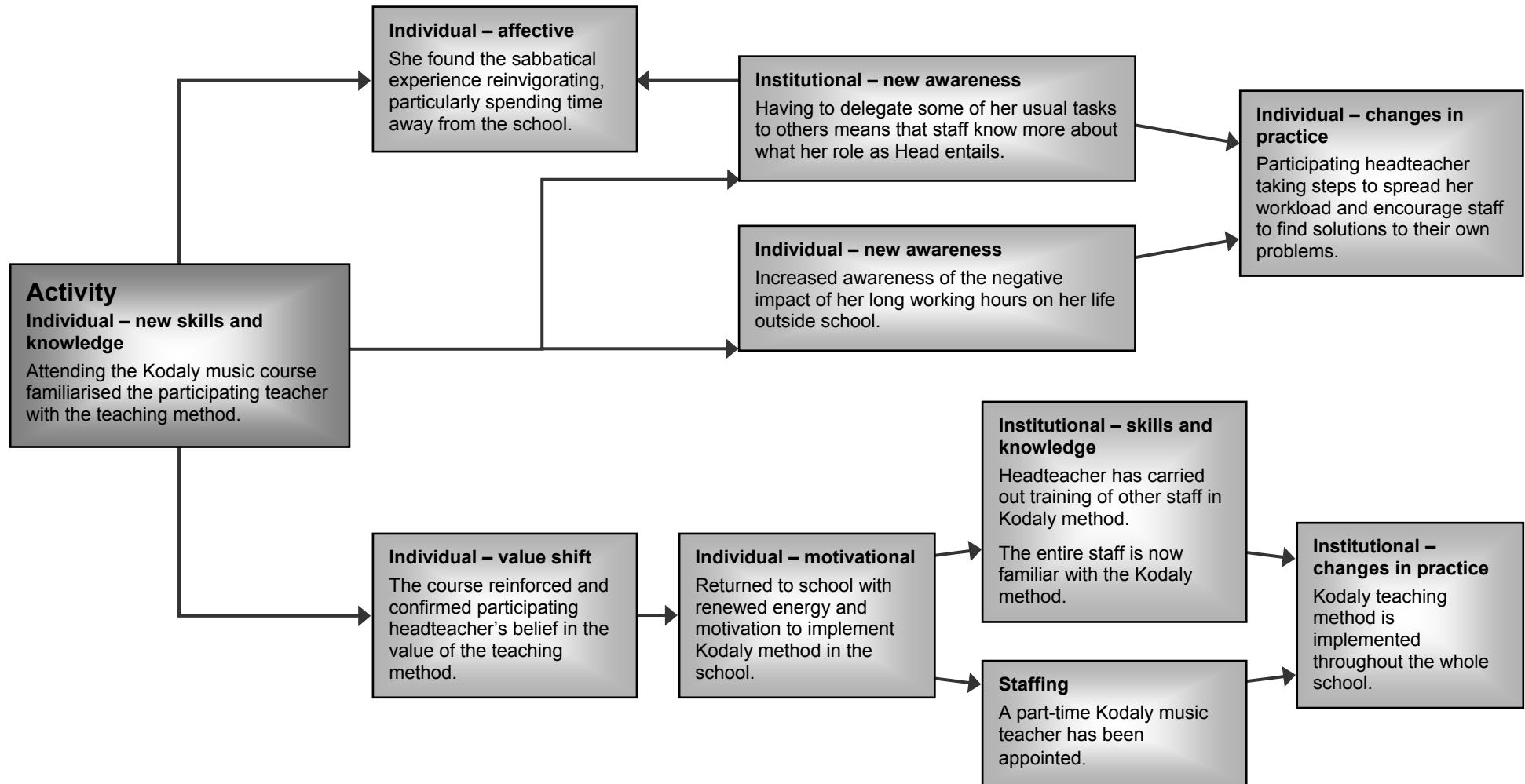
## **7.5 Outcome routes**

Whether a sabbatical primarily addressed the development needs of an individual teacher or the development needs of the school itself, it frequently emerged that outcomes for both the school and the teacher were forthcoming. The two examples below illustrate how a single focus for a sabbatical can lead to a range of outcomes. In both cases, significant changes in practice within the school as an institution derived from the sabbatical, but only after a chain of outcomes had been developed, stimulated by the experience of the sabbatical itself.

**EXAMPLE 1**

**Figure 7.1 Sabbatical 1: Aims and activity**

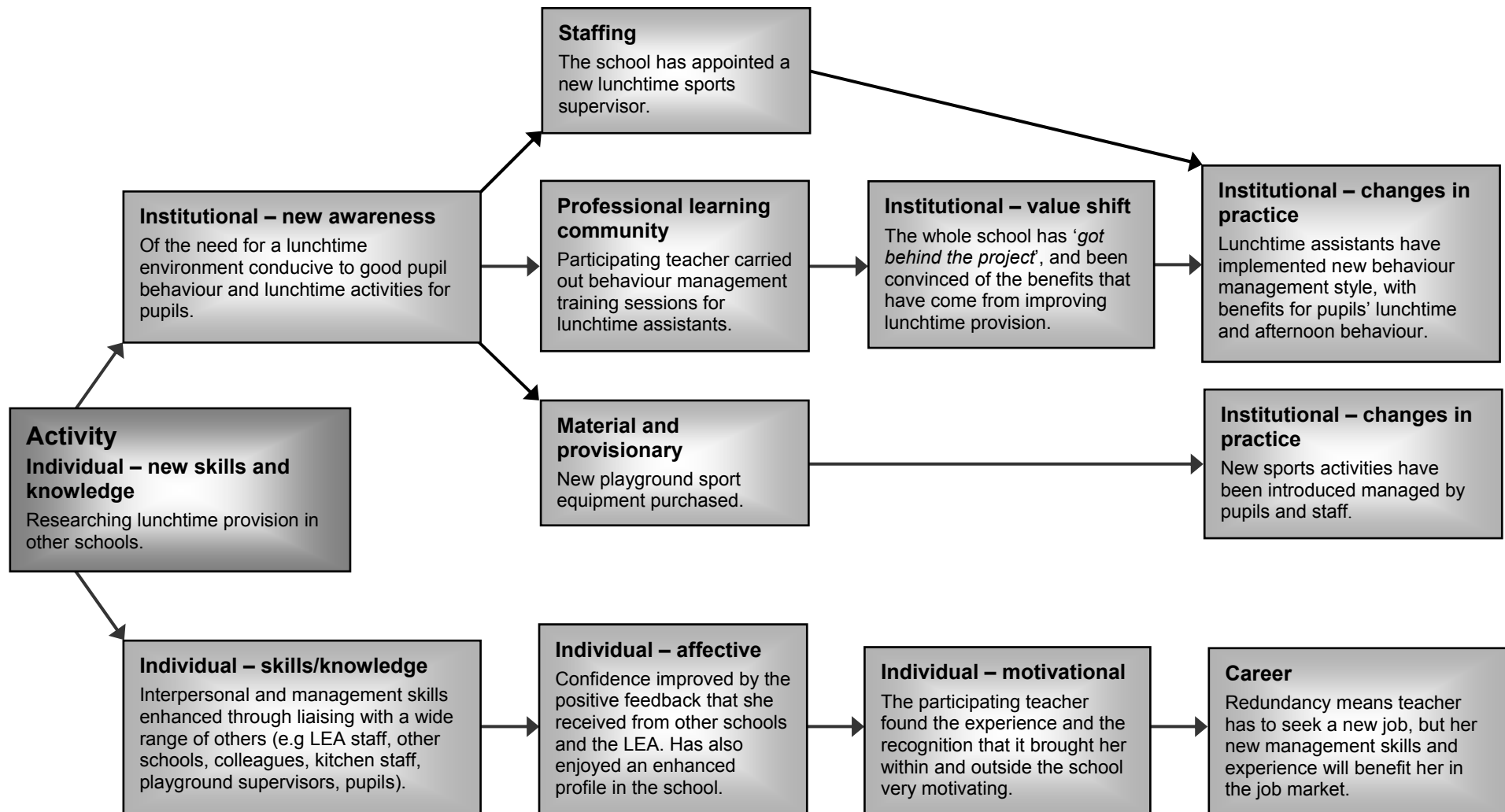
This school places great emphasis on the arts. The participating headteacher aimed to further improve music teaching in the school by improving her own singing through advanced singing lessons, and attending a course on the Kodaly method for music teaching with a view to implementing it in the school. She also aimed to investigate music teaching in other schools with a particular emphasis on strings projects in primary schools.



## EXAMPLE 2

### Sabbatical 2: aims and activity

This sabbatical aimed to enhance lunchtime provision for pupils with a view to improving their behaviour and concentration in the afternoon. It also aimed to raise the profile of the participating teacher in the school. The participating teacher carried out research into good practice in lunchtime provision, planned changes in conjunction with other staff in the school, and helped to implement those changes.



### ***Example 1***

In this sabbatical the participating headteacher had undertaken a course in Kodaly music teaching. Although the aim was to raise standards in music teaching in the school, two distinct outcome routes emerged.

The headteacher herself realised that she enjoyed her time out of school (individual affective outcome), while her staff found they could cope in her absence (institutional awareness outcome). As a result she was able to delegate much more of her workload, and thus empower other staff to make more decisions for themselves (institutional changes in practice). This outcome chain resulted from the experience of taking time out of school, rather than from the sabbatical activity itself.

As a result of taking the course (individual new skills and knowledge), the headteacher's commitment to the approach was reinforced (individual value confirmation) resulting in an increased motivation to disseminate her experience (individual motivational). As a result of training the rest of the staff in the teaching method (institutional skills and knowledge) the school developed a new approach to the teaching of music (institutional change in practice). The capacity to bring this about was probably greater because of her position as headteacher, but only by being able to take time out from her normal duties was she able to accelerate the process of changing teaching practice within the school. Without the time created by the sabbatical, changes in practice may have taken a considerable time to occur.

### ***Example 2***

Taking the time to research lunchtime provision in other schools (individual skills and knowledge) led to two distinct routes of outcomes. For the school, the new awareness of what was possible led to certain resourcing decisions (staffing and new materials) and to a new training programme for lunchtime staff (institutional knowledge and awareness). Together these led to a greater commitment to the development of lunchtime provision (institutional new awareness) and a marked improvement in the provision for pupils at lunchtime (institutional change in practice.)

In addition, the experience of researching the issue and supporting colleagues (individual skills and knowledge) resulted in greater confidence and motivation (individual affective and motivational), and these were expected to stand her in good stead when applying for a new position (career development). (It should be pointed out that the sabbatical did not prompt the quest for new employment – the changing context of the school had already precipitated this need.)

### ***Commentary***

The outcome routes described in the two examples above led to changes within the school itself. In other cases it was also possible to pursue that chain beyond the school. For example, in several of the sabbaticals studied, outcomes for other schools were recorded as a result of dissemination activities and were usually supported through the intervention by the LEA. This was most notably the case in sabbaticals involving ICT, where teachers who had developed new skills and awareness were able to communicate these to teachers in other schools, either through presentations or training sessions. In a small number of cases the chain extended to parents, though in



only two of those cases were parents perceived to have derived beneficial outcomes themselves, more usually the outcome was a closer relationship between the school and parents.

In those sabbaticals where the outcome route did not penetrate far beyond the participating teacher, this should not be regarded as a shortcoming. Some were deliberately devised to support the development of a particular teacher, to provide re-motivation or refreshment. While in certain cases this then proved to have a significant impact on the school as a whole, in the form of unexpected outcomes, this was not always the case, but may well have resulted in a qualitative transformation for the teacher involved. However, for many teachers the awareness that their work had an impact on the school as a whole was often seen as a motivating outcome in itself.

## **7.6 Summary and conclusions**

A range of analytical devices were used to investigate ways in which particular types of sabbatical were more or less effective in producing positive outcomes.

The perceptions of interviewees themselves were that the following factors supported the generation of positive outcomes:

- the attitude and capabilities of the school itself
- the attributes of the participating teacher
- the exposure to agencies and individuals outside of the school itself
- that the scheme afforded the opportunity to tailor CPD to the needs of the individual and the school.

Although the unique nature of most sabbaticals and the extensive reporting of outcomes made it difficult to identify many clear associations between processes and outcomes, in a limited number of instances a pattern emerged that suggested that some strong or high profile outcomes could be more directly related to certain process factors.

Strong evidence of institutional changes in practice was more likely when:

- the main activity of the sabbatical was research based
- activity was undertaken in the participant's own school
- there was a high level of consensus concerning the aims.

Strong evidence of institutional changes in practice was more likely when:

- the activity took place away from school premises
- the content or focus were related to teaching and learning issues
- there was a high level of consensus concerning the aims.

Strong evidence of affective and motivational changes for the participant was more likely when:

- the activity took place away from school premises

- the content or focus was child-centred rather than pedagogy or management
- there was a high level of consensus concerning the aims.

It is notable that the location in which sabbatical activities took place was significant in different ways for different outcomes. Moving outside of the school environment was usually, but not always, appropriate. The importance of reaching a consensus on the aims of the sabbatical was important for each of the outcome areas.

An analysis of the discourse of interviewees suggested that contextual factors, as opposed to the aims, planning or activities in the sabbatical itself, were also important in determining the generation of positive outcomes. The overall sample comprised the minority of eligible schools that had chosen to undertake sabbaticals. They were therefore either predisposed to do so, more able to do so, or both.

There was evidence that the following contextual features supported positive outcomes:

- the participating teacher had pre-existing motivation, determination and organising skills
- collective efforts were made to facilitate the teacher's absence
- the school was able to ensure the provision of teaching cover that inspired confidence in the participating teacher.

The nature of the scheme itself was deemed to be a very significant factor in generating positive outcomes. This related not simply to the fact that it provided the funding, though this was acknowledged to be very important, but to the freedom that it offered to schools and individual teachers to identify their own priorities and activities. This meant that:

- participating teachers and schools were able to tailor sabbaticals to their own priorities
- a sense of professional autonomy, leading to greater motivation and commitment was encouraged.

Many sabbaticals resulted in a considerable range of outcomes, and they often emerged as a chain of outcomes building upon the sabbatical activity.

The reporting of such a wide range and number of outcomes across the whole sample suggests that the concept of sabbaticals as set out in the DfES scheme was appropriate and effective. A wide range of challenging schools enabled a variety of CPD and school development activities, apparently tailored to suit the unique needs and interests of each one.

# Chapter 8

## Management issues

### 8.1 Introduction

The scheme to fund sabbaticals terminates in July 2004. Issues to do with the scheme guidelines and the managing of the introduction of the scheme are only summarised here as they now seem less pertinent, given recent changes in CPD policy. Instead this chapter focuses on management issues that may inform and support the use of time-out as a model of CPD by schools in the future.

A number of factors affecting the progress of sabbaticals and teacher outcomes related directly to the management of the scheme at the national and LEA level or within the school. This chapter is divided into three main sections.

- findings concerning the management of the scheme at the national and LEA level.
- school-centred management issues: preparation, including the allocation of time and funding, the arrangements for supply cover, the extent and nature of any disruption and the support available to the participating teacher during the sabbatical.
- managing the monitoring, evaluation and dissemination of the sabbatical experience.

### 8.2 Managing the scheme

This section summarises key findings relating to the management of the scheme at a national and local authority level.

#### 8.2.1 Planning, publicising and low uptake

##### *Planning*

A lack of clarity concerning the role of the LEA was a feature of the early stages of the sabbaticals scheme. Although the aims of the scheme were to improve and develop CPD, the DfES guidelines did not require that an officer with CPD expertise should manage the scheme, indicating instead only a fund-allocating role. Thus, the identification by the LEA of an officer to manage the scheme was highly variable. For the most part, officers were allocated the role of managing the scheme because it was seen to be part of their wider remit (e.g. administration, distribution of funds, CPD, primary schools). However, the allocation of responsibility relied on the emphasis that individual LEAs placed on the scheme in its initial stages.

There was similar lack of clarity concerning the level of support, and the ensuing increase in workload, that the LEA should undertake. LEAs chose to involve themselves in the scheme to differing degrees.

- some LEAs saw their role simply as an administrator of the funds, and their remit ceased once these had been devolved to the school
- a small proportion assisted in setting up, and even providing, sabbaticals. For example, one LEA created a reference booklet of ideas for sabbaticals (written by teachers funded to do so through the scheme itself)
- other LEAs provided support through assisting and advising schools with ideas and problem solving. This emerged as the most effective practice in respect of increasing uptake to the scheme. For example, one LEA organised regular networking meetings for participating teachers.

Confusion concerning the identification of managers for the scheme at LEA level may in some cases have led to delays in initial implementation as well as to inconsistency in approaches between LEAs. The factors perceived to have inhibited the development of a more operational LEA role included an increase in workload, lack of funding for the promotion and management of the scheme, and the notion that LEAs were no longer fully equipped to manage schemes of this nature. Where LEAs had assumed a wider, proactive, advisory role in relation to the scheme, the scheme proved more popular.

### ***Publicising the scheme***

The initial printed publicity for the scheme distributed towards the end of the Summer Term 2001, elicited a negligible number of applications. It was widely believed that:

- late in the summer term was not a good time to launch such a scheme
- the printed material tended to become lost in a volume of material concerning education initiatives
- distributing publicity material via headteachers had resulted in a significant proportion of eligible teachers not being informed of the scheme (several headteachers admitted that they had chosen not to pass on the information)
- the sabbaticals scheme needed promoting through proactive and local means such as meetings and face-to-face encouragement.

Where LEAs adopted a more proactive promotional role, uptake was greater.

### ***Issues affecting low uptake of the scheme***

Although many interviewees saw the scheme as particularly relevant to challenging schools, in which it was thought that the nature of the work resulted in considerable stress, many believed that the characteristics of challenging schools made using the scheme problematic. Moreover, there was little consensus concerning the potential of sabbaticals to contribute to raising standards in challenging schools and limited support for the view that they might improve teacher retention or recruitment. This raised a question about the wisdom of introducing sabbaticals initially into challenging schools, since the particular difficulties that they face in embracing an approach to CPD that involves the removal of teachers from the classroom resulted in hesitant adoption of the scheme.

In response to the initial low uptake, most LEAs extended their role in relation to the scheme to include promotion, encouragement and support.

Specific practices that may inform future consideration of this type of CPD included:

- predicting and challenging the barriers thrown up by schools or teachers
- highlighting links with HEIs and businesses
- advising on the adaptation and utilisation of the scheme to meet existing SDP and CPD priorities
- establishing supportive networks for participating teachers
- undertaking management functions on behalf of schools, paid for by contributions from schools' sabbatical allocations.

Also in response to low uptake, a more relaxed and flexible approach emerged concerning the definition of sabbaticals and the appropriate use of funds. In most cases, these adaptations were not seen to conflict with the criteria or the intentions of the scheme. The data from the investigation of low uptake of the scheme suggest that the assumption of a wider role by the LEA in some of the advisory strategies described above was the most significant factor in ensuring an increase in uptake of the scheme.

### **8.2.2 Funding**

Regarding the LEA's management of the allocation of the sabbatical funds to schools, the majority of schools reported no problems in obtaining funding from the LEA. A minority of LEAs had been energetic in their approach to funding. In one case, the officer concerned had devised a system of *mini-sabbaticals*, dividing a school's allocation into units of £2000, to offer more teachers access to the perceived benefits of the scheme as individuals. Elsewhere, an LEA had deliberately retained a portion of the funding in order to provide ongoing *structured support* for all teachers on sabbaticals.

In the relatively few schools, spread across several LEAs, where there had been a delay in receiving sabbaticals funding, the quality of the sabbatical had on several occasions been compromised. In one case, the participating headteacher described getting hold of the funding as '*Hell!*' and the delay had resulted in the headteacher having to carry out the entire sabbatical in the summer holidays (thus possibly rendering it no longer a sabbatical). Another headteacher suggested schools should fund sabbaticals themselves and then be reimbursed, to avoid any delay which might impinge on a sabbatical's effectiveness. Headteachers reported that early notification by the LEA that a sabbatical application had been successful, and that funds were to be released, was helpful in assisting them to limit any disruption.

### **8.2.3 Monitoring and support**

#### ***Monitoring***

Monitoring was not set out in the DfES guidelines as an LEA requirement. However, a minority of LEAs had deliberately taken steps to avoid the existing ‘loose holes’, which allowed schools to subsume the funds to their general budget or to channel them into other initiatives. In one LEA, schools had been asked to set up a formal monitoring process and provide the LEA with details on who would monitor the sabbatical, how they would report to governors at termly meetings, and how they would disseminate any benefits or changes in practice. All participating teachers in this LEA were required to produce a final report for the LEA as part of the annual report to governors.

#### ***Support***

Some LEAs took on an operational role beyond the guidelines set out by the DfES and offered support to schools at different stages of the sabbatical. In some cases, the LEA offered support with the planning of the sabbatical, through assisting and advising schools, providing them with ideas and problem solving.

In about a quarter of the schools there appeared to have been support from the LEA while the sabbatical was in progress. Three participating teachers, however, reported that they had been disappointed at the lack of ongoing support from their respective LEAs. Where support during the sabbatical was available, this had taken the form of informal discussions with link advisers, or contact with other LEA officers to obtain specific information relating to research content or relevant contacts. One LEA had established a customised support structure ‘*as part of the package*’ and arranged half-termly meetings to support sabbaticals in progress. A member of staff from the local HEI attended at regular intervals to talk about action research, and to offer opportunities for making links with the university. Although one participating teacher in this LEA had felt that such guidance was ‘misdirected’, others referred to the benefits of the meetings, particularly as opportunities for mutual support.

Although the demise of the scheme will inevitably alter the relationship of LEAs to this type of CPD activity (i.e. time-out from normal duties), the more general role of the LEA in supporting school improvement may be informed by the support that LEAs offered to schools under this scheme. Just as some LEAs had extended their role under the scheme, believing in the potential benefits, some may choose to continue to promote and support this model of CPD activity, it having demonstrated positive outcomes.

### **8.3 School-centred management issues**

The guidelines for the scheme were deliberately not prescriptive in order to allow schools the flexibility to design professional development experiences that they or their teachers needed. This resulted in responsibility for the sabbatical being placed very much in the hands of the individual schools. How they managed a sabbatical, if they chose to take one on, was therefore an important factor in its success.

### 8.3.1 Preparation

#### *Planning the allocation of time, including time for reflection*

The issues surrounding the timing of sabbaticals have been discussed in this report in Chapter 2, section 2.1 where the allocation of time to sabbaticals was set out and categorised and in Chapter 5, section 5.1 where the aspect of timing from the perspectives of the participating teachers was examined. In this section, timing is considered in terms of the school-centred management issues.

The timing of sabbaticals, and the allocation of time within them, appeared to be a significant factor in the sabbatical's perceived success. With regard to planning, in 25 per cent of cases the time needed to complete the designated sabbatical task had been underestimated due to a variety of reasons, including unexpected problems with arranging visits to host institutions or other schools, or an unrealistic assessment of the extent to which a participating teacher could remain detached from school concerns when the sabbatical was carried out on school premises.

A minority of participating teachers regretted the fact that insufficient time had been allowed for reflection. To some extent this depended on the nature of the sabbatical: those who had constructed a hectic timetable often found themselves bereft of time to take stock. Teachers who had not over-committed themselves in this way fared better in this respect. The majority of interviewees valued time for reflection and the importance of planning for it was a recurring theme in the data.

#### *Funding*

Most schools agreed that the funding was sufficient, and in a few cases it was seen as 'generous', leaving enough after supply cover had been paid for to enable the participating teacher to buy sabbatical-related resources such as IT equipment, course books or specialist materials for learning support. Some headteachers pointed out that the sufficiency of the funding depended to some extent on the nature of the sabbatical. Although ideally more funding might have enhanced the quality of the sabbatical, the school chose the content and, in their view, it was up to the school to tailor it to fit the funding or to find additional funds elsewhere. In one instance, the Education Action Zone had paid for additional supply time to allow the participating teacher to finish writing a book on community relations. Elsewhere, additional funding had been secured to cover the cost of extra resources for a participating art teacher's work with an artist. Where the sabbatical involved a trip abroad, in association with an HEI or LEA in the UK, the funding was used to pay for cover and the host institution was occasionally involved in supplying matched funding towards the cost of the trip.

Many headteachers displayed considerable creativity in their approach to devising sabbaticals and deploying funding. In one case, the funding had been used to 'overstaff' the science department. An extra teacher, as opposed to a supply teacher, had been employed full time, in order to release the members of the department from a full timetable for a concentrated drive towards implementation of the new key stage 3 science curriculum. Elsewhere, a participating headteacher had used the funding to devolve some responsibilities to other staff. While some headteachers discerned this kind of flexibility inherent in the scheme's approach to funding, a view endorsed, in

some cases, by the LEA, others seemed to have been restricted by a more literal interpretation of the expectation that the money should be spent on supply.

The sabbaticals scheme attracted £6,000 extra funding for schools. In future, the unavailability of this funding is likely to result in a much more searching analysis of value for money from headteachers. Though almost all regarded sabbaticals as worthwhile investments, it remains to be seen if this will be the case when the required investment involves internal budgets.

### **8.3.2 Supply cover and creative staff management**

#### ***Supply cover***

Arranging cover for the participating teacher was one of the major inhibiting factors in setting up sabbaticals, and many schools chose not to set up sabbaticals for this reason. According to interviewees in schools that had undertaken sabbaticals, arranging cover continued to be a cause of acute concern in the majority of schools.

In terms of the availability of supply, opinions varied as to whether it was easier to obtain cover for a single block of time, or for a series of ‘scattered’ days. In one school, for example, the headteacher referred to the advantage of being able to ‘negotiate a discount’ on the weekly rate, because the sabbatical had taken the form of a six week block.

Just over half of all the schools had employed supply teachers to some extent, with varying degrees of success. In half of these cases, the supply teacher was already known to the school and there were said to have been no problems. Where the supply teacher was unfamiliar with the school, the quality of cover was attributed by interviewees to the competence and experience of this individual. In a number of schools, the SMT ‘slightly rewrote the timetable’ and moved the supply teacher around every week, in order to diffuse any negative impact on pupils. Some headteachers had paid extra money to secure advanced skills teachers (ASTs) to provide supply cover. Others had booked the person they wanted well in advance, and identified the need for advance warning of sabbaticals to enable SMTs to plan effective cover.

However, many headteachers regarded supply cover as ‘unacceptable’ because of the potential disruption to pupil progress and behaviour, and the corresponding extra workload for teachers. This was seen to be a particular issue for schools in challenging circumstances. Special schools were particularly concerned to avoid the need to engage teachers without specialist skills and experience. Three LEA officers had encouraged headteachers to consider sabbaticals ‘disaggregated through the year’ to make it easier for schools to cover sabbaticals internally. Other LEAs had suggested using weekends and holidays in order to avoid the supply issue, and in one LEA this was alleged to have been the ‘most successful model’. One might question, however, how far such an approach amounted to providing a sabbatical experience for the teachers concerned.



### *Creative staff management strategies*

The interviews revealed that a range of strategies involving the judicious deployment of staff had continued to evolve in order to obviate the need for supply cover altogether. Headteachers commented that being informed of the allocation of sabbaticals well in advance was very important for planning. A few schools had received enough notice to be able to plan the participating teacher's timetable for the following year in such a way that the sabbatical could be catered for with minimum disruption to pupils.

A minority of headteachers attributed the perceived success of completed sabbaticals to the school's well-established and systematic approach to planning and 'teamwork'. Nevertheless, the comments of participating teachers and colleagues in some institutions suggested headteachers were unaware of, or preferred to gloss over, any disruption or increase in workload that had actually occurred. Disruption during the sabbatical is discussed in section 8.3.3 below.

Where the participating teacher was part-time, s/he was in some cases paid to undertake the sabbatical in their own time. Some schools had required participating teachers on 'scattered' sabbaticals to arrange the times they were absent in order to accommodate the provision of internal cover. One participating teacher, for example, had spent Thursdays on sabbatical, as that was the day her/his class was involved with other groups in team teaching activities.

The range of alternative solutions to supply cover identified by interviewees:

- use of a part-time teacher, paid to work on their days off
- use of a school's permanent 'floating teacher'
- use of retired or ex-teachers
- spreading cover between colleagues and/or non-teaching support staff
- the participating teacher selected had no class of their own
- the sabbatical took place outside school time (half-term, weekends or holidays, especially trips abroad which often used at least one week of holiday time)
- the participating teacher remained in school (and sometimes used non-contact time for much of the sabbatical): not teaching but available if the need arose
- the school employed prospective recruits, including NQTs or students (retaining students after teaching practice)
- the sabbatical took the form of a teacher exchange.

Where the participating teacher was the headteacher, the deputy frequently became the acting head and, in spite of the extra work, this was often agreed by those concerned to have been valuable professional development which resulted, in some cases, in the deputy's promotion to headship elsewhere. Where a senior teacher assumed the deputy's responsibilities at the same time, the staff development was said to have been replicated accordingly.

Sabbaticals attracted extra funding to the school and therefore staff were willing to be more flexible in order to accommodate the sabbatical. The research indicated the need for careful monitoring of flexible approaches which may amount to unsuitable working patterns for staff, such as undertaking a considerable amount of work in their own time. However, experience of sabbaticals does suggest that there are appropriate

strategies for releasing teachers from contact hours in order to undertake work on their own, or on the school's development. Such creativity might be deployed to provide time-out for teachers even in the absence of an externally funded scheme.

### 8.3.3 Disruption and extra workload

#### *Disruption*

A certain degree of disruption was frequently seen as the unavoidable 'downside' to sabbaticals and had to be accommodated for the sake of the potential benefits. Where the participating teacher had been the headteacher, the perceived effect on the school tended to be one of stasis: whole-school development had been on hold in their absence. With regard to other staff, the potential negative effects of teacher absence on pupils' behaviour and learning preoccupied heads and participating teachers in the schools that had taken up the opportunity for a sabbatical.

Generally speaking, pupils in schools which had covered the participating teacher's absence internally appeared to have experienced less disruption than those where supply teachers unknown to the school had been employed, although the extra workload for teachers in these schools could be considerable. Just over half of the schools had used supply to some extent, and in just under half of these cases, the fact that the supply teacher already worked regularly at the school was seen as crucial in the decision to use external cover. In spite of widespread reluctance to use unfamiliar supply teachers, in almost a third of schools that did, agreement was unanimous on minimum disruption to pupils, with some participating teachers praising the supply teacher's competence and professionalism. In all schools relying on supply, successful cover was frequently related to the degree of preparation and collaboration between the participating teacher and supply teacher in advance.

It may be worth noting that, in six of these schools, the experience of a different teacher was regarded as a benefit to pupils, and occasionally also to staff. In three cases, the supply teacher had been a man, and this in itself had been seen as a stimulating experience for pupils accustomed to an all-female staff. In two of the schools, the supply teachers' particular specialisms were seen to have injected a dose of creativity into the school's everyday curriculum. Elsewhere, an infant teacher thought that working with the supply teacher had helped the class to become more independent. In one school, the arrival of a talented and enthusiastic supply teacher had been 'a breath of fresh air for the staff as well as the children' according to the headteacher.

In other schools, problems with behaviour had occurred, especially when pupils had experienced a series of different supply teachers. Evidence from the follow-up interviews conducted with a sub-sample of schools suggested that in a small minority of schools, repercussions from a class teacher's absence were not always temporary. In one school, where pupils' learning and behaviour had suffered due to a succession of inadequate supply teachers, the damage caused to the children was apparent long after the end of the sabbatical: *'The only regret [concerning the sabbatical] is this negative impact on the children which we are still trying to heal'* (headteacher, follow-up interview).

In terms of the quality of pupils' work, most participating teachers appeared to accept that they would have to recover 'lost ground' on their return. The headteacher in one school reported that the end of key stage assessment test results had suffered in direct consequence of a teacher's sabbatical. In a few cases, it was reported that parents were said to have been unsettled at the participating teacher's absence.

The level of disruption in a small minority of schools had been particularly serious. One special school had employed a mainstream supply teacher who was ill-equipped to deal with the severe learning difficulties of its pupils. Elsewhere, a head of department was selected as the participating teacher and then carried out the planning with no further involvement from the SMT. The participating teacher did not appear to have discussed plans for the sabbatical, or provision for cover, with any of the departmental staff. The headteacher acknowledged that the ensuing problems derived from the failure of communication both between the participating teacher and the SMT, and between the participating teacher and his department:

*If there was a weakness it was communication within school, about how it was going to work - how it was going to happen ... I think as a management group we have learned a lot about how we dot the i's and cross the t's.*  
(headteacher).

In some schools, there was disagreement between interviewees, with headteachers claiming there had been minimum disruption while participating teachers and/or colleagues asserted the contrary. SMT members may have been unaware of any problems arising in the classroom, or keen to present them in a positive light. In one secondary school, the CPD co-ordinator felt everything had run very smoothly, but the participating teacher said s/he was still having problems with a key stage 4 class who had resented her absences the previous year.

### ***Extra workload***

Just under half of the schools reported extra workload as a direct consequence of the sabbatical. In the case of participating teachers who were senior teachers, management duties had been covered by the headteacher, or delegated to other members of the SMT. Other participating teachers' workloads had, as far as possible, been passed on to colleagues who could offer a similar area of expertise, and/or previous experience with the particular pupils. In primary schools, the role of teaching assistants as a '*steadying influence*' was valued, and in some cases teaching assistants were said to have benefited from the extra responsibility.

In the majority of schools, the extra workload appears to have caused little resentment towards individual participating teachers, although at times interviewees gave the impression that the extent of extra work for colleagues had not been anticipated in the initial stages, and that senior managers were unaware of the pressure that had been placed on other staff.

Evidence from follow-up interviews suggests that, in terms of limiting disruption and extra-workload, strategically timing the sabbatical was of great benefit to schools.

*You have to time [the sabbatical] right, weigh up the inevitable disruption very carefully and be aware of the extra workload that comes from having a staff member out of school ... the sabbaticals we have had have been very powerful in terms of their impact on the school but this is because the time and the conditions were absolutely right (headteacher, follow-up interview).*

Over half of all the participating teachers acknowledged a heavy workload for themselves as a result of the sabbatical. A small minority had been required to remain in school and to use non-contact periods for sabbatical activities. In cases where the nature of the sabbatical involved the participating teachers' presence in a non-teaching capacity in school, their sabbatical time had frequently been eroded by requests to resume their normal responsibilities.

It seemed that most participating teachers had encountered extra work on their return to school, either resettling pupils academically and/or emotionally after a supply teacher, or tackling paperwork. At the same time, the data suggested that extra workload was at least partly related to the attitude of participating teachers themselves. Numerous individuals said they did not like '*leaving colleagues in the lurch*'. Whether pressure was put on them by SMT or not, a sense of guilt pursued many teachers into their sabbaticals, impelling them to return to school at intervals, to keep in touch with their pupils, to catch up with administrative or academic responsibilities, and perhaps also to see for themselves how the school was managing without them. This pervasive 'guilt complex' was frequently noted by LEA officers and highlighted by a number of headteachers and participating teacher alike.

*It took a few weeks to not feel guilty about walking through town centre in the middle of the day. Six weeks is not long enough to relieve all the guilt (participating teacher).*

However, despite these problems, there was evidence in only one case that the school regretted having embarked upon a sabbatical.

#### **8.3.4 Support and monitoring during the sabbatical**

A minority of participating teachers said they had received no support during their sabbaticals. In the cases where they felt they had had little choice in the content of the sabbatical because they saw it as imposed by the SMT, this had been a cause of resentment. However, where the content of the sabbatical coincided with their personal interests, participating teachers had sometimes preferred to be left to carry out their research undisturbed.

The amount and nature of support available to participating teachers during sabbaticals was frequently difficult to determine because interviewees did not always distinguish between moral or practical support related to the sabbatical itself, and the obligatory support colleagues provided in the form of cover for the participating teacher's lessons. In some cases, individual colleagues had been particularly helpful. Several participating teachers referred to practical support from colleagues who had taken part in observations, or in experiments with specific materials related to the sabbatical research. Three participating teachers had asked pupils to carry out some research on their behalf, and had appreciated their willing co-operation. Fifteen per

cent of participating teachers identified headteachers as a source of moral support. In other schools, headteachers were said to have combined support with a monitoring role. A number of teachers had received detailed guidance, both in planning and carrying out research, from members of host institutions including HEIs and the schools they visited.

## **8.4 Managing the monitoring, evaluation and dissemination of sabbaticals**

### **8.4.1 Monitoring and evaluation**

While the DfES offered no guidelines regarding monitoring, in a minority of schools internal monitoring had taken place at the instigation of headteachers. This tended to consist of regular consultations between the participating teacher and the headteacher or another member of the SMT. In one school, the participating teacher wrote interim reports for the governors every term, in addition to the final report. A participating teacher elsewhere had made an appointment with the LEA link adviser to come and see what s/he had been doing, because s/he felt it was important that 'there was some sort of closure at the end'. Another participating teacher, who had perceived the final report as 'a target to work towards', was not alone in revealing a professional dependence on structure, and intellectual immersion in a culture of measurable targets.

In 26 schools where the sabbatical had resulted in specific changes in practice, 'ongoing evaluation' was said to be still in progress after the sabbatical had ended. Where the participating teacher was a headteacher, and the sabbatical centred on a performance management target, progress would be discussed regularly with governors throughout. Those participating teachers whose sabbaticals had taken the form of a university course sometimes referred to monitoring, rather than mentoring, by HEI staff. A CPD co-ordinator in one school believed it would be important to evaluate individual sabbaticals as they became more popular, but pointed out that this might add to the extra workload they could bring into schools: '*As other teachers begin to take part, we will need an internal way of auditing what they do and that is a time-factor for the school after the event*'.

A final written report was said to have been completed in just under half of the sabbaticals included in the sample, and reports were expected from a further 18 per cent. For many of the remaining sabbaticals, a report as such had been felt to be inappropriate. There was a frequent perception that where the sabbatical involved a project directly intended to benefit the school, '*evaluation and dissemination revolves round the product, rather than around the process of the sabbatical itself*'.

### **8.4.2 Dissemination**

The nature and extent of the dissemination which occurred, varied according to views on the relevance of the content, and also according to the commitment to sabbaticals prevailing in the school and, or the LEA. Two distinct types of dissemination emerged:

- i) dissemination of sabbatical content

- ii) dissemination relating to the sabbatical as a form of staff development.

The two were not necessarily mutually exclusive and in some cases both types of dissemination were undertaken.

### ***Dissemination of sabbatical content***

In the case of type (i), 24 per cent of sabbaticals were explicitly stated to have had dissemination built-in at the planning stage. Some, but not all, of these were closely related to the SDP, and a minority of these schools had set aside specific funds for dissemination. In one school, time and money had been allocated for one staff meeting and one CPD session to brief staff on the new SEN database. In another, CPD on special needs teaching was a specific component of the sabbatical itself. In some schools, building dissemination into planning included consultation with colleagues to ensure their needs were taken into account, for example, on lunchtime practices or departmental needs relating to IT provision. Such consultation was often valued by interviewees as a way of conferring a degree of ownership of the sabbatical on other staff, and thus avoiding any potential resentment towards the participating teacher.

Over half of the sabbaticals investigated were said to have been disseminated within the school, either across the whole school or within a specific department. In a minority of cases, there was dissemination to parents and pupils. In 21 per cent of sabbaticals which had been disseminated within the school, the dissemination had taken the form of CPD. Elsewhere, dissemination had been less formal. Typical examples included the piloting of a scheme of work with continuing review by departmental colleagues, or team teaching to enable the participating teacher to familiarise colleagues with a new approach to special needs.

In contrast to the success of this approach, a participating teacher elsewhere expressed reservations about the value of ‘cascading’ staff development. S/he had been ‘fired up’ by the experience of observing good practice on the training of teaching assistants in another school but the combination of the summer break and the pressure of a new academic year had made it a struggle to keep up the momentum and to communicate the initial enthusiasm to other staff. Ideally, this deputy head thought that everyone should experience the CPD for themselves, because ‘every time something is passed on, it loses some of the essence of the original inspiration’.

### ***Dissemination of the sabbatical as a form of CPD***

With regard to type (ii), where the dissemination related to the sabbatical as a form of staff development, one sabbatical had been used to compile an information booklet offering a range of possible options for sabbaticals, in terms of format and content. A number of participating teachers had made a decision to keep a sabbatical diary to monitor their own progress. Such journals recorded a sabbatical’s potential pitfalls for the benefit of future participants, and were disseminated within the school and/or on the LEA website. Some LEAs organised specific meetings or conferences to disseminate teachers’ experiences of sabbaticals successfully completed.

In cases where the emphasis of the sabbatical had been on personal development, dissemination of the content was sometimes felt by the school to be irrelevant because the sabbatical had been so closely ‘tailored to the individual teacher’s own interests’. In such cases, however, when the participating teacher had returned notably invigorated and refreshed, implicit dissemination of the value of the scheme in this respect was frequently apparent in the positive comments of colleagues and headteachers.

### ***Dissemination at the LEA level***

The LEA approach to dissemination varied. One LEA interviewee pointed out that ‘if the participating teacher leaves the school, the CPD is lost’ unless it is disseminated, first to other staff, and then to other schools. Another LEA had seconded a headteacher full-time for the following year to co-ordinate the dissemination of the content of sabbaticals. In an LEA where the teaching of thinking skills was a priority of the LEA’s Education Development Plan, one school described dissemination of an LEA-supported sabbatical on thinking skills as ‘intensive and ongoing’. In some LEAs, the outcomes of a sabbatical were disseminated either as-and-when they were seen to be appropriate, or according to commitment or practicability within the LEA. A minority of LEA interviewees made it clear they subscribed to the view that the individual teacher benefit was justifiable in itself. Two participating teachers in LEAs that had not requested any dissemination expressed frustration at the lack of opportunities to communicate their findings beyond their own schools.

While some schools were asked to present the outcomes of sabbaticals to the LEA in the form of resources for the intranet, reports, or formal presentations at conferences or special interest groups, others disseminated direct to fellow institutions. It seemed that in a number of LEAs, the scheme had created a momentum for schools to collaborate, to create or develop networks and share good practice. A head of art, for example, had notified neighbouring schools of the availability of new departmental resources s/he had produced. A CPD co-ordinator elsewhere commented on ‘the strong collaborative element between schools in the LEA’ and explained that the headteacher had sent other local headteachers a copy of the final report.

### ***Dissemination at a national level***

In a few cases, dissemination had taken place on a national scale. Outcomes from these sabbaticals related to both types of dissemination. Those relating to sabbaticals as a form of CPD included an anthology of suggestions for sabbaticals and methods for implementing them. With regard to sabbatical content, one participating teacher had been asked to write for ‘peer reviewed academic journals’, another had been to visit one of the principal subject officers at the QCA. The outcome of a third sabbatical was being vigorously promoted by the LEA: ‘anyone within the EAZ who decides they want to follow our system for setting homework can now get funding of £5,000 from the EAZ to do so’. The participating teacher on this sabbatical had given talks to staff in other schools, and the CD-ROM s/he had produced had been made nationally available.

### ***Longitudinal evidence of dissemination***

There is evidence from the follow-up phase of the research of the longevity of dissemination, beyond the sabbatical period. In many of the 39 schools surveyed, dissemination on the sabbatical activity was ongoing: 'It's not something we do and then stop. It is an ongoing process'. In the majority of cases this took the form of continuous development within the school.

Strategies employed by schools to engender ongoing dissemination:

- continuing dissemination within staff meetings
- the setting up of working groups who meet regularly
- other types of weekly strategic meetings e.g. within curriculum groups
- running observation lessons for staff
- providing INSET or other training.

In some cases, the dissemination process subsequent to the sabbatical had opened up a lasting dialogue between practitioners, or with members of the community, that had not previously existed, or been possible:

*[The sabbatical] was about disseminating ... and conversations became broader. People in the playschool came to ask her "We've got this problem, what can we do?" That dialogue was really useful (headteacher, follow-up interview).*

In some schools, ongoing dissemination of the sabbatical had extended beyond the school to other schools in the LEA. In one case, a later development from the sabbatical was that the school had become a beacon school, and had been using this role to pass on their experiences to other schools. In another case, the work achieved during a sabbatical project led to the participating teacher being selected by the DfES to appear in a 'best practice' video for other practitioners. Certainly, successful dissemination led to developments for schools as 'professional learning communities' both within the school, and in its widest sense. The extent of the ongoing or emergent dissemination identified in the follow-up phase of the research indicates a longevity of impacts that may be continuing still.

## **8.5 Summary and conclusions**

According to interviewees, the most important considerations for planning and managing sabbaticals were time and communication. Headteachers emphasised the need to be alerted to the allocation of sabbaticals well in advance, in order to plan the effective deployment of funding and staff. The timing of the sabbatical also had to be right, in terms of wider school priorities. Participating teachers stressed the need for advance warning, so that making arrangements for attending courses, or visiting host institutions, did not occupy the sabbatical period itself.

Communication between all individuals likely to be affected by the sabbatical was seen as essential in order to minimise the potential disruption and extra workload, and to avoid resentment and misunderstanding. Consultation with colleagues at the planning stage was seen as an effective means of generating positive attitudes towards the sabbatical within the school.



Important considerations:

- in the absence of clearly defined responsibilities for the LEAs, where LEAs had assumed a wider, operational role, there was higher uptake of the sabbaticals scheme
- headteachers continued to exercise a considerable amount of creativity in their deployment of funding
- providing cover for participating teachers continued to be a matter of acute concern in the majority of schools
- almost half of the schools evolved alternative strategies in order to avoid employing external supply teachers
- in a minority of schools, internal ongoing evaluation had taken place at the instigation of headteachers
- the nature and extent of dissemination varied according to views on the relevance of the content, and also according to the commitment to sabbaticals which prevailed in the school and/or the LEA.

The overall impression from comments on the management of the scheme suggests that schools' expertise in planning and managing sabbaticals developed with the number of sabbaticals experienced. A number of headteachers and CPD co-ordinators reported that the process was 'easier' the second time round. The fact that SMT members had no difficulty in recognising where they had improved, or where improvement was necessary, appears to support this view. Of the 39 schools studied in the follow-up phase of this research, 24 had had at least one further sabbatical in the school. Many headteachers stressed the benefit to their school of having had multiple sabbaticals.

Timing the sabbaticals emerged as an important consideration for headteachers, similarly the opportunity to have more than one sabbatical gave schools an opportunity to understand how different kinds of projects could be accommodated under the scheme. Such a learning experience for schools would seem to be cumulative. If the scheme for sabbaticals had continued, the range of sabbaticals experienced might, over time, contribute to a repertoire of strategies to meet each new sabbatical's individual requirements. Schools would learn to anticipate potential 'pitfalls', and as successful sabbaticals were completed, might become more confident and more adept in responding to the unique opportunities for staff development, while deflecting any potential negative effects on the school itself.

It would appear that some of the solutions to managers' challenges in enabling staff to take time-out for CPD may not have been funding-related. Certainly, the availability of extra funding through the scheme both provided and enabled a scale of undertaking that might otherwise not have been possible. However, it may be that the creative approaches of headteachers and teachers in undertaking sabbaticals could provide ideas for the future use of time-outs as a tool for individual CPD, whether or not related to whole-school development.



# Chapter 9

## Concluding comments

### 9.1 Introduction

The perceptions of participating teachers and headteachers – that sabbaticals resulted in impressive outcomes – were corroborated in many cases by those of teaching colleagues, school governors and in some cases, pupils, all of whom might have less reason to ‘talk up’ the positive aspects of sabbaticals. After the scheme’s very hesitant start, considerable enthusiasm for sabbaticals developed amongst those individual teachers and schools who had availed themselves of the opportunity.

Two broad aspects of the scheme appealed to many interviewees. These were the breadth of opportunity that the scheme offered schools and the extent of the outcomes that sabbaticals generated.

#### *The breadth of opportunity*

It was a notable feature of the scheme that it provided the possibility for very diverse approaches to CPD activities to be undertaken. Working in a garden centre, devising a numeracy recovery programme and completing an MA might not normally attract support from the same limited funding source. Nor might an expedition to the Atacama Desert or creating an early-years library. The opportunity to identify their own aims and activities was warmly welcomed by both headteachers and participating teachers. It fulfilled a number of needs:

- to address specific and particular school or individual needs, rather than externally prescribed ones
- to encourage a sense of professional autonomy
- to capitalise on the motivation of individuals.

In some interviews the conventional ‘one-fits-all’ type of training or INSET made available to schools was compared unfavourably with the very high levels of satisfaction and achievement being claimed for the tailor-made CPD activities undertaken as a result of this scheme.

*I had done the NOF course for computer aided language learning and I hadn’t managed to make much of a change to my actual practice - so this was a chance to develop my skills and knowledge further (participating teacher).*

Many interviewees dwelt on the enabling nature of the scheme when making recommendations about the future of sabbaticals. It would appear that both teachers and school managers would support the maintenance of a structure that enabled schools and individual teachers to work together to identify development needs and to specify the means of addressing them.

### *The extent of positive outcomes*

The volume of outcomes reported in Chapter 6, and endorsed by participating teachers, headteachers, teaching colleagues and others, was extensive. That so many were also able to report outcomes leading to actual changes in working practices, may be encouraging to policy makers. Evidence from follow-up interviews indicated that the outcomes reported in the initial interviews were sustained and, in a few cases, their impact was increasing or new outcomes were emerging.

While outcomes leading to change and development were widely reported, the significance of the affirming impact of sabbaticals should not be overlooked. It might be argued that such affirmation can lead to complacency, but this was not the impression generated through the interviews. Teachers tended to go out in search of new information, skills and insights, in the belief that they had much to learn. They actively sought to benefit their schools, prioritising this above their own benefits. Frequently, the experience informed them that they were already doing a good job, often in difficult circumstances, and that they enjoyed their work and wished to continue with it. Far from generating complacency, affirmation appeared to contribute to increased motivation.

## **9.2 Impact of sabbaticals on attitudes to time-out for CPD in the future**

Researchers sought to establish the extent to which the experience of sabbaticals had affected the attitude of headteachers to a form of CPD that entailed teachers being released from normal duties – time-out.

Under the sabbaticals scheme, the shortage of funding was not an issue for schools when considering the desirability of setting up sabbaticals. Indeed, the possibility of attracting an additional £6,000 was very much the attraction for some schools, especially for those who were aware of the flexibility that the scheme offered. Without the scheme to fully fund sabbaticals, schools are in the position of having to prioritise these kinds of activity against all the other demands on scarce resources.

Follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of 39 headteachers, undertaken after the demise of the scheme had become known, revealed a wide range of attitudes to the future of time-out for teachers. In every case, the activities that the scheme had enabled were highly valued and, along with so many other possible activities, sabbaticals would be a desirable part of the school's development armoury if funding permitted. But how high, in a situation of limited funding, did the use of time-out rank in a school's priorities? There was some indication that experience of sabbaticals had increased the interest in enabling time-out, even in the changed funding context. The following categories illustrate the range of attitudes held by headteachers.

### ***Already committed to time-out***

Five headteachers were so committed to the idea of using time-out for teachers that they were either already funding these kinds of activity, or were finding ways of enabling them without additional funding. One had identified another funding stream (Creative Partnerships) and another had been finding ways to enable teachers to take time out even before the sabbatical scheme. A third was actively seeking alternative funds for a specific idea.

Several headteachers described how they were building some flexibility within timetables that could provide internal supply cover for time-out. One said that as a manager, she felt she has more control over the direction of CPD taken during the normal working day and could ask teachers to focus it on school development priorities: *'You can say "I want you to go here and do this."'*

Another headteacher was generating links with other schools and HEIs to enable more outward-looking activities. None of the above headteachers contemplated sabbatical activities of the scale that the scheme itself had enabled. Although one used the term *mini-sabbaticals*, another eschewed the term sabbatical believing that it sent out the 'wrong signals':

*There is a difficulty with the notion of sabbatical. If the question was rephrased "Would you consider using standards money next year to support teachers working on agreed projects for the school?" then the answer would be "Yes". I have a problem with the word 'sabbatical'. It's a difficult word – it means 'do something else rather than doing work, away from what goes on', almost a rest, in fact. So there is a difficulty in that word (headteacher, follow-up interview).*

### ***Keen to explore time-out***

Ten headteachers expressed enthusiasm to explore the possibility of enabling more teachers to take time-out as a CPD or school development strategy. Provisos included that the timing be right – resulting in minimal disruption within the school – that the duration be manageable and that the funding could be identified. Four were very explicit about the need to be much more rigorous or 'stringent'.

*I actually find it difficult to think of spending money other than on something that's very, very important. And I think some of my colleagues may in a fanciful way say 'Well I think it's just as important to spend time away from school' or, 'I'm using the sabbatical money because it's really good that we just get to know each other a bit more'. I find fanciful uses of money like that difficult (headteacher, follow-up interviews).*

Another head felt that the school would continue to fund these types of projects, but with more monitoring of projects.

*Inevitably when you delegate accountability for the resources you generate closer monitoring and tighter structures and things. If it was our own money we would be so much more aware of the opportunity costs, in terms of spending the sum of money on something else. But we will still consider it,*

*because it is a model that we have now seen working in different ways*  
(headteacher, follow-up interviews).

Another referred to the need for stringent criteria in defining what would constitute a worthwhile way forward.

### ***Greater commitment to teacher-defined CPD***

The follow-up interviews elicited comments from three headteachers that reinforced the widely held view that enabling teachers to define and address their own CPD needs was a very positive experience. All three were seeking ways of promoting this approach, even if it was not going to involve time-out. One spoke of enabling teachers to 'follow an area that is close to their own heart'. It was apparent in each case that the experience of sabbaticals had supported the commitment to this approach.

### ***Unlikely to pursue the idea of time-outs***

Twenty headteachers, just over half of those involved in follow-up interviews, emerged as less than likely to pursue time-out as a CPD or school development tool. Within that number, various positions were apparent. Two believed that the sabbaticals under the scheme had been a bonus. *'No, it's a luxury really; we're not at the luxury stage'*. Five, while being very keen to enable more such experiences, expressed the view that the need to pay salaries would preclude them being able to do so. Nine referred to there simply not being enough money available to contemplate making this form of CPD a priority. It should be reiterated that in almost every case, the experience of the sabbatical had been positive, but not to the extent that repeating the experience could be prioritised within expected funding shortages.

## **9.3 Considerations for those contemplating time-out as a form of CPD**

Whilst the sabbatical scheme itself is no longer continuing, the data suggests that schools learned a great deal about CPD of this nature. There was universal support within the sample for time-out as a type of CPD, regardless of the content of specific projects. All but one school in the sample stated that the investment was worthwhile in terms of the outcomes gained. Although the majority of headteachers questioned in follow-up interviews said it would be difficult to recreate sabbatical opportunities on the same scale from their own budget, a significant minority believed it would still be appropriate to consider scaled-down versions of time-out.

For those schools that may wish to contemplate the use of time-out from normal duties as a CPD strategy in the future, the following points are offered for consideration.

### 9.3.1 Initial Considerations

#### ***Should time-out as a CPD tool be offered as a one-off or as a rolling programme?***

Some schools sought to offer sabbaticals to all eligible teachers. Others offered specific individuals the opportunity to take time-out to address their own and/or the schools needs.

*Headteachers and school management will need to consider which approach best suits the context and needs of their school and what implications, for example concerning staff expectations or tension, may be raised by this choice.*

#### ***For what purposes is time-out appropriate?***

A number of activities undertaken on sabbaticals were only possible because teachers took time-out. For example:

- visiting other schools or organisations operating within the school day allowed teachers to see other professionals in the context of their work
- affective outcomes such as re-motivation, reinvigoration and the satisfaction of having the time to complete a task successfully were all attributed by interviewees to the practice of time-out
- projects or tasks that needed to be completed with some urgency also benefited from the concentration that sabbaticals allowed.

*Schools considering offering time-out to staff would need to consider what development aims could be addressed and what additional affective outcomes might be achieved by providing time-out for teachers. It may also be worth considering whether or not the school has any areas for development that may benefit significantly from accelerated completion.*

### 9.3.2 Initiating and planning time-out

#### ***How do you introduce the opportunity to your staff?***

Encouragement and enthusiasm for the scheme from SMTs reassured participants that their work would be fully supported. However, the data also suggests that teachers still tended to undervalue their own development, or give it less priority than addressing their pupils' or the school's needs. It was frequently suggested that providing teachers with examples of what could be achieved would serve to encourage and inspire.

*Headteachers and school management may wish to consider strategies for persuading staff that time-out from the classroom is an appropriate use of their time and will need to be definite about any requirements or parameters the school management wishes to impose on their use. Examples of projects conducted through time-out may encourage teachers to think of appropriate activities (e.g. would the case studies in this report resonate with them?).*

***Which teacher(s) should be offered the opportunity?***

Some schools chose to enable sabbaticals that were designed to develop the capacity of the individual participating teacher, while others chose to address a school development need through the activity. In most cases it was found that both purposes were addressed simultaneously and that it was possible to identify an individual in need of the former, who could deliver the latter.

*Headteachers and school management will need to decide if it is appropriate to focus time-out resources on a teacher in need of individual development or if it would be of more value to target limited resources and opportunities on developing school issues?*

***What planning processes need to be employed to ensure maximum impacts from time-out?***

In several schools the insufficient time allowed for planning the sabbatical activity impaired the effectiveness of the experience. Allowing sufficient lead-in time enabled schools to make preparations for managing the teacher's absence.

Appropriate supply cover was seen in many cases as the key to a successful sabbatical experience from the point of view of the school and the individual teacher.

*Headteachers and school management would need to consider how much time could be allowed for the member of staff to adequately plan for their time-out and if this should include time for the participating teacher to plan for their absence in consultation with the supply teacher.*

*Headteachers and school management may also wish to consider alternatives to bringing in external supply cover, which could result in less disruption for the school; for example, by using a permanent 'floating teacher', a part-time teacher or ex-teacher. However, it may be regarded as inappropriate to erode other teachers' non-contact time by asking them to cover for colleagues taking time-out, even on a quid pro quo basis.*

***How do you establish a timescale?***

The amount of time given to individual teachers in the sample ranged from a very few days to 30 days, either spread over time or concentrated in a block. Sabbaticals taken spread out over a significant period of time were perceived to be less disruptive for the teachers involved, as they were able to maintain contact with the school.

Sabbaticals taken as a concurrent block provided teachers with the opportunity focus solely on the activity, without the distraction of coming back into school in-between.



Particular times of year were also favoured for sabbaticals, such as after the end of key stage tests.

*Headteachers and school management would need to consider if it is appropriate from the point of view of the activity and from the point of view of the school, to take the time as a block or as a spread series of days. It may also be worth considering if there is a point during the school year at which the participant's teaching commitments are reduced.*

***Who should be responsible for planning time-out activities?***

The greatest consensus of aims resulted from sabbaticals in which the planning was shared between the participant and the school management and in which both parties were involved in defining the aims.

*Headteachers and school management may wish to consider sharing the planning of time-out with the participating teacher in order to ensure a consensus of intentions.*

***What external support might be available to assist with the planning process?***

Teachers in the sample found it helpful to talk to other teachers who had been, or were currently involved, in the sabbaticals scheme, in order to gain both initial ideas and support throughout the experience. A number of schools made use of local links, such as LEA business link advisors working in the area that constituted the sabbatical focus. Universities were also able to help with the planning of research based projects.

*Headteachers, school managers and participants may wish to consider accessing support from outside school, for example LEA advisors or local universities, during the planning process to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived from the time-out.*

*Where appropriate, existing courses, conferences or training sessions may be worth considering as components of the time-out.*

### **9.3.4 Management issues**

***What is effective management in the course of the sabbatical, in terms of ensuring maximum impact?***

Where headteachers and senior managers played an active role in supporting a sabbatical it was seen as particularly beneficial, especially for those projects which sought whole-school outcomes. Whilst allowing individual participants a high degree of ownership over the projects encouraged them to stay motivated and committed, maximum outcomes appear to have been obtained when a balance was struck in terms of the degree of SMT involvement.

A number of participants benefited from maintaining contact with their school during sabbaticals. However, this was not deemed appropriate in sabbaticals where the intention of the sabbatical was to provide an opportunity for refreshment.

*Headteachers and school managers will need to determine what degree of control over the project is appropriate for the senior management team to maintain once a time-out has been planned and agreed.*

*Participants may wish to consider maintaining contact with the school during their time-out to minimise feelings of isolation – except where this would be counter-productive to the task.*

### ***How do you ensure that appropriate dissemination takes place?***

Dissemination was seen as a key aspect of the sabbatical scheme in that it ensures longevity of the initial impacts for both the teacher and the school. Two forms of dissemination were identified:

- i) dissemination of the project content – in which project outcomes and any new skills and knowledge were shared (this was perceived as particularly relevant to projects that had a school development focus)
- ii) dissemination relating to sabbaticals as a form of staff development – in which participants passed on recommendations to other teachers considering sabbaticals.

Dissemination took place during sabbaticals primarily in the form of teacher-led, school-based INSET. On completion it was often widened out to include written reports for schools and to LEAs.

Headteachers, school managers and participants will need to consider what aspect of the time-out experience would be most beneficial for colleagues to be made aware of. This would require consideration by headteachers and school management of the degree of dissemination that could be reasonably expected from teachers participating in a time-out and whether this should be part of the experience or something conducted as an additional extra upon completion.

## **9.4 Conclusions**

### ***Relevance of sabbaticals to the DfES CPD strategy***

The new CPD strategy from the DfES focuses on ‘capacity building’. Four strands are identified under this heading:

- closer integration between CPD, performance management and school improvement
- building stronger infrastructure in schools
- increasing school awareness and use of activities that contribute to sustained changes in practice
- developing clearer expectation of the skills and knowledge and understanding of teachers in their first five years of teaching.

The activities undertaken as a result of the sabbaticals scheme were clearly seen by interviewees to contribute to some of these strands.

Many schools chose to set up sabbaticals in which a teacher's CPD was undertaken through addressing a school improvement need. By enabling a teacher to explore a new teaching approach, devise a new school policy or develop a school resource, and by providing the time and support to disseminate findings to the rest of the staff, such integration was successfully achieved. There was some evidence of performance management being involved, but by no means all schools had made that connection.

Where headteachers themselves undertook sabbaticals it was necessary for deputies to act-up temporarily, and this was seen to strengthen management capabilities. In some cases, heads returned to school with an altered approach to their own management style and role, and this was deemed to be beneficial.

Changes in practice, both at an institutional and individual level, were reported to result from many sabbaticals. Follow-up interviews with the sub-sample would suggest that these were sustained, at least over the limited period covered.

The fourth strand of capability building, concerning teachers in their first five years, was specifically beyond the remit of this scheme.

### ***Relationship to previous research***

Although considerable research into sabbaticals has been undertaken abroad, much of it concerned with the 'rest and recuperation' aspects of sabbaticals, this research offers the first substantial overview of sabbaticals as a tool for individual and school development in this country. As such it also provides evidence to support the findings of the EPPI Research Review (EPPI, 2003), which identified five elements of good practice in collaborative CPD:

- external expertise
- observation and feedback
- peer support
- scope for participants to plan their own development
- sustaining CPD to embed into practice.

Although this research does not cover exactly the same aspects of CPD, it echoes the findings of the EPPI research in significant ways.

Accessing external expertise, through meeting or working with other professionals within and beyond education, visits to schools and attendance at courses and conferences, were all deemed to be very valuable.

There was little evidence of observation and feedback as a specified strategy being part of sabbaticals. However, the opportunity for a teacher to be able to work alongside a colleague, for example in developing ICT skills or active learning techniques, appeared to have generated more open and collaborative approaches to professional development in many schools.

Similarly, peer support, not so much in the sense of mentoring as in enabling the opportunity to take time to learn, was essential to the success of many sabbaticals. A

willingness on the part of participating teachers and their colleagues to share learning from the sabbatical experience was apparent in many cases.

The scope to plan their own development emerged as possibly one of the most fundamental contributors to the generation of positive outcomes. To be able to tailor activities to individual needs, to be accorded professional status by being given that responsibility, and to be able to pursue personal interests while at the same time relating them to school development, were seen as very significant features.

It would be premature to suggest that this approach to CPD has been embedded into practice and it remains to be seen to what extent schools will choose to continue to use time out as a tool for CPD and school improvement once there is no dedicated funding stream.

However, on that point, perhaps the most encouraging finding of the research is the extent to which CPD went hand in hand with school improvement, according to the evidence from interviewees. The choice to invest in CPD is increasingly in the hands of school management teams. The findings of this research indicate that an investment in time-out as a form of CPD can reap considerable rewards for both the individual and the school.

Although the scheme was originally intended as a pilot in challenging schools before extending the opportunity to other types of schools, a decision was made in the Summer of 2003 to cease the programme on completion of the pilot. The benefits of sabbaticals were widely endorsed, both by headteachers and participating teachers who had experienced sabbaticals, and although most headteachers doubted the likelihood of being able to offer sabbaticals in the absence of a fully-funded scheme, some were actively exploring the possibility, in the light of positive experiences resulting from the scheme.

# Appendix

## Ten Sabbatical Case Studies

To exemplify the range of sabbaticals discussed in this report, ten case studies are presented. These relay the planning processes, foci and content and perceived outcomes of ten different sabbaticals, selected to represent a cross-section of the whole sample in terms of content and the context in which the sabbatical was conducted. The context is included to demonstrate how individual experiences related to the participants and the schools, and where appropriate, to show how this inhibited or facilitated the projects.

Between them the case studies illustrate all of the principal outcomes to arise from participation in the scheme, as discussed in Chapter 6. These are presented in the table at the foot of each case study, using the subheadings of the typology of outcomes discussed. Career development (see Chapter 6, section 6.6) is included as an additional category within the typology for those case studies where this was evident.

## Case Study 1

### Research into and the implementation of performance management strategies.

The teacher participating in this sabbatical had 25 years experience, in both primary and secondary schools, and whilst happy in her career, was looking for a new challenge. Her school was situated in an inner city area and it's 'challenges' stemmed from the socio-economic background of the pupils. The sabbatical scheme was introduced to the staff by the headteacher, who was enthusiastic about the opportunity, particularly what it offered in terms of rejuvenation. The participating teacher initially saw the scheme as a way of doing something different to her everyday role, and as her chance to take some much-needed time out of the classroom.

The children in that year group are the most challenging children I have ever come across. It was purely selfish to begin with. I just thought I need a break because they were dragging me down. On a personal level I was really suffering with those children. I thought it would help how I view those children when I come back to them. If I'm feeling energised when I come back it will help me finish off the year with them (*participating teacher*).

The proposed idea for the sabbatical was to research Performance Management (PM), a new approach within the teaching profession at the time. By studying this in detail, the participating teacher hoped to learn more about its potential benefits and how it could operate in practice.

*I was, and I believe some of my colleagues still are, very suspicious of Performance Management, that there is something lurking behind it to get at teachers. I thought if I could be positive about something, that could then permeate down through the staff (participating teacher).*

The format for the sabbatical was quickly decided on by the participant; however, the LEA was slow to confirm that the application had been successful. This meant planning had to be postponed, leaving the participating teacher feeling like '*a fish out of water*' waiting to hear whether or not she could go ahead. Once confirmation had come through, things were quickly put into place with the assistance of the LEA business education link advisor, who was cited as instrumental in setting up contacts.

The supply teacher employed to cover the absence resulting from the sabbatical was known to the school and the participating teacher. Because of their existing working relationship, the two teachers were able to plan effectively in advance, keeping the disruption for the children to a minimum. With everything arranged in school, the sabbatical took place over a consecutive block of six weeks, in the latter half of the summer term, 2002. It consisted of secondary research concerning the theory and implementation of PM, making this a whole school issue focussed sabbatical. The sabbatical included background research and visits to local businesses to speak to people involved in PM. The organisations visited included Asda and the Police Service, to see how PM currently operates in the private and public sectors.

The main outcome for the participating teacher, concurrent with her initial intentions, was an increased understanding of PM and its implementation. This resulted in promotion for the participant to the SMT, initially to lead on the implementation of PM in the school. Affective outcomes were also evident for the participating teacher.

*I felt a different person. I was working hard still but the pressures in this job, in teaching are just phenomenal. I had other pressures on this sabbatical but they were self-imposed. I worked very hard but it was something I wanted to do and it wasn't imposed on me from above. That put a whole different slant on things (participating teacher).*

Information collected through a follow up interview with the headteacher affirms that this increase in motivation and professional autonomy was sustained beyond the end of the sabbatical, and was in fact the main enduring impact. Institutional outcomes included an induction booklet outlining the school's performance management strategy, and training delivered by the participant. The overall success of the project, in particular the increased motivation of the participant, encouraged a further three teachers to take up sabbaticals of their own. The key strength of this sabbatical appears to have been the determination of the participating teacher to make the most of the opportunity.

*I was determined to have a successful time on sabbatical. Whatever barriers were put up in front of me, I would have got round them (participating teacher).*

## **Outcomes**

<b>Informational Material and provisionary New awareness</b>	<i>New awareness of what performance management is and why it can be beneficial for professional development. The sabbatical resulted in the production of a guide to performance management, which is available to all staff.</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>A high impact on the teacher motivation; coming out of a very difficult year group to do something rewarding had sustained impacts on her motivation and commitment.</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>The participant increased her knowledge of performance management strategies and theories.</i>
<b>Changes in practice</b>	<i>New performance management procedures introduced.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>The school gained a new member of SMT. Staff in the school had someone they could seek advice from regarding performance management. CPD in the school was affected as colleagues saw the potential of sabbaticals and took them up themselves.</i>

## Case Study 2      An investigation into strategies for improving pupil attendance and punctuality.

This secondary school served a large council estate in the Midlands. A high proportion of the pupils faced disruptive home lives, often resulting in patterns of non-attendance. A key element of the School Improvement Plan, at the time of the sabbatical, was the development of strategies for improving attendance.

*It is a major issue, just as it is in many schools with challenging circumstances (participating teacher).*

Because it was the first time a scheme of this nature had been offered, the headteacher in this school did not open the opportunity up to all staff. Instead, he kept it within the senior management team and persuaded his Assistant Headteacher to take the first sabbatical.

*I was keen to get my senior staff out on a rolling programme (headteacher).*

Because of the Assistant head's responsibility for attendance, and the fact that this had been highlighted as an area of weakness in a recent OFTSED report, it seemed the natural focus for the research. The research included visits to other schools in similar circumstances to see what they do to tackle attendance and punctuality; background reading; and consultation with various organisations working with children absent from school. A close working relationship was established with the local Education Welfare Service (EWS).

*They [EWS] appreciate the fact that I was given the six weeks to look into it – they think 'There's a school that takes it seriously'. I think it has strengthened the working links between me and the EWS; they became more involved with the workings of the school (participating teacher).*

Alongside this information gathering, the participant worked in school with the learning mentors setting up reintegration programme for those pupils with records of long-term absence.

Although the sabbatical did show the participating teacher a number of possible new strategies for tackling attendance, it did not reveal any magic solutions. Furthermore, it assured him that they were approaching the issue in the right way already.

*It gave me the confidence that we are along the right lines, even if we aren't getting it absolutely right – with something like attendance I'm not sure you can get it absolutely right anyway (participating teacher).*

However, this re-affirmation in itself had an important impact on the motivation of the participating teacher and encouraged him to continue with the establishment of the reintegration programme, which allowed pupils to gradually increase their attendance, and the drawing up of an action plan to incorporate other ideas such as reward schemes.



Interviews with the pupils involved in the programme suggest that this was an effective strategy.

*It helps us really, without it I probably wouldn't come to school (pupil).*

A follow-up interview with the headteacher suggested that the participant's confidence in his own work was sustained.

*He was always a very motivated gentleman, that continues. I think he is more confident in the area that he's working in, which is attendance, because he's been able to find out more about what other schools are doing (headteacher).*

As well as a motivated and confident Assistant Headteacher and new strategies for raising attendance, the sabbatical impacted on the school by changing the nature of its continuing professional development programme. The opportunity the sabbatical provided to look outside of the school and to gain new ideas and perspectives on the problems they faced was welcomed by the senior management team. A further two sabbaticals were subsequently conducted following a similar format of information gathering. In addition, school management were motivated to reconsider the CPD they offered to all staff. In the follow up interview, the headteacher described how the school was looking at moving away from short courses for teachers, which they perceive as producing short term impacts, and looking at supporting wider reaching professional development opportunities which allow more opportunity for reflection on practice.

## **Outcomes**

**Informational  
Material and provisional  
New awareness**

*The participant gained new awareness of strategies for improving attendance.*

**Affective and motivational  
Value shifts and congruence**

*He also gained reaffirmation that the strategies in place in school were 'along the right lines'. This impacted on the participant's professional confidence and motivation.*

**Skills and Knowledge**

*Information gathered led to increased knowledge of strategies for improving attendance.*

**Changes in Practice**

*Changes in practice were institutional in line with the intention of the participant.*

**Institutional**

*Links with the ESW were reinforced, a reintegration programme was set up and the headteacher reported falling figures of non-attendance (follow up interview data). Staff training in the school was affected as the senior management team saw the benefits of sabbaticals and long term research projects as an approach to professional development.*

### Case Study 3     Increasing ICT skills through staff training.

A primary school had chosen to focus on training its teachers in the use of information and communication technology (ICT), following its identification by OfSTED as a weakness. But the school had been unable to create the time for the ICT co-ordinator to undertake the task. The sabbatical scheme offered the right opportunity.

*It seems to me that this has been an ideal opportunity to move forward without constantly having to look over your shoulder to the powers above and without having to write reams justifying what you are doing. The element of trust for this is something that has been missing (headteacher).*

Obtaining accredited training for the co-ordinator herself was an initial aim, in order to provide career development and raise her status and credibility amongst staff, but also to move the school from one of weakness in this area to one of leadership, by becoming a training school for the borough. A computer suite had been installed, and the school needed to gear up for using it.

*The suite had been dormant because of the lack of expertise. With a suite and a server you've got to know how to work the thing...part of the process was to get teachers into the suite, because when faced with 30 computers and you don't feel confident, you want to keep out of it (participating teacher).*

Thus the sabbatical was very clearly about addressing a priority in the school development plan, by increasing an individual teacher's capacity.

Apart from a limited amount of time spent in the local city learning centre (CLC), the participating teacher worked for two blocks of three weeks on either side of the summer holiday in the school's new computer suite. She taught each class in the school, alongside their own teacher, while her own class was covered by a regular supply teacher. The main focus was to ensure that the potential of the ICT equipment was exploited by teachers across the curriculum. Thus although she was experiencing time out from her normal duties, she was by no means taking time out from school. Some of the time spent at the CLC involved training teachers from other schools, which itself necessitated the participating teacher learning to use the interactive whiteboard.

There was unanimous agreement between the headteacher, the participating teacher, a teaching colleague and pupils from the teacher's own class about the benefit accrued by the school from this experience. It amounted to a successful version of cascade training. The teacher developed new skills from staff at the CLC. She then trained her colleagues in the school who went on to train their own pupils in the use of the website and computer programmes, and who gradually took up the use of interactive whiteboards in their classrooms.

*Since she's been on the sabbatical she's got at least one teacher per year group into the website. And she's shown us a lot about the laptops, where I would have been too scared to take a laptop and work with it. Now she's got*

*me using it in my class and projecting it onto the whiteboard...Now I want a proper interactive whiteboard in my class (teaching colleague).*

Teaching colleagues were also trained in a planning and management computer programme, increasing their efficiency and reducing paperwork. The school became a training centre for ICT co-ordinators from other schools in the LEA, and the school became listed as a CPD provider in LEA literature to schools. More than a year after the sabbatical, the after-school computer club for pupils was still being used by teachers to improve their own skills. A follow-up interview with the headteacher revealed that ICT training was being extended to support staff as a result of the sabbatical.

The status of the teacher was enhanced in the eyes of colleagues and pupils:

*If you had a camera and filmed us before the course [i.e. sabbatical] and after the course, you'd see a difference so much. I'm glad she went on the course because it's improved us. It's improved her learning and we get more educated. I think it was a bit long for a course, but it did help her (pupil).*

The focus for this sabbatical was selected by the headteacher. She and the interviewed teaching colleague recognised the determination of the ICT co-ordinator and the likelihood that any endeavour undertaken by her would be successfully addressed. As such the sabbatical was driven by school needs, although both the skills of the participating teacher, and her career prospects, were considerably enhanced by the experience.

The headteacher recognised the value of allocating time out of normal duties as a tool for both teacher and school development, and two further sabbaticals, focussing on art and PE, were planned for the future.

## **Outcomes**

<b>Information</b>	<i>There was an increased use of existing but dormant computer suite</i>
<b>Material and provisionary</b>	
<b>New awareness</b>	
<b>Affective and motivational</b>	<i>The participating teacher demonstrated enhanced confidence and self-esteem</i>
<b>Value shifts and congruence</b>	
<b>Skills and knowledge</b>	<i>The participant gained accreditation in computer training skills, skills in a range of computer programmes and computer suite management</i>
<b>Changes in practice</b>	<i>The participant took on a new body of work in training colleagues and co-ordinators from other schools</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>There was school-wide take-up of ICT enhancement across the curriculum, increased use of the website and the development of school as a training centre for schools in the LEA. The school also made further use of sabbatical opportunities</i>

#### **Case Study 4     Improving reading throughout the school, with a focus on early years, and the establishment of a nursery library.**

This school had been a very large primary school serving the largest and most deprived council housing estate in its borough. Recent years had seen a steady decline in school numbers, down 25 per cent over five years. With the level of free school meals running at 58 per cent, and 62 per cent of children on the special needs register, there was a whole web of challenges facing the teachers. However, at the time of the sabbatical, the school's under-used buildings were seeing new community activity, and for the past year had housed a new nursery unit. For the two years prior to the sabbatical the school numbers had been rising.

When the opportunity for sabbatical funding occurred, the previous headteacher wrote a proposal to use the time to address the issue of reading throughout the school, but did not identify the teacher to undertake the work. Staff members were not inclined to take on the task, but with prompting the newly reassigned head of nursery agreed to address the issue, but with the proviso that the focus was on reading in the early years.

The participating teacher began by observing the teaching of reading as currently practiced within the school itself, to assess the needs of the school. She then addressed the task by visiting schools identified through the beacon schools website. The final part of this sabbatical, undertaken in the first week of the summer holiday, was spent attending an international conference on the teaching of reading. In the beacon schools visited, she interviewed teachers, studied policy documents and teaching materials and observed teaching in progress. In particular she studied the use of classroom resources and support staff. The importance accorded to the enjoyment in reading was highlighted in much of what was seen, another key feature being the attention given to the role of parents in children's learning.

*I was looking at how we could get enjoyment back into reading, and what parents were doing with them (participating teacher).*

As the sabbatical progressed it was agreed that much of the activity should focus on developing an early years' library. Given the school's recent development as a community resource, it also seemed appropriate that the potential involvement of parents should feature in the design of the resource.

*She started a parents' book library, and it's quite difficult to get parents to come into our school. Out of a class of 26 pupils she had 16 of the parents there. That was absolutely unheard of in our school. We're after partnerships in learning, and if we get that started down in nursery, I would say that would certainly improve (headteacher).*

Indeed, evidence from a follow-up interview with the headteacher suggests that considerable improvement was achieved.

*It's been quite successful; about 55 per cent of parents are using it, on a regular basis. I've sat in on the last two Wednesdays and spoke to parents about it and they really think it's got a great value for them. The teachers also*

*model a reading session, so it's using that to help them read with their children at home (headteacher).*

The headteacher also believed that additional outcomes were derived from the presence of the library. Attendance was improving from a previously very poor level and reading attainment was rising.

Since the sabbatical the teacher involved has taken the post of deputy head in a larger school. The headteacher believes that the sabbatical contributed both to the quality of her teaching and to her career development. The staff as a whole have taken on many of the approaches imported through the sabbatical, including regular book readings during assemblies and routine discussions with individual pupils concerning their reading habits.

This sabbatical was planned by a headteacher who left before the work began. The participating teacher would not have selected this focus, preferring to focus on behaviour as an issue. However, in the event she greatly enjoyed the process and generated outcomes that were regarded as extremely significant contributors to the development of attainment, parental involvement and attendance. Although reading would have been a school focus anyway, there was a shared belief that these outcomes could not have been achieved so quickly without the freedom offered by the sabbatical.

## Outcomes

<b>Informational Material and provisionary New awareness</b>	<i>An early years library was established in the school. The participant's awareness of the importance of enjoyment in reading was crystallised.</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>The participating teacher experienced satisfaction and re-invigoration.</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>The participant acquired a body of new knowledge concerning techniques and approaches in the teaching of reading.</i>
<b>Changes in Practice</b>	<i>New classroom teaching techniques and methods of working with parents on reading support were employed by the participant.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>The staff as a whole invested in new reading teaching methods. Attendance and parental involvement improved.</i>
<b>Career development</b>	<i>Since the sabbatical the participant has taken up a post as a deputy in a different school.</i>

## Case Study 5

### The development of an interactive CD-Rom to support the vocational GCSE course.

A long-service teacher had recently moved from head of a subject department to ICT coordinator in a secondary school serving an area with considerable unemployment and cultural deprivation. The school had been developing vocational GCSE courses, to engage pupils who otherwise had demonstrated persistent disaffection, manifested through truancy and bad behaviour. The challenges of the school were taking their toll on staff.

*I saw this as for the first time a really positive scheme for the staff who had been committed to the children in this area - and it's tough because of behaviour, culture, lack of self-motivation, external pressures from league tables and OFSTED, from the DfES, from the LEA to get results to hit the 5 A to Cs. They are constantly under pressure from me because I'm demanding of them. It is grinding work. What I'm finding is that a lot of teachers in their 50s are finding it very difficult. They are absolutely burned out. They've given their all with commitment. This gives them a breathing space (headteacher).*

Because of the low uptake of sabbaticals in the area, the school was given six. For this sabbatical, a particular project was already in the minds of various parties, including the LEA, and sabbatical funding enabled it to be set in train and delivered in concentrated block of time. Working from home, the teacher organised the production of a CD-ROM to support a new vocational GCSE course in science, leisure, tourism and ICT, a resource that would thus become available to other secondary schools in the area. He identified five local businesses that would be willing to collaborate in the creation of interactive CD-ROM profiles. Filming in company premises, interviewing their personnel and using high quality graphic techniques, the profiles illustrated various aspects of the companies' operations. Two pupils were used as presenters for the 'programme'. Excellent support was provided by the local businesses involved, each of which gave unprecedented access to premises and staff. The teacher worked with a local professional cameraman who brought considerable film directing skills to the task.

The resulting CD-ROM was already in use in the school and had been placed on a website for use by other schools. The teacher expanded his own knowledge of business practices and developed new planning and organising skills. The experience had also enabled him to enhance his teaching on the vocational GCSE course.

*I'm really geed up as far as this course is concerned. It's a far more rigorous course than a lot of people think. I'm really excited by that. If I hadn't done this [sabbatical], and made the contacts I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing now (participating teacher).*

For the school, the sabbatical had strengthened relationships with local businesses, leading to one of the companies providing 'real world' problems for which students are creating IT solutions as part of their course work. Both the company and the school intended that this relationship be maintained into the future. The role of the host industries was crucial to the success for the project, but a representative from one

of the companies recognised that the efficiency and professionalism with which the teacher had approached the task had made their involvement straightforward.

Overall, the sabbatical was very highly regarded for the outcomes it delivered. The governors had been very impressed by the teacher's presentation to them concerning the experience. Dissemination had occurred through the CD-ROM being placed on a website and the teacher testing it in other schools.

This sabbatical was born of a coincidence of needs, fulfilling the requirements of the teacher involved, the school itself and the local authority's development of vocational learning opportunities and links with industry. Consequently it attracted very considerable support and resources. Although the sabbatical occupied a full six week block of time, because it was taken at the end of the summer term, when timetabling became less problematic, the school had not needed to use a significant amount of money on supply cover. However there was some extra pressure on other members of staff in coping with the teacher's absence. For both the headteacher and the teacher himself, the accruing benefits of the experience were regarded as especially worthwhile. An individual's reinvention and school development had proceeded hand in hand, apparently to the great satisfaction of all parties.

## Outcomes

<b>Informational Material and provisionary New awareness</b>	<i>The sabbatical had resulted in a teaching resource for this and other schools. The participating teacher developed a greater understanding of industry, which was valuable in the vocational GCSE course he was teaching</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>The teacher greatly enjoyed the experience and brought back added commitment to the GCSE course.</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>The teacher developed new planning and organisation skills, greater knowledge of industry and new techniques in resource development.</i>
<b>Changes in Practice</b>	<i>The vocational GCSE content changed in that one of the partner industries became involved in coursework.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>Enhanced relationships with local businesses, new understanding of vocational GCSEs and an increased commitment to sabbaticals as a development tool.</i>

## Case Study 6

### The development of provision for students aged 16-19 with autism

The participating teacher had been teaching in the 16-19 department of a community special school with Technology College Status for six years. As autistic co-ordinator for the 16-19 age group s/he had started looking at Post-16 provision for students with autism and found that while their provision aimed to prepare students for Post-19 education, the department was not aware what was available in terms of Post-19 provision in the area. At the time, the school development plan had further identified, as an area for improvement, the levels of expertise and facility in teaching the autistic spectrum. Thus, when the sabbatical opportunity was spotted by the participating teacher in DfES documentation s/he thought it '*sounded great*' in terms of developing this work further. The headteacher saw the scheme as a creative opportunity to address a school need.

The sabbatical was selected from a number of bids within the school. It was to take place within a host organisation and aimed to develop services to young people and benefits for staff on both sides (home and host). The participating teacher hoped to find out about the host organisation, how it provided for young people with autism and to bring back ideas to the school. The host organisation was keen to be involved in the project:

*Brilliant idea - a way of networking provision with feeder schools, better transition and continuing curriculum for students for whom such changes could bring about challenging behaviour and high anxiety levels. It can be used to develop links, planning curriculum and staff visits (host organisation).*

The participating teacher and school were keen to gain a longitudinal view of the host organisation. Consequently they decided to conduct the sabbatical in week-long blocks over the summer term. The participant went on a different placement every other week, including accompanying students to a residential outdoor pursuits centre. Supply was arranged to cover the teacher's absence and there was support from teaching colleagues within the 16-19 department at the school, who took on the extra workload which ensued from the teacher's absence.

At the host organisation, the teacher was able to observe lessons and arrange one-to-one sessions with an educational psychologist; a speech and language therapist; and the curriculum co-ordinator. S/he also kept a diary of the experience which was sent to the LEA as a report and was read by teaching colleagues on return to the school. The sabbatical activities were further disseminated to all staff shortly after the sabbatical. After the sabbatical the teacher also ran twilight training sessions and co-ordinated working parties on various aspects of the sabbatical.

There were wide-ranging outcomes for this sabbatical. The teacher's skills and knowledge increased, pedagogy was impacted and there were changes in practice for the individual teacher. In terms of the institution, there were also many outcomes. Changes were made to the timetabling of lessons as a result of the sabbatical and the LEAF accreditation system was built into the entire SLD curriculum.



[The participating teacher's] *sabbatical has been like a stone dropping into a pond, with lots of ripples coming out, affecting a lot of things* (CPD co-ordinator).

There were also outcomes for the host organisation through strong links with one of its feeder schools and new awareness of ICT options, such as interactive whiteboards and other ICT equipment.

The impact of the sabbatical was still being felt long after its end. At the time of the follow-up interview the school and the LEA were seeking to gain accreditation from the National Autistic Society. Initially accreditation was being sought for 16-19 provision, but in the long term the school hoped to gain whole-school accreditation. The participating teacher was looking at possibilities for promotion once the accreditation process has been overseen. Further, the whole staff had received training on autism and autism provision.

One of the main strengths of this sabbatical was that the activity itself was beneficial to both parties, the school and the host organisation. Moreover, there were tangible outcomes for both sides. The support of the SMT and the participating teacher's teaching colleagues who were flexible in covering him and accommodating any disturbances to the curriculum or the students were also great contributory factors.

## Outcomes

<b>Informational Material and provisionary New awareness</b>	<i>The school bought in some schemes of work from LEAF accreditation.</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>The participating teacher returned enthused and motivated to submit an application for accreditation for teaching of autism</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>The participant learnt about more appropriate timetabling and lesson length and gained knowledge and experience of accreditation Learnt to network so that students can be matched to the most appropriate provision. The participant also learnt more about communication with autistic students and teaching techniques for autism. The host organisation also gained skills and knowledge from the participating teacher.</i>
<b>Changes in Practice</b>	<i>There have been changes regarding teaching and learning styles for autistic children.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>Institutional changes in practice included changes in timetabling for autistic students in line with host organisation. Lessons last all morning and then all afternoon. This way of working was felt to be more rewarding with less pressure on the students.</i>

## Case Study 7

### Investigating strategies for raising boy's achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2

This sabbatical was taken by a Key Stage one co-ordinator in an inner-city London primary. Whilst the school faced a number of issues relating to the mixed ethnicity of its pupils (including English as an additional language), the school PANDA data, standard attainment tests and recent OFSTED inspections had highlighted that it was 'white indigenous boys' who were the lowest achieving. At the time of the sabbatical, this cohort was the main target group for improvement on the school development plan. With this issue pre-identified as a school need, the aim 'to develop a plan to further improve boy's achievement' was readily agreed on by the headteacher and the participating teacher. In addition, her role as Key Stage 2 co-ordinator meant that her professional development needs could also be addressed:

*Her performance management objectives are linked to her role, which is inextricably tied up with raising achievement for boys (headteacher).*

Because of low uptake of the scheme within the LEA, the school was offered two sabbaticals in one academic year. The Key Stage one co-ordinator took up the second opportunity and the two teachers opted to work together. By collaborating they were able to address the issue from the perspective of both key stages and discuss what would be appropriate for implementation in school

*A lot of our time was spent talking about things so we had things straight in our head before we pass it on to other people. The time was useful even when we weren't researching things or actually implementing things (participating teacher).*

They also commented that if ideas were supported by two members of staff they would ultimately carry more weight.

Both teachers conducted the sabbatical activity one day a week over the course of a school year, as opposed to a block of time, to minimise the disruption to the school which may have resulted from the simultaneous absence of two Key Stage co-ordinators.

The sabbatical activity consisted of reading existing research into the issue and visiting local schools to increase their knowledge of possible strategies for raising achievement. The opportunity to visit other schools was welcomed as a rare opportunity by the participants and a sense of reassurance came from seeing that schools in similar circumstances have similar problems with boy's achievement.

On a personal level the participant felt that the opportunity had impacted on her sense of professional achievement.

*Challenges of staff turnover, SATs results and the behaviour of the children can all be quite demotivating, so it is nice to see that we are already doing a lot of the right things (participating teacher).*

Despite not providing them with the ‘*magic answers*’ they had initially hoped for, the participant and her colleague both felt that they had an increased knowledge of possible strategies, including the introduction of new reading books which were relevant to boy’s interests and strategies for motivating boys, which they incorporated into the school development plan, and that the status of raising boy’s achievement within the school had been elevated as a result.

*Certain issues tend to get sidelined and this has become something that has become high profile, for us, and for the school* (participating teacher).

Information provided in the follow up interviews suggested that this elevated status had been maintained and that the area had continued to be addressed by the school.

*It still needs work doing on it, it’s still one of our main concerns. We still haven’t got boys achievement where we need it to be* (participating teacher).

Although the participating teacher was no longer as directly involved in these developments, as a result of promotion to deputy head (the work done on the sabbatical has been picked up on by English co-ordinators) follow up interviews revealed that she had in fact taken the issue as the main focus of a subsequent NPQH studies.

## Outcomes

<b>Informational Material and provisionary New awareness</b>	<i>New awareness of strategies for increasing boy’s achievements, which were back into school and disseminated to staff. New books purchased for the school which were identified as appealing more to boys’ interests.</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>Reaffirmation that the school was already ‘on the right tracks’ leading to increased confidence and motivation and a commitment to continue to address the issue and to keep it as a high profile area on the school development plan.</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>Increased knowledge of issues surrounding low achievement for boys.</i>
<b>Changes in Practice</b>	<i>The participant and her colleague were implementing the identified strategies within their own classes.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>Raising boy’s achievement given high priority status on the school development plan. INSET and dissemination led to more teachers implementing identified strategies. Data from follow up interviews suggests that these institutional developments had been sustained and were continually being developed further.</i>

## Case Study 8

### Brain Gym and its impact on pupils' motivation, concentration and engagement.

This Primary school was situated in a deprived ward in the centre of a large Northern city. It was reported that the pupils came from unstructured home lives, and many parents were coping with drug and alcohol problems. The result was a school population consisting of a high number of unsettled children, including a number on Ritalin or suffering from mild autism and other behavioural conditions. Despite these issues the headteacher noted that *'they bring it in as baggage but tend to leave it at the door'*. The ethos of the school was dedicated to pupil well-being and a whole-child approach to education. This had led to the installation of a multi-sensory room which offered aromatherapy and a place for 'quiet time', as well as a keen interest in related holistic initiatives.

The teacher who took the sabbatical was a very experienced teacher who had spent the majority of her teaching career in 'challenging' schools. She wasn't looking for promotion or career change from the sabbatical. As with all CPD she accessed, the focus was on becoming a better teacher in order to benefit the pupils. She believed that this meant always looking for new ways of doing things.

If you are to keep on inspiring children you have to come at things from a different angle, otherwise you get stale and boring (*participating teacher*).

There was no selection process as staff agreed that the participating teacher already had a good idea and that this would then benefit the whole school. The sabbatical looked at the use of Brain Gym, a series of exercises designed to increase academic achievement as well as concentration, memory and overall learning capacity.

*It fits in with the school development plan because it's developing the ethos of the school and the climate of the school; it's introducing yet another strategy to give our children support and self esteem (headteacher).*

The focus of the sabbatical therefore, can be seen as primarily Teaching and Learning, but with an additional focus on boosting the confidence and general well-being of the children. The sabbatical was taken as one or two days a week and was school-based. The nature of the activity was primary research, one of the few in the sample which can be classed as empirical research. Pairs of children were selected who matched in ability and engagement. The children were taken from different year groups but purposefully selected as those who were not involved in other initiatives or taking medication. They were tested on various skills including memory and concentration. One half became a control group and the remaining children were involved in Brain Gym exercises one or two days a week throughout the sabbatical. Both groups were then tested again at the end of the period of research and striking differences were found between the two. Those involved in the brain gym showed noticeable signs of improvement in all areas tested, including memory, concentration and engagement. They also demonstrated increased self-esteem from seeing their own improvements and identifying control over their own learning ability.

As a result of conducting this research, the participating teacher increased her skills and knowledge in the use of Brain Gym. Whilst her confidence in its effectiveness was high prior to the research, it did reaffirm her belief that it is something she should continue to develop. She felt that she had accumulated ‘actual scientific data’ to prove its effectiveness. Dissemination of the research findings took place informally in the staff room and the written report was made available to colleagues. Interest from colleagues led to the establishment of a Brain Gym club, in which colleagues learned techniques themselves to use in the classroom. As more teachers implemented the techniques it was anticipated that more pupils would benefit from its effects.

The focus of the sabbatical reflected the school ethos that teaching is about more than just raising academic standards. This meant colleagues and SMT were all supportive of the research and assisted where possible. The research methodology was regarded as both valid and reliable and the findings were clearly presented as ‘evidence’. Therefore the outcomes identified, in terms of the progress made by children and the benefits of Brain Gym, were not just speculative but seen as proven by the school.

## Outcomes

<b>Informational Material and provisionary New awareness</b>	<i>Participating teacher had previously collated information and materials on Brain gym as it was an existing area of personal interest.</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>The participating teacher felt that carrying out the research had given her the ‘courage of her convictions’ and that her belief in the benefits of Brain Gym were reinforced as a result of the research findings.</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>Throughout the project the participating teacher developed her own skills and knowledge of Brain Gym, through background reading and through practicing the techniques with the children.</i>
<b>Changes in Practice</b>	<i>There is an indication that the participating teacher may use Brain gym more in her own practice – although this was something she had already started to do prior to the sabbatical.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>The sabbatical helped to reinforce the school ethos of developing pupils’ well-being as well as academic standards and provided the staff in the school with a new ‘proven’ technique with which to achieve this.</i>

## Case Study 9

### The development of the school's use of outdoor education, the use of ICT and new technology in outdoor education and the development of a scheme of work on Local History.

The participating teacher on this sabbatical had been teaching at an inner-city primary school for a number of years. The school had particularly high levels of deprivation with 70–80 per cent of pupils in receipt of free school meals and the headteacher characterised the home lives of many pupils as 'chaotic'. The school, therefore, saw its role as bringing enrichment, together with order and security, into the lives of its pupils. One way in which the school tried to enrich the experiences of pupils was by taking Year 4 pupils on a residential week of outdoor activities at a centre affiliated to the LEA. The participating teacher had taken the role of co-ordinating and accompanying these trips for some time – a task which s/he has greatly enjoyed.

On learning about the possibility of teacher sabbaticals, the school's senior management team was keen to make use of it:

*I thought it was a wonderful idea. It's wonderful for any teacher to have time to refresh themselves, recharge their batteries. Coupled with that, from a management point of view, I thought 'Right, now this is an opportunity for staff to have time to work on projects that I have wanted doing for a couple of years, for example, a school website and a scheme of work on local history' (headteacher).*

The possibility of doing a sabbatical was brought to the teacher's attention by the school CPD co-ordinator. The participating teacher was immediately drawn to the idea of enhancing both knowledge and skills in relation to outdoor education and the experiences of pupils on their visit to the outdoor centre. The sabbatical aimed to offer the participating teacher a well-earned period of refreshment, carrying out a project of interest, whilst developing an ability to gain maximum educational benefit for the pupils attending the centre on the annual school visit. The participant arranged with the outdoor centre to spend a period of six weeks living and working alongside the teachers at the centre in order to benefit both from their knowledge about outdoor education and their exceptional motivational skills.

When the sabbatical plan was put to the school governors some further aims were added to the project to enhance the value of the scheme to the school. A request was made for the sabbatical to focus on the use of ICT and new technology in outdoor education, and for the teacher to spend some sabbatical time researching and writing a scheme of work around local history for use in the school's 'culture week'.

For the participating teacher, the experience was both extremely enjoyable, and beneficial in terms of developing teaching skills. As a result the participant expressed a desire to work full-time in outdoor education, but the scarcity of opportunities means that this is currently not a realistic option. At the time of the interviews the participant was looking for a career move that might increase outdoor education opportunities, for example, moving to a school in a rural area. One of the key factors contributing to the success of the sabbatical was the participating teacher's determination to spend as much time as possible on the hands-on aspect of the project.

This unfortunately meant that some of the sabbatical commitments, particularly writing the local history scheme of work, impinged on the participants own time.

The participant improved his organisational and management skills, and in particular his knowledge of issues and procedures for organising educational activities outside school. He also found himself developing new ways of building rapport with pupils:

*Children are more responsive to me than before. Because I was dealing with children from other schools, I didn't even know what their names were, however, I was able to relate to them. This increased my confidence, which in turn developed my ability to motivate children (participating teacher).*

For the institution, supply cover was effective. The school made use of a teacher that had taught in the school before and there was no indication that pupils had suffered from the teacher's six-week absence. However, both the school management and the participating teacher felt a degree of disappointment at the lack of time available at the end of the sabbatical to ensure that the full benefits could be applied in the school.

Beyond the sabbatical, the participant's career has developed through taking on the role of educational visits co-ordinator within the school. At the time of follow up interviews the initial refreshment of the sabbatical experience had faded. However, the new skills acquired for approaching working with different children had endured. The scheme of work on local history that was completed largely in the participant's own time had very little impact in the school. While the CPD co-ordinator described this feature of the sabbatical as a '*minor add-on*', it does raise questions about the role of school-governors in defining sabbatical aims indicating that it is probably not helpful to impose unrelated aims on a project.

## **Outcomes**

<b>Informational</b>	<i>A new local history scheme of work, a resource of which the school made limited use.</i>
<b>Material and provisionary</b>	
<b>Affective and motivational</b>	<i>The sabbatical left the teacher feeling reinvigorated. The teacher acquired enhanced confidence in trying new activities with pupils, both on their visit to the Outdoor Centre and at the school.</i>
<b>Value shifts and congruence</b>	
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>The participant improved his organisational and management skills and knowledge of issues and procedures for organising educational activities outside school.</i>
<b>Changes in practice</b>	<i>The teacher reported that more of his/her teaching is done outdoors at the school.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>The school now has a teacher with improved skills and a renewed commitment to the kind of teamwork that he saw in practice at the Outdoor Centre.</i>
<b>Career development</b>	<i>The participating teacher is now the educational visits co-ordinator for the school.</i>

## Case Study 10

### Developing the role of parents in their children's education

This primary school in the North West served a catchment area with multiple problems, largely centred around poverty (70 per cent eligibility for free school meals) and manifested through poor behaviour by children on the local estate. The school had a poor image amongst a very small minority of local parents, aggravating the falling roles caused by demographic changes. The school had identified the need to work much more closely with parents, many of whom were raising their children alone, and already offered adult literacy classes during the school day.

Because of low uptake by other schools in the area, this school had been able to grant a sabbatical to each of the five eligible teachers. The headteacher was determined that the activities undertaken did not merely deliver school development priorities, but that they also provide teachers with 'a boost or breathing space'. However, the participating teacher in this case was emphatic that she did not need a break, and was indeed concerned about taking more time out from her normal teaching duties, given that she already spent two half days per week working on adult literacy. She was however confident that her responsibilities as early years co-ordinator would be well covered by the established team approach within the unit.

Addressing parental involvement and the potential to do this by supporting adult literacy were both a school development need and an existing interest of the participating teacher.

*The opportunity to do something I wouldn't have been able to do ordinarily, something that I had wanted to do for a long time. Working with the parents on family literacy, I have become aware of how little I know about parents and their learning. I wasn't trained to work with parents in that respect. I thought, 'If I'm going to do my job properly for family literacy, I'd be more supportive of parents and be able to tailor my lessons' (Participating teacher).*

The teacher's aspiration was to develop joint learning for parents with children and the headteacher was pleased to support the teacher's suggestion for her sabbatical focus.

*We struggle with basic literacy, and [this teacher] runs our foundation literacy programme. We need to expand our adult education programme here. Our parents aren't accessing the high level programmes and need something at their level. There's a lot of low self-esteem in parents, and apathy (headteacher).*

Efforts were therefore made to identify a course in adult literacy for the teacher. In the event, only an evening course could be found, and the teacher was given time out from school to prepare for course sessions, undertake coursework and carry out the required teaching placements at the local community college.

*It was like going back to college - you can't believe how nervous I felt - nervous teaching the adults. And I was being assessed by a very experienced tutor... It was a lot to do. Maybe a little more time to reflect was needed. But*



*it's finding the time to do it. I had other school pressures (participating teacher).*

As a result of her studies, the teacher reported considerable developments in her adult teaching skills and her awareness of the learning needs of adults. She felt that these would also equip her to manage the part-time tutors who visited the school to teach adult literacy. Having set out to enable parents to support their children's literacy, she had developed an increased interest in adult literacy in general, to the point that she was teaching it as a volunteer in the community college. The course had generated both motivation and confidence in this field.

*It's improved my confidence in working with parents. It terrified me - you are working with parents whose own literacy skills are comparable with those of their children. It's frightening to think how terrified those parents must feel. You cannot talk down to them I (participating teacher).*

The newly acquired expertise also supported the school in its ambition to become more involved with the community.

*I'd like to think she will do some after school classes for adults. [Participating teacher's name] will stay here - she's very dedicated to the school, but it will clearly change what she does here... Community and adult education is one of the targets on our school development plan. I think we are developing our expertise in that area. It's something we have left other people to run. More and more we can look at how we run our own and focus on what this estate needs (headteacher).*

A follow-up interview with the headteacher revealed that a new temporary classroom has been installed for adult and parent education, and the school's plan to develop as a community education centre was thus being developed.

## Outcomes

<b>Informational Material and provisional New awareness</b>	<i>The teacher brought in much greater knowledge about the availability of adult courses, and new perceptions about the learning needs of adults and parents</i>
<b>Affective and motivational Value shifts and congruence</b>	<i>Her confidence to teach adults had increased and her motivation in this field was re-affirmed and extended</i>
<b>Skills and Knowledge</b>	<i>The course had provided and enhanced perceptions of the needs of adults as learners and the additional teaching skills needed to meet those needs</i>
<b>Changes in Practice</b>	<i>The teacher had taken up teaching adult education as a volunteer, and it was intended that she take a greater role in adult teaching within the school.</i>
<b>Institutional</b>	<i>The school was developing its community education role and had extended its premises to do so.</i>



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