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Learning in Harmony

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ABSTRACT

Learning in Harmony:
a narrative case study to explore ethos creation
and subsequent lessons for leadership

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Schools shape future generations and play an enormous role in the support and learning of our young people. The vision of a school and how it determines an ethos or school climate, is often seen as a central part of the drive and development of the learning community. As educators, we must consider how and by whom, a vision is established, articulated and communicated, and what makes it become a shared belief, seen in both policy and practice.

This research is an ethnographic case study considering a specific learning environment, The Music House, over a period of 15 years from 1990 to 2005, through the retrospective adult narratives of students, staff and trainee teachers involved during this time. Questionnaires, interviews and group discussions involving a sample drawn from respondents, were analysed and evaluated in a consideration of how the climate of the Music House was introduced and developed, looking at the nature of participants involvement, their understanding of the vision, how it was shaped, understood and absorbed, and occasions when values were demonstrated and challenged.

With three central themes of relationships, safety and opportunities growing from the research, the narratives give a unique student viewpoint, through adult eyes over a substantial research period. The writing reflects experiences, feelings and ideas of the participants, treating them both as individuals, and identifying links and similarities in their thinking across the sample. There is a consideration of the legacy impact of the community on individuals. Findings are reviewed to highlight possible lessons to learn, particularly for leaders within the current educational climate, indicating elements of school life for priority, applicable in any school setting.

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CHAPTER ONE
Developing Advanced Professional Practice
Professional Learning and the Self

I think the Music House changed my life. It made me who I am
Ex-Music House student, 2011

1.1 Introduction

As evening fell, a group of ex-pupils sat chatting in the garden after a mid-summer BBQ. The ensuing discussion of the role that the music department group had played in the development of these young men made me think carefully about the way that, as educators, we shape the values, experiences and lives of our charges. Every interaction can make a difference, even the smallest chance event. As school leaders we have huge resources of staff, time and equipment at our disposal. How important then is it to be sure that what we are trying to achieve with and for our pupils is the right thing? Academic qualifications can unlock doors to careers and life paths - but what is the relative value against developing the moral judgement and core principles that make us the people that we are? How can the balance between nurture, care, learning and achievement be decided? How different is it in similar schools? How does one decide what is most important for a school? How should priorities be set and how dependant should these be on the establishment of key principles or values, and by whom should these be decided?

Did these ideas make up the elusive vision that I had heard so much about in my National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) training? In seminar sessions the theory had sounded plausible enough: – develop a strategic educational vision and explore ways to ensure that the vision is articulated, shared, understood and acted upon by all. At the National College residential we discussed vision statements and imaginary ideal schools. It was an inspiring exercise as we built communities that centred on the school; life spiralling about a hub of education for life-long learners. My particular group had, amongst other things, included a farm, healthcare network, space research

centre and entertainment buildings. The whole family would be involved in the development of life and education for all. Central to the success and development of the community was our agreed shared vision. Complex enough for the eight people in my NPQH group to agree how our perfect school would be formed, and how much more difficult to create a vision for a real school and a real community.

The first of four files in the NPQH materials pack, designed to support new and aspiring Headteachers focuses on strategic direction and development of the school.

Vision is seeing the masterpiece while you are mixing the paints.

National College for School Leadership (2006:9)

1.2 The Role of Vision

Where there is no vision the people perish

(Proverbs 29:18)

After this opening quote, the pack goes on to define vision as ‘a rather grand way of describing what a school sees as its core purpose – a ‘preferred future’ – the school as we would wish it to be’ (National College for School Leadership (NCSL), 2006:9). Examples of leading schools often cite clear vision as a key factor and Ofsted reports refer to shared vision as determining success. Josh, Hillman and Stoll (1994:7) found that successful visions for a school ‘expressed a desirable direction and destination for the school, were well grounded in circumstance and looked confidently to the future’. Certainly if a group shares a common purpose we all know that it can achieve more than if everyone is pulling in a different direction. Shared approaches and goals increase the effectiveness of a team.

The hallmark of any successful organisation is a shared sense among members about what they are trying to accomplish

(Peters and Waterman 1995:72)

Vision then can unite a community and motivate them to achieve common goals. It can also be used to outline foundation values, the core of beliefs that are special to the school. These may be tied to educational ideals, moral

purpose or perhaps refer to continuous improvement. But does a school need vision? Could it operate without this shared sense of direction? Rules, systems and common sense could allow an establishment to operate effectively. Would this be enough? The vision could be thought of as something in place primarily for outside consumption, to enable those looking in at the school to understand what it pertains to be. It could be akin to a set of clothes for the institution, an outer garment that indicates key information that people might want or need to know about the school. Could it not be a bit of a show? Or an advert?

Perhaps a vision helps individuals to know their place within a greater community structure, to give us a comfort of knowing that there is a bigger plan. In a business context, Ohmann (1989) used the phrase 'skyhooks' to describe the leap of faith that is needed for vision. He suggests that workers want to work for someone who believes in something and in whom they can believe in.

We have a tremendous capacity for cooperation when charged with larger visions

(Ohmann 1989:145)

The vision could play a multitude of roles within the school community. Its effectiveness is determined by the role it is given, its articulation and the energy that it generates. Does the leader of a community decide what the role of the vision should be, in addition to what the vision actually should be? Many visions are extremely personal and distinct to the individual. Should a school's vision come only from the leader or from more of those in the school community so that is understood and, as far as possible, shared by everyone?

It's well known that effective leadership is closely related to school improvement, but our understanding of whose leadership is important has changed. Until recently, the principal received most attention as keeper of the school's vision and, sometimes, 'saviour' in cases where principals were catapulted into schools deemed as failing. It's no wonder that people were drawn to the notion of the hero leader. These days, though, the demands and challenges of leading schools are simply too great for any one person (the principal). Many countries face a succession crisis with ageing principals and few candidates to replace them in what is seen as an unattractive job

(Pont 2008:3)

Given the changing role of the Headteacher, are middle leaders in a better position to drive forward the school vision ?

In reality, the school improvement role played by middle managers, such as Headteachers of departments and subject coordinators has been explored for some time. Recently, however, the link between teacher leadership and school improvement has been highlighted (e.g. Murphy, 2005) and bolstered by evidence that the link between principal leadership and student outcomes is largely indirect

(Leithwood and Riehl cited in Stoll, 2009)

The range of responses and interpretations that a group of people might have to even the most simple phrase could be enormous. Is it possible for a vision to be the projection of a whole school in a middle outwards structure? Is there a tension created if the drivers of the vision are not the leaders of the school? How well could a shared notion of vision be implemented across the country? Does Governmental vision support this leadership of school vision?

1.3 Vision of a Government

The Education Reform Act (1988), driven by Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, was introduced early in my teaching career. On the surface it gave schools an opportunity to become more autonomous whilst also centralising many school powers. Key educationalists such as Chitty and Dunford (1999:25) argued that the 'meretricious agenda' of the 1988 Act allowed the Government to use 'devices like opting out, open admission, city technology colleges and the introduction of 'local markets' ... as attempts to introduce selection by the back door'. They also felt that in many ways the struggle against the changes provided 'a tribute to the remarkable resilience of the comprehensive ideal'. The vision of the Government was progress through a National Curriculum, local management of schools and the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). How did individual establishments retain a specific school vision that absorbed the Government diktat and still retained for example a 'comprehensive ideal'?

More recently, and over 20 years later, Michael Gove announced new expectations.

....a more autonomous school system led by professionals; a new generation of brilliant teachers; a new era of discipline in our

schools; a fairer funding system; a simpler and more challenging curriculum and a qualifications system that restores standards rather than diminishing them....Children only have one chance - and I am impatient to ensure that my children – that all children – get the best possible chance to succeed in our state schools.

(Gove, 2011)

His vision outlines measures to ‘root out bad behaviour, tackle underperformance and improve the way in which schools are held to account.’ How well does this equate to priorities that a school group might have? Changes in Government policy affect the development of curriculum and targets of every school. By changing the criteria of success and influencing content in this way the components that make up the school are altered. Does this outside interference also, by default, change the vision of a school? How big a part can the Government and its continually changing educational policy play in the vision of a particular school? Is this desirable in the name of consistency or should we champion an individual approach?

Recent developments in education have led to the creation of many new academies. As publicly-funded independent schools, academies benefit from greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards and the Government has identified that academies can do this by ‘challenging traditional thinking on how schools are run and what they should be like for students. They seek to make a complete break with cultures of low aspiration and achievement. The sponsor’s vision and leadership are vital to each project.’ (Department for Education, 2012). Does the involvement of sponsors, often non-educational, change the vision of a school? In many instances this vision is a corporate one. Supported by the 2011 Education Act, academy chains often have a shared articulated vision determined by a central body or sponsor and then implemented at a local level. Locations and circumstance of individual schools could be wildly different but a common vision for these schools works to motivate and draw schools together.

Does it then matter what it is we all believe in? Is vision about us all believing something together? The aims of any school must broadly be about learning how to learn and being successful at learning, with a measure of development

of the whole person and a value system. The balance may change slightly, but are school visions largely all the same? How different can they be? What then makes some so successful?

1.4 Articulation of Vision

Many schools have a vision that is, at least on the surface, articulated through a number of statements – motto, mission statement, slogan, traditions. Often these are long held and part of school tradition. Can a vision remain the same over time, despite changing leadership and educational pressures? Having been part of the leadership team in one school under two different Headteachers, using the same motto and mission statement, I noted a huge difference in approach and purpose, despite seemingly having the same articulated aims. Perhaps this showed a different emphasis of the same core values, with each Headteacher driving the school towards the priorities of the time. The two polar leadership styles worked with a largely stable leadership team in completely different ways, and whilst the mission statement remained unchanged and the primary aims of ‘spiritual, academic and personal development’ were common to both, there was a very different feel to the school during each of these times and staff and pupils certainly had a different focus. It is very difficult to pin down exactly how this was communicated to everyone. Certainly key documentation did not change and many traditions of the school continued as they had always done. Perhaps, in part, this shows the nebulous nature of vision and its effect.

In an ever-changing society, it is difficult to say whether our core values and priorities can remain the same over time. The values that serve one generation well may be completely inappropriate in the next. If a vision or mission statement remains unchanged, either the intent also is unchanged or the interpretation alters over time. By accepting a fluid reading of the vision, to some extent we could be considered to similarly devalue the essential purpose of that vision. Does a school with specific faith, intake or interest have a different vision? Does a unit within a school, for example for hearing impaired or autistic students, have to have a vision that is in line with the main school, or is there a difference of interpretation? As time may change vision, then place

may also be relevant. Is the vision of a rural school different from one in an inner city location? How much does the profile or needs of the pupils influence the vision?

1.5 Ethical Issues

As a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) student I was introduced to the [Seven Up](#) series by Michael Apted, where a set of children are filmed and a snapshot of their lives recorded every seven years, starting in 1964. The series took as its starting point the Jesuit motto ‘Give me a boy until he is 7 and I will give you the man’. The children in this longitudinal study were selected to represent the range of socio-economic backgrounds in Britain at that time, with the explicit assumption that each [social class](#) predetermined their future. Watching the first four series as a training teacher had a huge impact on me and my colleagues, bringing to the forefront the question of the point of secondary education. Determined to make a difference and to ‘put right’ the ‘wrongs’ of society we found the ideological and inspirational school visions a tremendous antidote to suggestions that factors such as class, race and gender were untouchable by education.

Headteachers must establish a culture that promotes excellence, equality and high expectations for all pupils.

(DfES 2004)

Pupils have to attend school and this imposes a considerable ethical burden on those who lead in shaping the values of those pupils. The educational idea of the Headteacher acting as a guide for the whole school is perhaps now a difficult one to sustain, especially given the complexity of the Headteacher role and the breadth of skills and expertise that is needed at this level. One might consider it quite unreasonable to expect a god-like perfection from every Headteacher, with a moral certitude of values that they would argue, suffer or even die for.

‘Philip believed in the infinite capacity of the human spirit to confront difficulties and to transform failure into success. The Philip Lawrence Awards echo his belief by enabling young people to share their vision of society and to showcase their solutions to the challenges we all face.’

(Lawrence cited in Miller 2010)

If the vision is clear, then members of staff and pupils should be able to judge what to do in a new or unforeseen situation. To this end the vision perhaps should not be that of only the Headteacher and the leadership team. Everyone must share in its creation. A vision would be enriched by having a range of contributors and perhaps should be based on the views of many and preferably all of the stakeholders. Should the Headteacher be considered more as an enabler, making the building of the vision a collective exercise? Perhaps they are the leader that brings the 'wow factor' to the vision. Perhaps a vision is a good starting point for a new Headteacher or perhaps it has more value and significance when it is formulated over a period of time.

1.6 Sharing the Vision

A vision which is explicit is more easily understood by all. The transmission of the vision comes in a host of forms. It may be articulated through a list of qualities that pupils should acquire or through school documentation such as the staff handbook, parent newsletters and pupil guidance. Conversations and speeches may promote the vision, although, especially in large establishments, it is not always easy to be completely consistent in policy and practice. Development plans and school evaluation documents need to show adherence to the vision but this is not always easy, given the other needs and constraints that they work within. More visual representations such as logo, badge or tag line slogan may help to reinforce vision ideals or summaries and a vision might have significantly increased impact if its articulation is exciting or particularly memorable. In schools where a vision is more longstanding there may be imbalance between stakeholders developed over time. Training, discussions and shared experience can help to promote commonality of understanding. As time passes, however, the interpretation of vision can develop in different ways within specific groups, for example parents, faculties, friendship, and it is an ongoing challenge to retain a purity of vision as it becomes more firmly embedded.

1.7 Personal and Professional Identity

The nature of vision in schools is of particular interest to me, given my current post as a Headteacher in an inclusive secondary stand-alone convertor

academy. I know that I am the person that I am, with the beliefs that I have, as a result of my experiences. I am a white, middle-class, well-educated, single, middle-aged woman. My life has been in many ways predictable and I have followed a well-travelled professional path in education. The expectations that I have for education have grown steadily throughout my career and whilst there have clearly been key moments that have helped to shape my beliefs and approaches, I think most have been gentle realisations and confirmations as opposed to exciting epiphanies.

Most often, autobiographers write about ‘epiphanies’ – remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person’s life (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Couser, 1997, Denzin, 1989), times of existential crises that forced a person to attend to and analyse lived experience (Zaner, 2004), and events after which life does not seem quite the same. While epiphanies are self-claimed phenomena in which one person may consider an experience transformative while another may not, these epiphanies reveal ways a person could negotiate ‘intense situations’ and ‘effects that linger’ – recollections, memories, images, feelings – long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished. (Bochner, 1984)

(Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011:2)

Looking back I realise that I have been exceptionally lucky to have been part of such a loving and warm family. My parents have cared and supported me throughout my life, even when they disagreed with my plans, and have always been there to pick me up and dust me down when the going was tough. This has been a constant and positive force for me and I think a wish to provide this for everyone has motivated my life in education.

Born in the south of England, my family moved to a very small village in Yorkshire when I was young and I attended a rural infant-junior school that had only 21 pupils and 2 teachers in total. School was an extended family in many ways and curriculum decisions were taken on a very flexible and individually driven basis. The shock of moving to an enormous secondary school of over two and half thousand pupils was immense. Added to this, we were taken by coaches to the school that was located a few miles away in a nearby mining town during the significant pit closures and industrial action of the 1980’s. Given my southern accent and village address I became an easy

target for school bullies and found refuge at break and lunch times in the music block and dance studios. Taking music up formally at a relatively late stage of schooling, I then progressed more out of chance than planning to music college and then onto a PGCE course. I am a competent musician but whilst music is a great love, I do not fool myself into thinking I have any great talent in this area, and looking back, realise that much of the decision to work in music and in particular within schools was due to the protection afforded to me at school and my subsequent involvements there.

During my early teaching career, I worked in a relatively large number of schools, initially acting as part of an ILEA music team to support new or failing music departments. Many of my assignments were limited in time to one or two terms, generally with a brief designed to galvanise departments into action. Understanding the importance of immediacy and high impact, I found strategies to engage pupils with the music department, quickly building a music family to draw in as many pupils as I could. The schools ranged over three inner city boroughs and whilst many characteristics were similar, each community had its own feel and a different way of articulating the mission statement or vision. When I reached a north London Catholic boys school I 'knew' that it would be for only 3 years. I had gained enormous experience moving from school to school but understood that I needed to show commitment to one learning community before I could progress professionally to the next level. With this in mind, I took the job when it was offered to me, primarily because of my first impressions of the Headteacher and what I felt was a clear vision for improvement. Despite the school being single sex, Catholic and a long way from where I lived (all elements that I wouldn't have chosen), I subsequently remained at the school, through many changes, for 18½ years.

Bourne House was sited apart from the main body of the school and was a tremendous asset to a new and enthusiastic Head of Music planning exciting projects and endless rehearsals; we would be unable to disturb a studying school, quite unlike my previous school, that had the music rooms next to the staff room. The Music House had originally been the family house of the De

Havilland family (of aircraft fame) and felt very much like a mini-school within a school. As a new start department we were able to make the building as we wanted it and by creating the office in the middle of a maze of rooms and next to the main wood-panelled classroom, we made it the heart of the Music House, open at both ends to give a very open-plan feel. During the initial years of the Music House, staff established a warm and inclusive learning environment. Everyone was welcomed, regardless of musical talent, and soon we had our very own 'family'. Whilst the ethos of the Music House fitted within the school vision, it felt as if it had special characteristics unlike other areas of the school.

The relationships forged between staff and pupils in the Music House were extremely close, perhaps in part due to the special nature of music as a subject but in large part through the caring and support that we gave to one another. The staff were young and single and the Music House family became a real focus in their lives. Pupils arrived early and stayed late, returning during the day at lunch and breaks as you would a home. As time went by the 'family' of the Music House grew. Boys from all years joined the gatherings and after-school clubs, for practical music making and theoretical study, became popular both for the content and for social aspects. The bands and choirs became enormous to the extent that, eventually, they had to be divided into more manageable group sizes. The Music House flourished. At the core of all the activities were a group of students who, I think, just wanted to be part of something. School productions, concerts, national and international competitions and tours seemed to bring everyone even closer as the shared experiences multiplied. The staff team grew and occasionally changed and the pupils, of course, went through the school and moved onto work or further study, but the Music House remained a constant link for us all. Those who had left came back often and the links between students were built on as many progressed into music related professions. This extended family made it feel as if there was always someone who could help you, or someone who knew what you needed. Such a large group of people meant that often another 'old boy' could help.

Even when I decided to work at Goldsmiths College for half of each week leading the PGCE Music course there, the Music House group flourished. In many ways it grew stronger. Others stepped into my shoes on the days that I was away, promoting the same vision, and the PGCE students themselves became a branch of the family as we combined their teaching experiences and pupil learning by teaching part of the PGCE course at the school. The all-embracing nature of the Music House became a model that many of the PGCE students took with them as they started teaching, and later led their own departments. Other changes did not seem to alter the dynamic of the Music House. We changed buildings to a purpose-built one storey accommodation and I became mother to a gorgeous baby boy. As part of my Goldsmiths work and on becoming an Advanced Skills teacher I was able to work with a large number of different schools, both with the music departments and with other subject areas. I learnt much through a cross fertilization of ideas and experiences and continued to take good practice back to the Music House.

It was only when I took the NPQH course with NCSL that I started to think about the inclusive nature of the Music House and how this had been implemented. This was a time of reflection as part of the leadership building programme and I recognise the growth in my awareness of the impact that such a community has on its participants. The NPQH came with many other changes in my life. After leading the Music House for many years I moved into a senior leadership role which demanded that I relocate into a different faculty. The Performing Arts faculty worked successfully under a new head of faculty who had an effective, but completely different, approach and vision. The old Music House family grew up and left school. They remained in close contact with the staff and other old boys but there was a definite end to the Music House as we knew it. I subsequently moved to a different school and eventually to my current post as Headteacher.

My time leading the Music House has been incredibly important to me, not least because of the staff and pupils that I got to know. Many of them still play an important part in my life. The boys have grown into fine young men. They have lives, careers and families of their own, but clearly still feel part of a

Music House group. The vision of the Music House was never specifically articulated, although I think that staff and pupils alike understood the broad aims and ethos and that this was translated into a positive school climate or ethos. I became keen to know how everyone perceived the vision and if in fact, it was a shared one? If we all had a shared vision how was this understood by everyone? Using an experience-based case study, I decided to explore the involvement of a group of ex-students in the Music House and how their life was affected by their being part of the group.

1.8 Research Focus

The process of collaborative narrative construction will, by its nature, be to some extent influenced by both the shared experiences and subsequent relationships. This will, I hope, add to a willingness to contribute to the study. In her study of student–teachers Doecke (Doecke, Brown and Lougran, 2000) describes accounts outlining understandings of, and reflections on, learning to be a teacher.

Meanings were jointly constructed...[and] were shaped by commitment to share the experiences and to give them narrative shape

(Doecke et al 2000:337)

Similarly, I anticipated the sample group would bring a shared enthusiasm for discussing their school experience, through a range of perspectives. Narrative related research is a growing field. However many of the studies focus on aspects of the narrative such as the structure of the story, the development of the plot or various linguistic aspects of the narrative rather than the content.

My own involvement with the subject of the study means that I bring my own experiences and bias to the work both as a participant and as a researcher. This makes this personal critical analysis of my life and career even more important.

The work carried out (in a narrative study) is interpretive and an interpretation is always personal, partial and dynamic

(Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Silber, 1998:10)

I felt that the fact that the sample group are now not at school, would allow them to consider, with the benefit of hindsight, the provision and its impact and how much of this grew from a vision. The group profile is specific to the

school and time of their being at the school and this may have implications as to wider relevance. The sample group of students are all male, largely catholic and of middle-income families. Their current age range is from 25 to 40 years old.

Measuring the impact of an ethos is to some extent impossible. Ethos is an all embracing 'feel' to a place or community, and it is not possible to measure this empirically. It is also difficult to separate ethos from other aspects of school development and even to identify which actions have given which results. Whilst it may be possible to judge the understanding of a vision and the attitudes and perceptions to a vision, the judgement of impact on an ethos is much more nebulous.

In most situations we would rightly expect that an ethos, growing from a vision, should pervade all parts of a school, its documentation, stakeholder perceptions and activities. The Music House did not have separate written policies. Does that mean there wasn't a vision? If the impact of the vision is dependent on its articulation, we are able to measure this by looking at the understanding of the stakeholders or the form of the articulation itself. The quality of the vision articulation could be assessed but this may not be relevant to its impact on an ethos. The actions which demonstrate the vision and the ethos can be quantified, but I am not sure that, even with all of these parts listed, the impact of either could be measured. The relative impact of a vision on the ethos of a community may be quite different for different stakeholders and a measure of impact may only really be for those involved to assess. Perhaps vision has to be continually modified as part of a cycle of development and informed by leaders' judgement and understanding for it to keep the ethos stable.

This introduction has posed a series of questions about vision and its implementation, as a background to the thesis subject. I am passionate about education and about supporting children through the learning process. Paramount for me is the well-being of pupils, the confidence that this brings to them and how an ethos of belonging is created. I was excited to discover what

can be learned from conversations and discussions with a group of students and staff from a learning environment that I have known and, perhaps more importantly to consider what lessons there are for me and others to learn and apply as a school leader in the current educational climate.

CHAPTER TWO

Working within the Wider Context

Pressures on our young people and schools

This chapter will briefly explore a number of ‘pressure points’ operating on the mainstream education of young people, from those at policy-level to the well-being and stability of the students themselves, as observed in my own practice as Headteacher.

2.1 Government Policy and Direction

Schools, of course, have always been subject to the direction of travel set by Government policy. We have only to look at the changes that education acts have brought over the last thirty years to see the attempts at improvements in provision for young people. Each has an impact on schools and society, for better or worse. More recently, the rate of change has been greatly increased and it has sometimes been difficult to see, or believe in, a logical rationale behind decision-making. Changes of Government and personnel have brought radical shifts in thinking and long-term direction continues to be difficult to ascertain. To the school leader, decisions often feel as if they have been made without consideration of the views of the profession, giving disproportionate weight to the views of a minority of people, such as politicians, who have had a quite different educational experience than the majority of the population of the UK.

How schools are structured, governed, funded and monitored has changed markedly over the last 20 years. The Government continues to pass legislation to encourage academisation (Andrews, 2018) and there is a general move towards multi-academy trusts (MATs), where schools are grouped, some bound by location, some by a similarity such as faith and some only by sponsor. The 2016 Education for All Bill, which outlines the “move towards a system where all schools are academies”, grants the Government new legal powers to force schools in the worst-performing local authorities and those that

can no longer viably support their schools to become academies. For many this is a form of privatisation. (Mansell, 2017). Funding has also been strong for favoured types of schools, such as grammar schools, especially where their intake has been amended to accept students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Hinds, 2018). In my opinion, this tokenism does not really change the elitist educational approach that both grammar schools and the private or fully academised education system generate. Surely, we want our children to be educated in a full and equal community, not segregated because of family income or ability to pass an academic entrance test at a specific age?

“Since 2010, successive governments have reduced funding for local government in England as part of their efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit.” (National Audit Office, 2018). Local authorities now find themselves unable to sustain services which they previously provided and school development, funding and direction is based with individual governing bodies. Sharing of good practice and the support of other local schools currently depends wholly on the degree of outward-facing work that a school is able to afford to be part of. Many of the organisations set up to support and encourage shared school improvement, such as Challenge Partners, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and Partners in Excellence (PiXL) can remain in business only by charging large fees. These are unsustainable for many schools and result in schools withdrawing from the benefits of this kind of structured collaboration. Added to this, the demands of schools continually increase given the withdrawal of funding to other front line services such as the police, National Health Service (NHS) and youth services, resulting in support for families and young people lagging woefully behind need (Walker, 2017).

2.2 Pressures on Young People

Contemporary pressures on young people in the UK are enormous. Our culture idealises materialism; children are bombarded with media which champions a lifestyle to ‘have it all’. Brand names are linked with success in all fields, and particularly with regard to sport, technology and fashion. Image is everything and judgements made by peers can be cruel. The need to conform, and be like everyone else, often drives young people to make irrational decisions, and to

put themselves in vulnerable positions. Self-esteem can be a driving factor in a child's achievement in life and can have a long-term impact on mental health and lives

Most mental health disorders begin during youth, although they are often first detected later in life. The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) (2018) identifies that 'mental health problems affect about 1 in 10 children and young people.' This can include depression, anxiety and conduct disorder, and is often a direct response to what is happening in their lives.

Teenagers often experience emotional turmoil as their minds and bodies develop. An important part of growing up is working out and accepting who you are. Some young people find it hard to make this transition to adulthood and may experiment with alcohol, drugs or other substances that can affect mental health.

(MHF, 2018)

The increase in mental health affecting our young people can lead to dramatic events.

The mental health of thousands of children and young people is reaching crisis point. Teenagers especially are turning to self-harm or suicide in increasing numbers. But the true scale of the crisis is unknown with so many who show signs of going through trauma unnoticed.

(The Children's Society, 2018)

We live in a world of increasing technologies. This brings a range of exciting possibilities, but also a culture of immediacy and personal spotlight. Good news and bad spreads quickly, especially on social media platforms, and the endless commentary on every aspect of life encourages everyone to voice opinion openly and without the necessity of consideration of the impact any remark may have.

"It is clear from the hundreds of thousands of calls [ChildLine](#) receives that we have a nation of deeply unhappy children. The pressure to keep up with friends and have the perfect life online is adding to the sadness that many young people feel on a daily basis.

(Wanless, Chief Executive Officer of the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), 2018)

Technology also brings a dichotomy to the classroom. A wealth of information appears now readily available to everyone, with easy access to multiple sources. However resources are often conflicting and it can be difficult to

establish accuracy or to illicit the necessary material. Increasing skills in evidence selection and in the effective application of information is necessary for a young person to progress. New technology appears with regularity and staying up-to-date can be a time consuming and expensive business.

Parts of our society live in very difficult circumstances. Child Poverty Action Group (2018) claims that ‘there were 4.1 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2016-17’ and Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty (2018) estimate that ‘over 500,000 people in the UK are now reliant on food parcels’. Social tensions, particularly in areas of deprivation, include gang culture, sexual exploitation, drug wars and common use of weapons. Incidents that would have been incomprehensible only a few years ago are now commonplace. In some areas it can be more dangerous for a young person to not be in a gang, and many feel that there is no choice but to take routes mapped out for them by others. A study of criminal gangs showed that “Children who join gangs feel safer despite a greater risk of being assaulted or killed” (Henion and Melde, 2009).

"There is incontrovertible evidence that kids in a gang are more likely to be exposed to violence than kids who do not belong to a gang. However, that truth does not resonate with many kids who join a gang, believing that it protects them from violence in school or the community. Some youth also seek the protection of a gang because of problems at home. Girls who experience physical or sexual abuse at home may believe that being in a gang offers them protection."

(Simon, Ritter and Mahendra, 2013:5)

Adolescents are forced to find a route through any number of challenges to their survival, as they balance demands and no-win choices with their own moral decision-making. It is a sad indictment of our society that children remain in such vulnerable situations.

2.3 Decline in support services

At this time of increasing pressure on young people, there has been a significant decline in support services for families and young people. Education, social services, police, health care, connexions and youth offending teams seem to have experienced huge loss of personnel following funding

rationalisations and this results in those families and young people nearing crisis having even fewer options open to them. Inevitably, school services are at the front face of problems that arise for young people and must attempt to meet the needs of families as best they can in order to support their students. Perhaps, equally dangerous as the reduction in support for those in crisis, is the almost complete withdrawal of services for those heading towards crisis. Many safety nets previously in place have now been withdrawn and the cumulative impact of this could be considered alarming (Walker, 2017).

Schools naturally work to increase students' knowledge of potential dangers and routes for support and build the skills needed to cope and deal effectively with such situations. However, increasingly they are also central to the wider support for parents and families, steering multi-agency hubs and being the lead partner for numerous CAF (Common Assessment Framework) interventions. It is not always clear how schools are expected to meet the complex and constantly evolving needs presented to them, especially when the support of outside agencies has its own limitations. Whilst much about the notion of schools at the centre of community is appealing, there are real dangers of schools being central to so many services provided, especially when this shift has been made often without sufficient training and when outcomes in this area are not recognised in any formal way or the staffing or resources properly funded.

2.4 Pressures on Schools

In addition to the social and personal pressures that students face and that schools must contend with, curriculum and pedagogical changes have been forced either directly or through back-door alterations to the calculation of progress measures, some even imposed retrospectively. Expectations to succeed are, rightly and as always, high. Exam results remain central for students to progress to higher education or in the world of work, but this can make it difficult to maintain balance between academic achievement and development of the person and between 'best for the student' and 'best for the school'.

Recent curriculum changes have included an overhaul of both Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination syllabi. Changes lead to increased pressure on teachers and increased workload. Exam boards have struggled to keep up with changes, with many producing supporting materials, specimen papers and teaching materials long after the teaching of courses has started. The move away from the half –way Advanced Subsidiary (AS) exams gives a more focused 3 or 4 subject model at Key Stage 5, but also increase pressure on teachers and on universities who now have no partial marker and must rely more heavily on teacher predication and their own interview processes.

At Key Stage 4 the grading system has moved from A*-G to 1-9. There is a widely-accepted implication that grading boundaries are set to rise. We currently have a situation of the same proportion of students passing A*-C as grade 9-4 (with 4 being a ‘good pass’ and 5 being a ‘strong pass’). However one suspects that, in the not too distant future, grade 4 will become obsolete as a pass and 5 will become the norm pass. This could be a convoluted way of changing the grade boundaries in an educational climate that has set itself norm-referenced improvement statistics for each annual league table. The number of exam papers to be taken for each subject has also increased dramatically, causing increased pressure for both students and schools.

Most incredibly, the enormous changes in policy and systems, rolled out over a very short space of time, come alongside widespread real-term cuts to funding (Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), 2018). Following formula funding reviews many schools have seen their real-term funding reduced in spite of the spiralling costs for services and goods, and increasing pressures to ensure that our students continue to be given cutting edge education provision informed by the newest technologies.

The governorship of schools is often led by volunteers with a background outside of education. The make-up of the board of directors can be varied, dependant on school status, and many governors bring a range of valuable skills. Whilst frequently passionate about the effectiveness of schools and often giving freely of their time, it is increasingly difficult to ensure that governors

have the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge and support the leadership team. The accountability of governors to the Government is only through school outcomes, accounts and in their dealing with complaints; by the time a problem has been identified in this way it can be way past the stage of intervention or support and be more likely to be at crisis point. Monitoring by the local authority, particularly in areas where academies are well-established, can be, at best, superficial. Ofsted plays an important role in the monitoring of school standards, with a focus on “the quality of teacher, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for pupils” (Ofsted, 2018). Its focus has changed several times over the last decade and some feel that, whilst there is no real viable alternative, there remain concerns about consistency, communication and purpose (Ehren & Macbeath, 2018).

Recruitment into the profession continues to be difficult. Graduates are less and less tempted into teaching despite slick advertising campaigns and incentives. There is less movement generally between teaching posts, especially outside of city areas. As funding tightens, schools are forced to cut out many developmental and additional support roles and the range of opportunities for career progression becomes more limited. At a time when education needs high-quality leaders, there are fewer and fewer potential candidates to take on these roles. By necessity, the time taken for a teacher to progress to senior leadership continues to reduce, and whilst everyone appreciates the fresh ideas, passion and enthusiasm that young leaders bring to leadership roles, it is also useful to have a balance of experience in the leadership mix. The focus and integrity of our school leaders is essential to the success of our education system, and enormous pressures and unrealistic expectations could make school leadership seem something of a poison chalice.

2.5 Summary

The wider education sector is under great pressure, in terms of government policy, school structures, funding and clarity of expectation. Even as an ideal, many parts of current policy create dichotomy. Recent speeches by the education minister, Damian Hinds, have outlined his plans ‘to expand grammar

schools, unleash a wave of new faith schools and reaffirm the right of parents to take their children out of sex education classes' (Adams citing Hinds, 2018). This traditionalist approach could suggest that support for disadvantaged students and inclusive education may not be a top priority.

Children today live with pressures in part created by our fast-paced and driven community. The output of technology, media and social interface can be difficult to face and the increase of mental health disorders is disturbing. Poverty, disadvantage and social tensions can lead children towards involvement in gangs, exploitation and weapon use, often with no foreseeable way out. Schools are, within a reducing service for families and young people, the key partner to work with children.

With the removal of many services from local authority services, support for schools seems limited, particularly if a school is not part of a MAT or a group of affiliated schools. It is down to individual schools to negotiate and promote sharing and developing practice. Given the void created, there are, without doubt, increased opportunities for leaders to create new ways of working together and it is up to Headteachers to give collaborative projects of this kind the investment that they need.

Within this current climate it is critical that we understand the ways to create powerful learning places which will allow children to flourish. What follows in Chapter 3 is therefore a consideration of relevant writing to understand existing theories of school climate and distributive leadership models, and how professional and personal identities influence those involved, including the Headteacher.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptualising the Body of Knowledge

School climate, professional identities and educational leadership

This research is concerned with the experiences of a number of students who, over a period of fifteen years, studied in a music department, separated from the main body of the school, with a distinctive ethos and vision of success. Key theories of school climate, distributed leadership and professional identity are particularly appropriate to secure the central intentions of this research, which will look predominantly at the ways in which an unarticulated vision was communicated to, and shaped by, pupils and staff, and what lessons there are to learn as a current school leader.

The shaping of school climate or school ethos is recognised as playing a key role in the leadership of our schools and whilst the development of ‘successful’ learning places is influenced by many factors, the belief of stakeholders in a school vision can be tremendously powerful. In the context of research with a group of pupils working over a long period, within a shaped climate, there are a range of considerations. This chapter sets out to summarise literature on relevant theories of school climate, review key aspects which link with a distributive leadership model and consider how professional identity impacts on the development of school climate from a leadership perspective. These strands are integrated to supply an underpinning model for key proposals of my writing.

3.1 School Climate

3.1.1 What is School Climate?

Schools are learning organisations. Although articulated in a wide variety of manners, they all broadly have similar aims - academic and social achievement, care and support, and the development of a moral value framework in preparation for future life. Having said this, the ‘feel’ of each school can be quite different and the balance of these strands, the importance

given to specific areas within school and the people who make up the school community make each school individual.

School climate is the heart and soul of a school. It is about that essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, an administrator, a staff member to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day.... It is the interaction of school and classroom climate factors that enable members of the school community to teach and learn at their optimum levels

(Jerome Freiburg and Stein,1999:11)

There is considerable evidence to support the idea that characteristics of individual schools make a difference to pupil progress. Research on 'effective schools', both in the United Kingdom (Mortimore, Sammons, Lewis and Ecob, 1988) and in America (Purkey and Smith, 1983) found that there are some typical internal conditions in schools where pupils achieve higher outcomes. Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston (1979) compared the 'effectiveness' of ten Inner London Secondary schools on a range of student outcomes. The most effective schools were characterised by factors 'as varied as the degree of academic emphasis, teacher actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and rewards, good conditions for pupils, and the extent to which children are able to take responsibility' (Rutter et al., 1979:178). Later, Rutter and his colleagues referred to this combination of factors as the 'ethos' of the school.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) survey, *Ten Good Schools* (1977) found similar results, concluding that a 'good school' is one that can show:

...quality in its aims, in oversight of pupils, in curriculum design, in standards of teaching and academic achievements and in its links with the local community. What [good schools] all have in common is effective leadership and a 'climate' that is conducive to growth

(DES, 1977:36)

Considerable research (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, MacBeath, Dalton, Steward, MacBeath and Page, 2002, Duignan and Macpherson, 1992, Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992) points to close correlation between structure and organisation, and school climate.

As the school structure changes, so does the school climate. By purposely addressing all the factors that make up the climate, such

as, parent relations, discipline, at-risk program, and enrichment, you can create a climate in which students want to learn.

(Walker, 2007:77)

3.1.2 School climate or school culture?

School climate can be viewed as growing from the perceptions of all those involved in the school community. Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1999) suggest that school or organisational climate should be viewed from a psychological perspective and school culture viewed from an anthropological one. They see culture as identifying the distinctive feel or ideology of the workplace referring to ‘the shared orientations that bind the organization together and give it its distinctive identity’ whilst climate is outlined as ‘characteristic of the entire organization, featuring collective perceptions of members, arising from routine practices and influencing members’ behaviour and attitudes.’ There is no doubt that everyone involved in a school has a different perspective of the climate of the school and that each stakeholder’s opinion is valid.

School climate is a term used to describe people’s perceptions of their school. It combines beliefs, values, and attitudes of students, teachers, administrators, parents, office personnel, business partners, community members and others who play important roles in the life of the school.

(Stevens and Sanchez 1999:124)

Student, parent and community surveys informed Houston School District’s drive to improve effectiveness. Stevens and Sanchez (1999) used data collected to identify a need for focus on safety and security and, as a result, Houston adopted a ‘zero-tolerance’ attitude towards student behaviour.

By allowing parents and community members the opportunity to express their views and expand their involvement, school districts provide these stakeholders with a definite role, predisposing them toward a more positive attitude about their children’s education.

(Stevens and Sanchez, 1999:145)

Stevens and Sanchez (1999) also point out that ‘perceptions can often have as great an impact as reality’. Perhaps if we consider that the ‘ethos’ comes at least in part from the common beliefs about the school, then to a large extent the perception could be considered as a reality.

3.1.3 Measuring school climate

Research of school climate shows a wide range of measures, including personal experience, discussions, case studies, student drawings, report cards, staff and student journals, interviews, classroom observations and checklists. Direct measures, in which the researcher interacts with others to collect climate data can contrast with indirect measures which use records already in existence and observations that do not disrupt or influence pupils or staff. The relationship of the stakeholder to the school alters their relative viewpoint and changes the direction and impact of the perception. Halpin and Croft (1963) have provided us with perhaps the best-known conceptualisation and measurement of school climate in educational administration, suggesting that climate is the ‘personality of the school’ and that it can be seen for anyone in school positioned along an ‘open to closed continuum’. Jerome Freiberg and Stein (1999) emphasise the importance of broad and up-to-date information:

School climate should be measured from multiple perspectives, and throughout the school year, so that each person responsible for the education of youth can see how healthy a learning environment is and what needs to be changed or sustained. Continuous improvement requires continuous information about the learner and the learning environment.

Jerome Freiburg & Stein (1999:24)

There is clearly a balance to be found. Some of the more easily measured aspects of school climate may not necessarily give us the full picture of impact and the link between influencing factor and impact is often blurred by the multitude of influences and the perceptions of different stakeholders.

3.2 Distributive Leadership

3.2.1 Leadership in Education

Views of what ‘Educational Leadership’ is have changed considerably over the past 25 years. Smyth (1985) proposes that educative leadership is that which ‘helps professional educators to work with others to shape their purposes and the meanings that they use to make sense of and to justify, their involvement in and contribution to education’. Gunter, cited in Bush (2011:5) identified labels to define the field which has showed a move from ‘educational administration’ to ‘educational management’ and more recently to ‘educational leadership’. Bush (2011:5) sees this shift in England ‘...exemplified most strongly by the

opening of the now defunct National College for School Leadership in 2000', with Bolam, cited in Bush (2011:5) describing this as a 'paradigm shift'. Bush (2011:7-8) outlines his view of three dimensions of leadership, which contribute to a definition: influence, values and vision. For many, the term educational leadership is contested.

'[T]he definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no 'correct' definition.'

(Yukl, 2002:6)

For others it must be broken into constituent parts to be considered fully.

'Whilst leadership is a well-established industry there are ever increasing branches in this field: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, constructivist leadership, servant leadership, systems leadership, collaborative leadership, cultural leadership and primal leadership'

(Goleman and Boyatzis 2002:1)

In contrast, Hallinger and Hock (1996) suggest that it is most useful to look at aspects of leadership evidenced through outcomes.

'In the light of such expansion of ideas, one could easily think that there is no clear evidence of what makes successful or effective leadership, however we do now understand much about leadership behaviours and practices and how this impacts on student outcomes'

(Hallinger and Heck, 1996:4)

Much of the focus of research has been placed on the values, beliefs, skills and knowledge that we think of as important to educational leadership, with little writing about actual leadership practice. Whilst we are often able to identify the results of great leadership or to see it as a finished product it is not always easy to define the way that the components have come together.

To define educational leadership, much depends on the way that a leader plans to work and the community with which they will engage and maybe there cannot really be a full definition of educational leadership. As the role of school leader has diversified, a definition, in many ways, becomes even less possible; any viewpoint giving only a partial picture of what a school leader can contribute.

3.2.2 A Distributive Model

The change in demands, with increased responsibility and pressure for school Headteachers, has increased considerably over the last twenty years.

The diversity of School challenges us to believe that one person cannot solve all the problems in isolation. Individuals and groups need to step up to the plate to assume some leadership – once thought to be the realm of the principle.

(Bergmann and Allenbrough, 2007:97)

The distributive model of leadership has come to the fore not only because of idealistic reasons, therefore, but also because of the pressure of work at this level.

It is little wonder there emerged a search for a structure whereby collective intelligence could be assembled.

(Hartley, 2010:282)

There is much to commend a distributed way of working, which allows a school leader to make the most of the specific skills and knowledge of their team to improve the proficiency and quality of the decision-making. Bush (2011:202) states that ‘distributed leadership has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century, replacing collegiality as the favoured approach.... It can be differentiated from other models by its focus on collective, rather than singular leadership,’ whereas for Harris (2004:13), ‘Distributive leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role.’

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006:12), in their study of the impact of school leadership, concluded ‘seven strong claims’ about successful school leadership, of which two related to distributed leadership. Further, they deduce that multiple leadership is ‘much more effective’ than solo leadership. This is also endorsed by Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods. (2003:3), who see distributed leadership as an ‘emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise’, whilst Hopkins and Jackson (2002) feel that the space for distributed leadership needs to be orchestrated and suggest that this could not occur without the active support of school principals.

In her book 'Leading the Sustainable School' (2012) Debra Massey describes her journey as she takes over as Head of Howe Dell School using a distributive leadership model. She aims to make leadership the 'right and responsibility of every stakeholder' to impact on children's lives by raising aspiration and achievement in her community.

'No one knows all the answers, but with consultation, a greater variety of solutions are available, upon which to build....[distributive leadership] reinforces the power of the message 'You matter and so does what you do in our organisation.'

(Massey, 2012:27,150)

Interestingly, Lumby (2009:320) feels that distributed leadership should be extended to include partnerships with other schools. In the current climate of changing relationships between schools under Government directive, this may be a model that can only work if it is made a priority for all school's leadership.

3.2.3 Challenges of distributed leadership

There may, however, also be limitations to a leadership model of this kind, and these too must be considered. It is of course still the Headteacher who is accountable to Governors and the Government, no matter how their responsibilities and choices are shared; some might feel that a loosening of control on key areas affecting progress is too risky. A Headteacher's reputation could rest on the actions of a leader in the team whose understanding, opinions or priorities are not exactly the same as theirs, or whose skills and experience in one particular field, whilst perhaps more extensive than the Headteacher's are not supported in the same way by broader experiences and responsibilities.

Where a distributed model of leadership across a whole school is not already in place it could be difficult for everyone to see how this would work. Much depends on the way the model is introduced and the people who are involved in the early stages. Teachers who are not in senior leadership positions may have chosen not to take on extra responsibility or might prefer to be directed. Would

staff feel threatened by younger or less experienced colleagues taking on a role in the leadership of the school? How could the sharing of responsibilities be remunerated? Is there difference for all parties involved between distributed leadership, delegation and ‘palming off’ the Headteacher’s duties? Hartley (2010:271-85) claims that, given the formal authority of Headteachers, ‘distributed leadership resides uneasily within the formal bureaucracy of schools’. Gronn’s study (2010) of four research projects concludes that

....Headteachers retain considerable power within a distributed leadership model. Certain individuals [in the study], while they by no means monopolised the totality of the leadership, nonetheless exercised disproportionate influence compared to their individual peers

(Gronn, 2010:89)

Whilst there is a gain of skills and shared passion in a distributed leadership model, there are also important issues to be understood, both by the Headteacher and those others involved.

Visions of distributed leadership need to take fully into account the asymmetry of power between different actors

(Bottery, 2004:21)

On a more practical matter, Webb and Vulliamy (1996) point out the time-consuming nature of distributive leadership meetings and Massey (2012) identifies the need for strong lines of communication to make this model operate effectively.

Sometimes the distributive leadership approach might empower to the point where there are breakdowns in communications or ‘solo working’ to the detriment of the overall organisation. These have been minimised by weekly half-hour leadership team meetings and group emails to inform and update colleagues.

(Massey, 2012:155)

The involvement of students in the distributed leadership model brings an even wider range of questions ranging from how their responsibility links with an accountability to how their involvement is best utilised. That they have great potential to lead is widely acknowledged.

We know that, when given the opportunity, young people can have a profound impact on their schools. Involvement in leadership and voice activities can improve students’ and pupils’ learning as well as helping them to develop the skills and traits needed for success outside of the classroom.

(SSAT, 2018)

Developing a model where students have a true leadership role can be difficult and their involvement can be perceived as a sharing of vision and an engagement in the shaping of school operation. Does the role of the pupils in this model diminish or enhance the role of the staff and parents? How many people can be leaders in any model of leadership? Does there have to be someone left to be led? Certainly the pool of key players is enlarged hugely in a distributed leadership model that includes all students. This could be overwhelming from a logistical point of view. However, the student viewpoint is able to bring a completely different aspect to development discussions and this is clearly valuable.

3.3 Professional Identity

3.3.1 Identity Theories

To understand the construction and potential impacts of a school ethos or school climate, it is essential to consider the role of the Headteacher or key leader within this. An assessment of identity theories helps to support an understanding of the influences that shape how a leader perceives and interfaces with school climate and also with the previously discussed distributive leadership models. However, the range of perceptions and definitions of ‘identity’, shows the degree of uncertainty that this area can generate.

Marx, cited in Ricoeur, (1992:56) proposes that identity is a ‘sense of self’ whilst Nietzsche, cited in Ricoeur (1992:56), sees a person’s identity as comprising two parts: the ‘plastic self’ and the ‘expressive self’. The ‘plastic self’, he claims, makes identity flexible and adaptive whereas the ‘expressive self’ is concerned with authenticity (from external forces). For Ricoeur (1992) identity is a ‘fiction’ through which we understand our lives:

Narrative constructs the identity of the character, which can be called his or her identity, in constructing the story told. It is the identity of the story which makes the identity of the character.

(Ricoeur, 1992:147-8)

The extent to which we share a group's beliefs, goals and norms affects the way that we view ourselves in relation to them. Our identity is based on how we look at our lives and how we fit into our own world. The psychologist Josselson (1996), proposed a series of questions to allow people to define who they are and what they consider to be important:

What matters to you? What goals do you pursue? How do you want others to think of you? What do you believe in? What guides your actions? Whom do you love? What values do you hold dear? Where do you expend your passion? What causes you pain?

(Josselson,1996:29)

Identity and its development are intensely personal, but their understanding takes place within a much wider context. Aspects of self are not fixed and are altered and changed with every event. We could perhaps see identity not as a single analysis but more as an amalgamation of roles, beliefs, experiences and values.

3.3.2 Development of teacher identity

From the second half of the C20th, Erikson's (1959) proposed model provides the foundations for many of the theories of identity development that influence our perceptions of educational growth. He suggested eight stages of psychosocial development linked to age and moving from basic trust and autonomy issues in early childhood, to generative and integrity in later life. Erikson describes a phase of the adolescent years as 'identity versus identity confusion', where individuals seek to 'define' themselves in relation to their environments. Determining identity can require the combination of former and present self-representations and also 'ideal self' (Ruyter and Conroy, 2002). The relationship of self to the world outside is tremendously important to the process of identity development. Erikson suggests that 'identity connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others' (1959:109). His theoretical approach to adolescence, in particular, has been studied and supported by others since (Kroger, Martinussen and Marcia, 2010).

Amongst many considerations of teacher quality, character and identity, Josselson (1987) suggested that much of identity is dependent on 'the relatively

permanent traits shown in given situations such as in roles' and Weeks (1990) went further, suggesting that this involved the identification of the commonalities with a particular group of shared values:

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some other people and what differentiates you from others....it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality.

(Weeks, 1990:88)

The common ground of a shared group builds a 'shared culture'. Some aspects of a 'teacher culture' are unspoken and there are considerable influences from individual schools and managerial bodies, however many current views of identity support the idea of an unchanging core self (Nias, 1997). This could indicate that the most influential factor in a teacher's identity is their life before teaching. The idea of a narrative theory suggested by Beattie (1995), with identity being seen through the stories that people tell about themselves, suggests that developing identity can be observed through the changes in story. Pre-existing narratives, may orchestrate and sift memories of teaching experiences, and shape the formation of teacher selves.

Johnson (1996) described teaching as a 'socially constructed activity that requires the interpretation and negotiation of meanings embedded within and outside the classroom'. A teacher's definition of 'self' affects the construct of meanings within the classroom. Their comprehension is further influenced by the socially embedded understanding of teaching as constructed through experiences in school and with members of the teaching profession and various student groups. The teacher's identity and the way that they describe this identity, both as a member of the profession and as an outsider has bearing on the dialogue between teachers and their pupils and thus also reflects in some ways the identity of the students that they work with.

3.3.3 Leadership of Vision

Vision is frequently regarded as an essential element of the package that a leader has to offer.

'The issue of creating and inspiring vision should be central to the work of school leaders. It is a key task that makes schools stand out from the rest. '

(Ryan, 2008:26)

There can be a high expectation of visionary leadership amongst stakeholders and for the Headteacher to articulate that vision openly. A clearly articulated vision must have the potential to develop schools, but evidence of vision effectiveness is mixed and raises many questions. How much of the vision comes from the professional identity of the Headteacher? Dempster and Logan's (1998) study of Australian schools shows that an expectation of the Headteacher having a clear vision is the case for 99% of teachers and 97% of parents, and additionally that 98% of both groups expect the leader to plan strategically to achieve their vision.

...the formal leader makes a significant difference. No matter what the leader does (and does not do), the effects are detectable throughout the organisation. In visiting schools we all have experienced a difference in 'feel', which, in large part, has been shaped by the principal....How teachers perceive and interpret the actions of the principal leads to the construction of the culture of the school and, in part, each teacher's classroom culture.

(Dempster and Logan, 1998:143)

This belief by staff, pupils and parents in the impact of a vision formed and executed by the Headteacher can be enormous. However Fullan (1992b) is critical, implying that so called visionary leaders can damage rather than improve their schools, particularly in the long term:

The current emphasis on vision in leadership can be misleading. Vision can blind leaders in a number of ways...The high-powered, charismatic principal who 'radically transforms the school' in four or five years can...be blinding and misleading as a role model...my hypothesis would be that most such schools decline after the leader leaves...Principals are blinded by their own vision when they feel they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it.

(Fullan, 1992b: 19-20)

The study of twelve self-elected 'effective' schools by Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington and Weindling (1993:33-36) revealed a number of problems with the development and articulation of 'vision'. They showed that most Headteachers were able to describe 'some sort of vision' but 'they varied in their capacity to articulate the vision and the visions were more or less

sophisticated'. In addition the visions were rarely specific to the school and were 'neither surprising nor striking nor controversial. They are closely in line with what one might expect of the British system of education'

Visionary rhetoric is a form of management-speak that had increased very noticeably in schools since the advent of educational reforms....If all the visionary rhetoric corresponded with reality, would a third of teachers be seeking to leave the profession?

(Hoyle and Wallace, 2005:11)

Is it in fact possible for a vision to be specific given the current Government agendas, schemes and directives that tactically manipulate curriculum aims and content? Ryan (2008) advocates that Headteachers take greater charge of their own schools'.

... pressures all come from outside into the school ... Those who have the knowledge and understanding of a school and its community should claim autonomy and turn education inside out ... They should use the best of the outside – without being a Government puppet. The balance of power needs to shift towards those who have the expertise, the passion, the energy and the belief to do the right thing.

(Ryan, 2008:ix)

Bottery (1998:24) describes the actions of Headteachers who challenge official policy: 'from defy through subvert to ignore: on to ridicule then to wait and see to test; and in some (exceptional) cases finally to embrace'. Hoyle and Wallace (2005:139) feel that school visions have to conform to Government and authority expectations and to satisfy OFSTED inspectors; - 'any vision you like, as long as it's central Government's'. Perhaps there is an impossible dichotomy between the encouragement of vision being central to school development previously promoted by organisations such as the NSCL and the focus on management and centralisation through the growth of MATs, currently favoured by the Government.

3.4 Leadership, Identity and School Climate

3.4.1 Effects on School Climate

Much evidence suggests that school climate or ethos is a central part of being an 'effective school'. Both the direction in which the school climate is driven and the way that the Headteacher organises and utilises their leadership team and the wider school community depends to a great extent on the values,

beliefs and aspirations for the school that all of those involved have. The 'vision' or future of the school becomes dependant on everyone believing something together. How much of that vision is about us, as leaders? The aims of any school are broadly similar, with a balance between learning how to learn and being successful at learning, and the development of the whole person able to make moral judgements. Perhaps the difference comes in the way that the core team, steered or led by the Headteacher, perceive those elements given their own identities and how their own personal and professional identities shape decisions that they make together. The Headteacher makes decisions about who will be part of the core team, what roles they will each take and how the leadership of the vision will shape the school climate. Equally, as the school climate develops it will, to a greater or lesser extent, shape the way that the leadership system moves forward.

...an appropriate climate is an essential pre-condition to meaningful distributed leadership.

Bush (2011:91)

It may be possible to say that the change in school climate or ethos can grow, at least initially, from the ideas of the Headteacher, and that longer term this may be a vision that is shared and developing. The professional identity of the Head will be shaped by their experiences both before their school career and during it, their values and development. A set of short statements developed in the late 1980s by Hall and Vandenberghe described change process related to intervention behaviours of school principals. Each represented one of six dimensions of Change Facilitator Style (social/informal, formal/meaningful, trust in others, admin efficiency, day-to-day, vision/planning). The resultant CFS questionnaire was used in a variety of studies from 1988 to 1991 and analysed by Hall and George (1999), to produce three change facilitator styles:

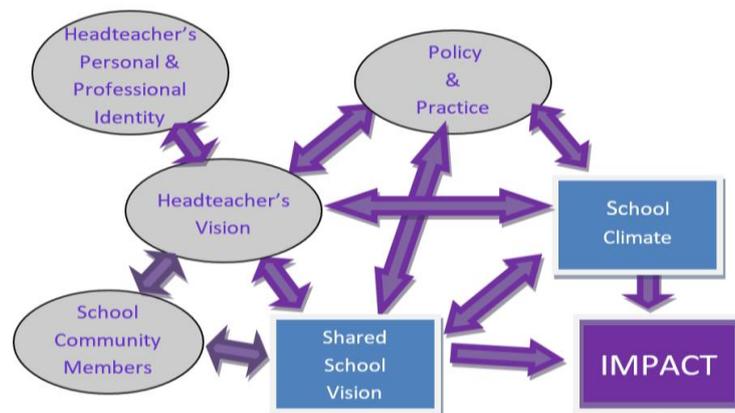
Initiators have clear, decisive long-range policies and goals...(with) strong beliefs about what good schools and teaching should be like and work intensively to attain this vision. Managers represent a broader range of behaviours...(They) provide basic support to facilitate teachers' use of an innovation...(and) become very involved with their teachers in making it happen. Responders place heavy emphasis on allowing teachers and others the opportunity to take the lead...They often give everyone an opportunity to have

input so as to weigh their feelings or to allow others to make the decision.

(Hall and George, 1999:181)

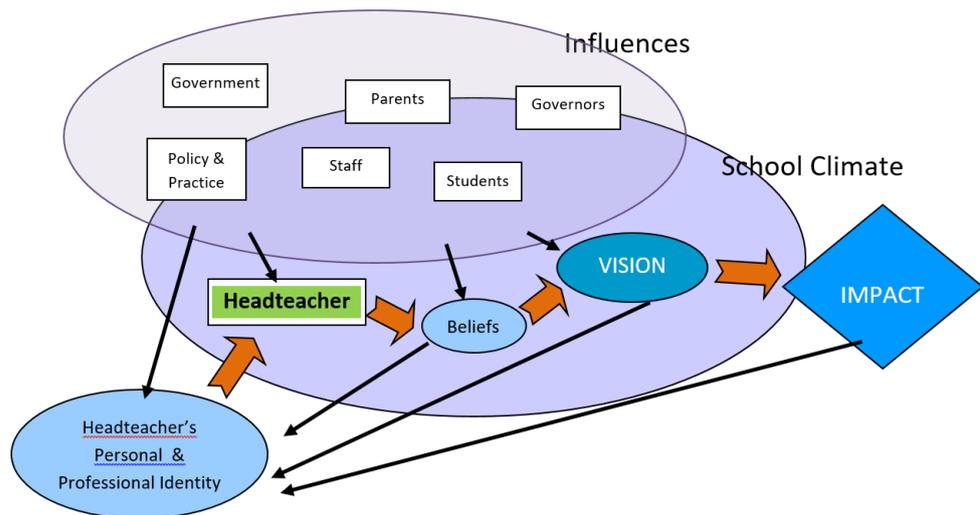
We can see the Headteacher as central to the development of the shared school vision and to the school climate, shaped by their own experiences inside and out of education and with a central set of beliefs and values, considering these as a personal and professional identity. From this identity they create their own roadmap which effects decisions about the involvement of others (each with their own personal and professional identity) and the extent to which policy and external practice affects the school climate. Together these elements may determine the shared school vision and the development of the school climate or ethos. The exact relationship between them and the relative impact of each on another, would of course be impossible to determine, given the complexity of the inter-relationships and the difficulties of separating impact.

Figure 3.4.1a: Effect of Professional identity and distributed leadership on school climate



The extent to which the Headteacher drives the school climate directly or through the other stakeholders involved with the school, depends enormously on their personal and professional identity and the resultant beliefs that they have about the school and how it should develop. Of course the identity and the relationships and experiences with everyone else in the school community is constantly evolving, as are the views, experiences and ideas of everyone else involved with the school. Added to this are external influences such as Government policy and practice.

Figure 3.4.1b Influence of Headteacher Identity on School Climate



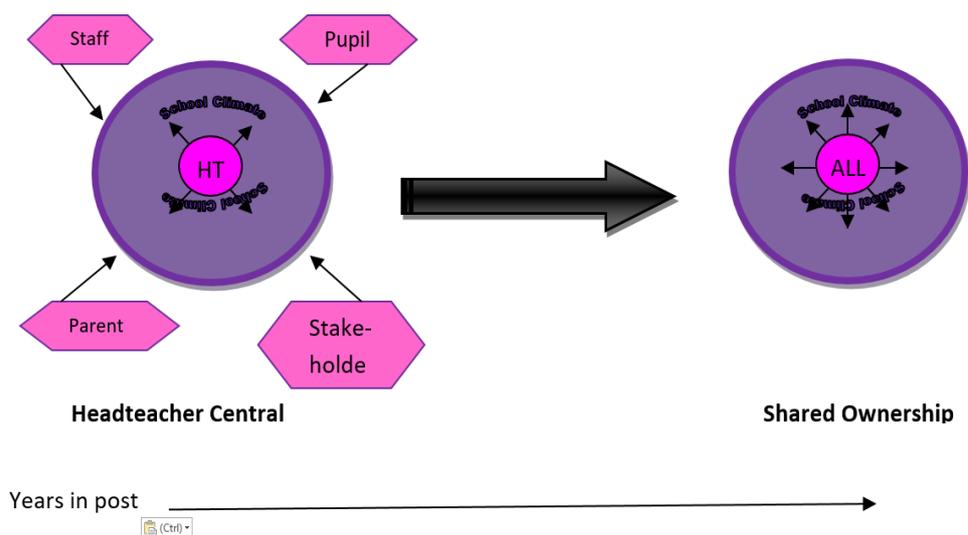
3.4.2 A changing perspective

A school ethos, determined by the personal and professional identity of the Headteacher and by all members of the distributed leadership team, is part of a shared vision that is constantly evolving and developing. Consequently, it is organic. Every experience of how the climate develops can inform and shape those involved. How much control should a Headteacher have or want to have over these changes? Given the central nature of the Headteacher to the primary decisions about leadership distribution and how the school climate will be shaped, one could consider how the role within this network might change in different stages of the life of the Head within a given school community. On taking up post at a school a Headteacher might feel the need to empower and inspire with a seemingly fixed and secure vision. The path to future success may be rooted in the vision of the Head, with all stakeholders sitting within the vision and understanding how that vision will take them forward. Their specific role would be clear to each of them and they might understand how they fit within the whole community. With 'buy in' from the staff, students and parents this could be a very successful model, especially in moving a school forward or changing a downward trend. Everyone could feel safe within this model.

It is conceivable that the possible shortcomings of this model (the pressure on one person and limited ownership of the vision) combined with the growth of

trust in an extended team might lead a Headteacher to consider a gradual move towards a less Head-centric community. In this model a more distributed leadership might involve more people and each stakeholder could have much more of a role in the decision making and development of the school climate and vision for the future. The Headteacher might remain a central figure but other members of the community could also be driving the shaping of the school.

Figure 3.4.2: The changing role of the Headteacher in relation to Vision



3.5 Summary

The relationship between a school vision and school climate or ethos is a complex one, and one that is particularly difficult to measure. For school leaders, it is important to fully understand the influencing factors, such as professional and personal identity and the impact of different leadership models. These characteristics make a difference to student and staff experiences and outcomes.

Leading a school today is a huge challenge, and multiple leadership, through a distributive leadership model, has much to offer. The pooling of expertise and the creation of opportunities for effective discussion to solve problems and decide future paths is arguably a much more sustainable, effective and pleasant way to work, than a model of a visionary leader or hero head. Widening the

leadership team to include larger numbers of staff and also students, brings many potential problems, but the benefits in terms of increased capacity, ‘buy-in’ and idea generation could be enormous.

The function of the Headteacher within any model of leadership is crucial, especially because, to a large part they determine their own role and that of others. They are usually seen as the front person for the articulation, presentation and execution of the school vision, although many recognise the limitations of this (Crawford, 2002, Stanley, 2017 and Waite and Bogotch, 2017). Certainly, there are huge benefits from everyone in a school community having shared beliefs. The professional and personal identity of the Headteacher will influence the shaping of the school vision and the manner in which it is modified and shared. This may change over time, given the changing role and influences on the Head and the changing perceptions that they might have. No matter how leadership is shared, there remains a responsibility for the whole school that lies with the Headteacher, creating a strange dichotomy between the strengths of a shared ownership model, wherein control is distributed, whilst responsibility still remains central.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology and Procedures

Chapter four sets out to consider the nature of the relevant research and knowledge creation and to outline the methodology and ethical procedures adopted by this research.

4.1 Methodological Issues

We are all naturally curious about the surroundings that we live and work in and how they operate. We rationalise what we experience through deductive and inductive reasoning and a combined deductive-inductive approach. Research, defined by Kerlinger (cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) as the ‘systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of the hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena’, combines experience with reasoning. Different viewpoints grow out of different understandings of reality and approaches can be located within groups of scholars who share a way of looking at things. A paradigm is an ‘accepted model or pattern’ (Kuhn, cited in Cohen et al., 2011), a shared set of parameters. As knowledge is gained, a paradigm may shift to explain new information.

Burrell and Morgan (cited in Cohen et al.) propose four assumptions: ontological, epistemological, human and methodological. They concern the philosophical study of the nature of reality, the scope of knowledge, the relationship between humans and their environment, and way that study takes place. Based on these, Cohen et al. (2011) describe two conceptions of social reality. The first, objectivist approach, or positivism, looks to knowledge that is based on experience and empirical information. Research methodology linked with this approach often centres around surveys and experiments. The second, subjectivist approach, or anti-positivism, regards the viewpoints of individuals as fundamental and considers the way they create, adjust and explain their own world. Methodology

in this area often includes personal accounts, narratives and constructs. Critical educational research brings together the two paradigms of positivism and interpretivism, combining them with a political and ideological context and using this to present a view of what society should be like. This model is created to change and have effect.

There are a number of methodological issues involved in this particular study. The research will examine the created climate of the Music House from a number of viewpoints. The personal nature of the experiences and involvement will reveal considerable detail. Given the different personalities involved and their varying involvement and influence within the community the participants views of the climate, its development, operation and impact will almost certainly be wide ranging. These subjective perceptions will, although perhaps presenting apparently conflicting evidence, add to a rich tapestry of data about the Music House community. The strength of the study will be in the personal accounts of events and feelings, and the memories, insights and observations of each participant. It is important to understand that there will be no single truth.

One of the problems caused by the uniqueness of a case study is the difficulty of application to further understanding. The specific details of a case study may not ever be replicated in the same way. Does this mean that understanding gained from the case study is not of use? Robson (2002) suggests that an individual case may present a valuable 'test bed' and this can give a better understanding of how something operates before an idea is applied more widely. Additionally, whilst findings may not be able to be generalised for a wide application they will be available to others who may find parallels which can be of use in their own situation. Whilst the information in this study is based on the particular of a 15-year period in a specific location of the Music House, analysis could lead to more general conclusions about the nature and development of a particular climate, and the impact specific features might have on a school climate.

4.2 Validity of Practitioner Research

Action research gives teachers an opportunity to look into aspects of their own institutions. It can be used to bring about change and has enjoyed a high profile in schools in recent years. It has commonly been linked with appraisal or through teacher professional development programmes, and often grows from a particular interest or project that a teacher is involved with.

Much educational research focuses on interesting puzzles that have been identified by practitioners

(Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy, 2004)

Practitioner researchers based in school are often drawn to methodologies of action research, case study and grounded theory which can be easily centred on the institution community. Grounded theory grows from the findings. Glaser (cited in Cohen et al.) outlines that ‘grounded theory is the systematic generation of theory from data’ and this fits well with the practitioner research model. Practitioners see issues and strengths from the inside and offer a unique opportunity to explore situations from a specific angle. The research produced often brings about school improvement, although sometimes this is on a very localised scale. As a practitioner I bring a passion for educational improvement to my research. I see the positive relationships built with pupils as a foundation to achievement and to developing responsible citizens of the future and my contact with the student body of a specific time and place allow me to explore this context in a way that someone else would not be able to. Considering how school climate is created and re-shaped by all who are part of it has considerable interest for me as a leader and Headteacher. The student perspective of their role in this development, seen in this study, will give an insight into individual experiences and views.

Groundwater-Smith (1997) recognises that ‘increasingly, there is an awareness that we cannot continue to debate the nature of schooling without consulting the consequential stakeholders, the students themselves. Ruddock agrees:

What pupils say about teaching, learning and schooling is not only worth listening to, but provides an important – perhaps the most important – foundation for thinking about ways of improving schools

(Ruddock, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996:1)

Whilst this research will be centred around adult participants, it will focus on their thoughts and retrospective feelings about school experiences. It is worth considering that the researcher in this context may make an assumption of ‘best of both worlds’: authentic perspective by way of adult maturity, but, equally, there are equally significant drawbacks in adult experiences coloured by hindsight, issues of hazy memory, the desire to please the interviewer, and so on. Notwithstanding these considerations, retrospection can allow the researcher to benefit from each participants’ hindsight and for broader concepts to be discussed in a context which, to some extent, might lack the emotional immediacy of pupils involved in a current situation.

4.3 Approach

Ethnography is a term used to describe an approach found within social research. Originally the term ethnography was a description of a community or culture, often outside of Western society, but now its variable and often-contested meaning is frequently shaped by its use, given an acceptance that there can be no definitive view of the world that we live in. Ethnography tries to understand social situations and behaviour through the consideration of the people involved. Le Compte and Preissle (cited in Cohen et al., 2011) identify an element of an ethnographic approach as being concerned with ‘description rather than prediction, induction rather than deduction, generation rather than verification of theory, construction rather than enumeration and subjectivities rather than objective knowledge’.

A case study gives the researcher an opportunity to consider the viewpoint of a specific person or group, to look at all the details of one particular situation. Stake (1995:7) sees a case study as the ‘study of the particular’, but it can be thought of as a ‘single instance of a bounded system’ (Cresswell, cited in Cohen et al., 2011) or the ‘case within a context’ (Yin, cited in Cohen et al. 2011). Case studies are often easier for a reader to engage with than quantitative data, and can demonstrate in real terms how an abstract model might actually work. An understanding of the cause and effect of an issue, with the variables that this might encompass, can often be best seen through case study evidence, which allows for the complexity of context and the uniqueness of any situation

to be considered. Case studies can take a very narrow focus and provide detailed and descriptive information. In this respect they provide powerful data which is strong in reality. They are able to show a range of different truths and viewpoints.

In terms of outcomes Yin (cited in Cohen et al., 2011) outlines three types of case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The second of these, a descriptive case study, focuses on the narrative accounts of those involved. This research will be a case study which focuses on a very specific instance of location and time period. Conversations will explore the way in which the school climate of the Music House was understood and absorbed, how it was shaped over a period of time, occasions when values were demonstrated and challenged and the impact that this community identity had on personal futures. The retrospective nature of the interviews will allow the research to consider aspects over a long time period, give an opportunity to see the effect of variables and also to look at long term impacts.

This research takes a mixed method approach. As research that has, and continues to inform my own practice and that of my leadership team on an iterative developmental basis there is an action research perspective. In a wider context there is much here to inform practitioners and for leaders, including myself, to reflect upon, bringing a practitioner research angle to the work. The research is ethnographic in its consideration of personal and cultural perspectives and as a case study made up of individual perspectives. It uses a grounded theory approach, allowing the themes to grow from the collected data. Data gathering as outlined in the next section is part of the research practices within these fields. Once information had been gathered through the initial questionnaires (Appendix 3 and 4), first interviews and group forums a tool to organise and refine the grouping of information was needed, and for this I used a software package called Nvivo.

4.4 Data Collection

Whilst case studies are data rich they can present a large number of variables and often evidence needs to be referenced from several sources and using

different collection tools. Data for this research has been collected through questionnaires, interviews and group discussions. The data collected was both qualitative and quantitative, though these will not carry equal weight. Despite the objectivity of numerical and empirical data this could not be prioritised given value of the narrative discourse.

Interviews are based on the dialogue between two or more people. They encourage a bringing together of viewpoints and allow creative conversation within a structured format. Data generated from interviews may be in regard of the text, meaning or non-verbal references and can be a tremendously flexible tool. The construction of the interview needed to be carefully thought through as the form, roles and questions can shape outcomes immensely. It was important that the researcher was clear as to the purpose of the interview so that it could be constructed accordingly. Tuckman (1972) writes that interviews give ‘access to what is ‘inside a person’s head’, [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).’ For this research I used an interview question framework (Appendix 5); there was, however, a need for considerable flexibility in the interviews, as whilst there were definitely key themes to be explored, much of the strength of the material produced was through the willingness to follow ideas and experiences brought up by the participants. Second interviews were used to further clarify points made and to explore new ideas that participants raised.

Group discussions allow participants to interact with each other to discuss a given topic or idea. They are seen as particularly useful where members of the group know or know of each other (Watt and Ebbutt, 1987) and can provide a cross check of information (Arksey and Knight, 1999) or identify ideas to be followed up in interview (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Group discussions in this study were used in a variety of ways. Two groups were asked to clarify themes through a grouping activity based around the responses to Question 2 of the initial questionnaire which asked for words to describe the Music House. Four groups talked about rules and how these could be articulated and a final staff

group explored the characteristics of an effective teacher. All groups talked about a recipe to create a positive ethos.

The participants in this study have a common bond of the Music House and as adults involved in exploratory discussion about school climate it was felt unlikely to find overt concerns over sharing information. It is important, however, that recognition was paid to the effect of ongoing relationship influence. The participants do not all know each other since they studied as part of the Music House at different times, but they all know at least one other participant. Given the comfortable relationships already established with members of the group it is important that the interview is able to take a fairly flexible approach to allow ideas to be fully examined and considered.

Documentary evidence may have been used as part of this research should this have proved useful. This is largely primary evidence that was produced as a 'direct record of an event or process' (Cohen et al., 2011). There is a range of material available including grade sheets, exam results, work samples, school magazines, photographs and audio recordings. Lincoln and Guba (1985:268) discuss the benefits of using documents and records to support research, given their ready availability, low cost and factual nature. They also recognise the possibilities of the documents being unrepresentative or lacking in objectivity. In addition to using the documentary evidence to prompt and trigger recollections at the interview stage in the exploration of specific events, analysis of this evidence could have helped to clarify timelines and provide links between people, occasions and outcomes if this had been needed. The use of the documentary evidence must not compromise the central case studies, which are important for the personal perspective that they bring.

4.5 The Sample

My research was defined by a smaller group drawn from the total population, or sample. The selection of participants to be involved in a study can be based on any of a range of strategies. Cohen et al. (2011:153) describe two main methods of sampling: probability (random) sampling or non-probability (purposive) sampling. In the latter the participants are selected, or not selected,

with purpose, and reasoning determines the choice of those involved. These selections can be rationalised through, for example, convenience, quota or volunteers, or can comprise of a mixture of strategies.

The population of pupils taught in the Music House during the period 1990 – 2005 is too large to interview everyone in depth. The aim of the study was to explore how the climate of the Music House was introduced, shaped and developed, to look at the nature of the involvement of the students and consider the legacy influence on individuals, the school and the wider community. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were heavily involved with the Music House community. This was done with the understanding that the wider population of the Music House is not fully represented but recognising that the quality and personal nature of material will be enhanced through the focus on a much smaller group of participants. It was also noted that the involvement of the participants was different at different times during their school life.

In much qualitative research the emphasis is placed on the uniqueness...[of the] individuals in question...In such cases it is perhaps unwise to talk about a 'sample', and more fitting to talk about a group, or individuals.

(Cohen et al., 2011:161)

This is a small-scale research project considering the development of climate or ethos over time. Consequently, participants were selected from different year groups, covering changes within the climate and different events and experiences for them. The initial questionnaire was sent to all students, staff and trainee teachers that were part of the Music House between 1990 and 2005 and whose contact details could be obtained. Of the 87 questionnaires sent out, 41 were returned. These were either students, teachers or trainee teachers in the Music House during the period of study, however there is a degree of overlap between the student, trainee and teacher groups. Of the 27 student respondents, one subsequently trained and taught in the Music House and one taught there after training elsewhere. Another three went on to teach in other schools, two teaching music and one English. The 14 trainee teachers were part of Goldsmiths' College on the PGCE course, with the exception of one who

took a Graduate Trainee Programme (GTP) course. All went on to be music teachers, four of these in the Music House. Six respondents taught in the Music House.

From the participants, 10 were selected for a follow up interview, based on role, age, interest and ethnicity to give as wide a sample as possible across the study period. All participants were invited to a discussion groups. The research has focused on the results from 41 questionnaires, 10 interviews (some in two parts) and 7 group discussions. It may be that the sample group does in many ways represent the wider population of the Music House, but this is not the purpose of this research. Each of the participants represented their own recollections, views and ideas.

4.6 Analysis, Interpretation and Evaluation

The evidence from the interviews and group sessions was rich in data. Co-created information from the group discussions saw a development of key themes as they emerge. Analysis of the data ran concurrently with the interviews so that data could feed back into subsequent interviews and group discussions.

Given the range of viewpoints to be considered and the long time period of the study it is inevitable that there were multiple and conflicting narratives. Data may be selective, biased, personal and subjective and not open to cross-checking. Interpretation and evaluation must be considered in this light. But this is its strength.

The central position of the researcher within the situation also presents its own participatory reality and again this must be recognised as the research is written up.

When it comes to writing up, the principle of reflexivity implies a number of things. The construction of the researcher's account is, in principle, no different from other varieties of the account: just as there is no neutral mode of report. The reflexive researcher, then, must remain self-conscious as an author, and the chosen modes of writing should not be taken for granted. There can be no question, then, of viewing writing as a purely technical matter ... [as a

qualitative analysis or account; it] is more informal and impressionistic.

(Hammersley and Aitkin, 1983:207)

The strength of this research lies in the depth of personal viewpoint, in the presentation of the details of each subject's memories and thoughts. It was important that in the analysis of material, especially related to study themes, that individual concerns, views and ideas were not lost. Dixon-Woods, Fitzpatrick and

Roberts (2001:13) highlight the danger of destroying the 'heart' of qualitative research context in order to get to specific themes and concepts.

To effectively store, organise and analyse information, particularly the interview texts I used a software package called Nvivo. The software can classify, sort and arrange information, examine relationships in the data, and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching and modelling. The coding of the interview texts enabled me to group similar comments and ideas. Gibbs (cited in Cohen et al., 2011) explains that 'codes can be regarded as an indexing or categorising system'. As a beginner user of Nvivo, I was some way through the research before I fully understood the implications of some of my early categorising choices. Miles and Huberman (cited in Cohen et al., 2011) suggest that 'codes should enable the researcher to catch the complexity and comprehensiveness of the data'. I recoded the interview text several times as early codes resulted in duplication of ideas, huge imbalance or text being steered into codes that were not quite a match.

Often, in the first coding attempt, many new codes are generated and the subtlety of difference of codes may be unclear as the researcher goes further through the text, or the earlier codes may turn out to be unhelpful....coding is not a 'one-off' exercise

(Cohen et al., 2011:560)

Whilst Nvivo was invaluable, particularly at the early stages of the research, giving me a broad understanding of core themes and ideas it took me some time to appreciate all that it could do. I realised that slight differences in wording could change analysis radically, and that, it is important that research

is not solely driven by an analysis tool. Nvivo provided useful tools, such as word maps and frequency counts, although I am not sure that I used it to its full capacity during this study. It was tremendously helpful in allowing me to sift material for key words, to allocate themes and identify links and stems. The clear-cut nature of Nvivo outcomes sometimes made it difficult to allocate meaning or weight of importance to ideas. I also wonder if using a package of this kind extensively could magnify aspects of unintentional bias of the researcher.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were viewed from three angles, regarding the consequential validity of the research and the effect of involvement in the research on both the participants and the researcher. That the researcher is at the centre of the research is in many ways problematic, yet with this comes privileged information and access to a specific group of participants who can bring a range of views and experiences. Whilst the strength of trust between researcher and participants allowed for candid response and opportunity to discuss perhaps more difficult areas of effectiveness, it was important that the validity of the data generated was not compromised by this. Careful structuring of interview questions and skilful handling of meetings limited the potential dangers in this research, though it is important to recognise the inescapable influence of the researcher on every aspect of the study, from participant selection to final presentation.

As a retrospective study, participants relied on memories of their school experiences. Given the time factor involved, memories may be exaggerated or distorted, becoming rose-tinted or negative, and, it should be noted that specific experiences and thoughts may have been discussed and retold as part of group interaction. The researcher's own position within the group may mean that external verification of interpretation gives additional validity and brings additional perspective from outside. I decided not to link comments to specific students/staff participants in this thesis, to allow those involved to comment, in the knowledge that they would not be identifiable and ensure frank and unrestricted conversations. Many of the Music House community are still in

touch with each other and though the comments are not wildly opposed, some viewpoints of specific incidents do differ. From Chapter 5 onwards indented quotes are those made by students, whilst indented quotes in italics are those made by staff; this supports the understanding of the reader.

Case studies can often reveal confidential or sensitive material and it is essential that the ethics of the research are clear for both the researcher and those participating in the study.

the ethical enactment of practitioner research relies on an alignment of a number of different ethical 'frames' – those of consent, confidentiality and transparency...both data and researcher become compromised when the alignment of these frames is absent.

(Mockler, 2007:90)

For the participants, a formal information sheet and consent form introduced the research and offered protection of identity and the right to withdraw at any stage of the process. (Appendix 1 and 2). It was essential that participants felt confident in the process and in their security so as they were able to speak openly. The researcher has a moral duty not to prioritise the research over the experience of participants.

Conducting a study with people with whom one has worked closely, brings many benefits in the depth of knowledge and understanding that can be gained but this information must be analysed and evaluated in the context of shared experiences and relationships. Researchers, immersed in the detail of respondents, may be able to ascribe significance to observations that others might not be able to, but equally it may be difficult to separate the response from the individual. That the participants in this study are now adults and not within the school community lessened the impact of internal pressures though some pressures may still exist. For the participants, the opportunity to meet up to talk about the Music House community may have been personally exciting and it is important that this did not overshadow the core questions.

Insider research presents an issue of multiple roles and it is difficult to be both within the study and an observer of it. It is important that observer bias is

limited as much as is possible though it must be recognised that total eradication of bias is impossible, particularly in a situation where the researcher played such a central role in the study focus. Questions needed to be carefully thought through and several writers suggest rehearsal of interview situations. Further, the analysis of data must be seen within the broad picture of information. The researcher's picture of events and opinions may not concur with that of others and this may dramatically change the model as the study progresses.

Insider researcher seeks to express not the respondents' version of reality but their own, even though this may often be based on the expressed perspectives of respondents who may also be colleagues and friends. The insider researcher may be seeking a methodology that enables them to integrate researcher and practitioner functions, for these to merge into a new state of personal identity and action.

(Drake and Heath, 2011:43)

That the research participants are from the researchers' previous school, allowed conflicts of current professional pressures and institutional affiliations to be by-passed to some extent. The researcher must be aware of the personal contribution that participants make to this study. By extending thanks both informally and formally and through a broad sharing of outcomes with participants (though not necessarily the complete writings) the value of their input can be thoroughly recognised.

4.8 Summary

Understanding and viewpoint are personal and grow from experiences and perceptions of reality. I consider a strength of this research to be the rich tapestry of data that the narratives present. Whilst the specific case details may not be exactly replicated, there is much to learn for wider application. Practitioner research gives unique opportunities for personal development and insider school improvement; this is particularly true of study involving student voice which, for outside researchers, can be limited by logistical and trust issues. The consideration of school climate has specific interest for me as Headteacher, and I appreciate the exclusive nature of being able to work with a range of adult participants to consider their school-time experiences.

The ethnographic approach to this case study of the Music House community during a specified period tries to understand the perspectives of the participants to best represent their range of viewpoints. Rich data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and group discussions, with a flexible attitude allowing the personal perspective to be maximised. The sample for interviews was selected on a basis of age and involvement, whilst group discussions were open to all participants and groups formed on a basis of availability and role. Analysis of the data, in part through Nvivo, worked within key themes to highlight personal viewpoints and experiences.

The central position of the researcher brought access to a specific community and a trust, facilitating open discussion, however, it also brings an inescapable influence on all parts of the study and whilst awareness of this issue can work towards controlling it, the impact of insider research must be carried in mind. The retrospective nature of the research allowed for an adult maturity to a student perspective, although may have resulted in distorted or reconstructed memories and ideas. Participants' comments from chapter 5 forwards are indented, and those from staff are also italicised.

CHAPTER FIVE
Case Study Findings
Impressions of Ethos

The use of the word ethos in rhetoric, is closely based on the terminology used by Aristotle in his concept of the three artistic proofs, ethos, logos, and pathos. Ethos is a Greek word meaning “character”, used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterise a person, community, nation, or ideology. Interestingly, the Greeks also used this word to refer to the power of music to influence its hearer's emotions, behaviours, and even morals. Ethos is often linked to belief or to a culture and frequently takes on broad values from a variety of sources

5.1 Ethos

The articulation of ethos is not without its problems. During my initial writings in this study I realised the importance of defining words like ethos, vision and climate for myself so that I could approach the views of others in a more systematic way. However I was keen not to impose my definitions onto the participants and felt that, for those being interviewed, it was very important to bring a clarity to my questions without leading towards a particular viewpoint. As such in the interviews I used the term climate and ethos interchangeably and broadly to mean ‘the way the Music House felt’.

I was keen to ascertain what participants felt the spirit or character of The Music House was before we explored how that had been created or developed. In the initial questionnaire, I asked participants to describe the Music House in 5 words. The openness of this question resulted in a spread of 89 words. Most participants selected 5 words to describe the Music House, but some decided to settle on just 2 or 3. Figure 5.1a, on the next page, is a word cloud diagram, produced through Nvivo, showing the range of words used by the 41 questionnaire participants in this question. The size of the word in the word cloud is determined by its frequency of use.

into similar meaning, both arriving at 8 groups with similar but not identical titles. Asked for a smaller number of broad themes they then refined their groupings to three broad areas.

Figure 5.1b: Theme Titles Q2 from Group Discussions



Both groups identified safe/safety and community/team as main themes. It is interesting to note that whilst they arrived at similar final group titles, the words that they put into each category were sometimes different. Figure 5.1b shows the percentage of words allocated to each of their final themes. After looking at the words that they had grouped, I decided to bring their third areas (excitement/creative), which included the widest range of words such as imaginative, chaotic, bohemian, busy, inspiring and progressive, together under a linking title of opportunities. These three areas became my initial themes.

<p>Safety Community Opportunities</p>

As interviews progressed, the theme of community seemed to be largely about relationships and I amended this theme title, later, as the volume of material increased, breaking the section down into three areas of Friends and Family, Hierachy and Boundaries, and Roles and Responsibilities. The individual interviews gave participants the opportunity to explore their thoughts expressed in the questionnaire in more depth. Many commented on the friendly atmosphere of the Music House and often this seems to have been one of the things that drew them into the community.

Welcoming, it was very inclusive and anybody was welcome to be there.

It never felt contrived. It was a very natural atmosphere.

It felt like you had walked into a separate little world...a bit of an oasis...

It was fun and it was a laugh and there were jokes...

The Music House was relaxed...it drew you in...you just wanted to be there. Right from the first time you went in it was like comfortable...it fitted with people.

It was always fun. I remember smiling a lot...

The school within which the Music House was set was a well-established, traditional faith school with an improving reputation for academic success. In the 1970s on the amalgamation of two schools it had changed from being a grammar to comprehensive school. The school mission (Appendix 6) centred around the gospel values, with the first statement outlining the importance of the Catholic faith and the centrality of this belief. The school motto, “Da Nobis Recta Sapere” (Grant that we may be truly wise) led to the introduction in the late 1990s of the slogan of “Where Everybody Matters”. During the period of this study, the headship of the school changed and it was particularly interesting to see the variation in ‘feel’ of the school, despite the unchanged mission, statements and policies. The Music House worked within the same school vision and rules as the rest of the school and the values presented there matched those articulated in the aims of the school.

Whilst, as researchers, we might view school climate as a set of descriptors, neither I or the participants saw the ‘climate’ or ‘ethos’ in this way, viewing it more as a ‘felt’ experience. Many of the participants identified the feel of the Music House to have been central to why they remained involved there, often for their whole school career.

There were elements of comradeship, community and friendship...an element of seeing my potential and nurturing me...and then someone who cares about me as a person and my personal life as well...but then there was the fun element of just playing music...

I think we all felt very nurtured. Especially when you came to the school, you changed it around. Everyone in there was there to help...not just in music but in other aspects as well, that was the great thing...it wasn't always music that we did there but no matter what our interests were musically, they were nurtured.

..not just in terms of music, but just education as a whole and also in yourself and growth as a person

The only good thing really was the House at the back of the school where people were passionate about something. In the rest of the school the passion was just in the lessons.

I think the environment that was created probably by the staff. But then the shared interests, the common interests of the people who were there, and I think potentially we were all seeking that kind of refuge so it kind of created the safe haven.

5.2 Changing Ethos

There is no doubt that over the span of time considered by this study, things changed within the Music House; students moved through and the staff team increased in size and gradually changed in personnel. In the wider school this period also saw a change of Headteacher.

Participants involved in this research realised the difficulty in commenting on how things changed over time because of their own involvement in the changes and the changes in their personal perspective as they became students in increasingly older year groups.

It's hard to see it when you are inside it from my perspective because it was just always there and because we were there so much we were part of whatever was changing...

I think just by being a part of it everybody shaped it. It was impossible to be involved in anything there and not have an impact on that.

You were seeing it from different points as you got older

I don't think we really saw the changes over time because we were so wrapped up in what was happening and we could never stand back from it like that...it's like you are always in the middle of your own world...you don't really see how the world is changing, just how you are changing in that world.

Some felt that there were specific times when changes in the ethos were more noticeable and many of these were linked to staff changes. The first that several of the older participants described was when the team arrived in 1990.

Before you came the Music House was a bit of a joke. The Head of Music played the piano and talked about the war.....we didn't do any music....just listened to him. And then when you both arrived it was like a revolution, suddenly things were happening and it felt like it was excitingwe wanted to be there

In my head we were like the first year there but there must have been years above us when you got there.... It became much more comfortable...it became more organised the longer that you were there...I remember that this went there, this goes there, the office was in the middle....I'm not sure how it changed....I guess it just became more what you wanted it to be in terms of a learning environment

Another period where some students felt there were more changes was in 1998 when the number of classroom teachers increased from 3 to 5 as I started working on secondment to Goldsmiths' College leading the PGCE course.

I think something changed in the department when you went part time

When [new teachers] joined that year it felt like we had to train them up into the Music House way

I think that kind of started changing it, because you weren't there with the hands on the reins to keep the ship's guidance.

In some ways it changed that year, but in other ways it was just the same. You were there even though you weren't if that makes sense.....other [teachers] had the same ideas and you still knew everything that went on....I suppose having new teachers join at the same time meant that they took a bit longer to get into the way we worked

Perhaps in part this difference in viewpoint relied on the participant's age at the time of change.

I think [it stayed the same]. Certainly in terms of my immediate circle. But by that time we are in the sixth form, the ethos has been fairly established already, so I think that who we are has been moulded and so that holds...the years below that I don't know

I think when you started at Goldsmiths I was in year 8 – I didn't have you as a teacher and I think my world centred around [another

teacher]. I am not sure that I saw any difference on a day to day basis.

...when I came back when I was in the second year of university to see productions that people were doing that was still going and there seemed to be a nice atmosphere....

Participants commented on the changes that they saw in particular new staff as they joined the team

At first he was rigid and then relaxed into it and [now] you have him and he's used to that relaxed environment

someone goes and another comes in and gets used to that environment and then it kind of breeds...

It was funny seeing the new [teachers] and seeing how long they took to kind of embrace it all....some took longer than others...and some just jumped straight in and were like at home from day 1....we got them all in the end though, didn't we?

Some participants felt that the way the Music House felt was driven more by differences in students than staff.

But I think on balance there's always somebody [who drives change]and it's not always sixth form is it. I mean [as specific student] was massive and was involved right from the beginning.

[A student] made the whole place a really positive place to be....it was just their outlook....they had a lot of get up and go....all the time

Each group of students had their own approach....not massively different....but still unique....and I think that was always influenced by the one just above you....sometimes we wanted to do it the same or build on what they'd done, but some groups wanted to do it completely differently....it just depended

5.3 Getting Older

Whilst participants found it difficult to see wider changes over time in the Music House, they found it much easier to think about the differences that they saw and the way things changed as a result of getting older.

After the first year especially, there was kind of a shift when a lot of the [older] guys finished

it feels as if from year 9 onwards I was just in the Music House to hang out and stuff, picking up guitar....I am sure that that was around the same time that music was becoming my number one

interest and hobby and I think almost both things fed into each other really...a bit chicken and egg.

We were definitely installed in the Music House by the time we got to GCSE. I think we were like 'we own this'

It got more relaxed and less formal, the extra-curricular stuff and the.... and I think once you got into the smaller groups that are part of the.... you've actively chosen to do music at GCSE then normally that's a very small group that had more of the close feel to it.

You grow in terms of your capability and then as you get older you get....people start consciously or sub-consciously to pay attention to you and your involvement naturally increases.

Some felt that the productions and tours marked particular points of change for the Music House

I was in year 7 and, after that was done, we didn't do another show for another two years. I think every two years there was kind of a shift change

You could always see the difference after the show finished....everybody stepped up a bit....I think [productions] galvanised the next step of development

Things always changed when we did a show or went on tour....maybe we all just got closer and that pushed what we were doing even further

I think the productions were a goodbye to that year group

When we went on tour we carried the Music House with us....not literally (laughs)....but I think that reinforced what we did....it made the thing at the middle of it even stronger.....and then we could feel it when we got back

5.4 A staff perspective

Staff had much clearer thoughts about how the ethos had changed over time.

At the start it felt like we had a massive job to just get everything going. We wanted [the Music House] to be a creative hub. I think we were focused much more on the music, and the activities, and making it all work, but then, as time went on, I think we got more and more sucked into thinking about the people....the music was more of a vehicle to support them and help them grow.

When I joined it was all pretty established and there was a strength in that, knowing things that worked and having groups that were ready to do quite complex music stuff. That was very reassuring. It

felt that we were improving not inventing. I don't know if that was different from when you came, but I guess it was.

When you look back over the years we were there you can see how it developed and changed, but at the middle of it all was our beliefs – that you all had to work together, to do the right thing for the kids, to encourage them to do the right things, make the right decisions, help each other, look out for people.....and so whilst the systems and organisation became more and more refined, all that let us do was support that 'ethos' in better ways.

They recognised the important role that the students played in developing ideas within the Music House.

The kids were so passionate about the Music House. They were part of making decisions about what we would do and how we arranged things. That was really important – I think we all believed in them being part of that leading and fixing the direction.

It was a very nurturing environment, so you felt that they were making a difference.....we would always do our best to help them and to facilitate [their ideas]

Each group had their own ideas and every year or group had their own identity – different interests, different ideas, different worries, different solutions – it is so interesting to think about

However they also saw a difference in the way staff and student roles impacted on the ethos.

There were many groups of kids, each with their own plans, ideas, quirks.....they shaped their own group identity and that impacted on the whole place, and some of them were very influential....but the staff brought those group inputs together and made sense of everything – they curbed the mad ideas and encouraged the things that would be useful.

Whilst I don't think the boys 'shaped it' I do think they made it what it was during their time.

More than student participants, staff spoke about the importance of the staff in driving the ethos forward.

That [ethos] was what we wanted, I think. We had to keep perpetuating it, reinforcing our beliefs with the kids.

We weren't perfect...I'm not making it out to be a perfect place....but I think we did our best. We knew what we wanted it to be like.

....I can't remember ever going 'This is what we believe.' I can't remember ever discussing it as teachers. I don't think we ever did that at any stage.....but as situations occurred then we dealt with them, or worked with students to deal with them.....or students dealt with them and everybody modelled our beliefs.....be nice to everybody, be honest, be fair, do the right thing, look after each other, care about each other.....maybe like a family. Without saying any of those things then each thing that came along....because we believed that ourselves, then I think people joined into that and then perpetuated it.

[my current school] is very similar now in that the Director of Music values all of our opinions, most of the time we'll have agreement when things happen...she might say this has happened and I think this, what do you think, and often we would agree. That's really nice.

The children changed lots of things – they brought the colour, but the outline was from us.....if there had been different children it would have been different because we might have done different things to suit their particular needs.....but the underlying principles would have been the same. I think the kids still would have grown in a secure and fun environment....and they would have benefitted from that in the same way as our boys have done. And our boys would have done equally well in another music department, maybe different interests and different detail...but with the right people, with the same beliefs they would still do well. I guess it's about getting that fundamental heart of the department right, isn't it.

5.5 Summary

The majority of this chapter has been quoting directly from participant interviews. In this sense, the ethical research position is demonstrably led by participant response. Their viewpoints, particularly of the ethos of the Music House, were crucial to the research, giving interviews a base-line starting position to consider the key characteristics, how the ethos had been established, how it changed and how it could be recreated. The questionnaires and initial discussion groups shaped the preliminary structure of the data analysis and influenced later interview questioning. The high degree of correlation between the outcomes from the groups established the three main themes of safety, community and opportunities.

Descriptions of initial impressions of the Music House used words such as 'inclusive' and 'fun'. Students felt that the ethos or climate was one of the main features that had kept them involved. There is no doubt that the Music House changed over the period of this study and that this was seen by the participants from different perspectives. With the exception of very few specific changes, mostly to staffing, students found it quite difficult to comment on Music House changes, given the changing state of their own roles, both in terms of age and involvement. They did however note changes in new staff as they became integrated into the practices of the community and saw differences in what they did themselves as they progressed through the school. Staff had a perhaps more static viewpoint of the changes that took place and a more pragmatic view of why changes happened.

As is evident in many of the contributions from staff, gender is a visible aspect in an all boys environment. Staff refer to 'our boys', 'the guys', 'the lads': these are contributions from both male and female teachers. Whilst gender could have been the basis of an interesting further research question within the thesis I have followed the direction of the contributions from the students which were largely non-gender specific. There were two specific references to mothering. Where students referred to me as a mother figure or carer I have interpreted this as part of my leadership role rather than focus on aspects of gender.

The case study findings are presented through the three themes of relationships, safety and opportunities. Chapter 6 considers the first of these, examining aspects of friends and family as a branch of the relationships theme.

CHAPTER SIX

Case Study Findings: Theme 1 - Relationships

Friends and Family

Speaking with past students and staff as part of this research has been a hugely educational experience. It has been heart-warming to hear people speak with such fondness of so many people that they studied and socialised with in the Music House. They have been keen to remember events and activities, but, above all, they recollect the different people that they knew. For many, those that they met during their Music House years have continued to be close friends and several have subsequently worked with each other, or called on each other for help as they have progressed through their adult life.

For me, the relationships between students, and those between students and staff remain at the core of effective education, even more important than subject content or academic achievement, because this is how core values and principles for living are modelled, explored, developed and ingrained.

6.1 Making Friends

One of the great thrills for students moving to secondary school is the rich subject provision. In junior schools classes often work with one main teacher and subjects are not necessarily taught as discrete areas. At secondary school the curriculum is taught by subject specialists and often in subject specific rooms, which are relatively well equipped. The excitement generated mixed with the fear of this enormous change can be a real catalyst for new friendships.

Additionally the range of extra-curricular provision, designed to support curriculum work provides opportunities to meet and build relationships with students in a slightly different context. Many student friendships in the Music House started initially through extra-curricular activities. For the year 7 students these were generally highly energetic and enthusiastic groups, meeting

at lunchtime and after school, that focused on having fun through music and working together as a team. They built on musical concepts introduced in the music curriculum classes, designed to deepen students' understanding.

In that year when I started to do the additional band and choirs as well and getting more involved in those really helped making friends in the wider part of the music house.

...because you used to socialise after rehearsals and go to events and stuff like that so it was good

They would come together at lunchtime and after school to practice and socialise.

Those special relationships played a huge part. They were all nice people; they all had talent and ability so in the initial stages they were a big part

I was in the choirs and I had been involved in the production....and I think it was probably the year after that when I went on my first concert tourto Austria...Salzburg and Vienna.....so I was quite heavily involved by that point...and obviously rehearsing for that as well....and I made quite a lot of friends and got a lot closer to people that I already knew in it...for someone who is not very social like myself it was a nice way of socialising with people that were.....nice people.

I had a group of friends that were in the Music House.

When I went to the first choir rehearsal I was really scared...there were so many people....but then it was loads of fun and we got to hang out in the Music House when we weren't singing....so I got to sit and chat to the other first years and that was fun too

The friendships that started in the large extra-curricular groups often strengthened as students fell into smaller groups, sometimes age-based and commonly with shared musical interests.

And then I found my footing and had my own friends, who I got from mainly from the Music House. Then, created my own group, so to speak.

I just got in with a little group I think...I can't remember who was in the initial group, but there were people in my year...

[I remember a younger student] and his buddies....I can't really remember any names. I think we were so wrapped up in our own year that you kind of disregard the younger pupils.

I made a great group of friends....but I don't think it was before I had committed to music....I think it was because of what we were doing as opposed to we are all friends out of school that stay friends in school. The unity and bond that we had was because of what we were studying, that brought us together.

If you bumped into someone from the Music House, you wouldn't get ignored. Whereas, in other aspects, if you got on with someone through a common interest, I don't necessarily think that would extend out in the school.

if you wanted to find a person at lunchtime then you knew where he would be....he'd either be in the canteen getting his lunch or be in the Music House....and the same with any of those people. If you wanted them then it wasn't 'where in the school will I find them', it was 'where in the Music House am I gonna find them

We chatted as friends a lot in room 2I think that was the roots of our band really.

The Music House was an open space, where you could do what you do, meant that there was some of the people that I was friends with anyway and so you kind of almost grow into interests with friends, but then other people that I got to know, with the Music House being the common link....so then you'd have a group of friends based around the Music House where music was the common link and therefore you'd become much more embedded and that was the main interest and as a young person or teenager you'd use your time doing that.

6.2 Roots of Friendship

Friendship groups formed for all kinds of reasons. For some it was about common ground, for others it was more about complimentary skills and needs. Looking back at how groups had formed several past students felt that, whilst they hadn't thought about it at the time, they had gained tremendously because of the groups that they had been involved with.

Perhaps I had musical skills, but not the social skills....so I think I developed that way....but then other people like [my two friends], didn't necessarily have the musical skills, but they certainly had the social aspect.....

We were a bit of a misfit group but being together gave us confidence....our friendship evolved as we grew up.....that core feeling of being there for each other was....like a constant support

Within my year group I don't necessarily think that there was a lot of performance there....like practical musicians. Then actually

going down [to]the year [below] and then even within [the following] year I think we kind of tended to just merge together in terms of the abilities that we all had which naturally kind of happened

people saw me and knew me and I was sort of there, and the expectations were there and the invitations were there....the people I hung around with after school were there

We loved the same guitar sound and so we could just immerse ourselves in that

For most people the closest bonds that they formed were with the other students in their direct class or year group that shared their interest in music, but the more advanced extra-curricular groups were based on musical experience or ability and so would frequently bring together students with a wide range of ages. In the interviews students spoke with high regard for students that they had worked with who were some years older.

That's when I started to know people from across different age groups that were also involved in music playing different instruments, just before that I was just really pre-mixing with people in my class who weren't necessarily that into music.

because the older boys seem to have had that same relationship....they came back frequently to do this, that and the other....and they had...they may not have had it with us...but they had it with each other....but you could see that they had that friendship and that relationship with them and with the teachers

Yeah they were a couple of years above me and they were obviously quite involved already so they had a strong presence [in the Music House]

I think it quite unusual..., to have such good friends who are not in your year group...and that sort of stems from having shared interests...but definitely we felt like we were really good friends.

there were times when people helped me with my homework and stuff like that

The good thing about it was that I don't think age was a barrier. You could easily talk to one of the kids who were in year 13, who was 17....and it wouldn't be awkward and 'Why are you talking to me?'

I think in a more looking out for each other kind of way. When you were in the lower school I think the older boys, they'd been there a lot longer and so they look out for you, not protect you, but that

kind of element of a brotherhood type thing and then so as you progressed up you then reinvested back into the younger kids then.

6.3 Extending Friendship

Students often used the feelings that they had about the older students and in the same way became role models to the students lower down the school. It was positive to see them taking responsibility for younger students, helping them to develop or supporting them through difficult times.

He was passionate about music and it came through so much. He put himself forward for everything and was so massively confident. But weirdly he spoke to me quite a lot. I think he saw me as the established student. By then I was in sixth form. I think he saw me and [my friend] were quite like him

I also kind of looked out for [a student] – who was a bit younger and was quite lazy with the clarinet. And then there was a time when he suddenly decided to get really good at the clarinet and we got really competitive with each other.

That was the first time I met [the older student] because there was a conversation broadly of who I'd be going to stay with and he, the way he did, trucked up and said it's alright he can come and stay in our room....and that was the start of a beautiful friendship that's lasted all these years

I think he saw that I was looking out for him.

The older ones looked out for me and I did the same for the ones who were younger than me. I think it helped them get started and to know that older students had confidence in them and would be there to help them.

The practice of looking out for other people seems to have been self-perpetuating. Students realised that being part of a group that cared for you and that you cared for had tremendous benefit. It made the world a much nicer place.

We took care of each other....you watched out for people in the rest of the school....even just a nod....it meant you had people to rely on....

It was kind of a brotherhood....like you were part of something that kept you safe.....

This is the way the whole world should be in an idealistic way...maybe that's visionary...perhaps like a communist ideal....everyone works hard together and looks out for each other

There was a sense of community...[the Music House] brought together pupils from different year groups in a very unique way.

It's like people are confirming their beliefs...and then the areas where maybe I didn't have as much compassion or caring about others...or awareness of other people...when I might have been more insular....I think it made me more aware of what's going on with them, instead of being completely focused on my own issues. I think having all those different personalities working together, and being friends together and being in that close proximity, that definitely helped me to be more aware of other people

Given the security made through the caring and awareness within the group, it was easy for the students to extend this to visitors and outsiders who worked with the Music House, creating a much more inclusive approach. One of the music teachers recalled bringing her teenage niece on a school tour to Salzburg and the difference the care shown by the students had made for her.

That had a big impact on her life because she was amazingly shy. I was surprised that she agreed to come on it. At the time her parents were so pleased that she came on that tour.....the boys were very lovely....it was very relaxed.....[they] looked after her....they would have known that we would expect them to look after her.

That trip changed her life. She had been so withdrawn and frightened of everyone. It gave her confidence to know that [the students] had taken the time to get to know her and had enjoyed her company...she was part of the team. It showed her that people could be there for her and care about her, without expecting anything in return....just very genuine and honest relationships.

Occasionally students would join the school or the Music House part way through the school. It was particularly interesting to consider retrospectively the impact that this had on friendship and musical groups. One particular year two new, older students joined the Music House, both fairly accomplished musicians, but with very different temperaments and this had clearly made an impression on several students that I interviewed and was also talked about in one of the group discussions.

I think there was people that you naturally got on better with and.....I think as you got older if someone new had come in at

your age group, I think I found that that was a bit difficult sometimes.....so when new people started that was very weird

I remember when he came and he was a really good pianist and it was great because there was another person to accompany the instrumentalists and the choirs....I liked it when he came

When someone new joined I think it was easy to see how they would fit in musically because of what they played and how advanced they were, but personality wise they might fit with some people more than others and when everyone was older when that happened the groups were much more established and everyone already had a kind of role and so it wasn't always clear how they would fit in.

When they joined I remember one person getting quite irate...I think he was worried that they would be more popular than him

I can think of some people who, when they arrived, it felt like there was a big upset because it wasn't clear how they'd fit in....but the new ones soon hooked up with people who fitted with them and the groups readjusted and settled down again...and you had people in the group who had a different history....which in some ways was good and some ways bad.

6.4 Time to build friendships

As with all friends, shared experiences and time spent together allowed the development of relationships. As friendship groups progressed through school, many of those that I interviewed spoke about how the groups had changed and developed over time.

just hanging out with friends from my class and two from the year above, who were quite into music ...evolved quite organically into playing with drum kits and that in turn evolved into hanging out and just talking about music.

You spent a lot more time with those people than you did with everyone else

I reckon our friendship got stronger as we got older....we were almost like living together all through the day....every lunchtime, breaktime, before school, after school....sometimes rehearsals and other times just hanging in room 2. We got to know each other really well

I think it's a mixture of the music and the social aspect a bit....like the friendships....it was a combination.

...it makes you more secure when people know about you, even the bad things, and they are still with you in the group.

The time spent by the students in the Music House was in many cases enormous. They divided their time between rehearsals, personal practice and spending time together informally. The busy rehearsal schedule meant that there were things going on before school, break-time, lunch-time and after school every day.

a lot of other students, as soon as they got into school they couldn't wait to get out of there, so as soon as that bell went they'd be gone and then they'd watch us...when the bell went we'd be going to another part of the school knowing we'd be there for another 2 hours and then we might be there an hour early in the morning,

the fact that we were always there 2 hours after school shows that we would have done that either way....it wasn't about the lessons, it was about the community.

Often the socialising and musical learning overlapped and the friendships grew from the increased understanding and common involvement, frequently also shaping musical skills

I was probably 70% socialising and 30% solid music work....but then it depends on what was going on... it was....because they blended so.....the lines were so blurred.....sometimes you would be doing a rehearsal and at the same time socialising so, being so close to it it's probably harder to distinguish

I did have guitar lessons at some point, but I think the first time I started to play was with [my friend] teaching me a bit, and I definitely would sit there and try things out...and a lot of it was group learning I suppose.

You just get into whatever is going on in your room and you need to know something so you learn

I think I enjoyed being there anyway.....separate from the music. I mean....Maybe I enjoyed the participation more than the music....

I went along with the group when they thought about what to play....and I got more into the music and learned chords...started to play a bit of piano and bass and drums....just whatever was needed....we had great fun.

The concert tours in particular threw people together for long periods in a rather idealistic yet intense world. Tour destinations were agreed through a

after school meeting of everyone who was going to be involved in the tour, including students, staff and parents. A discussion about the pros and cons of any place brought to the table was limited really only by costs and dates. Similarly, the itinerary and accommodation was the product of discussion and agreement. The group would travel, visit places of local interest and perform a number of concerts usually over one week period, usually staying overnight in hotels or hostels. On some occasions the group split up to see different attractions or events, although performances were always a full group activity and the usual dormitory sleeping arrangements and communal eating meant that the students were together for most of the time. Tours during the period of study included trips to Barcelona, Paris, Salzburg and Vienna.

[The tours] solidified it. At the end of it you get that really good feeling and it really is a bonding sort of experience. You meet people and you spend a lot more time with people...normally it would be like an hour a week at a rehearsal or maybe 2 hours a week but I think the more intensive nature of the tours, being away with them for a whole week or so, and then producing something together at the end, like a production...and having an audience respond to it, that's massively important thing to solidify that. I don't think it would have been so strong otherwise.

I think they just made people closer.....we just spent time with each other and without doing those....it was just another chunk of time together with people who enjoyed doing the stuff you liked doing.

Otherwise you only ever see people in a very short space of time and you don't know much about them other than the instrument they play and a bit about their personality. You learn a lot more about people from being around them. And people that you don't know initially you can kind of go actually you're alright...and people who come over as irritating or arrogant or annoying, you spend time with them and then say actually you're quite a decent person. I don't think you see that otherwise, you just get the surface level stuff. I think having that close proximity over time then you get to see that.

Tours meant that you got to know friends even better....no secrets time...and I think it made us all just be closer together....you could feel it when you got back....just more relaxed with each other

6.5 Staff-student relationships

The staff played a huge part in setting the tone of the Music House and modelling positive relationships with students, demonstrating how to speak to

each other and how people should behave. Many of the participants commented on the equality in the student/teacher relationship and how they felt valued because of this.

There was sense that in the Music House you were treated in a more grown up way than in other parts of the school or in lessons and it definitely felt that the relationships that you had with teachers was different than those you had in the [other] classroom[s] and you enjoyed that more respectful relationship

we were mirrored....so the age that we were behaving was the age that we were treated as, so if you were very young and were acting like a child then I think the relationships between the students and staff was very..... student/teachery....but if you were mature then that is when it started to change...

you kind of integrated on a more personal level with the teachers.

You didn't sense that the teachers were your friends, but there was more trust from the side of the teachers and there was a great interest in us and for us to just enjoy music and have the freedom to do so.....and there was a level of slightly more familiarity....it was a warm, quite homely place...and that relationship was central

I think the teachers wanted us to be there. You were made to feel welcome to be there. Whereas other teachers (in the school) were 'at break time, lunch time, you should be outside' etc., etc.

The students all felt that the strength of relationships with the teachers developed further as they went into the exam classes. Groups were smaller and made up of students who were particularly interested in music, which perhaps allowed for a more relaxed approach.

I definitely think there were different bonds between different, between students and teachers in different age groups but I think as we became older, the relationships developed more and was... not more personal, but just a different relationship.

you then felt more able to have that kind of conversation with whomever you wanted to at that point

Well, there was the first name terms, which didn't happen elsewhere in the school...I think it did [make a difference]. I think it did. I think it showed a level ofa level of trust and....yes it was in contrast to the rest of the school

I think once you get into it more the A Levels (Advanced Level exams) and stuff like that, then I think you worked a little more on a personal level...

As we became older I think we...the relationships evened out....it was always the teacher/student relationship but it became a lot more equal in terms of respect both ways and actually once we got to year 10 doing... I'd say that was probably... Once we got to year 10 and we'd chosen to do music and the class had reduced down to that, and probably back in year nine it became more of nurturing that person's talent and actually being on a friendly basis and it didn't feel mothered

At the centre of these positive relationships was the knowledge that teachers cared about the students as people. Certainly by the time students reached Sixth Form they were very well known and understood. The closeness, demonstrated in practice through, for example, using teacher's first names, was more importantly based on a trust grown through shared experiences and conversations. This 'evening out' of the relationship allowed for more productive learning, sharing of music, honesty and support. Past students were keen to point out how they felt about the relationships that they had had with music teachers

but it was close to friendship as it was to education and that was the key of it....you would be there and it would be like 'I'm not just being taught by a teacher who doesn't give a hoot, but it was someone who cared about your wellbeing and about you as a person, instead of some of the teachers teaching science who as soon as the bell goes you're like gone, get out, don't want to see you again....and it wasn't like that at all...it never felt like that...

I don't think there was ever a time you would suggest [an action], unless you thought it was in my best interest, but actually I think you let people reach the decisions themselves.

I think you were very unbiased to have anyone kind of see individual strengths and it didn't matter to you which... what they'd rather have, you encouraged and nurtured everyone

I've seen people who were thanking past teachers for taking that little extra time and I think that the closest we had in Finchley was probably the Art department....but they still didn't have that connection that we all had in the Music House

I think that students recognised that the ethos of the Music House was based around the relationships between us all and part of this was the conscious effort of staff to let students make decisions for themselves whenever this was possible. Whilst it is important for children to have the opportunity to discuss

options with both peers and adults, they must be allowed to take responsibility for decision making, especially those choices that affect them directly. School can provide a great space to try out ideas and form opinions.

Teachers also spoke very positively about their relationships with students and how they valued these connections.

when you get to know the children a bit better and they come to your classroom and you're seeing them more, you find out little bits about them and what they are dealing with at home.....you have a lot of respect for children who are having a difficult time....I have a lot of respect for children who make it through to adult life despite having difficulties.

I love working with children. They bring such an open and honest approach. They are funny. What's not to like?

...you can just chat....you don't remember the conversations that you have but they will talk to you about anything and everything and it's nice to see them open up and be themselves

There is something very special about the friendships that you make with students – it's not like a parent, or a mate....but you are in a trusted position and they look to you for help and support, but also to joke and relax with.....it's a strange combo.

It was interesting to note that in both the interviews and the group discussions staff spoke in very generic terms about the students, rarely identifying individuals, whilst the students spoke very specifically about both staff and students, with frequent examples of individuals.

6.6 Role of the teacher

In the teacher discussion groups, participants considered what specifically they felt made an effective teacher. High on their list was the enjoyment and love of being with young people.

You have to want to be with them, to be ready to put up with their nonsense, but still want to be there with them

I think we had a great time with the boys.....we all enjoyed each other's company. It's got to be a joy, hasn't it? Or else I guess it would be a nightmare.

Participants talked about the importance of caring for the students and providing the support for them that they needed, particularly when this might

not be available for them anywhere else. They also recognised the difficulties of this, especially when students had differing ideas of the best way forward.

Teachers often have to make decisions that some students/other staff don't agree with. If the teacher has the needs and welfare of the child at heart when making difficult decisions they should have the courage to carry these out and deliver.

They appreciated that sometimes students didn't want a solution to a problem, more a listening ear and stressed the importance of the relationships between staff and students.

Part of growing up is working out who you are...and that's not easy...young people need to have people in their lives who are prepared to listen to them and help them work things out....they might be little things or huge things but they'll be massive at the time....and they need us to be there for them.

[the students] will try to push your buttons....to test you....to see if it's true...that you'll still care for them, even if they say something horrible to you....but when it comes to the crunch, it's you they want to talk to....they know you'll hear them out and be fair....not necessarily agreeing with them, but treating them with respect and listening to what they are saying.

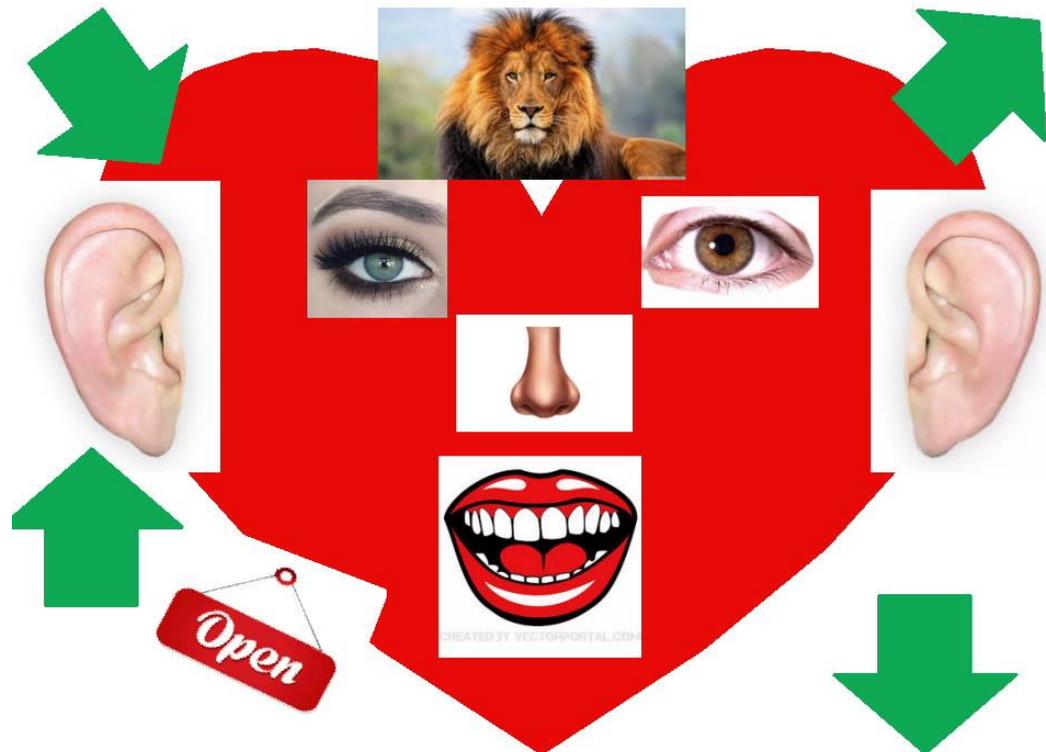
Everyone in the group said that they couldn't see themselves doing anything else for a living.

I look at what some of my friends are doing now and I just can't see me doing something like that – in an office, or in a shop – the kids make it so interesting....I mean, sometimes it is hard and you feel emotionally and physically drained, but it is the best job in the world

It doesn't always feel it....but this has to be the ultimate dream job. I think we are the lucky ones.

Following the discussion one participant sent a pictorial representation of the elements that his group had considered.

Figure 6.6: Representation of a teacher



The representation that I've created sums up my thoughts about what characteristics an effective teacher should have. The heart represents a love of what you are doing and a love for the children that you are working for - this is the biggest feature and underpins everything the teacher does. In order to be effective, I believe a teacher should have a genuine love for what they are doing and not see teaching as 'just a job'. The 'big' ears represent the importance of listening. There's a danger of teachers talking to/at children and it's really important to listen to what they are sharing with you and responding accordingly. It's not the child's fault if a teacher is in a bad mood or not feeling great and the 'smiling' mouth represents the positivity that teachers should aim to convey to each child. This is also represented by the 'green arrows' facing inwards/outwards. Taking on board new information/ideas and sharing that with others. An effective teacher should be open to new ideas/concepts and be willing to try out and share these with their children and other colleagues. Children should also feel confident in approaching teachers in order to clarify understanding, share problems, raise concerns etc. I have represented this through the 'open' sign.

Staff felt that long-term positive relations often grew from shared experiences and common interests and recognised the importance of investing time in subject and pedagogical developments.

Passion for the subject – really important!

I guess one thing is caring about your subject and about your pedagogy and being ready to spend time keeping up to date with it

You need to know your stuff – to really understand it so that you can break it down for [the students] to understand

Student participants also valued the staff team for their wide range of skills and interests. Students were able to access people who had particular expertise or who were involved or stimulated by similar genres of music and staff were keen to tailor both curriculum and extra-curricular studies to individuals.

When I discovered trad jazz it was like a curtain being lifted - everything started to fall into place. [A teacher] loved it too and kept feeding me new things to listen to. We had great discussions about the way different artists improvised and would rush in to tell each other what we thought.

I think that helped in terms of [music theory] because [a teacher] helped me through that. Whereas, I think you could see certainly with [another teacher] that if you had someone who is an amazing singer, which she was, she kind of honed in on them and nurtured them

I had loved musical theatre from quite early in school and it was fantastic to be able to ask quite complicated questions about it....like how a particular [chord] worked or the way melody fitted with a character. I often argued with [a teacher] about what was effective on stage or in the music and I think we both enjoyed that on/off debate.

I needed someone to tell me how to [compose]...like a composition 101. When we did serialism I got that because the rules were clear and I understood how to do it. When [one teacher] taught me a way to do the melody I understood....I didn't understand how to work in the way [someone else] taught me.

[A teacher] taught me guitar and introduced me to Malstrom, who was one of his heroes....and that changed the way I played completely.

Students certainly appreciated the time and effort that the teachers put into keeping the Music House open for long hours, particularly in the build up to performances, shows and tours.

Everything was above and beyond....and it made you feel like you were all doing it together....that if the teachers are putting in that

much effort to make this staging for this show then we better start getting our arses into gear because.....it obviously means a lot to them and it should mean a lot to you

It perhaps is more difficult to do in schools now because of the pressures on teachers and students for results. You must have given up so much of your time to open it up for people to have the opportunities and maybe it's more difficult now for teachers, given the pressures of the job.

Maybe the feeling that the students have in the extra-curricular activities is a reflection of what the.... the fact that the teachers are there and normally in their own extra time as well...

The long opening hours of the Music House allowed students to fully embrace their musical passions, to have time and space to discuss and share ideas and be supported and cared for. In a different context this provision could also provide a vital role to give a safe space to young people who do not have this at home. In the current climate of high level deprivation for many of our young people and in light of the ever-reducing social support agencies schools have an opportunity to provide this, however the limitations of funding and increasing pressures on staff make this less and less likely.

At different times over the research period, the Music House had a classroom teaching team of between 2 and 5 staff, working alongside 8 to 12 peripatetic teachers and up to 20 post-graduate teacher trainees. It was a large adult team and whilst we never really discussed *how* the teachers would interact with the students, I think there was generally an unspoken agreement that students were the first priority and that we would do everything we could to support them in becoming good musicians and happy, balanced, caring adults. Within these broad aims, different teachers I am sure, had different styles of interaction with students. The student perceptions of how the staff team worked together were very interesting.

You all worked like....well as a team I guess....it all seemed really smooth and united.

I think [the staff] probably had their own hierarchy that ran parallel to the student's hierarchy ...although I probably wouldn't have thought that at the time. At the time, I probably saw them as a united front, but I think as I got older and got into the sixth form I think you are a bit more attuned to power struggles.

I think always you would be the one we would look to for.....another faculty member had said this or that and we would look to you to be the one to be the.....just to check it... not in a rude way, but if you said something then it would carry more weight than [other teachers]....and especially some of the student teachers as well, they wouldn't have the level of authority that you had.

I think that for [one teacher] the performance came first and it has to be a perfect, polished performance...not that [another teacher] didn't get that for [their] performances, but the way he went about it was different

[Two teachers] in certain aspects were chalk and cheese but actually I think [they] had a shared goal or passion that [they] worked towards, and....at the time you never would never have noticed any risks or anything or argument....[they] pulled together and actually [were] passionate and.... worked well together whereas it never really seemed like [another two teachers] were not sitting on the same side - they were kind of pulling in opposite directions for me

I was always surprised how...even when you asked different teachers the same question to try to get a particular answer....not that I would do that of course....but you always said the same thing....different words of course....but the same thing....we used to joke that you were like the Borg from Dr Who.....like a collective.....a centralised mind.

Both students and staff involved in the study felt that, whilst there were obviously differences between the roles of staff and students in the Music House community, these were often played down or were irrelevant.

It was more of a community of like-minded people, and that wasn't necessarily separated between the teachers and the students because, when it comes to music, doesn't matter what your age...

We all worked on stuff together....I think you genuinely forgot who was a teacher and who was a pupil....people are just people aren't they?

it didn't really matter who did what....everyone had their own talents....and you wanted to get the best out of everyone....if you needed to know something and someone knew it, they shared it with you....didn't matter if it was a teacher or a student...everyone was learning.

When you are on stage they would never pick out the teacher's voice...it was never like that....like when we did Return to

Forbidden Planet and there's [a teacher] dressed up the same as a year 8 next to her, nobody pointed that out or asked why she was up there, it was just part of the ensemble, part of what was going on

Whilst staff generally tried to solve problems in a positive coaching manner, there were always those instances when frustrations rose to the surface. One student, who had a tendency to be silly, recalled a time when after doing something wrong the teacher had been angry with him.

I am thinking of one time when [a music teacher] went ballistic at meI can't even remember what it was about but he was totally.....and I took it like....if another teacher had done it I wouldn't have taken it, I would have just walked out....it felt really bad. That's just one moment that sticks in my head...I was just like...oh wow....this man doesn't like me...I remember for a while thinking....maybe for a while we should avoid each other....physically avoid each other. So there were times like that....there were incidences where....I mean just as much my fault as his but.... they merged sometimes...for better or for worse....the merging was great for personal relationships and for getting the best out of people

Thankfully, there were relatively few incidents like this in the Music House and maybe that is why this one stands out so clearly in the student's mind. It is difficult to know if the teacher spoke with anger or calculation, and what the immediate or lasting impact of the incident was. It is perhaps because of the strong ongoing connection between this student and his teacher, that the student came away realising that going through these frustrations together ultimately could strengthen the relationship.

6.7 Not fitting in

No matter what our age, or the stage of life we are at, relationships can sometimes prove challenging. Working with students and developing the skills to build understanding, negotiation and listening is a crucial part of school life.

You have to face the fact that sooner or later you'll disagree with someone....and you have to sort that out. [A music teacher] helped me to see that you had to look at it from different angles and understand that other people's views were valid even if you disagreed with them....you had to accept that they thought that before you could go on to work out the way forward.....it's all about communication.

Anything serious.....was dealt with almost on a human level. If someone had been horrible to somebody it was 'do you understand what you've done wrong? – go and make it right'. There was nobody standing over you making sure you did that....well sometimes there probably was. It wasn't about an outcome just for the sake of an outcome. It was about restoring harmony, I think.

Were there some people there who didn't fit in? I don't think so, I think everybody did in their own way. And I think that was.....it was quite inclusive..... there was lots of different people around.

In some instances however, students felt that there were people who had not fitted in so well

Anyone who caused friction or just was there to rock the boat, then they just weren't really accepted very easily....and there were some who would ...just disappear and there were people who would still do that and still keep coming back.....and back and back and would hang around on the periphery, but they were never in a core group I guess

As you got to know people better you kind of understood them more and then you got where they were coming from and it made sense of what they were doing a bit....but there were a few who I didn't get...although they went off to other things I think.

The older we got, the tighter that we got....I think we weeded out the people who didn't want to be there and didn't get on with each other. The amount of time we spent in there it would be impossible not to....and it even brought some unlikely people together

It is difficult to ascertain if the 'weeding out' referred to in one interview was a deliberate act on the part of students through a lack of friendship or if people who didn't 'fit in' realised that the Music House wasn't for them and went to find other more matched activities.

I suppose....just trying to think of people who did drift away.....they've got music to a certain degree and then when they got to GCSE, obviously they picked different options to the rest of us.....and I suppose their studies went elsewhere.

And people like [him] didn't really get involved in music at school. He rejected the Music House. I think he saw it as a bit rubbish, but actually he was quite musical.

Someone like [a student] who.....he had quite a good voice and was ok at acting but he stayed involved in the sixth form, he was in Beauty and he did Performing Arts so he kept an element of it but not the theoretical side. He certainly liked the community side of it

Maybe the ones who disappeared just found other things that they liked better....though who wouldn't want to be part of us?

It must have been hard to be in the group if you didn't subscribe to that 'everyone pulls together' attitudeyou know...if you didn't want to be nice to everyone and be 'in it'.

Interestingly, several of the students identified one particular student who they felt had not 'fitted in'. This was a student who was musically very able both instrumentally and vocally. He studied music at GCSE and performing Arts at A Level and despite being possibly the most advanced musician in his age group and able to tackle complex performance pieces with musical maturity, he always seemed to put himself outside of the group. He was a confident young man and well-aware of his musical strength.

Then there's people like [him], who were very arrogant and obnoxious and maybe had an over-inflated sense of their own talent and was sure that they were going to be a rock star and go on to greatness...

People...he had a way about him that a lot of people didn't like....but I think he thought a lot of himself and wasn't afraid to tell people about it and people didn't....the way he did it....people didn't....like within the group when he was there people were like (sigh) alright?

....he wasn't even within the group to be in the hierarchy, that was the thing...he was just floating....

....he was part of it but not part of it, all at the same time.

I think he never really found a place within any group in the Music House, because his personality was so combative...had he not been like that probably everybody would have been asking him to be in their band, to play guitar on something, to sing on something....but his personality put people off...and I don't think people thought [he] was a terrible musician, I think they didn't ask him to be involved in stuff because....well kids that is, of course he was always involved in ensembles and stuff like that, but in terms of kids going off and making their own bands and that....well to be honest it would be more trouble that it was worth; however good he was, it wasn't worth the agro that comes with it.

Staff included him in rehearsals and performances, as they would any other student, however it was noticeable that in the student-led activities he seemed mostly to be on the fringe of the music-making and social time spent together.

On the few occasions when he became more central to a group of friends, he seemed to do something outrageous, which spoilt everything. How much of this was a conscious decision is obviously difficult to say, but the net result was inevitably to return him to the fringe of the group. Whilst I think in principle he was desperate to be a part of his peer group, he was not able to trust that people would like him for himself, rather than as an able musician.

He was in everything.....but if someone comes into the group and they don't....people don't like them, there's a certain uncomfortable atmosphere that can be created sometimes that person who comes in isn't [committed].....could be at home now instead of being there 2 hours after school.

[He] wasn't very nice to people. He thought he was great.....and he was, in terms of music....but he didn't care about anyone else....he only saw things from how they impacted on him

I remember when we were doing the thing with St Michaels girls and he just couldn't stop showing off.....and then didn't concentrate in anyone else's pieces....set the year 9 piece wrong and left off the music stand.....and didn't give the note in the tenor piece.....just to make his bit look better.

I think he wanted to be part of the group but when it came down to it he couldn't put anyone in front of himself.

I once saw him helping a year 7 pupil....when we were in about Year 12 or 13....and he was really helpful and supportive....I think maybe it was OK for him because there was no threat at all, whereas with us he felt he had to keep proving that he was best and that we were all fools for not making him the star all the time....and that was why he got people's backs up all the time.

That this student was brought up by name in several interviews and group discussions is an indication of the impression that he had on others and primarily this appears to be because of his non-acceptance of the shared values of the Music House community and his disregard or inability to build effective relationships with others. This student was by no means the only person who was not always popular in the group, however whilst other friendships changed and relationships evolved, with different students taking the lead at different stages, this particular student stayed very much on the periphery throughout his time in the Music House. Two of the students that I interviewed had had relatively recent contact with him but both still regard him warily.

I saw him a few weeks ago....think he has a band still....he wanted to know if I would dep if he needed someone...but difficult because so busy....his sound is decent....don't know if you could rely on him really....always wondered how he could be such a reasonable guitarist when he is never able to understand anyone else's view....you'd think the music would lack empathy too....but it's actually ok.

I see him every now and again, sometimes at gigs or parties....he is still the same....he is only good to you if he needs something from you, and then he is like a different person. I don't really trust him. He is a good musician.....not a very nice person.

6.8 Like a Family

Many of the people that I interviewed likened the Music House community to a family. Several felt this was almost inevitable given the amount of time that everyone spent together.

We certainly were a kind of family.....when you have 7 years together you do become a sort of family..... I work on a show for 1 year and we talk about it as a family....so 7 years, of course.... I spent more time in the Music family than in my real family....no wonder I was closer to them.

I suppose that's why we spent so much time there...because it wasn't work, it wasn't school, it didn't feel like school.

Others felt that the family feel was more centred around the relationships and the way those relationships worked.

I think I saw the Music House as a kind of family....they were there when I needed help....which was often...even though I didn't always like everyone..... I kind of knew they were with me....like on my side....which is what you want your family to be...even though I'm not sure at that time that they really were. Maybe the Music House filled a gap for me that a family should have filled. I don't know what I would have done without you all.

I think that squabbles were dealt with in a familyish way – lots of them were petty, about nothing...

The relationship with the teachers was really important. A parallel would be if you are a kid and you have a relationship with an uncle or aunt, like a bit younger than your parents and a little bit more on your level and the relationship is not like with a parent and not like with a friend...it's sort of somewhere in between the two...

In many ways, considering the time spent together, perhaps it is not a surprise that participants drew a parallel between the Music House and family. Both comprise a group of people working and sharing social time together. Because of the bond that they have, the benefits of the group make it worthwhile, desirable or even necessary to get through the inevitable ups and downs of the relationships involved.

6.9 Summary

Core to any family, work or friendship group are the shared values that they develop. This comes out of the relationships that are developed. In school, student-to-student relationships often grow from initial meetings. Organised activities, both within and additional to, the curriculum, can provide valuable opportunities for this to happen. Common ground, such as a shared interest or activity, provide a starting point for friendship and in the Music House this was often extended by cross-age group activities, which gave older students the chance to support and encourage newer recruits. This appears to have gradually become self-perpetuating, bringing benefits for all concerned and affecting the way that students on both sides of the relationship acted subsequently. Looking at the development of friendships over time has also highlighted the importance of social time and the enormous gains of tours, trips and productions, where students have the prospect of mixing with others in less formal situations.

Creating an environment for positive relations to develop is in no small part reliant on the staff involved, and both students and staff recognised the importance of this. Students appreciated the way that staff dealt with them as young adults, and valued the respect and personal interest that was shown. The strength of these relationships seemed to develop further as students moved into the smaller examination groups at Key Stage 4 and 5.

Teachers acknowledged the pleasures of working with students and identified key attributes of an effective teacher. Central to this, they felt, is an enjoyment of working with young people, but they also emphasised the need to care deeply, have strong listening skills, be prepared to give selflessly and show a

love of their subject. Students likewise valued the subject skills and interests of the staff, and often found special links with teachers through these. There is no doubt that being part of a school is hard work and students were quick to identify the huge commitment shown by the staff and the impact that this had on them.

The importance of creating a setting promoting teamwork cannot be underestimated. That is, of course, not to say that relationships are always smooth and by exploring times when participants did not fit into the community gives an insight into the importance of involvement and the central nature of shared values and beliefs. In the same way as a family operates, a school community fulfils many of the fundamental needs of a person and it is a function of school leadership to ensure that these needs are met.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Case Study Findings: Theme 1 - Relationships

Hierarchy and Boundaries

The viewpoint of staff and students who are part of the same community can be quite different and was interesting to hear student views in relation to structures that they felt were in place for them in the Music House. Setting out to look at relationships I had not personally perceived a sense of hierarchy within the Music House and when so many of them referenced it I was surprised.

7.1 Hierarchy

For students, the viewpoint shifts as they move through the school, with a huge variety of experiences related to their increasing age. For staff they are effectively still in time and students pass by them, but the experiences at each age group appear to remain largely the same. The different perspectives can give quite different perceptions. Unsurprisingly, staff had recollections of lots of different students over long periods. In the staff group discussion whilst many students were mentioned by name and often linked to students that they worked and socialised with, there was little sense of ranking or hierarchy. In the student conversations, however, there was a clear sense that there was a natural order to the Music House students.

the interesting thing is that even within the music house community, a sort of social hierarchy forms..... maybe if you got a group of students together not from a particular social standing of the school there might still be a top dog and so a hierarchy is there

We never talked about a hierarchy but we all knew that there was like a pecking order

In part, the hierarchy seems to have been based on age.

In that I suppose anyone who is older than you seems a lot older when you are that age and definitely think that anyone who was doing GCSE or further seemed kind of more embedded in the Music House.

There was a generational thing

I think everyone knew where they fitted in. So, because of the different age ranges that we had, I think we always had that, 'Oh okay when I go up a year you then ascend the ladder.'

You're still part of the same thing but I think you don't necessarily feel as close as the year above

I think perhaps towards the upper part of the school.... obviously that was when people.... the majority of people got more involved....but the ones who did GCSE and A level music.....they were the people who were around quite a bit more...

The older ones had spent more time doing everything and so they were higher up the tree than the younger ones

[I had a sense of moving up the hierarchy] That's probably why I have less memories of people younger, because maybe the memories when you are 13 or 14 are really quite important and it seems quite cool to be friends with someone in the year above whereas when you are 14 it's not cool to have a 12 year old friend. I always remember getting along with the younger ones but I don't think I would have ever thought of them as my mates.

I suppose it changes through the years though, because when you have the sixth formers, there is a level of trust that has been built up...you're a sixth former, you're involved in the Music House and you've been on a couple of tours, you've been in the ensembles and stuff and you're at the top because you've been there longestand then it probably goes down through the years and so the hierarchy is loosely based on that...

The hierarchy also seemed to be felt within friendship groups of similar ages.

Our place in the hierarchy kind of depended on our personality too. I was quiet...I didn't want to be seen or heard....I was low in the hierarchy.....others pushed themselves to become the leader....which sometimes worked and sometimes didn't....others were just there naturally

[A student] was always our leader....I think that's just the way he was....he had an outward confidence that we didn't have so much....it fitted with our group....we all had our roles.

there were people....with big personalities who, not necessarily consciously, would put themselves at the top.....that's the way it fell..... so that's sort of a natural personality thing.

At least part of the hierarchical feel appears to be centred on musical ability

The best musicians were always at the top of the pyramid....performances would work around them too....maybe

that's just playing to strengths....but we all knew what they said about the music was more important

musical proficiency definitely and as you get older you get better so there's more for you to do and so people rely on you more

How it appeared, was every couple of years you had the really strong performers..... and I think that was why we tended to have the musicals every two years

As you got older you got to be a stronger musician and so you went up the ladder

Because of their musical ability and experience, some students were able to lead rehearsals and this seems to have raised their status in the hierarchy

I think as I developed as a musician then the opportunity to accompany choirs, or accompany groups came along....I suppose to take more of a leadership role when I went in with the groups, and helped other students

There wasn't enough teachers to teach a part and he was always doing the part I was in

...there would have been people who would have been younger and more accomplished musicians, but I don't remember being that aware of them. [Student] was about 4 or 5 years younger and he was really good. I remember him being around. I think you are very conscious of the hierarchy around your age....that hierarchy around he is younger than me but he is a better musician....maybe there is something in that the people in the year above me I would have been very aware that they were all very good musicians.....but maybe a 13 year old can't compute [that]

For some students they felt that they had made a conscious effort to moderate the impact of their ability on other people

I learnt a lot of lessons. Just because I was a better musician than someone else that didn't give me power to laud it over them or exert authority over them – because that's not what nice people do.

Some felt that the nature of music acted as an equaliser against the hierarchy.

It's like the hierarchy that was naturally there didn't really count when you were rehearsing or performing...you couldn't have worked properly without an equality in what you were doing

that's one of the things I enjoyed about doing the choir that I'm in now....it's a real leveller of....the quite hierarchical medical machine....I mean, music is a leveller across the board

but that's the whole point about having the ability to engage in it....to feel like you want to perform or rehearse or sing out your line.....you can't do it if you think there's too much of a hierarchy

7.2 A Core Group

A core group, within the hierarchy was spoken about by many of the students. Interestingly, all but one interviewed felt they had been in the inner sanctum although identified relatively few others that had been. The idea of a core seems to have existed in every year group although people generally saw their own group as the main 'inner group'. Perhaps in part, this is the nature of looking at the world from one's own perspective and seeing those closest to you more clearly. If there were 7 or 8 students from every year group in this 'inner group' there would be more than 50 members in what was spoken about in quite rarefied terms.

[There was] an inner sanctum.

There were about 8 of us in the core....like the main group. We nearly all went on to do GCSE and a few of us did A Level.....the music happened around us.

I think I was on the outside. I was aware that because I knew [2 older students] and because they were so in the tribe and people saw me with them, and [they] would talk to me.....I was quite aware of how other people saw me as 'in the music group'.

It felt to me that there were a core group that were studying music, because they were doing GCSE and A Level and were keen musicians, and they were like the core group and then almost like an outer circle of people who were quite often mates with them, were interested in music but not studying music as their career.

The core group were right in the middle of everything that was happening. I liked that me and [my friends] were in it....it made the Music House even more ours.

I'd say within the GCSE class there was probably myself and [my friend] who were within the realms of properly within the Music House, I think the others wanted to do GCSE music but were on the periphery.

I certainly felt that we were the core, the originals....we had you for the longest....from the beginning.

it only made it the core to me because we hung out there the most...I think in our Headteachers we were pretty cool.

I wondered what allowed people to move from the 'outer' circle to the 'inner'. The answers were varied, including some of the same features that had distinguished the 'hierarchy' initially: age, musicianship, time-commitment, involvement, values.

I think everyone started off on the outer circle.

And the core people were probably the most able musicians because the most able musicians are going to be the people who are most into music so therefore that would be logical to have that core of people

people who played instruments as well or they were particularly gifted with their voice stayed within the inner circle.

The core group were the ones who wanted to stay to all the extra curricular activities

[You joined the core group] probably about Year 9. Once that first group leaves, then they will be in the inner circle. You kind of have to come for years and done your time and then you seem to drift in.

I think you found the nice people generally moved into the core group, they all seemed like they bought into the ethos more readily

I think I remember the people who were core to the house.....or maybe they just hung out there the most.

I think we were good and that gave us an element of confidence.

I think the core people were musical but there were fringe people that would get involved during certain periods.

Participants seemed to suggest that there was a degree of fluidity about the core group and I expect that this may have depended to some extent on extra-curricular projects and commitments. There were certainly students who seemed to get involved in everything and were constantly in the Music House and I am sure that staff were closer to those students who were involved all the time, through knowing them a little better. This may have further supported the students' belief in an inner core group. Staff also perceived a core group but saw it as much larger and incorporating students from all year groups. They had much less sense of any hierarchical structure.

7.3 Ethical Boundaries

It is interesting to consider the staff and student perceptions of limitations or boundaries that they felt were in place in the Music House. These in part were influenced by internal factors but some were also felt to be morally or legally based. There have to be clear boundaries between students and teachers, despite, and because of, the familiarity and trust between them. Staff felt strongly that the responsibility for treating everyone equally was with the teacher and that this was one of the few responsibilities that couldn't be shared with students.

at the end of the day we still need to maintain a teacher/ pupil relationship, so whilst you can be more friendly, more open, you have to be careful that you're not too friendly and that the child is safe and they know the boundaries

students need to know that those boundaries are in place for them to feel safe and be safe...they have to be able to trust that you are clear about that...and know that you have that in your mind. If they doubted it they would be quick to change their involvement I think.

It's totally up to [staff] to make sure that those boundaries remain in place.

The clarity of these boundaries made it transparent who the adults were. Staff felt that there were advantages to students seeing some of the 'behind the scenes' commitment and that having too firm boundaries and separating from the students too much could cause problems.

It's like you don't trust them to see the real you

If you don't let children see who you are and how much you feel about what you are doing it's almost like telling a lie....a lie by omission....you're hiding a massive part of you...that's when the formality and the distance are destructive.

I think because the boys were often in the office, the doors were always open....they could see what was going on, they knew we were there earlyyou were there at 7 o'clock, I was in early and they would see us working there and so I think whereas at [another school] it's a shut door policy so, however much I remind my [own] children about how hard their teachers are working they don't get it, there's that boundary and they don't get to see their teachers' lives outside the classroom and I think that's really important...

The clarity of ethical boundaries is especially important for staff so that there is no misunderstanding of how they behave. The responsibility of this lies only with staff.

Staff participants also felt that the way that a teacher managed a class and their relationships with students had a direct impact on the way students then approached boundaries in their music-making.

If a music teacher is too strict and rigid in their ways of teaching or managing a classroom, the students are less able and willing to break other boundaries in music [and] music is about thinking outside the box and breaking with convention.

7.4 Physical Boundaries

For student participants there was much more discussion about physical boundaries, and in particular about those that were marked by their voice changing. Given the huge amount of singing in the Music House and the number of choirs and vocal ensembles that rehearsed and performed, there is no doubt that for some, the inevitable changing of the voice, where the soprano register of boyhood changes into the grown male voice, brought a massive emotional hurdle.

Yes, I thought it was over, that was that

I think at the time I did take it....I didn't take it personally as in blaming it on someone....but I was definitely 'Fuck I've fucked everything up. My voice is gone'

It was terrible. I was working at the Opera House in the children's chorus. I was on the top soprano part of Die Frau by Mahler and, as one of the eldest and I guess most experienced, I was leading the section. It was complicated music and had sections at both the start and end of the opera.....which was a pain because it meant after the opening part me and [my music teacher] had to wait around for a couple of hours for the final chorus before she could take me home. There were about 10 performances but they were spread out.....somewhere in the middle of the run my voice just dropped.....it felt like it was overnight....and suddenly I was a bass. Because the run was midway and everyone had rehearsed with each person in a particular place I had to continue to go on stage for the last 4 performances even though I couldn't sing....I couldn't get anywhere near the notes so I had to mime and lead the top part without making a sound.....and all the little kids kept asking me

why I was so quiet...it was awful.....embarrassing....felt like I had lost everything.

One of the [non Music House] teachers came up to me after a show and went 'ohhh, you've lost it? haven't you?' I was like 'lost what?' and he was like 'it's not quite sounding as good as it used to'oh no the pain...the pain! (laugh).

As much as the loss of the high voice itself, was the reduction in status that went with it. As a soprano, students often stood at the front, they generally had the melody and as such, at least on the surface, held the most important part of the piece. Additionally, several older groups needed to use younger students to cover the highest parts and so the strongest of the sopranos were often co-opted into much more advanced and mature groups of musicians. When their voice dropped they, of course, were no longer needed for those roles and as such their standing changed.

All a sudden I was like a nobody

.....and actually...I never envied the bass or tenor parts. I liked where I was...at the top...at the front...Bosh!...and you never turn round and think I wish I was singing that bottom A for the next 7 bars

....and then I had to just hand everything over to [another student] and he was the star of everything instead of me. He had the amazing voice, not me.

When you're one of those chosen 'special voices' you know it's coming...it's like a guillotine waiting to fall...in some ways I was relieved to get it over with....although I can remember feeling....well left out because I didn't know the lower parts, just the tunes and so I ended up busking parts that weren't really parts at all....like just making up things that fitted with my new range.

Some were more philosophical about the loss of their soprano voice, especially given the frequency with which it happened in the Music House.

but you just go with it really....and when you see everyone else goes through it too...it just equals out in the end

Mine just slid down very gently and very slowly....I just moved into slightly lower parts each time we started a new piece. I couldn't see what all the fuss was about...it happened to us all.

It really helped knowing that....you know like everyone else had been through it

Students found different ways to cope with the physical changes that they were experiencing.

I remember that there was a stage when I focused on drums a lot more than I focused on anything else so maybe that was at that stage when I decided that singing wasn't the be all and end all, please God. But that's where I started singing little weird solos in We Three Kings or something like that...and you'd be like 'maybe there is a place for me in this world again' and it went back to that really. It's weird...because you don't really think about these things...it's like what you're brought up with.

7.5 Subject Limitations

I was particularly interested to find out if those within the study felt that the spirit of community that we had in the Music House could be replicated in other parts of the school, in different subjects. Had the students seen it with other curriculum areas? A few people felt that it was not possible.

[Music] was a completely different atmosphere...and no, I don't think you'll ever get that in science or history...or English

I think that that set of circumstances with a different subject would have had the same result

I remember in our maths department I was in top set maths. Our teacher had a similar attitude of treating students like adults, which worked really well with the kids in our class, who were all destined to be engineers or who loved maths. About 10 kids in the set could not get enough maths. So treating them like adults worked really well. He said he wasn't going to mark homework you should just go through it with him in class – all very grown up. But I hated maths and I abused that and so I never did my homework.

Others felt that the subject area was not relevant.

I'm sure it's possible [to have a sense of community in other subjects]...it just wasn't there.

We were studying music because it was another subject we had to study but it could quite easily have been in an English class or a history class....

The same thing happened, just to an extent, in the sciences as well...I remember having good lessons with, I can't remember his name, young guy....we used to have lessons, there was only maybe six or seven of us doing chemistry...but that's at A level so maybe it happened earlier in music.

I think nice came first and music came second....

it could be similar.....It's somewhere that people felt that they're doing....that they're enjoying, they felt comfortable doing it

....if you looked at history or geography, you know, there could be the same unwritten rules, but in terms of intellect or conversation.....in music you still might get someone who was a better musician and whose part might shine more than somebody else's, in the same way as if you were having a historical conversation with someone, they might know more so their conversation might be a bit more intellectual or high-brow

As they unpicked the idea of the Music House community working equally well in other subject areas, participants began to identify aspects which could be common to other areas. Being able to evoke a sense of team and a group spirit were identified by several contributors.

I think music is a very team thing. Art and History are very individual kind of things, although you could incorporate to a degree an element of 'teamness' or that kind of feeling of being part of a team. I think within music that's probably more evident and so it helps create that.....it helped create the kind of sense of purpose of belonging.

I think there came a point fairly early on in [a student's] music where [they] became a much better pianist than me.....and actually, I think in history or in another subject maybe that doesn't happen in the same way. If [a teacher and student] are performing duets it doesn't matter that I am the weaker person, player-wise....actually it's quite fun.....but you can still operate as equal musicians even if one of you is doing something much simpler. I quite like that.

If you were making the comparison with art, which might attract the same kind of people as music, it is possibly less collaborative than music, because the natural thing in learning music is to have 3 or 4 of you together

Many participants compared Music to PE in terms of being able to have opportunities to work together. Although some felt this was similar to music, others felt it was quite different, citing the competitive nature of many sports and the physical barriers to cross-age integration.

I would say if you compared the Music House to, say, PE, I would say in there, whilst you have your friendly banter and I think we all had friendly banter, but there was still that level of respect and I would compare that to the kind of team element aspect of it that I would say you still have that. If you were excelling in sports or that

was your chosen subject then yes, you would have that level of respect there.

they put the sports clubs and all this stuff like that.....people that are very good at sports and they go the extra time...they come in.

I don't necessarily think that would occur in sports because you're just competing within...the same age group.

there was obviously football teams and they would hang out together, but that was quite competitive and that wasn't making something together..

you might have the collaborative ethos in sport but you would always be with people of your own age or at the same level... They don't have that daily interaction, say you're only practising twice a week and a match once a week, you might only see them three times a week. You don't have that individual moment, a connection to create, you don't have much of that. I think the more with PE is probably, it doesn't seem an aspect of the game.

Several participants felt that the key to a like-minded community was the creative or emotional nature of the subject.

I think it's probably easier in a creative subject...even with art there is no end to it, is there?...it's quite open-ended and it does not necessarily have to be part of the curriculum.....whereas with more academic subjects maybe it's harder.

I wonder also if there is something about like the emotional intensity, it is not just like a technical thing or a knowledge thing....you engage with passion and the music can move you...and if you are performing with other people then you are moved together, so that kind of shared experience, especially I think giving performances, then you have got a very intense performance.....and you feel so close just because of the kind of quality of what you are producing.

I felt that in the sciences, these are a set of facts that you have to learn A plus B equals C. There is less need for discussion in that context. I think in music, and the arts...[and] English, then I would say you probably need to work on.....a more questioning approach.

Music is inherently a more fun subject, it's creative...playing in bands is fun, going on music trips.....I don't think going to history club is ever going to be such fun...or any other subject...maybe with the exception of sports...nothing gives the same level of enjoyment in the same way....that's collaborative enjoyment. If you enjoy history you can enjoy it alone and you don't really need a community....

there was definitely the same in the art house

you can compare English to music in some ways....you can't just learn English from a book; you have to learn about it from talking about it and being explained to....you don't get that in science....you just open the text book and you either understand it or you don't....with English it's all about language and the way you use it and sometimes.....I think that's why music brings so many people together

The feedback presented a very wide range of opinion in this discussion of the merits, differences and limitations of music and other subjects in being able to provide the basis of a common or central theme around which a community might flourish. The opinions, often conflicting, would appear to suggest that for different people, in different circumstances, any topic might provide the necessary subject interest to stimulate a group community.

7.6 Summary

We all work within structures and boundaries, whether articulated or perceived. For the students within the Music House, their hierarchies provided an order. For some this was a help and for others a restriction. The structure seems to have been based mostly on age and, to a lesser extent, on musical ability. The sense of hierarchy was felt both in terms of the whole Music House community and within friendship groups, and perhaps this is part of a natural order. The perceptions that there was a core group are interesting, especially given the huge variety of the perceived make up of this group, which differed widely from participant to participant and might lead us to think that there were a great number of 'core' groups, each central to their own friends. Everyone that I spoke to said they were in the 'core group', although named others that they felt were not. The perception of each person that they were in a 'core' group came from all the interviews and it is perhaps a great strength that so many felt that they were special and right in the middle of the Music House community.

Boundaries (ethical, physical, and subject-based), bring limitations, and these can be both helpful and restrictive. Responsibilities for ethical behaviour by staff must be in place to ensure the safety of our students, but staff felt that the

way these are best presented was firmly wrapped up within the positive relationships between staff and students, and that clarity and honesty ensure the transparency necessary. Physical boundaries, such as the changing of a boy's voice are inevitable but can be devastating, especially when linked with performance and rehearsal status. Subject boundaries were less well defined and many participants saw the possibilities of the same spirit being created across different curriculum areas. A number of qualities in the subject area of music, such as teamwork, extra-curricular opportunities, creativity, clearly lend themselves to fostering a positive community ethos, these are not exclusive to music and there are clear prospects for application on a wider school basis.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Case Study Findings: Theme 1 - Relationships

Roles and Responsibilities

The togetherness of a subject-based community demands commitment from both staff and students and, although not always apparent from the start, this has to be built through relationships, beliefs, systems and consistency of approach. For all involved there are benefits, but alongside this came a responsibility to live up to the ideals and to be open and honest with all parties.

8.1 Making a community

It is difficult to pinpoint when or how a group of people become a community. Many felt that in the Music House it was more about the people involved and their passions, with a list of features, such as the defined territory, the creative opportunities and the shared goal, which had additionally supported the success of the group.

The teachers believed in what they were doing and so we believed it too

You were a real mother figure, so if you had been teaching history, you would have been exactly the same

I didn't feel like we were being taught. It felt like we were all equals, just all learning on the same path

We would have followed [the staff] to do anything. We were excited about the Music House because we.....we were going somewhere, doing something...it felt really important....

Students in the Music House were, I think, always treated with respect, in the same way that adults would be. They were encouraged to use the office area. Many were involved in the administration of the peripatetic music lessons or in the room booking systems and others with the daily assembly performances and rehearsal schedules. Given the large number of peripatetic staff also there to access registers and arrange teaching times the office was sometimes a very busy place.

The office was where it all happened. Everyone knew they were important to the smooth running of the whole operation, but there was always someone to help when it got hectic.....which it often did!

the boys are very much around and again they see that the door is often open, the older boys are often in the office and the boys are very giving of their time. They'll often come and offer....we won't have to ask them...

Looking back I can see what an enormous operation it was in terms of getting everyone in the right place at the right time with the right music and instruments, all the visiting teachers, the kids, the Goldsmiths teachers.....the rehearsals, the peri lessons, the practice rooms....it took a lot of working out.....it was like a little business in its own right....and it felt like we were running it....could that have possibly been the case?.....certainly the office was at the middle of it all.....we felt like we were making it all happen.....it was great.

As the Music House expanded both in terms of staffing, students and provision, the space capacity of the small office was stretched and we had to nominate a second room as the student office. They became quite protective of the space and I think enjoyed the opportunities that this informal dedicated space provided.

We were really struggling to get stuff done because it was such a hive of activity and so many people were trying to do different things in such a small space....it was very cramped. I think we needed to make that split to give us all more room to work

we were all responsible for that room....it was our room....we had tea and coffee and stuff....it gave us a little bit of responsibility

The people would tell them to leave...[people felt that responsibility because] I suppose it was like our area.

I felt that it was like a recognition of being part of the team that ran the Music House

8.2 Responsibilities

The students were central to the workings of the Music House and covered many of the day-to-day jobs that kept the provision operational.

We were in charge of getting the peri notes out to everyone in the morning....that was quite an operation.....where were the computers?...all by hand...it took us ages....and then some of them

didn't go....it was like a daily challenge...how many could we get there.....like a success rate I guess

As a monitor, I stood on the door and checked people into the practice rooms at break and lunch. We worked in a team; I was usually on the door. At the end we made sure all the keyboards and guitars were put back in the right place and rooms were tidy.

[I played] for the assemblies....so many assemblies....[the Headteacher] decided everyone should be singing in assemblies and so it was in every year....that was painful.....but we had a laugh watching it all

[a key memory is] running the notes out to the kids who had lessons that day as an extra reminder

The students took their responsibilities very seriously and the pride and togetherness that this generated made it, in many ways, self-perpetuating. The positive work ethic, flexibility and willingness to work together for the greater good would be envied by many companies.

We were quite a team. I remember bombing it over to the Music House at break time to get there ahead of people who had booked the rooms so that we could make sure only the ones who had booked came in. I remember how important it was to us to make it work right.

[Student] would take the sectionals when we were part-bashing...he was really good...he helped me a lot.....my sight reading wasn't great and he always made sure I knew what I was doing.

I think the older you got within Music House, you kind of..... not a rank system, but it was just more mature that you became....you took on more responsibility.

Everyone just wanted it all to be right

I don't think it was ever expected that you would do stuff, I think it was you just kind of became more responsible.

It was important that we were there to run the Music House. We all had our part to play. It made us crucial. We knew we were each like one cog in a big machine.....but that every cog was needed.....you know like every chain is only as strong as the weakest link..... If someone was away or something we all knew we had to shuffle around a bit to make sure their jobs were covered.

8.3 Student Roles

Students felt that which roles they took on in the Music House team, was largely driven by their strengths, preferences and friendship groups

I think it was very much down to the individual and how much responsibility they kind of took, if that makes sense.

You naturally kind of fitted into a role

I was really good on the door at break time; I was a bit bigger than most of the kids and so nobody argued with me, although I think that you knew I was really a bit of a gentle giant

I looked after the tech stuff in room 8 because [my friendship group] were into that.....I wasn't at the start, but later it became my passion too....probably because of that job that we had

my skill set would be organisation and more looking out for people

[Student] was brilliant at organising all the reminder notes. We used to come in early in the morning to make sure everything got done.

Staff were naturally grateful for the roles taken on by the students and appreciated the time that students gave to these roles

I think they took on responsibilities. It was amazing how eager they were to help out. When you think that there were other things that they could be doing with their time

I know they loved being part of the whole team, but it was still amazing the responsibility that they took on. It allowed us to do so much more. I think it was great for them too....they knew that they were important to making everything work well.

Interestingly, as participants spoke about the jobs that they had taken on, some started to realise that a number of roles had only been operational in some years. For example, in some year groups there were large monitor teams on a detailed rota who looked after the booking of the practice rooms, but in other years we had nobody specifically doing that job; for a short period we had technology monitors, or a team logging the loan of woodwind instruments, or cataloguing the musical scores. In part this was needed because of the changing provision.

Potentially that was where I filled the gap and that's not to say that that gap had been filled the year before.

Probably [the job was created by] ourselves, in terms of what we thought we were doing every year. You kind of go to the level up set, but once you got into high school you were at the top of the hierarchical ladder so to speak. You're always consciously putting your stamp on it.

That's weird.....it's how I think, because you just fill these roles without them being... seeing the mess, potentially each year the roles might change.

You're just doing what you thought should be done.

Many students were quick to identify things that needed to be done, and this was especially the case when it matched their own personal interest or strength. They worked effectively in teams and often a group would shape a job role to fit well with a multi-person approach. Staff recognised the gains from this involvement, not only getting the task finished, but also in terms of personal and team development.

The lads gained from understanding that taking on a responsibility is hard work but it brings a sense of a job well done....and respect.....and more opportunities

For some students a natural role was not always apparent. In these instances, staff frequently felt that there were such benefits to students being involved, that they tried hard to find or even create the job that would match the skills of a particular student. This was not always easy, but it was important that everyone had a part to play in the Music House.

I remember it was hard to find something that matched what [student] could do, but when we did he really started to fly. I don't think he had ever been in charge of something before. It was great to watch him grow in confidence and people coming to ask him as the expert.

Different students need to be involved in different ways and being able to match the right job to the right person grows from understanding each other and seeing the potential in every child.

8.4 Giving Extra Time

Both student and staff participants felt that all-important team work was at its strongest at the final stages of rehearsal and performance time, and particularly

for school productions, when everyone would work tirelessly towards the best possible show.

You certainly saw everyone working as one unit when we were doing a production....it needed everyone to be on it....there was always so much to do.....and a great sense of comradeship and purpose. I loved it.

A lot of them appreciated that we worked hard and that we were doing it for [them] [the] shows would be an example.....whilst we enjoyed it, we were doing it for their benefit and they appreciated how much work we were doing and so they would be very giving of their time

I remember in the run up to Forbidden Planet. We were so exhausted. I don't think I had ever worked so hard, but it was all so exciting.....it didn't feel like work....you simply wanted it to be amazing and you'd do anything to make it like that

I think for the majority of the time the boys would come up trumps....think about someone like [student], all the hours that he put into Guys and Dolls, and he is just one person

We especially worked hard for productions. You just did any job that you were asked to do. You knew everyone had to pitch in no matter how menial or high profile a job was....you just got on with it. Even the old boys would come back and work through the night with us to get the set built or the dances rehearsed or the backdrop painted.

The Concert Tours were also cited as a time when students and staff worked together as a team, with students past and present taking on tasks and responsibilities as necessary. Many felt that tours especially provided a time when they were able to demonstrate their capacity to see and take initiative.

When we were on tour you had to step up and focus. Sometimes there were younger students with us; we knew that we all had to watch the group and everyone had to do their share of the jobs. Like if the coach took us somewhere, we all needed to unload the gear and get it set up without it being a big deal. If it got left to just a few people then it spoiled the fun of the event.

I think part of that comes from taking old boys along, so people who would let that be part of tours and I think that was quite a nice thing as well wasn't it? I know [past students] came back so I think that was quite good.....I came to Barcelona whilst I was at University

...maybe the residential school trips, I think even there, there was that sense of responsibility to ensure we were doing the right things but that's without being told as well.

When we were in a church in Salzburg we had already done quite a few performances and we knew exactly what we were doing.....the whole set up, performance, changes, close down.....I can remember how good it felt to be part of a huge team that was so slick and so professional.

The involvement in the running of the Music House and its wider projects greatly increased the sense of ownership and loyalty to the group. Whilst it is difficult to say whether the increased involvement in musical activities came out of having responsibilities or that involvement led to taking on more jobs, it is clear that the two were closely intertwined, with both contributing to a much stronger overall sense of belonging.

people didn't just sit back, they got up and did things.....so I think people liked the responsibility

We wanted to make it as good as it could be. It was really important to everyone.

As you got more involved, you kind of got more sucked in too....like a spiral...or a plug hole!

8.5 Looking after each other

Participants also felt that their responsibilities stretched much further than specific jobs. Many spoke of how this extended to looking out for younger students and being there to support them.

Looking after the young kids, really. Taking the younger ones with you

Whilst participants felt that there was an expectation of them to support younger students their motivation to be involved in this way seemed to mostly stem from their relationships with other, often older, students.

people told me when I joined the school there was a natural progression when you help students...

[I did that] because that is how it had been for me when I started, it kind of just naturally followed that especially the middle school where there wasn't the pressure of exams and stuff like that.....in that middle level where you mix with the older kids, but mix probably a bit more with the younger kids and so I looked after them.... I suppose they kind of looked up to you a little bit.

That was their assumed role of looking out for the newbies and welcoming them in a bit. You automatically had that close relationship.

One participant realised the wider benefits for staff of students watching out for and in many ways steering younger students.

Yes, I think you ended up in that role the older you got...you took more responsibility for shaping it. You kind of had eyes everywhere didn't you? You weren't everywhere but you had people everywhere, looking. That's how that governance worked I guess. If you stepped out of line then [a student] would have told you...or [another student]...or [another student]...or any of those people....and if they didn't, they certainly would have told you and it would have been dealt with.

This informal self-management and regulation can be seen as part of growing up and as a step towards choosing to take responsibility within a community. Shared sense of community grows from the willingness to share in the concerns, obligations and liabilities of a group as well as the joys, achievements and pleasures.

8.6 Broad Values

By the time students reach secondary school most have an understanding of right and wrong. They know the rules and how they are expected to behave in different situations.

Obviously at primary school I was taught to respect people

I think everyone knew the things that you shouldn't do....at school you follow the rules that people tell you, but I am not sure that you always think about what.....you don't really think about something....about the effects of different actions and about the ethics behind it all....sometimes a rule is just 'do as you're told' which I guess gets the job done but doesn't really help you understand.

Secondary school is often a place where students think more about how rules apply to them. Several students felt that in the Music House they were able to better explore the complexities of rules and start to unpack their application and rationale.

I think that they are an evolution. Your experiences are things that you grow and that you learn from.....I don't think my values have

necessarily changed but the way that I would express that value or the way that I might implement it [might change].

I think in the music department, it was ok to have a view that was different to somebody else's....that was ok and there was a way of expressing that

I guess [in the Music House] we were asked to consider every situation against what our core beliefs said...without those words of course.....but to consider all points of view.... and what would happen if.....and how would you feel if.....so not about someone else's rules that you just did but about thinking about what the right thing to do was.

For one participant, the negotiation or approach of deciding the way forward together, allowed a new consideration of personal belief and a realisation that the way that we understand and engage with rules is intimate and peculiar to each of us.

It had a profound impact. Most of my upbringing and schooling up to that point had been based around the rules and beliefs of religion and [the Music House] community was the first thing that really challenged my belief in....not in God, but in....you don't need religion to be a nice person....you don't need to read from a book to tell you what life rules are, some of those rules are just self-evident – don't be nasty to people is number 1, you don't need someone to tell you that's a life rule. But I think that started my path to questioning God and organised religion. Because it had always sat uncomfortably with me that religious people could do things that were not nice and still profess a faith in God and that....although it was a religious school then there, there was no reference to religion, apart from singing hymns and stuff, so yes, that was the first thing that challenged my belief system.

8.7 Rules

As a staff member I cannot remember there being any specific rules about behaviour in the Music House outside the school rules. Behaviour across the school was generally good; rules were quoted and enforced; their importance, as in most schools, was reinforced through assemblies, displays, form time, the sanction system and parent meetings. In the Music House the same rules applied generally, however I can't recall ever using the school sanction system or speaking to parents about behaviour. There were certainly no written Music House rules and I can't think of any conversations that I had about sanctions. There was perhaps a shared view of how a community should operate...what is

right, what is fair, how behaviour should be....but I don't think we ever put this into words. Students generally seemed to take much more responsibility for their own actions in the Music House, trying to be aware of others and help them to make good decisions about how they behaved. Whilst appreciating that the reality may not have been quite as utopian as I remember, I was keen to explore if/how the students had perceived behavioural boundaries; Did people behave well and if so why? What were the rules? How did people know? How were the 'rules' articulated? How did the Music House become like this and how was this state perpetuated?

I first explored what people felt the behaviour in the Music House was like and how it compared to behaviour in other parts of the school.

I do remember that there was a mutual respect that when you are in the Music House you don't act like an idiot.

People didn't really mess around...what would be the point?...we all wanted to be there....either to do music or to hang out with mates....but not to have to go somewhere else....we wanted it to be....well the place we kind of wanted to hang out.

If anyone started to be an idiot someone else would tell them to stop....we all wanted it to be a good place to be.....for a lot of us it was the only thing that got us through school....it was all we had and so we wanted to keep it that way....we didn't want to let anyone spoil it....

you've invested in them timewise and caring about their development and giving them a safe space...so for them to let you down in that way, people wouldn't want to do that.

I remember departments where people were a little more boisterous and more gobby and perhaps in other classes would be a difficult child, but when they came into the Music House they toned that down a lot.

I wondered if student participants felt there were specific rules in the Music House. For those who felt there were rules there was a quite a high degree of consensus about what they were.

I think [behaviour] was borne out of the unwritten rules that were there....and that was broadly be nice to each other and anyone that messed with that, it just wouldn't work.

Everyone knew that you were expected to behave and to be nice to each other.

I suppose it would be just what you would assume pretty straightforward rulesdon't be an idiot, don't annoy anyone else, be decent to other people, be respectful of everything we are offering you and then you'll have the freedom to use it...

It was all about being respectful and being nice to each other

Two students felt there were no rules

Consciously I don't think there were any rules, I don't think there was a set... I think it was just that we all had this level of respect for each other but I don't think there were rules.

There wasn't rules on the wall or you get kicked out if three strikes and you're out.

For some students the rules were seen through the way that staff acted when something went wrong, or someone overstepped a boundary.

It was never explicit. No-one ever sat you down and said 'you've got to be a nice person'. I think that the rule came if someone wasn't being nice....and you saw the way they were dealt with....and it just reinforced that if you do the right thing you'll be fine and you are free to come and do as much as you like.

I guess the teachers decided.....what they wanted from the department.

I think it was just more.....like demonstrated like top down and then obviously people did it....it was just the way people worked.

I guess if someone stepped out of line [staff] would correct them.....

Some students went further to describe the way that they felt was more a raising of awareness rather than an imposing of rules

Community was never made explicit. I think from those conversations where you said do that, like x, y and z...then that's when people became aware perhaps that's what they needed to do.....and I suppose that you got thinking about doing it yourself without having to be told to do it.

as a pupil in the school you are aware of the rules when people are not following them, so you are aware when the teacher gets cross because people are not concentrating in a lesson or when people start doing things that they shouldn't be, like making a lot of noise or damaging things or being stupid.....so maybe [in the Music

House] there was a general atmosphere of respect meant that you didn't think about rules

Nobody said there were any rules...I think that they just evolved as situations occurred. I think [staff] counselled us through issues so that we would make the best decisions....then we could apply that way of thinking to whatever happened next. They were more like encouraging us to make the right choices.....not really enforcing rules...I guess it's a different way of approaching things.

Interestingly, the Music House staff themselves felt that there were very clear rules and maybe there is something to learn here about the way that staff and students differently perceive the communication of rules and boundaries.

Whilst we had lovely times there were rules and we would expect [students] to be respectful of us and the environment.

I think things were devolved, for example using the practice rooms....you'd go through a stage where kids would just walk upstairs and help themselves to a practice room and go and practise, and then we'd have groups of boys up there and then they'd be left in a state....and then as a result of that we'd decide we have a timetable and you'd have to sign up if you want to use a practice room you've got to talk to one of us.....so things like that would sometimes evolve....so rules like that would evolve. That's kind of reacting to something that might have happened.

I think the kids would know that there were boundaries and that we would have to put trust in them and so they would respect that and therefore act accordingly.

8.8 Articulation of the Music House Rules

When I met with the student forum groups, one of the tasks that I gave them was to articulate the rules of the Music House as they felt they were....to create something that we could have stuck on the wall at the time to explain to people how they should behave. The discussions as they came up with their lists of rules were as revealing as the lists in many ways. All four groups started by talking about quite specific and mostly negative rules, many of which they perceived as school rules at the time don't swear, don't fight, don't bully.....but as they talked more about the Music House and their own experiences, the ideas became much more value based and positive.

Respect others sounds cheesy but it's how we all wanted to be treated and so it became self-fulfilling I think....I don't think we

were conscious of it but we were all building the world the way we wished it....

We saw the rules in the behaviour of the older students and the staff and so we knew how we needed to act and we wanted to be like them so that was what we did

The four groups produced different responses but there was a great similarity in their thinking. The first group decided on 5 bullet points to sum up the key rules. They were keen to keep the list simple and all-encompassing, presenting values that could be applied to every situation.

Figure 8.8a: Music House Rules (Group 1)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <u>GROUP ONE</u> | |
| • | Be nice |
| • | Care |
| • | Respect |
| • | Listen |
| • | Take
responsibility |

It's got to be worded in the positive because that's how the Music House was

I think it's all about students being trusted to take responsibility themselves

The second group quickly moved from an original list towards 3 short sentences which they felt would have high impact and convey the message with simplicity.

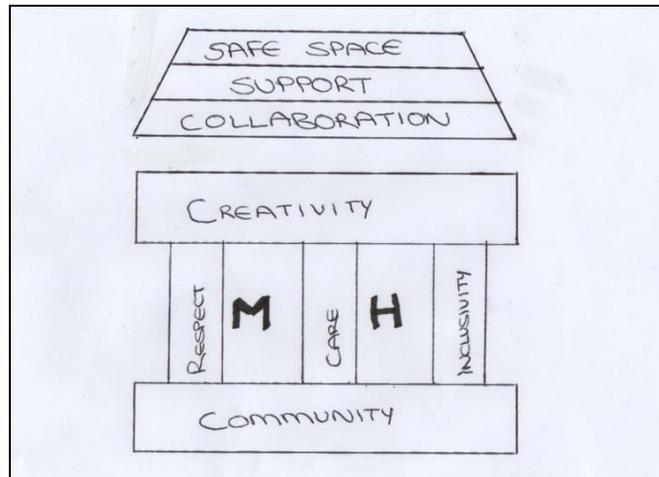
Figure 8.8b: Music House Rules (Group 2)

<u>GROUP TWO</u> The Music House is for us all. Take care of it and all the people in it. We are strong together.
--

I don't think that it would make any difference if rules were written down or not really....it was more about how everyone was treated...I can't really remember not knowing that we should be sensible.

After starting with a long list of quite specific rules (including fold the leads after use, put equipment away and be respectful to everyone) group 3 changed tack and worked on an acrostic based on the word respect. Deciding that this didn't really encapsulate all aspects of the task, they brought their ideas together in a poster diagram of the Music House.

Figure 8.8c: Music House Rules (Group 3)



After much debate, the fourth group of students decided that putting rules on the wall was contrary to the trust and belief in everyone that had been in the Music House, and that the very action of not putting up rules illustrated a shared ownership of the Music House, within which everyone had a part to play.

It's like the rules for life – they are not written down – you have to work them out for yourself for them to be real.

I guess you link up with other people who see it the same way as you do....in places where you can share the same way of thinking.....and that finding other people like you makes a community.....people don't ever think exactly the same

The discussions threw up considerable debate generally about rules and how people in the Music House had known what they could and couldn't do.

There was certain levels of banter and fun....and then it would be like too far. I think that generally speaking there was a rule, but I am not sure how that was instilled in people

I think [things that happened in the Music House] were a series of experiences that you learnt from

You were the chief. It wasn't a written thing but the way that you dealt with people and your expectations.....it wasn't left to fester...it was just dealt with and that was it.

8.9 Falling Short of Expectations

There were certainly times when students didn't act in a mature or sensible fashion. The past students that I spoke to were very open about times when they felt that they had 'broken the rules'.

I'm sure that we abused the fact that we were also in [the teachers'] good books. I am sure we got away with a lot...we weren't smoking and drinking in there or anything like that, but I am pretty sure that we all had times when we were not very nice to people....we were probably a bit....me and [my friend] might have been a bit 'no, this is our room, get out' to younger ones.

We kept phoning each other on the hotel phones and I think the hotel spoke to you and you spoke to us.....you were not happy.....we certainly understood we had done wrong. Nobody touched the phones again.

I remember on the Paris trip me and another student were messing around and I remember getting the talking to over the glasses....and I remember we both felt very bad about that.....I think everybody did at some stage. At that age you are always trying to push the boundaries, aren't you, to find out what's acceptable and what isn't.

I did some really silly things....I don't think I thought about it....just played for laughs I guess.....we all make poor judgements at one time or another....I guess it's important that you are given the opportunity to reflect on what you've have done and what they could have done. In the Music House there was that space. The teachers talked to you....and you understood the problem.....not that that always stopped me of course.

Several participants also spoke about the role of older students in ensuring a positive approach to behaviour.

....and it wasn't just you that would do that, it was the older kids at the time

People who are nice at their core tend not to do things that are not nice, but you still have to have some boundaries, because when you're 12 or 13 you haven't got the same experiences to draw on as when you're 17, 18 and so you need someone looking over you for guidance

There was also an occasion when it felt as if the Music House community hadn't acted fairly: in Summer 2000 the Music House ran a song competition to celebrate the new millennium. There were about 15 entries, but only a few looked as if they would be at performance standard by the date of the contest. One of the music teachers worked with the composers of the weaker entries to improve them, ensuring that they were all ready for presentation to the invited audience. The guest judges didn't realise the huge variation of compositional support that the pieces had had and finally awarded the gold medal to a piece which had had an enormous amount of teacher input. The winner felt quite embarrassed and some of the bands that had worked on their entries entirely on their own felt quite cheated. Two of the participants spoke about the injustice of this as we discussed moral values and fairness.

That was a competition in the year 2000 to write a song to commemorate or celebrate the turning of the millennium and I remember it very vividly and it's been the subject of jokes for many, many, many, many, many, many years.....I just remember us all really....the group I was in....getting very, very into it and we put a lot of hard work and a lot of effort and spent many, many, many hours.....many hours.....crafting this 'masterpiece' as I would call it. It was something that really captured our imagination....and I guess we worked quite hard to do it and..... I just remember spending a lot of time on it. It's just stuck in my mind. And then we didn't win, which was incredibly controversial. I remember, at the time being...I don't want to use the word...but apoplectic. We were very, very unhappy, because we'd crafted this song....just us....and then we had this other piece....and it was a good song in the end....but the general feeling was that the composer hadn't composed it by himself, so it had lost a bit of meaning to us and we were very unhappy. Very unhappy.

I vaguely remember that the judges weren't from the Music Houseso I remember thinking, arrogantly, 'Well what do they know anyway?'. So we at the time, and now, didn't think that anyone set out to maliciously do that, it was just one of those things that snowballed and we were furious at the time

I don't think that it rocked my faith in the Music House. To us it was just a complete injustice, because we were given a brief and we followed the brief to the letter I think

I also think there was a bit of arrogance in there.....we'd put so much work in that we deserved to win....and actually it wasn't a bad life lesson to learn....that just because you put the most effort in, it doesn't mean you're going to win something.....looking backwards it is those kind of incidents that shape you and what you

do...not that I think about it regularly, but....it has crossed my mind a few times across the years.

These wider perspectives, given through hindsight, highlights some of the dangers of actions not supporting or being in line with an ethos and the lack of continuing faith that this might bring.

8.10 Summary

The sense of community in any group brings those people together. How specifically this happens can be difficult to isolate, but participant interviews and discussions highlighted the important role within this of the staff and their commitment to fairness and respect. They recognised the sharing of benefits and of responsibilities had brought an increasingly collegiate feel to the Music House, with students leading on many of the day-to-day jobs and being fully involved in group decision-making. Their positive attitude and keenness to ensure the success of the group perpetuated belief in the community, and whilst at least some of the roles had been designed specifically to engage and involve students, these contributions were important both logistically and from an individual development viewpoint.

Both staff and students agreed that the Music House team often felt at its strongest during pressure points such as exam time and readying for performance as part of productions or concert tours. Their leadership and full involvement in these projects drove them to be even more engaged in what was going on, assuming responsibility and supporting others to do the same. The students were clear that they felt a commitment to looking out for younger pupils, which frequently stemmed from their own experiences and relationships with older peers.

The broad values understood by children as they start secondary school give a foundation for deeper understanding. It is important that as they develop, students have the time and space to explore the complexities of how and why rules work, and how they relate to each of us on a personal level. The Music House rules were not specifically articulated, but participants had a strong sense of the principles and some felt that this more general raising of awareness

encouraged better opportunities to make the 'right choice'. Faced with writing down what the rules of the Music House were, groups presented a range of responses that in many ways embodied the essence of the Music House and perhaps suggested that a defined articulation was not necessary or even desirable.

Looking at examples of occasions when students or staff fell short of expectations helps us to understand the importance of practice and policy reflecting core beliefs and values. A community 'ethos' does not mean anything if it is seen only in words and not in deeds. Everyone has to be able to have faith that principles that are presented will be true for everyone and in every situation.

CHAPTER NINE

Case Study Findings: Theme 2 – Safety & Security

A Safe House

In models of development, being and knowing that you are safe is often seen as a prerequisite to being able to think and learn. (Maslow, 1943) (Osler, 2000) (O'Brien, 2017) Students certainly seem to work best when they are happy, safe and relaxed, being able to be confident about where they are. Consequently, we all understand the priority given in schools to protecting and caring for students in the widest sense. In this study the questionnaires, individual interviews and the group discussions revealed the importance of this theme for the participants.

9.1 Initial reactions

Safety and feeling safe was very dominant in many of the individual interviews. All 10 participants who were interviewed brought up the feeling of security within the Music House and their sense of being protected.

It was just a safe environment.
[there was] a real sense of stability

I think music was what we did there, but then I think potentially it could have been down to the fact that it was that safe... that refuge which drew people in.

Central to the feeling of security for six of the ten students interviewed was a feeling that the Music House was a place where they didn't have to put on a front, somewhere they were able to let their guard down in front of other people.

I think it was a very safe place to go, where you never felt that you were being judged or that you had to conform or such. You could be yourself.

.....we could just be ourselves there.

For some students this was felt to be even more crucial and provided a 'bolt-hole' away from the wider school.

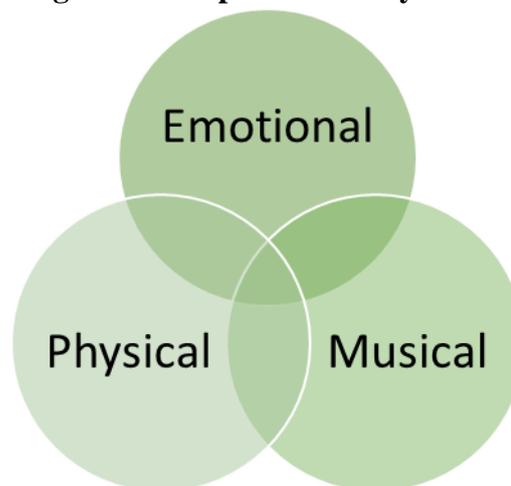
...that was my safe place where I would go and escape to. I didn't want to see people and I didn't want them to see me.

I think there's a lot of pressure on kids at school and that actually, you can get swallowed up by the majority and if you're struggling it's good to have... to know you've got somewhere to be able to go and say, 'I'm struggling' or go and kind of hide out.

9.2 Aspects of safety

As participants expanded on how and why they felt it was a safe environment, it became clear that there were many aspects of this that combined in different ways to build the perception that the Music House was a secure place to be. These seem to broadly fall into the three areas of physical, emotional and musical safety. Although in some ways the areas have separate characteristics, the responses indicate a tremendous overlap between them and an effect of each one on the others.

Figure 9.2: Aspects of Safety



9.3 Emotionally Nurtured

Throughout questionnaires, interviews and discussions participants described the care that they felt that staff and students showed to them and to each other.

I think we all felt very nurtured

We were looked after in the Music House.....I mean that you felt someone thought about you and worried about you and was interested in what you were doing, even when you weren't there.

The teachers fostered a real sense of involvement with us....people paid attention to you when you needed them.

I think there is respect. There is.....again working together and helping each other out. If something was in difficulty, somebody older or somebody who knew that, would help out...

....people just liked the comradery and the friendship, and feeling like somebody cared.

You weren't going to be picked on or made to feel like you were worthless

I think it was a safe haven, the kind of place where you knew that someone had your back. You weren't going to be bullied or picked on..... or made to feel like you were worthless...

9.4 Priority of care

Ex-student participants felt that there were clear divisions between musical assistance and more personal support, and in many cases participants felt that the care of the person was given priority. Staff too felt that this was the case, although many of the trainee teachers who completed questionnaires saw a more equal balance between the music and personal care.

Everyone in there was there to help...not just in music but in other aspects as well, that was the great thing...

I think that, if anything, care of the person probably more...because if there was a musical development, if that was in some way having a negative effect on someone's personal development, I feel like the personal development would win out.

We were like little plants that needed tending. The teachers helped us with our music but what I think was more important was how you helped us to grow as people and how you nurtured us....there was always someone to help you when you needed them and you could rely on that...which made you feel better....like confident about being able to go on.

Perhaps the nature of the environment and the caring qualities shown had an impact on the students who subsequently became involved in the Music House. The students interviewed were all sure that the main reason that they had initially become involved was their talent and passion for music, but identified many others whose musical interests they felt had grown out of nothing as they had become more involved.

It wasn't just musical students that were hanging around, sometimes it felt like the ones that were unhappy elsewhere in the

school and we had a safe environment on offer that they were drawn to

Loads of people came in because they knew that they would be ok there....it wasn't really about the music, that was just what they had to do to be there, but sometimes they turned out to be great musicians too....but it wasn't why they came to start with, that was more about being part of the group and feeling they belonged.

The staff discussion group came to the same conclusion, although interestingly there was little correlation between names of the students perceived to be the 'musical' and 'non-musical' starters. Perhaps this is in part because of the widely differing perceptions that people have of each other, and in part because of the necessarily subjective judgements around musical talent.

The kids came along for all kinds of reasons – not always the music. Sometimes they just wanted to be in the Music House. I remember when [one student] started...he was so lost....and I remember wondering what he would do, but then he joined the choir and then took up the guitar and actually became a great little musician.

The opportunity for students to talk through their worries was cited by many as being very important in making them feel cared for and safe.

[There was] an opportunity to talk to staff if they needed or if there were problems....and that might not necessarily be because they needed somebody's opinion but sometimes because it was just a nice place, a safe place to be.

We were the oasis so...I'm sure they would probably....well some of them always seemed to be in the Music House, so possibly for some, we were their world as much as they could make it during their day

it's a mind-set of showing an interest in people, in their lives, in their development, literally in their mental health development as well, their issues and helping them...

Participants suggested that the act of listening was more important than the solution or result, however in the staff group discussion several people felt that there were times when students had expected, or sometimes needed, a level of intervention

....and they thought you would have answers

Sometimes it was hard to know the best things to say....you had to think through how a student might need to act next to sort out a problem.

And I think if you'd said to them I'm really disappointed in you, then that would carry a lot of weight...

9.5 Bullying

Ironically, although the Music House was universally seen as a safe place, many participants spoke about the comments that they received because of their involvement and the separation of the group from the rest of the school. Often this took the form of name calling and it seems most often was amongst the students in the younger years.

...although you are included in the Music House it kind of ostracises you a bit from the rest of your peers. But then actually as you get older, I think people matured through school and I don't think it was actually seen as that big a deal.

You still get....not in a malicious way.... 'Choir boys'...all the comments

something that you get taken the mick out of...at that age if you show interest in anything other than sports then you're singled out for ridicule

There was always a thread that went through the Music House about 'that's where all the gay boys hang out, all the un-cool people' and all of that stuff

I think also there was an element of music nerds...I don't remember being bullied... but there were certainly words thrown around and so being in that nerdy group...I didn't feel that we were complete nerds...

Hanging out in the Music House might mean that you got teased by a couple of people, but I don't think there was a particular conception, that everyone outside that Music House looked at you and thought this, that or the other, just that one or two people might make a snide passing comment, like boys do about all kinds of things all the time.

I think especially when we were lower down the school people couldn't always understand why we were part of that, so that's what was down to them.....

I think actually as we progressed through the school and as we matured and grew up, that people respected each other's choices to

spend time....so that being the same for me....changing perhaps what somebody could doI suppose there's that respect of choices.....So actually, like at GCSE and A Level it wasn't an issue at all

The frequency of this coming up in the interviews would lead me to think that this was fairly widespread, although different participants seem to have handled the comments in different ways. Many felt that they were able to ignore the comments and that they weren't hugely affected by them.

It's just much more of the banter isn't it? It doesn't bother me.

People used to say something to me and I used to bat it off or just say OK....but if you think about [some other] people they would get a reaction, and that was the thing that people never got out of me....a reaction....I'm sure there probably were occasions but it used to go over my head a lot

Because you just think what does it matter what they think? I'm a part of something and I enjoy that and then that carries with you beyond school and even up until now. If you're doing something that you're happy with and confident doing, it's not worrying what other people think about it.

Others relied on their size or personality to take them out of the target group.

I think I was always bigger so I had a physicalness that meant I didn't get bullied....

I've genuinely never had anybody bully me because I was attached to music but I think in doing it and enjoying doing it, I was just more relaxed as a person

....like I get the old jabs '[teachers' names] erhhh' and I was like 'Yeh, yeh, whatever'.....

...the way that I was socially positioned, I could ride the waves quite well....I used to hang around with both sides of that...the music people and the non-music people...and I was able to skate the line quite well

Some were more philosophical and one participant, who spoke at length about his lack of confidence and his vulnerability, particularly in the first few years of school, was quite sure that bullying was almost inevitable for him.

...I was not popular anyway so it didn't make much difference...at least I had a group of people who were in the same boat...rather than being off on my own, which otherwise I would have been I think.

Another participant spoke about a more serious incident which he felt had marked quite a turning point for him.

I think that was a game changer for me, that actually after that point. Because I kind of went with that a bit as I started year 11. There was some sort of presentation...in assembly and everyone booed. There was something within the year group. I remember, yes. That's when I came down and I was so upset and I spoke to you..... and I think that was kind of the turning point that I actually just shut the door, with everybody else. You know what, it doesn't really matter what they think. It kind of gave me then that confidence to kind of deal with it.

Looking back at this low level bullying, many participants felt that it was driven at least in some part by envy, although most acknowledged that they didn't feel that at the time it was happening.

That was the view of the people on the outside looking inwards....and part of that was jealousy that they weren't able to take part.....or they could have taken part but they were probably afraid to take part...like singing was for girls...and so was music and the rest of it.....but a lot of that you can look back on now and say it was insecurity on their part...and probably a longing to belong...

I think it's just like the mickey-taking that went on.....I think there was a group of us.....the form classes from Year Seven.....there was just a group of us being music monitors.....so when we had lessons as a form, class comments were made by others so.....especially looking back perhaps jealousy....but at the time was just....it felt like that's where we went and that's where they didn't have that

Now looking back on the whole thing I think people were really jealous – they must have looked at what we had, with the space and the nice teachers and the comradery and everything...at the time nobody would have admitted that but I think probably even they would think that now. Maybe them name calling and making us the butt of their jokes..... it was just them reacting to that.

9.6 Impact of Bullying

Participants also spoke of the way that bullying had influenced their own actions, particularly in supporting other students, often those younger than themselves.

...until maybe if I saw someone who was being given a hard time I would definitely speak up about that, because I'd probably been through it myself...and maybe keeping people a bit more honest if they were getting a bit above their station.

I think it made me much more passionate about protecting the year 7 kids....I remember what it was like....through my own personal experiences....which were not always great....and it made me want to stick up for the ones who were like I'd been....I guess like [students] had done for me when they saw it happening to me....although I didn't think at the time that it could have been what happened to them too....they were just like heroes to me.

Although in schools we frequently look at the safeguarding and caring responsibilities of the staff, it is less frequent that there is a consideration of the impact of staff and students on each other in terms of wider moral views. In one interview, the participant talked about how he felt that security in the Music House community provided a 'constant' that was created by everyone involved:

.... going through adolescence and having the one constant there, even though you're growing through the peer groups in Music House, it actually will change you and shape you and mould you....by all people who are around you....

Others agreed.

I think they changed...like ethics and moralities. I think I felt a certain way about things....instinctively I knew what my moral ethos was but I think having other people to reflect that and having other like-minded people to confirm that...

Sometimes I think I made the right choices because of what other people said and did....it sort of secured the right decision and what was the right way to act....and even though I think I knew all of that anyway, it just made it really sure. It made us strong being together and so the bullies were always out of that group and they couldn't sway us....and that was quite powerful.

This feeling was echoed in the group discussions.

I guess that in some ways it is inevitable that when you feel strongly about something like bullying....probably because you've seen it in the people closest to you....and you have all seen that....then as a group you kind of stand up to it....and that makes you stronger and then you believe in the group and that becomes something you all believe in....so it makes it happen again....and then that reinforces that you all do that.

Being in the Music House made you be the best person that you could be

I think that the boys often talked things through together and then they came up with a collective response that they could all get behind and then that became what they would subscribe to and what they believed in, and then you would see that in action when they were doing things.

There was a great respect for doing the right thing and in many ways that perpetuated itself and evolved into something that then shaped and confirmed what people thought.

One participant commented that the need for security was for some students a driver of that creation.

.....I think potentially we were all seeking that kind of refuge so it kind of created the safe haven. I think just by being a part of it everybody shaped it. It was impossible to be involved in anything there and not have an impact on that. I don't think that I ever consciously set out to do something but I think the things we were involved in and the decisions that we made and the conversations that were happening, then that was naturally happening.

This co-construction – the contributions that both students and teachers make collectively towards the establishment and continuation of a secure setting – is not only seen in the security of the Music House but also appears to be common in many aspects of this study. The idea of a school being able to give students the opportunities to create safe spaces for those who need them is a powerful one. One participant described the confidence that this had given him as he left school and moved onto further education, to recreate a safe group of peers within which he felt he could be himself.

I don't think that would have been the case if not for the Music House environment and having the space to do that. I don't think that I would have gone on to college and been able to do that, with new people that I didn't know. Whereas in the safe space where these people I know and I've been getting to know them over the last few years, it's a safe space, but the other, less favourable people have dropped away and so it was the right balance...so enough of a change to allow you to do a bit more and be myself, but enough of the same so that there was a level of comfort.

9.7 Location

Although the Music House was a part of the whole school, its physical location was at the edge of the school grounds and somewhat separated from other

sections of the school in an old house, which in the 1960's had been the location of the residence for boarders at the school. That it was a short walk from the other buildings, allowed the community to feel that it was distinct, and, for some participants, detached from the main school.

It just enables us to create that, you know that kind of separate environment, just an environment that is contained within itself

Whilst people weren't turned away, unless that was your interest or you like to think you are going down there you wouldn't necessarily go, because it was around the back of the school on its own. And that's why people wouldn't go there for different reasons.

I don't think it would have been quite the same if it hadn't been a different building or on a separate floor

The house felt like a 'safe zone' away from the rest of the school.

I don't necessarily think that in another school if the music department, say, was just annexed to another building and wasn't that location or that kind of separate... We had our separate environment and I think that definitely helped as well ...

The Music House had a large room, which was used as a classroom, and nine smaller rooms, which became the office and practice rooms. At different stages in the history of the Music House, rooms were also used by the main school as leadership offices, a counselling room and careers facilities as the need arose. Consequently, the music areas shifted to accommodate and also to meet the changing requirements of music activities and current projects. The office was always sited in one of the two central rooms, depending on how many teaching staff would be in the team that year.

I guess first and foremost it was a house and it was laid out like a house....you had the kitchen/office area that became the central hub ...and the other rooms were off that and were never your own

I can't imagine that experience would have been quite the same if it had been in the last 4 classrooms in a corridor. And if I remember rightly there was that central office that was a kind of hub

The students felt it belonged to them too.....they had a sense of ownership and loyalty

...and then it just comes down to creating a safe space for me...even like in the officeyou could just come and sit down

and have a chat and have a cup of tea and be away from the playground...

Staff made a conscious effort to keep office doors open so that students were comfortable coming in and out of the office and to indicate an availability if students needed them.

I think having the office doors open, so that children can come and see you when they want to and when they need to is really important.

I think because the boys were often in the office, the doors were always open....they could see what was going on, they knew we were there

The layout of the Music House, with many separate rooms, was ideal for small group practice.

I think a lot of the attraction was around having a space where you were trusted ... like creative spaces I guess.

what was provided was certainly a space for people to explore their passion.

Practice rooms enabled students to work through or practice new material, develop instrumental skills and take time to talk about music.

We'd spend hours there.... just noodling or sometimes not even music.....just talking...people would be eating their lunch there....

I was starting to spend all my money on buying tapes at that times....meant I was more into listening to music and ... the Music House was an open space, where you could do what you do

I was lucky in that I could pick up the guitar and each day pick up more and more quickly

just messing on a guitar with a couple of friends, or doing stuff like that with friends as well because that was allowed and encouraged and it was just a place and a space where you were encouraged to have access to things.

9.8 Musical Risk-taking

Within this safe musical environment students were able to take risks that they might not do in front of a larger group and experiment with the creative exploration of new sounds and sound combinations.

we were left to our own devices to work things out and stuff like that

a general sense of being open and giving people freedom to explore stuff, without pressure

It means that they could discover new things and test out things they'd learnt in class or from another student.

I try out things in lots of different ways to see what they sound like...and [my friends] are like 'that was great' or 'what about this'and then I start to think about what works and what doesn't

Well you didn't want to show your stuff to everyone until it was really good so you could try it out on some of the others and then talk about it...and they'd let you know

I found this great chord...and it took ages to work out what it was...and I showed it to [a friend] and he showed me about moving it into different keys...I thought I'd solved all my composition problems for ever....but really so many more chords to discover.

Although students often felt that they were not learning, these informal sessions frequently played a huge role in their progress.

[We were] given freedom and time to mess about with stuff and figure it out and it didn't feel like it was an experience where you were going there explicitly to learn, but that was what you were doing because you were picking up ideas from other people about how stuff works.

It really was about having the time and space where you had access to musical instruments and initially you learnt in quite an unstructured way, just playing around with your mates and showing each other how to do things.

You could always tell if someone had spent time going through stuff or playing about with musical ideas....it shone through in their compositions and their performance pieces and made them come with questions and an eagerness to understand better.

When they use the practice rooms they can absorb

What kids can do in that free time is more adventurous and experimental because they are protected...they know nothing will happen if it's wrong – it's just part of learning

Many participants felt that the musically safe environment gradually allowed them to take risks in larger rehearsals or in more public arenas.

I remember there was a piece we did....there were teachers from Goldsmiths and we did this theme from Riverdance and the parts were all over the place..... and they were like reading away....and I was lost.....

When I got to year 10 I began to find that being...like comfortable enough to take on the risks of doing something too hard.....that you know is too hard....even if you know you are going to mess it up....it really allows you to learn even better. It's just about being open to risking it.

I think the more you understand music, the more you can actually.... I think it changes your level of awareness very much.....you realise that you don't always need to make every single thing correct, in order for this to be right.....you can't actually do that, you're just picking out the important bits.

when I was at primary school....the only people that listened to me playing the piano were my parents and my piano teacher....she'd say, 'Oh that's great, that's great.' ...and that was it; all to encourage you to get better...say it's amazing when actually it was a pile of tut....but actually within the Music House there were various times where people said, 'Oh that's not right, no that's not good..' ..but that was okay.....I didn't feel that people were either 'taking the mick', or being horrible....and I think that shaped me.....

Risk taking is also a key part of performance. One participant benefitted from performing in the chorus of a school production.

Yes, on stage all the time so you were involved all the time but you didn't have the pressure to learn all the lines....like it's not all riding on me. So that was quite a nice way in, to not be too pressurised.

Another felt that a performance he had been forced into brought an initial risk but ultimately great benefit.

...one time that I was really nervous....it was the first day of term and you said ' you're going to sing in front of the whole school' and I was just I really don't want to do this....Simply the Best...and it really scared me and it was one of my own songs, one that me and [my friend] wrote and everyone loved it. And afterwards I was like 'wasn't expecting that at all'....'I know I take the mick out of you all the time but that was alright – not too bad'....and you know [it] kinda made me think has my life been building up to this moment?

Participants generally felt that the musically inclusive approach, which encouraged progress at whatever level a person was at, made everyone more comfortable and secure in trying to develop their skills and ideas further.

the difference with music as well was that you were equally welcome regardless of your ability and that was a very important thing.

I think everybody respected each other.....respected the people and respected their musical ability, whatever their ability was.

9.9 Summary

The secure place that the Music House offered, was important to the participants of this study for different reasons: for some it provided a place where they could really be themselves; for some it was a place to escape bullying or to find emotional support; and for most it gave a framework within which they had the safety to experiment with their music.

The nurturing environment acted as a haven for some students, with the personal care often being seen as taking priority over musical support. Students benefitted from knowing that they would be taken seriously and that staff would listen to them. This security of knowing that someone is there who cares for you is particularly important as young people work through the difficult teenage years, growing towards adulthood. Eradicating, or at least reducing bullying is a continual focus for all schools, and part of this has to be helping students to have the strategies to cope with incidents and the confidence to tackle issues together. For many of the participants in this study, their experiences changed the way that they behaved themselves, often encouraging them to look out for younger students. With hindsight, many felt that the negative experiences they'd had outside of the Music House had strengthened them. They saw the perpetuation of safety in the Music House as, in part, being a co-construction through a need to create their own safe space.

Creating a safe learning environment can be aided by the location and layout of the available space and an open door policy allows students and staff to be more aware of each other, understanding needs and problems. The Music House, with its many smaller practice rooms created possibilities for group

work and space to experiment with musical sounds and combinations. Essential for understanding and development, this time helped students to be confident enough to take risks in their compositions and later performances.

CHAPTER TEN

Case Study Findings: Theme 3 – Opportunities

Something for Everyone

Participants in this study spoke with enthusiasm about the range and quality of experience that they enjoyed as part of the team. The large number of people involved in the Music House as students, teachers and trainee teachers brought phenomenal expertise and musical interest together into one place.

10.1 Initial impressions

With a house full of professional and aspiring musicians, the Music House was always a very busy part of the school. The generous proportions of the practice rooms meant that they were each able to accommodate separate ensemble, choir or band rehearsals, and so frequently a wide range of activities would be happening at the same time. For visitors to the Music House this was often quite a revelation.

I remember our first session [at the Music House]. There were children everywhere and they were all involved in something. Every bit of space was being used - people were practising on the stairs and on the landing....there was a really loud rock band making the walls shake and the parts to Christmas carols being learnt in three different rooms. Upstairs some GCSE students were using computers to compose. It all made for a really bohemian, creative atmosphere. It felt like music was at the centre of everything. As a student music teacher it felt like utopia – what we were all in teaching for.

The school's annual open evening, aimed at prospective students and their parents was, for many students, the first time that they had visited the Music House. For some it was a deciding factor to choosing the school for their secondary education.

Every room was full of musicians.....just doing things, like bands and different groups. The walls were just literally covered with displays....I just liked the atmosphere that was going on.... I think that was within the department and within the school.....

It was really exciting....not like being at junior school. The Music House was buzzing....there were loads of things going on; bands,

choirs, a folk group and loads of people just practising and enjoying what they were doing. It made me want to be part of it.

I think I was quite keen to get involved and do things, and this was obviously very different to what the music provision was like at primary school....and everyone was really friendly and welcoming

10.2 Curriculum experiences

Classroom lessons provided the basis for musical understanding for all students in Key Stage 3 and an option group at Key Stage 4 and 5. Given the time spent in these formal lessons, comments about the formal curriculum made up a very tiny proportion of the recollections of students and staff from the Music House. Particularly those class lessons in Key Stage 3, were referred to in a more detached way, perhaps with students seeing them as quite different from their upper school and extra-curricular experiences.

The content was fine but there were so many idiots in the groups....a lot of the music just got lost.....they just wouldn't do the work so they could play the pieces....and so they just took the micky....I guess their priorities were somewhere else.

Some of the music they made was awful.....I don't think they could see what they were capable of, so they never put in the time or the effort to make it good.

I think everyone enjoyed music lessons...they were a bit of light relief after some other classes....only a few people thought they would choose it as an option and so most people didn't care that much.

It was frustrating to be there and not be doing good stuff, though I can remember 'One Love'....the bass line is stuck with me forever.

One of the student group discussions listed the areas they studied at Key Stage 3 and were able to recall thirteen of the eighteen topics studied, with particular pieces, such as One Love (reggae), Pirates rondo song (structure) and Glassworks (minimalism) especially standing out for them. It was reassuring to know that the Key Stage 3 classroom time had not been wasted for them, although it was clear that as future musicians it had not always been the effective learning that it should have been. Several people felt that the lower school music lessons had acted as a draw for instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities, and there seemed to be a common route of class music to

instrumental lessons and choir/band, leading to performances and exam classes.

Figure 10.2: Relationships between elements of musical education

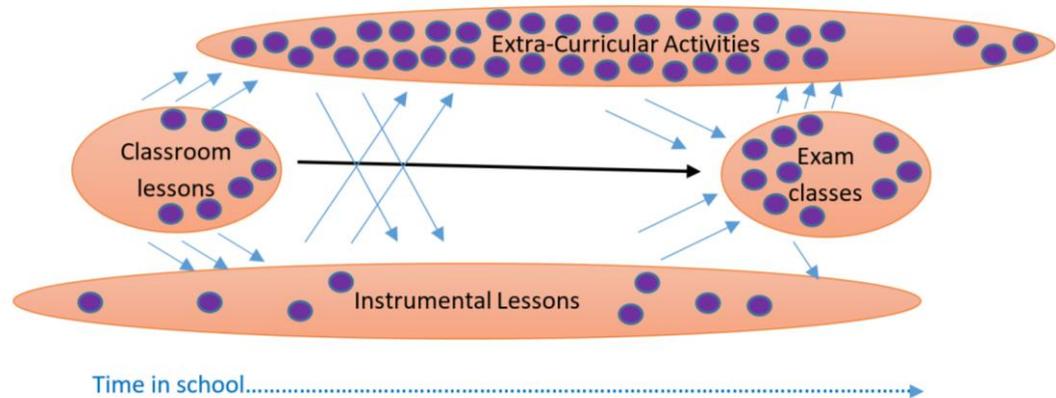


Figure 10.2 shows possible interactions between the different parts of a student's musical education throughout their time at school, with a typical spread of performance opportunities marked as purple circles. Much strength comes from this kind of integrated approach to learning and part of this is creating the opportunities for students to take.

I remember that we tried to sing in every lesson...just so that the boys were comfortable using their voices and that brought a lot of them into the choir...and the pieces we used...they were.....well usually quite popular.....so it made it a fun activity too

I had music with my class and then I joined the choir and wind band and then got involved in concerts and productions

As a pupil I attended class music lessons, instrumental lessons (at various times saxophone, piano and violin), orchestra, school productions, learning music theory and choir

You do get children that will come to you and want to start piano lessons in Year 9 as a result of playing One Love and enjoying playing the keyboard and I think that that, although it seems like a small thing, is really important

10.3 Exam Classes

By Key Stage 4 and 5, students had chosen music or performing arts as an exam subject and so were much more involved in the courses. This opting-in resulted in a considerable increase in focus and the knowledge that the other group members had also made the commitment to further study gave students confidence to share more openly and take risks, both musical and personal, more safely.

once you've decided you were going to do GCSE music that was where a lot of hard work then came in

[when we started GCSE] there was a real shift in pace...our ideas were challenged more...you knew this was important.

And all the performances....anyone who had music would remember the performing Arts kids but when you were doing Performing Arts A level I remember that quite clearly....all the pieces were devised.

Once we got onto GCSE it was much better...people who didn't want to do it weren't there and so it felt like a weight had been lifted and we could all just get on with the music.

Doing GCSE gave what we were doing in lessons more point...it was probably the same in other subjects but I can't remember it so much....I felt driven in music....like there were things to accomplish

The syllabus provided the things we had to do by the end of the course but it was more than that.... I think we were like standing on the edge of a musical cliff....we knew it was all in front of us...we just had to open up [and] be ready to listen and experience stuff.

Teachers also felt the difference in the group focus.

[It was] completely different teaching the GSCE and A Level groups. The students were all keen....they wanted to be there....consequently the atmosphere was much more relaxed and more about the music. You could work with the kids instead of controlling what was happening all the time.

This shift in approach allowed teachers to consider the musical journey for each student in even more detail, mapping new experiences and challenges to develop them both in terms of understanding and performance. Sometimes students were aware of the planning involved in their musical growth, but often it was just considered as a seemingly random set of experiences.

[in terms of performance pieces] I guess it peaked and troughed...as you go up a level of difficulty your quality goes down initially and then you perfect that and it goes up again. So I think there was gradual up and down but I guess in an upwards trajectory most of the time.

The sight-reading was quite difficult....but very satisfying once I'd matched up the sight-reading with what I could remember the part was. That's the satisfying bit.....when you see these do actually correlate with what you're singing.....and it does fit like the composer meant it to.

I remember you bombarding me with 20th century music....I was convinced that it was only romantic orchestral stuff that was worth listening to...Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven.....the modern stuff just seemed like noise.....and then when I started to open up to Webern and Schoenberg and see what you were talking about....I saw the 'magic of the atonal'.....and then you changed the goalposts and started to drown me in Palestrina.

Every time I'd get too big for my boots because I'd conquered a difficult piece I'd find myself learning something even harder or something that pushed me to sort out a different technique.

When I look back at the musical repertoire that I picked up during GCSE and A Level I can see a fantastic breadth....that has helped me to understand music that I have come across in my professional life.

10.4 Breadth of Experience

The wide range of musical input helped to ignite new passions in the students and encouraged them to explore music in different ways. For many students this was tremendously exciting.

[my friend and] I took GCSE music, and I.....got into the productions, and the.....tours, and I got involved in the production....we went to Paris.....I went to Vienna and....we did Disneyland as well, backstage Disneyland. I remember all of those.....it was good....and lots of concerts.....I remember going up to....Brodsworth in Yorkshire....with the male voice choir....and.....quite a few carol concerts, presentation evenings...

the great thing about that was that I realised that I could sing

I remember having a whole day doing gospel music...I think it was on the day that we opened the new Music House...the chords were so quick and easy to build up...we'd not worked like that before...I could see how the guy.... added sixths and sevenths and then

moved things around....with everything in parallel...it changed how I thought about voices

There's other people that went on trips with us, like [a student] who was very involved in extra-curricular but not sure if he did performing arts or not – I feel like he got more involved in the extra-curricular stuff....and interesting because now being in a band is his job, it's what he does. I don't think I would have ever picked him to be a performer....

We worked with the LSO...they came and did a session in school and then we composed a piece as a group and then performed it at the Barbican...we used a work by Messiaen...maybe about a concentration camp?...and looked at features of the piece....we had a strange combination of instruments, which I think was the point, like in the camps in the war...we experimented with spreading out the sound and the pitches used to create space in the music....it was amazing the difference it made to the music....just moving the octave of the sounds

Certainly everything that I wanted to do was there. And I think that was the same for everyone....bhangra, hip hop...I think if someone wanted it, it would have been there. That was the vibe. There was lots of stuff around all the time...not just in music but also when we did performing arts

10.5 Extra Curricular

Whilst curriculum activities incorporated many of the musical experiences for the students, both students and staff often seemed to have the fondest memories of the extra-curricular activities. A discussion group made up of current teachers felt strongly that the additional interests and opportunities created outside of the classroom were frequently the main drivers of musical learning, although appreciated the complexities of the relationship between learning and involvement and the difficulties in being certain about the nature of cause and effect. For some, student involvement led to greater learning, for others learning led to greater involvement; for most there was a combination of the two.

The students who are most involved in the extra-curricular stuff get immersed in so much music, even when they are not really thinking about it; they have much more exposure to new ideas, they get to see how things work in music.

Being ready to get involved often indicates a child being ready to find out more about music.

Extra-curricular activities create the opportunities for students that can be hard to set up in the classroom.

The extra-curricular stuff is really important.....It's just as important in many ways, if not more important than your classroom teaching

I think teachers get more opportunities in the extra-curricular too....everyone wants to be there and it's all about the music for everyone.

10.6 Rehearsing

Many of the extra-curricular activities that students and staff described were rehearsals preparing for a performance event. For some the rehearsals themselves were as important and enjoyable as the final presentation.

I remember the rehearsals for the concerts most I think. I remember the encouragement from [the teachers]....so mostly the positivity, and when then rehearsals become a bit more focused and longer as you're getting near to performance....yes I remember them more...

I remember a lot of the rehearsals and the set up for productions. I remember having a good laugh doing all of that.

I sing now in the choir I'm in now, and I won't be able to make the concerts, but I'd still sing in the rehearsals because I enjoy the singing and the rehearsing.

The extensive calendar of performance events meant that rehearsals, by necessity, had to have tremendous focus and many of those interviewed or speaking as part of the group discussions articulated the marked differences between the relaxed social time and the more purposeful rehearsal time. By necessity, rehearsals were structured times; there were different parts to introduce, revise and secure, and the ensemble to perfect and shape.

....there was work time and there was play time.

You knew that you had to concentrate....it was just....like that was the time to switch on and

The kids were great at switching on when we got to that time....not always, of course....but most of the time....I think they knew that that was the time to pay attention if we were going to get everything sorted

Occasionally there was a mis-match between a student's musical ability and their personal maturity and this sometimes brought difficulties to rehearsals.

I didn't always get it at the time....the others were much more focused than me.... I think I still thought it was a bit of a laugh...they were pretty patient until I understood I had to bring my 'A Game' if I wanted to be in on what they were doing. I thought it was just about having a great voice but when it was right it was so much more than that. I don't think I fully got that until I had to deal with idiots in rehearsal myself.

I remember being frustrated when [he] couldn't concentrate....we really needed his voice because ours had dropped, but, because he was so much younger, he didn't have the same commitment to what we were doing....he couldn't concentrate for very long so we had to keep having little breaks so that he could run around and get rid of excess energy....it was irritating....eventually he calmed down a bit....but it took a while!

The rehearsal schedule was demanding because of the large number of performances. Many students were involved in several ensembles as well as their own musical lessons and explorations. The staff encouraged pupils to embrace as many different groups as they could, to expand their musical experiences and deepen the range of their musical understanding. Performance was used to bring a focus to learning and an opportunity to show case the talents of the students.

[there were] so many things going on.....So at lunchtime there could be ten things going on at once but everyone seemed to know what they were supposed to do and where they're supposed to be.

You had to work out which rehearsals you needed to be insometimes that was confusing....you didn't want to miss anything or let anyone down but there was so much going on I didn't always keep track of what I should be doing

[For the Paris Tour] I remember doing lots of rehearsals....lots of rehearsals...lunchtimes and after school. I remember the coach trip quite vividly; I was friends with [another student] at that time. I remember singing the Lion King medley for months and I think there was something else...the Hunchback of Notre Dame possibly.

When I think about Beauty [and the Beast] I remember all the rehearsals and how they built up...as we got closer...in the Music House to start with....just rehearsing every minute that was spare....and all the rotas to cover the parts and the different groups.

10.7 Performance

The closeness of relationships was often tested, and sometimes also enhanced, by the pressures of pending performance. Whilst this end product gave an outcome to aim for it depended on each member of a group to get it right. No matter the complexity or status of the musical part every strand is important in the performance.

You knew that you were in it together, so you had to get it right for everyone

Eventually you realise that being the star of the show doesn't matter...no one at the end of anything that we ever did came up to one person....well maybe [one student] (laugh) but it was always a collective, never about one person, and that was probably about there were times where one person wasn't there and you were like 'that sounds crap', cos it's like a watch....if you haven't got the little cog in the back then it doesn't work....but a lot of the stuff that we did was like that.

I think having a common goal is important in a group and going through the stresses.

Knowing that you'd be on that stage as a group meant that you had to know what you were doing and trust that the others would be ok too....especially if it was unaccompanied....like that Purcell for 8 voices....it was really exposed....you had to trust everyone else....if someone went wrong it was all coming down....and when you rehearsed you had to do it like it was the performance...there was no room for mistakes.

There is a significant value in the shared experiences that bring a group of performers closer and enhance the musical togetherness. The relationships developed around the Music House allowed for more cohesion in the music and supported an empathy within the music, where performers were able to breathe together and to anticipate as one. This only comes from a trust and understanding in the students and staff developed over time and from shared experience and clarity of musical understanding.

If you are doing an ensemble piece, a group piece...it only works in the context of what everyone else is doing....you have to work together for it to sound good.

the more time you spend with anyone then the more comfortable you feel with them....and in the musical sense you relied on people

That's the real community spirit of music, isn't it?

[Students and teachers] related in a very equal way as musicians.

As we got older we grew together musically I think, especially singing...we fell into something much more secure...we started to know how each other would...like how we were together when we were performing...we could see when to start and stop and how to finish a phrase and pull the music.....you started to act like one person

Since I've left school I don't think I have experienced that same degree of trust and safety in a group....there is always someone that makes you a bit wary...I know the teams I work with are different...it's not music...but I think the principle is the same....it's just difficult to get right.

This sense of being completely together in the music is hugely powerful and an experience perhaps unlike any other. It brings together musical understanding and an absolute belief and confidence in each other. It needs those involved to commit fully to the music and to want the performance to be the best that it can be. The high level of engagement in the Music House and the commitment of those involved at times created pressure around performance.

I think one of the things that made it good was that we all cared about getting it right...you wanted people to be impressed with what you put on

Nobody worried about rehearsing over and over because that was how you made the concert good...or the show or just the piece....whatever you were doing....that was what you focused on

even if you knew it hadn't been perfect...you wanted it to be perfect

....[performance] becomes more than just education it becomes personal...I'm not just doing this for the fun of it anymore, I'm doing this....we're actually doing this in front of people

I don't think anyone judged you if you messed up.....it could happen to anyone....but you never wanted to be that person

I liked rehearsals much more than the performance itself....I was always so scared that I would come in wrong or crack a note and then it would all go wrong because of me

I think I put a lot of pressure on myself to get everything perfect...it was hard to keep a balanced view I guess.....the performance just took over

For some, rather than creating stress, performance provided a release from it.

I loved it when someone came up after a performance and said they thought it was great...or that they thought you'd done well...it made it worth the work in rehearsals...the rehearsals are kind of forgotten...they're in the past...the performance is the focal point [it was] the ability to perform music which I have learnt from.... it provides a balance and a release from the stresses of life...

...and it gives you a little bit of pride, doesn't it? 'that was a really good performance that we did' and 'people enjoyed it' – and audiences at presentation evenings or assemblies or whatever it is, when you get a good response that does give you a bit of a boost.

I enjoyed [performing]...and still do I suppose....the feeling that everyone is watching you...that you are connecting with the audience...that you have something to say that is worth listening to...you're in control...it's just amazing!

I loved the feeling of arriving somewhere when you performed with the kids.....such focus and energy.

The performance was the best bit....too late to do anything about it....just able to enjoy the moment....like the moment where everything comes together and your hard work pays off....you can just sit back and enjoy it all then

For some participants there was a sense of relief that all had gone well, although also a feeling that this would always be followed by plans for the next event.

You could just breath out after it had all happened...like you didn't even know you'd been holding your breath.
There was always.....once they'd finish something, there was always the next thing to prepare for

It was just part of the cycle of rehearsing and performing.....like tension and release....we built up through the rehearsals and then it all culminated in the performance and then we patted ourselves on the back and relaxed

Performance felt like a massive achievement in itself. You managed to get everyone to the right place at the right time, able to get through the music in a relatively musical way....maybe even produced a great performance....phew! and then off we go again
....

10.8 Wider Performance Pressures

For the teachers in the study in particular, there was a recognition of the importance of performance in terms of the development of the student, the status of the music department in the school and also the reputation of the school in the wider community. For many schools, the creative arts provide a showcase that can promote the school image immensely to parents, prospective students and local residents. There is no doubt that the awareness of the broader functions of performance only added to the pressures for staff involved.

I think it made a sort of point to being part of all the different extra-curricular activities, like we've got this concert and we have to work towards it. Being in teaching now some it feels very much like it's all planned out and we've got eight concerts to do...But I don't think we saw that as students...for each one everything's got to be professional and then you've got to focus on the next thing. As teachers there's a lot of pressure when you're doing all these activities but as students it's just the next thing...there's music making and socialising.....and then there happens to be a concert and you perform pieces that you were rehearsingalmost opposite for teachers.

I think sometimes you feel completely ignored by Leadership and then at performance time you're their best friend.....you really become the centre of the school world.....everyone suddenly loves you and you can't put a foot wrong

I don't think people realise the work building up to the performance and how difficult it is...the strain is huge...it's great fun....but there is a tremendous weight on you for it to be yet another amazing performance...I don't know what would happen if it were all a disaster.

Given the wider school pressures on teachers linked to performance, it would be easy to assume that this would become the central motivation. However, speaking to music teachers, both past and present, it was very clear that for them it was much more about providing an experience and a showcase for their students.

Performance is so good for the students

You've got two challenges; you've got to inspire the right people coming through to go on and take it up and sometimes that's very easy to do because they're clearly inclined to do it and whatever like that.....that's like people getting the same marksthen you've got people that are not going to be musicians whatever like that but

there's their chancethey could get some enjoyment out of it and that's the real challenge I think

It makes such a difference to [the students]...I mean you wouldn't do it otherwise would you?.....such a huge workload and so much hassle....but always worth it when you see them do their stuff....you can see the pride that they have in their accomplishments.

It's really important that the pupils have the opportunity to present the music that they have been working on...in class or in an informal setting or in a full on concert...they need to be able to share their musical ideas....I think that performance can bring an extra edge to what they are doing too....just being in front of someone else

Readying the quantity of music needed to sustain a range of events through the year took careful planning. Whilst a significant volume of new material always had to be in preparation, there was, of course, always a recycling of old performance pieces that ran alongside the learning of new pieces. There was something very comforting about revisiting music that often brought back happy memories of other performances, places or events. The shared experiences added to the music and brought new dimensions to it.

How many times did [he] sing 'Ain't No Sunshine? It was like the foundation piece for ages....we could just roll it out without any thought, even if different people were in the line up....like everyone knew it.

There was a kind of established repertoire, so we could always fall back on them and that was like a security especially if we were trying out difficult new material too

At Christmas we always started the carols....you just got the pack out again and you knew how everything fitted together. I always enjoyed doing the bass parts...it was like coming home after your holidays....except for the solos in We Three Kings which I always messed up....I guess even that was like business as usual

Sometimes, when you'd done a piece a few times before you kind of saw other things in it that you hadn't spotted before....like when we did the final section of the Brain Medley the chords could sound in different ways depending on who had which part and the acoustics and just how we were performing that day....such good chords too...

In the Music House students often took an important role in determining their own learning, especially in the selection of curriculum and extra-curricular

material. As well as developing a breadth of repertoire knowledge, this also developed decision making and negotiation skills and ensured that students felt a shared ownership in what was happening. Sometimes this was on an individual basis and sometimes this involved a large group. Productions and concert themes were often decided in this way.

I liked being able to be part of choosing what we did....especially with performances...and shows...[and] tours.

I remember when we all decided on a theme for the concert...something about travelling through time I think....it was so tenuous....but we thought we were amazing to have found a way to link everything together. I remember making huge posters of the different years to be paraded through the hall as each piece was announced

it's just something we all spoke about every time we did a production

the following year I think we did Return to Forbidden PlanetI remember talking about that and being quite interested in that [idea]

When we chose Guys and Dolls as our end of school production we matched the lead roles to the singers who were leaving....and I guess also the staff who could be in it too....I don't think it was what they would have all chosen but some of us had seen it at the National on a trip...Rocking the Boat and Luck be a Lady were great songs....we mapped out 5 different musicals with parts and scene changes before we eventually made the final decision

Two students who are now teachers identified the strength of this shared decision making.

Letting the children to some degree help make decisions about lots of different things from repertoire down to the rules of the practice rooms....little things like that so that you are asking their opinions. I think they value that more than we perhaps imagine.

Students want to be part of choosing what to do and which concerts to take and how to run things....and given it's for them, why wouldn't you hear their opinions?....they have interesting things to say...they see things you miss...and having more people in the discussion means there's loads more ideas.....avoids your brain running dry. Having students in the mix means you're all heading for the same thing.

10.9 Shared passions

It was clear, speaking to both students and staff, that they felt that the common goal of performances gave the group motivation and an obvious purpose. It created a structure within which rehearsals and experiences made sense.

There was something to do most lunchtimes and after school and at the end of pretty much every term there was always something that we were preparing for.....which was that aim and what we were working towards to get to.

I always thought that it was the culmination of the ongoing rehearsals...it gave everyone a destination

I think that shared goal..... I think that was probably, that was quite key to it as well.

we knew what we were working towards. I think if we had just been going to choir practice or anything like that, it's just like, 'okay, we're just rehearsing for nothing really' potentially people could have been dropped at the wayside and thought, 'Well, why are we giving up our time for this?', whereas actually, having the concerts, the carol concert and then the end of summer concert, that's what we were working towards and yes, I definitely think that helped focus.....and have that drive there

Having something to work towards made us more of a team

if you are working towards something, and that's it definitely.....I would need a structure, a rehearsal programme or something to work towards at that stage definitely....

Perhaps equally important to the common goal, brought about through the cycle of rehearsal and performance, was the overriding shared passion for creating great music.

We all wanted to make good music....people appreciated that about each other....teachers and pupils cared about what they doing because it made a difference....the music was better....and being together made it better....and people were passionate about what they were doing and that's what the Music House made us.

It was creative and collaborative

I think one of the things that I really, really liked about working in music was the sense of being around people who were into creative things and there was a bit of a collective energy about that and that was something I craved and wanted....and I think the reason that was there was because it was something that I'd experienced within the Music House

everyone in the Music House at that time...we all loved music...and we all loved making it....and it doesn't matter what age....if we had studied music to be a teacher or we were a pupil there, we had that common ground.

The shared enthusiasm for the subject was evident in all aspects of the Music House and staff worked so hard because of their excitement about music and about sharing that passion with young people.

[the staff], I think, had a lot of passion for teaching.

...and the music was at the heart of everything....I couldn't believe teachers would care so much about music....it made music itself very important

A lot of it, I think, is the commitment from the teachers to create the extra-curricular activities that bring us all together. Pretty much every night in the week we had something to do and also, the open element of break times and lunchtimes, we'd all just come out and hang out with the Music House.

All the teachers had different interests and backgrounds but they all loved the music....you could start playing and a teacher would just join in with youyou could make things happen.

There was an appreciation of all kinds of music....I think it's to do with the different... loads of different texts and different opinions about music.

Music is a great medium for expression and working with children allows you to explore music with fresh eyes

As well as the staff, the students cared tremendously about what they did and became more and more passionate about music throughout their time with the Music House. Their endless enthusiasm and the intensity of their feelings provided motivation for other students and for the staff.

I remember very specifically, I think it was in year 8, that I performed at a presentation evening and I remember winning the award for most promising young musician and that was quite a cool moment...and I remember thinking oh maybe I am alright at this....and maybe I should probably continue. So I think from then on I was definitely very heavily involved and very much wanted to do music.

I gradually realised that music was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life

I feel like it was different from any other subject or any other teacher I had....like you have a talent and I am going to try to nurture it – I don't think that was anywhere else...

...you could really sink into the music there....it was a world on it's own

For almost all the student participators their interest in music continues in their adult life. During their university years many of them returned to school to be involved in productions, tours and projects.

10.10 Summary

Schools provide untold opportunities for their students, both in terms of their curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. Sharing subject passions can be enlightening and inspiring for both students and staff. In the Music House, curriculum activities led towards a range of additional activities, supported by specialist instrumental lessons. Exam classes in Key Stage 4 and 5 provided increased challenge and extracted even more focus. Individual learning journeys worked in different ways and participants spoke with enthusiasm about the breadth of musical experiences that they had had.

Many of their most lasting memories came from practical music-making and particularly preparing for school productions, tours and concerts. Despite demanding rehearsal schedules, students valued the way they worked with each other and the teachers. Performance is not without its pressures: for some students this caused stress, for others it was hugely enjoyable. For teachers there were wider pressures, with a clear understanding of the importance placed on public presentations for the whole school. Music House students were very much part of decision-making about repertoire, sharing in the delights and demands of this.

The shared passions and experiences often brought the Music House team closer together. In part, this could have been through the increased time spent together in preparation and delivery, the opportunities these occasions presented for people to demonstrate their skills and commitment, and the power of having such a clear end goal. Participants related the energy and

dedication of all those involved and also appreciated that these times were when new friendships were often tested and strengthened. Within education there is an important balance between familiar experiences and new ones; a powerful combination of educational security giving resilience for risk.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Case Study Findings: Impact

Combining Outcomes

The impact of any one aspect of a student's school experience is, by nature, impossible to assess accurately. It would be impractical to even identify success criteria, given the wide range of individual needs, preferences and aspirations and the extensive breadth of both measurable and unmeasurable outcomes.

This stage of adolescent development is notoriously challenging for many young people and getting through the difficult teenage years can be a trial. With the benefit of hindsight, the participants broadly felt that the Music House had been a positive support for them. Maybe some of the perceptions of the impact of the Music House have been magnified through subsequent discussions (and possibly also this study) but generally the participants that I interviewed felt that the Music House had had a lasting impact on them, often, they felt it had been life changing.

11.1 Music Skills

Given the subject specialism of the Music House, I had expected participants to identify their musical learning as a key impact. Everyone recognised that they had learnt a tremendous amount about music.

So much material....songs from every genre....every age, even stuff my gran knew....different cultures, different religions....we were taught to listen to everything and try everything....not that I was always as open to new stuff as I could have been...

I learnt One Love bass line, and that's a fact!

Theory Club was great fun (laughs)

Keys and all that....helped me loads when I performed more and had to transpose to match what other people were playing

....then there was the fun element of just playing music

I was in the orchestra and a choir at Uni....I did the productions there....and I wouldn't have been able to have done any of that....I've played the trombone in Anything Goes and I sang in The Hot Mikado and I did the backstage stuff in Guys and Dolls....whatever I like the sound of like that.

It gave me the broad understanding of music...theory, history, practical, aural....it gave me the basics to hang more knowledge onto I think....things I learnt later made sense because of the framework that I was given in school.

However, in terms of the number of comments and the depth of feeling expressed, music content seems to have been only a part of the impact of the Music House.

So much of what we did in the Music House had an impact on me – I guess my musicianship improved....but that was only part of it....it was more to do with the wider things about me as a person.

We learnt music....maybe we could have picked that up other places too.....gigs, friends, recordings....but the things that made the most difference to me, that really changed me, were the other things...they were the things that made me like I am.

11.2 Personal Development

In the group discussions several people spoke about character and how they felt that the Music House had been instrumental in helping to shape the people they had become.

We all changed for the better....maybe it was always there, but being part of the group meant that we were always our best selves....like looking in from the best side....or always being the best version of yourself. You didn't want to be the one that let everyone down by being mean or rude....we all wanted to be good....and then that kind of made us good.

Being part of the Music House gave me an identity and purpose....which I think has impacted my life in general.

I think being there showed me a selfless approach, where other people came first....maybe before that it was more theoretical, like something they talked about in assemblies....but I don't think I'd seen it kind of working in real life....I felt like people cared....nurtured....it gave me confidence to be like that.

Having someone who sat us down and made us think about situations and what we'd done and how that would affect people was very sobering...it made you look at things from different

perspectives and think about what someone else might feel. I think that was what had most impact on me. I realised that I always have choices about the type of person that I am.

Certainly [I gained] an ability to be myself. It's amazing how many people don't have that. Sometimes they just can't talk to each other.

The shared interest and common goals served to create not only musical opportunities but also opportunities for students to build self-esteem and confidence. Many of the students that I spoke to felt that they had benefitted from taking opportunities to lead sectional rehearsals, work with older and younger students and to be involved in the organisation of schedules, decision-making and the general running of the Music House.

[I gained] people skills, leadership skills.....people [now] look at me as a leader

I think you learn when you're leading something.....it's like the sectionals...when you have to teach someone else what to do, you have to think it through yourself to be able to explain it to them

You brought us up to a more mature state so that we could talk to adults and be able to share ideas.

It gave me the confidence in my musical and performing ability.

The younger ones looked up to you especially when you were in charge of a band or a rehearsal or something...you remember that feeling

There were times when we were in charge of younger students and we learnt how to deal with those scenarios. I took that on into life...organising myself.

Many participants spoke of their self-confidence, which they felt had grown through their time in the Music House.

I think, especially more socially.....I'm quite happy even as an adult to talk to a range of people and I think actually having that from a young age where talking to people older than me and younger than me.....I think probably, whereas I didn't have that when I was younger.....I suppose that happened more as I moved up through the Music House as well.....the confidence I suppose.

[The Music House] gave me the opportunity to do something that I enjoy and which was great fun and having a good time doing that. I think it gave me confidence

It changed who I am.....you gain a great deal of confidence when people show they believe in you... it empowers you and gives you the strength to do what you want to do. I don't think I would have made it through some of the tough times without that inner strength.

I didn't come with a great passion or skill or whatever like that, it was brought out of me. I think it's done me a world of favours for all sorts of things. I don't know if I ever would have been unconfident but I think it's definitely added to my confidence.

11.3 Professional Skills

Student participants identified other skills they'd gained from being in the Music House that they felt had particularly helped them in their adult professional life.

So many people don't listen....I think I learnt to pay attention in the Music House....to care about what people thought....and it really helps me now – when you work with people you get much more out of them, better ideas, better buy-in.

I've been a resident director and a dance captain on shows and that has nothing to do with how good I am at the show, but is just about how well I manage people and how I communicate...and I think that is a lot to do with having to do that in the Music House

When I get ready to pitch an idea I remember the things we did getting ready for a show.....paying attention to every detail, thinking about what the audience experience is, planning it all out so that nothing is left to chance, getting materials ready and back-up materials and back-ups to the back-ups.

In my job I work with some very difficult members of the publicI always try to treat them with respect and give them the time to explain their point of view, and understand what they are saying. I know it's important to be calm and listen, and I learnt that in the Music House, sorting out squabbles with younger ones about keyboards or practice rooms or anything really....I watched how you all dealt with things.....like it was important....because it was I guess to them.

For a number of participants, their current work directly involves the music business, either in performance, support or management.

I think it's why I do what I do now...because I was encouraged to pursue something that wasn't necessarily an academic thing.

I work in the music industry and I can't imagine being anywhere else. Would I be where I am without the Music House? – I am not

sure – you'd like to think the music would win through anyway.....but being part of the group definitely gave me a direction that might have taken me a long time to find in a different life.

I do think the Music House changed my life. Or else I wouldn't be [in my job]. I could be in a job just working to the weekend. I love what I do. I get to be silly on stage every day and I get mad opportunities....I'm working with Ant and Dec, I'm on stage, I'm doing adverts, I'm making a film....that's my job, my life.

I love going to see [a student] on stage – you feel like you may have influenced what they're doing a bit – or when [another student] came to play for a local community day, I felt really proud.

My job is a direct result of being involved in the Music House – I don't think I was ever a star musician...I didn't have the talent of [other students] but you all drew the passion out of me....and I find that it's what I love doing.....I didn't have the strength of character when I was younger....if the Music House hadn't been there I don't know what I would have ended up doing....nothing I loved as much as what I do now, that is for sure.

Many of participants who had not gone on to work with music had continued their interest through bands, choirs and personal practice.

11.4 Lasting Friendships

All of the student participants spoke about how they especially valued the friendships that they had made during their time in the Music House.

There were elements of comradery, community and friendship

Many of my friends are from the Music House years – I hadn't thought of that before – more than from my form group for instance – I think the friendships were much deeper – you know those people will stay with you. I even met up with [a student] a while ago - I hadn't seen him for years and it was like we hadn't been apart – it's like seeing long lost family.

When they thought through all the friends that they had kept from secondary school many realised that most or all of them had come through the Music House.

I hadn't thought about [all friends still in contact with being from Music House]....I suppose I shouldn't be surprised .

I'm in touch with about 20 people from school.....18 are from the Music House...I suppose that's where I made the friends that

mattered, the ones that stay with you, good times and bad....I think they are friends that will always be friends.

The friendships that we made [in the Music House] were genuine....there was no need to pretend....we were close because of the performances too....it's not the same as when you sit next to someone in maths or history lessons....all the extra things you do together in rehearsals or just hanging out are shared things

Several student participants had contacted other 'old boys' from the Music House years after school, at a time that they needed help, either professionally or personally.

I just knew he would help me and he was there straight away.

I called [a student] because I needed someone to accompany me at an audition.....it was important....I needed someone who I trusted

We ran into him when I was depping in a band for someone....it was like old times....we did 3 gigs together....you just slot back into the way it was. He got me quite a bit of work after that.

He was great. He got me a job at the radio station where he was.

When he phoned I knew he was in trouble, but it was easy enough to get it sorted.....and it got us back in touch with each other....I met up with him and [a group of older students] a couple of weeks ago....we had a great catch-up session....we are all working pretty close so I think it'll be a regular thing now.

It is common for groups of ex Music House students to meet up socially and it is great to know that the friendships initially created during their school time have become such established relationships.

11.5 Impact on teachers

As teachers we are so privileged to be able to work with such amazing young people who, despite the fast-changing world that they operate within, continue to impress with their ability to build a better future for everyone. The opportunity to be part of the lives of so many fantastic students is tremendously inspiring. All the teachers that I spoke to recognised the impact that students have on them and the unique qualities of the job.

when you have been teaching a long time you get a new batch of children and you move on....but they leave little marks on you

They make me laugh...what fun would life be without [the students]

...and then you realise that [a student] has changed the way you look at something.....or taught you something new....or made you see a different perspective....it never stops

They are like bags of emotion – happy, sad, angry, defiant, confused, strong.....it's all very raw, very passionate.....and you are in there supporting them, cheering them on, helping them, saving them, sometimes from themselves.....it sounds like a cliché but you really do get to make a difference.

What an amazing job.....why would anyone want to do anything else?

They bring an eternal optimism....they're just starting out....even in their worst times there is hopefulness....such potential waiting to be released

[The students] keep you young

My students have helped to make me into the person I am today, both as a practitioner and as a person. I have not, I admit, enjoyed every minute of it, but I certainly wouldn't swap any part of it. When I sent out messages to let people know that I had decided to look at this research area, the responses were entirely positive. The support that the participants have shown is in large part due to their loyalty and commitment to helping others. They are a fantastic group of people and I feel incredibly lucky to have worked and learnt with them.

11.6 Involvement appreciated

During the interviews and the discussion groups many of the participants expressed gratitude for being part in the Music House. They felt that their lives had been better for their involvement, and this is in itself is a valuable seal of approval.

I think I feel grateful.....forever grateful, that at some point I passed close enough to the Music House to be caught up in that, if you know what I mean?

Thank you. You all did so much for me. The Music House helped me through very tough times. You were there for me when I needed you....which was a lot (laughs)

I think you should be very proud of the Music House and the work that you did. I know that you put a lot of effort in and I value that. It made a big difference to me, personally and that's quite honest.

I am amazingly lucky that I was part of it all....I can never thank you enough for making it like it was. We had great times. I learnt tonnes.

It completely changed my life, who I am, what I do. Thank you.

That, even after twenty years, students feel strongly enough to voice their appreciation and, indeed, be part of this study is a testament to the incredible impact that schools have on young people and how powerfully positive that impact can be.

11.7 Summary

Given the difficulties in identifying the impact that any one element can have on a student's life, participants felt strongly that the impact of the Music House community on them had been considerable. They spoke about the skills and knowledge about the subject that they had learnt but put this within a much wider context of personal development and professional skills that they felt they had gained.

Many of the student participants felt that the Music House had played an important part in shaping their character, through building esteem and sharing responsibility. Their confidence had grown because of the belief that others had shown in them and this had been useful to them both personally and professionally. A number of participants had moved on from school to work in the music business in some way, whilst others still enjoyed music more informally. For all of the participants, friendships that they made in the Music House remained important to them, with many meeting socially, and speaking of times when they had been helped or been able to help other Music House students. Staff too, recognised the impact that their students had on them.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Conclusion - Lessons to Learn: Making a Difference

A Recipe for Success?

This research aimed to consider vision and ethos through the eyes of students and staff involved in a particular school environment by looking at the nature of participants involvement, their understanding of vision, how it was shaped, understood and absorbed, and occasions when values were demonstrated and challenged. I have also considered the legacy impact of the community on individuals. This final chapter aims to review the findings to highlight possible lessons to learn, particularly for leaders within the current educational climate, indicating elements of school life for priority, applicable in any school setting.

12.1 Vision

I started this research with huge questions in my mind about how ethos in schools is created and sustained, the opportunities for distributive leadership and the role of the much championed ‘vision’ as being central to school development. I was sceptical about catch phrases and slogans, which seemed to me often to be empty words and promises of a utopian world. During the process of research, I think I have begun to understand the nature of vision much more clearly. Leaders need to be clear what they are trying to achieve with and for their pupils. For them the ideal for a school may be clear, informed by their own personal and professional identity. Core beliefs inform educational ideals, moral purpose and show the way to school improvement. There is a commonality about the wider goals of schools focusing, as they must, on the well-being, achievement and personal development of students, however every school is different in context and make up and the way that stakeholders work towards achieving their vision. Rules, systems and common sense could allow an establishment to operate effectively in the short term but I am not sure that this would continue to be effective without a sense of direction and purpose, without knowing what it was that needed to be achieved.

It is possible for a vision to remain the same over time, despite changing leadership and educational pressures. In fact, in some cases this may be a necessity. In other circumstances, the vision may need to be modified, updated or redesigned. A school with a specific faith, locality, intake or interest requires a vision that matches their values, in the same way as every school must decide what is most important to them. A vision must be based on what the school community want for the school. A unit within a school, for example for hearing impaired or autistic students, may influence how the school vision is shaped and what importance is given to which elements. Across a school community the vision should be consistent, with an aim for all stakeholders to interpret it in policies, systems and actions in the same way. Part of the impact of the vision comes from us all believing something together. There is much strength in a common focus. Academic qualifications unlock doors to careers and life paths but, for me, there is maybe even more value in the development of moral judgement and core principles that make us the people that we are.

Having shaped the vision, forward progress may initially depend on achieving buy-in from other stakeholders; leaders, parents, governors and students, each of whom may have their own view of how the school should develop. As time progresses the balance will shift towards a more shared understanding and driving of the future of the school. The context of the school may determine the extent to which the wider community can drive the vision, and leaders manage and steer this. Some might feel that this process either increases or diminishes their influence, and it is a very personal aspect of leadership that will determine how leaders go forward. It is of course important that within the school the understanding of the vision spreads and gradually becomes shared; this is not easy to achieve. Stakeholders with a wide range of involvement often have quite different perspectives. Staff, for example, see students pass through the school as the school changes, whilst students and parents see changes as they move up through the school, with views and outlooks that shift as they move.

The ethos or climate of school is the feel of the school at a particular time. It grows from the vision and is the proof of it. The ethos of a school is what is

seen in each action, reaction or decision. It is the reality of the beliefs of the school and is dependant on every person involved, through their thoughts and deeds and their perceptions of the school. Whilst it is difficult to measure ethos there is no doubt that each school has a different 'feel' generated by all components of the school, determined by the school vision. It is not always easy to articulate the vision because of the complexity of elements that make up an effective school, and because of the many viewpoints which must converge in agreement. Words, which can be read and interpreted in so many ways are often open to misinterpretation. More important than the words used to describe the vision is the understanding that those within the community have of it. Words are used to remind and to introduce the dream of the possible future but it is the actions of every person within an organisation that make up the ethos and this is the reality moving towards a world of high consistency with whatever 'vision' is targeted.

It is clear that a common or shared vision can unite and galvanise stakeholders and a well-worded phrase or slogan can make this easier to refer to or to remind everyone of previous discussions. Whatever the words are, they are especially effective for stakeholders if they themselves have been involved in their creation or development. To an outsider these words may appear trite or simplistic, however for members of the school community they can provide a focus for broader and more powerful concepts and principles, acting as a reference point for the underlying foundations of the way that a school will be. I think it would be a mistake to consider the articulation of vision to be just something primarily for outside consumption, like a set of clothes, to show key information about the school to people looking in. For leaders it is important to understand the difference between the vision slogan and the longer viewpoint of the goal vision as an aim for the future. Given the non-stop, day-to-day, immediate nature of school life, it is sometimes possible to lose sight, as a leader, of where you are going. The vision should provide the guiding principles that inform the immediate life of the school and a reference point to ensure that effective decisions are taken.

The individual nature of schools makes it difficult to see how a government could implement a single vision for schools, across the country. Whilst there are clear overarching aims for education nationally, the uniqueness of different schools and the variety in their vision gives students and their parents the opportunity to start to work with the school community that most closely aligns to their own beliefs and aspirations.

Central policy changes affect the development of curriculum and targets of every maintained school and academy. By changing the criteria of success and influencing content in this way, the components that make up the school are altered. This outside interference, by default, changes if not the vision of schools, then certainly their development towards the vision. Despite possible gains in consistency across schools I think we need to champion the individual approach and recognise the strength of school vision.

Given recent changes in educational policy, the government vision for the future does not seem to align well with the majority of school visions. The restrictions of funding both in education and other frontline services puts a tremendous pressure on social systems, already under burden from changing attitudes, technology and a rise in violence. Schools are at the forefront of supporting students and their families. The current crisis of funding is causing unparalleled staffing cuts and this can only reduce the impact that a school can have.

12.2 Leadership

The role of leadership has changed radically over the past 20 years. Leaders must now provide or oversee a wide range of issues, both educational and business based. They are responsible for accounts, premises, marketing, funding and for liaison with all outside agencies and partners; the responsibility is enormous. Schools and academies run as individual businesses or as a part of federation sections of a business. There is much in this study to support the potential of a distributive model of leadership, not for only idealistic reasons, but also because of the pressure and breadth of work at this level.

During this research I have become increasingly aware of the strength of distributed leadership with leaders at all levels, including students, empowered to make decisions based on the vision and values as a foundation. A team can have a range of expertise and viewpoints between them and, whilst an ultimate responsibility remains with the Headteacher or Principal, the scope of work can be much wider through involving a team. By sharing responsibility between stakeholders at all levels the sense of belonging and shared ownership can only be increased. This must, however, be aligned with a shared vision and within a collaborative ethos in school, but allows for all parties, including students, staff, parents and middle leaders to be part of the development and progress of the school.

The research title of ‘Learning in Harmony’, reflects the musical nature of the research setting and the fundamental belief of the Music House of working together, supporting and complementing each other, in many ways like a musical ensemble. Much the same is true of schools, where every part is important and harmony can only be experienced when all contributors are aligned. Many parallels can be drawn between music and leadership. Just as a section is a complete, but not independent, musical idea, my vision of leadership has been affirmed by descriptions of the Music House being shared and collaborative: ‘it felt like we were the team’.

12.3 Key Areas to build Ethos

This research set out to explore vision, how it can determine ethos, and what can make a shared and visible belief. It considered retrospective narratives of students and staff from a Music House that acted as a separated community within a school, with a view to highlighting possible lessons to learn for leaders within the current educational climate. The reflections of a group of people in one specific context cannot, of course, be examined as comments on every educational situation. They do however, bring a number of broad areas for consideration within a context of school improvement and particularly give us a student perspective, with an adult articulation, of things that they felt were important in the creation of ethos as they went through their school years. Their

experiences allow us to better understand possible priorities for future decision making.

The research findings, grouped under headings of relationships, safety and opportunities have been presented to show the viewpoints of individual participants, each with their own perspective. Given this, there was a great deal of consensus about the important aspects of school. Relatively little of the research material was linked to academic outcomes or achievement. That is, of course, not to say that outcomes are unimportant; they open doors to future opportunities, but for these participants, who have gone on into adult life with different ideas and through different pathways, priorities centred much more around how they felt about themselves and others, and how this ethos could be created for every student.

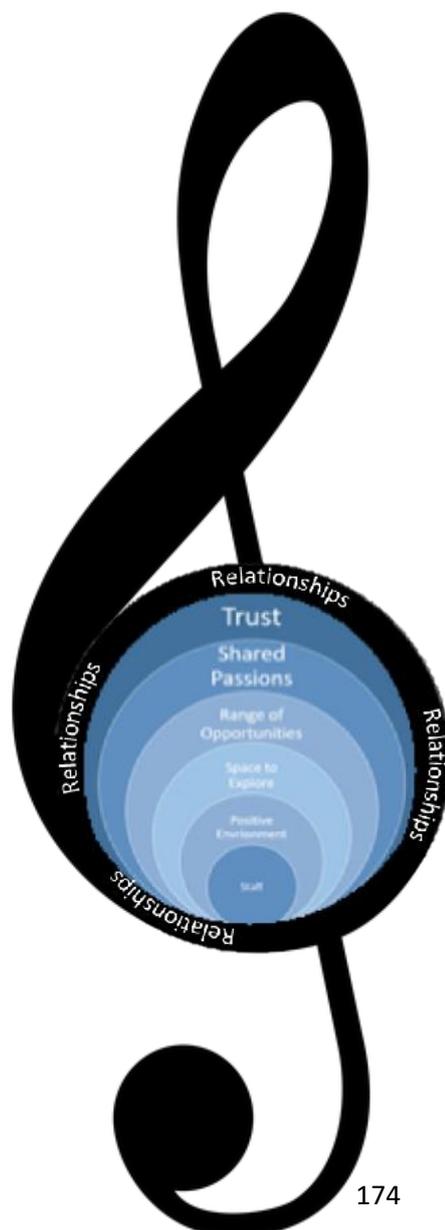


Figure 12.1:
Key Elements for Impact

The participants spoke freely in the interviews and group discussions about elements that they felt were key to creating a positive school ethos, which could underpin student security and well-being, enabling effective learning. These can be broadly summarised as key elements, or recipe ingredients: trust, shared passions, a range of opportunities, space to explore, positive environment and staff. The case study evidence suggests that the development of relationships is particularly central to impact.

Inevitably, there is considerable overlap, cross-pollination and interdependency between the six elements and for some schools it may be that these need to be grouped or considered in a different order or combination.

12.4 The Elements

In music, trust allows a higher level of performance through a shared understanding and direction. It grows from working together, from knowing each other and being able to be sure that someone can be relied upon. In ensemble work we act as one, breathing, counting and making music together, but this can only happen through a level of trust which allows individual contributors to understand that they are part of a group and that they act as one. In leadership terms we must build the systems, policies, structures and relationships to give stakeholders a complete faith in the school. In the same way as a music ensemble shows a unity in its performance, so a school community demonstrates its ethos through its display of the beliefs and values of the school.

The trust between staff and students, and between members of staff, is incredibly important to establish. It allows people to feel safe with each other and to be ready to listen to other points of view, knowing that these come with shared best interests at heart. For relationships to blossom we must seek ways to build up trust and this can be a long-term business. In many ways it is dependent on the other elements that have been identified, because through them children gradually are able to believe that they can rely on the school staff who are working with them.

Trusting children to make decisions, take on responsibility and to lead on development is part of this and relies heavily on the professional judgement of staff. Our students have incredible talent and potential and it is up to us as educators to help them realise that. The capacity of students to work to support both younger and older students is immense, and encouraging these relationships allows students to watch out for each other and to learn from each other, promoting a family feel, even if that is not articulated. In the current social context it is essential that all children can have faith in the relationships that they build at school, as they may not have this luxury elsewhere. Knowing that staff will be there for them, with an open door and a listening ear shows students that they are cared for. Adult integrity is crucial to this as staff have to be the main driver of building trust with their students, although clearly there are benefits for both parties in a trust well-established.

In the Music House, music was, unsurprisingly, a huge passion. It motivated people, gave them a topic to discuss and find out about. Music skills and interests could be explored and shared, and with such a wealth of available resources, recorded, written and live, there was never a possibility of running out of things to learn. Both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities were structured to develop skills and teamwork and the constant programme of performances gave clear, shared goals. The shared passions of both students and staff brought the team closer, increasing their time together and presenting opportunities for them to support and care for each other. Whilst appreciating the strengths of our shared passion for music, many participants felt that the subject of the passion was in some ways irrelevant. They were able to see possibilities in many subject areas and also in broader humanist areas of volunteering, raising money for charity or developing better community services, in or out of school. The felt that core to any group needed to be the belief and passion of both staff and students, which would support them working together over time, developing relationships, enjoying each others company and pulling together.

For a school to provide a range of opportunities appears, on the surface, to be the most straightforward of the areas to implement. Participants generally felt

that the wide range of opportunities, in this case centred on music, had both encouraged them to be part of the Music House and helped to ignite their passions. Staff provided structured ensembles covering a variety of genres and student combinations which allowed musicians of all standards to find combinations of activities that would both improve their musical knowledge and skills, but also broaden their understanding. In a climate where the arts are being eroded it is my conviction that the arts, such as music, have an enormous contribution to make to school vision and leadership.

Staff should consider how to best achieve a range of opportunities and how to ensure that these opportunities are of high quality and will provide a positive experience that both staff and students can share. Having created opportunities for students it is important that they are hooked in by wanting to be part of the group and enjoying the experience when they are there. 'There's a shift in dynamic if you are saying well I'm coming here out of my own choice'. Mandatory opportunities may encourage good learning and may be thoroughly enjoyed, but might not necessarily result in the same commitment; this is largely a challenge best met by the highest quality teaching and learning in the classroom, which inspires students to be fully involved. It is for leaders to ensure that high quality provision reaches every part of the school, providing the intrinsic motivation that both staff and students need. Great music is often the result of chance. Allowing musicians the freedom to improvise and creating the space for this to happen can remove barriers and open possibilities. Students value being 'given freedom and time to mess about with stuff and figure it out'. It is incumbent on leaders to establish the right conditions to support freedom of expression and creativity. This is especially true both in terms of teaching and learning and for emotional security. 'Nothing will happen if it's wrong – it's just part of learning'.

Participants felt that there was a great benefit to the Music House being slightly separate from the main body of the school, creating a clearly different area. Whilst this advantage is unlikely to be available to most departments in a school, there could be gain in thinking through how space is used and defined.

Student participants felt that ownership or responsibility for a room increased the sense of belonging and encouraged them to take responsibility for their space.

In addition to physical space to explore, participants also spoke about the teaching approach both in class and in extra-curricular activities, of having time to experiment and to share ideas. Linked with this is also the opportunities for students to have the space to take learning risks and to try out theories, often building their confidence towards discussing or playing music with others, perhaps outside of their friendship group. Having a safe place to be, allows students to explore their feelings and to have time to consider experiences and emotions. As young adults in a changing world this can be very important. 'In the Music House there was that space'. This emotional space gives students the opportunity to make decisions about the way that they want to act and to think through their behaviours and reactions.

Students must be safe and feel safe in school. This is wider than physical safety, although that of course is essential. Students need to feel secure in asking for help, expressing their opinions and taking risks in their learning. They must feel valued, as must staff. Creating this environment depends on everyone being ready to make it a priority. Staff in this research acknowledged the pleasures of working with young adults and it is important that students know this about their teachers, and that staff understand the impact of their positive relationships with students. Whilst boundaries can be restrictive and frustrating for students and staff, they can also be helpful and liberating. The qualities seen in the subject area of music such as teamwork, opportunities and creativity are not limited to the arts and lend themselves to the development and support across the school of a positive community ethos. Involvement and leadership in all parts of the school and for all stakeholders can only increase the positive feel of the school. A positive and nurturing environment can provide a haven for students and participants valued that care seemed to take precedence over subject progress. They knew that they would be taken seriously and listened to. For students to be supported to build the strategies to deal with problems as they arise, ensures their improving well-being.

As with all music, much depends of the calibre and skill of the musicians involved, their passion and commitment to the music evident in the outcome. At the core of effective education are a team of highly professional staff, who show the same passion and commitment to the well-being and success of their students. Absolutely central to school effectiveness are the staff who work with our young people. In my experience, people who choose to work in schools do so because they care about what they are doing and believe passionately in the potential of our students. I am proud to be currently part of an inclusive and exciting north London school, and I know the time and energy that staff put into creating the very best caring, supportive, learning community. Our students do not all have the easiest of starting points, but staff work tirelessly with them as part of a thriving school community. Education is not the profession to enter if you are looking for quick money or an easy life. The rewards are huge; there is no other profession with such high potential impact and opportunity to shape those who will make the future. However, sadly those rewards are accompanied by challenges and especially in today's muddled educational climate, and with the pressures incumbent upon our staff and young people. So much is reliant on the staff that work in our schools.

The attraction and retention of staff who have the skills, the personality and the passion to work with our young people is an essential part of school leadership. Creating and sustaining an environment where students feel safe and valued, and where they are all able to grow in confidence and aspire to achieve, takes time and commitment from staff. The relationships between students and staff in all combinations are crucial to building the trust needed. This must be seen in every conversation and every action. There must be an honesty and a shared commitment to supporting each other, and whilst we all know that there are times when patience is tested, remaining calm and fair and respectful is essential, no matter what the circumstance. Of course, there will always be differing opinions about the best routes to take, especially within the current educational climate with all of its pressures, but as long as we all have faith that those in the discussion have the best interests of the students at the heart then debate is healthy and productive.

12.5 Is music different?

Music has many unique qualities. We ‘experience’ music. We can have a completely personal reaction to music that is not only largely unseen but also cannot be disputed or judged, because it is our reaction. Music is tremendously powerful. It can change, intensify or control what we are thinking. For everyone, either explicitly or in the background, music is the soundtrack to our lives. It is often interlaced with our most intense memories, and can trigger intense reactions.

Music is personal, but can be intensely unifying and creates endless opportunities to share emotions and emotional journeys. Music can be liberating. A musical response can take any form and is not necessarily limited by inexperience or lack of skills. It brings people together on an equal footing. For children to be able to work on music as equals with experts is very special. A piece of music can evoke different feelings in each person that is hearing it yet still bring them together. The organisation of sound can be incredibly powerful – sometimes through design, sometimes unexpectedly. Music can bring about the whole range of emotional reaction – it can excite, empower, inspire, amuse, remind, upset or anger. The impact is rarely completely in line with intention, but this is a strength. Every musical involvement is unique and may not be replicable. Each connection is different for each individual. This makes every musical moment exclusive.

Music connects through emotion as well as on an intellectual or physical level. In the classroom, the direct line to emotions through music can be very potent. In secondary education in particular, students are undergoing huge changes and the teenage years can present an emotional rollercoaster for many. Children often find a way to communicate in music these very personal expressions which might otherwise be difficult to explain. As we look at how schools can support our young people through these turbulent times, and in today's pressurised context, music can provide a nourishing and open medium to work within as well as a creative, expressive and intellectual outlet.

Student autonomy and independence of spirit was picked up as being important by many of the participants. This equity between staff and students working together with an equal responsibility is not easily created in our current education system, with us often relying on systems of enormous hierarchy. In this context it is not always easy to give autonomy to students, and perhaps we should consider how much easier it is to do this within the arts. Given the passion that participants have shown about their time in the Music House, there is no doubt that the experience of working equally together in music has been incredibly important to them. Given the opportunities available within the arts it is even more distressing then that this area is being so effectively eroded by curriculum direction from central government. Neglect of the arts at primary level is common with music becoming more of a privilege than a curriculum entitlement. Sometimes arts are covered only in a special 'arts week' held after Standardised Assessment Tests (SAT) with a perception that music, art, dance and drama are not even in the curriculum. The arts are not an 'add on'; they are a vital part of personal development and preparation for adult life.

12. 6 Utopian paradise?

In considering this research, readers might feel that everything always went well within the Music House. Certainly as the participants have described their time there, a degree of rose-tinted viewpoint has prevailed. For many I think this is because the overriding impression on them has been positive and we are all prone to remember the very best of good experiences. I know that life in the Music House was not always a utopian paradise. I remember being frustrated when the school leadership team demanded above what we felt was reasonable and how utterly disappointed staff were when we found that students had behaved poorly or had failed to live up to our shared expectations. Errors of judgement in dealing with an emotive issue or hindsight which revealed mistakes of approach weighed heavily on us because of the impact that we knew we were having.

With complete commitment to the Music House came a sometimes blinkered viewpoint. Small failures and set-backs could take on an importance that was

disproportionate because of our investment in each other and in the Music House. Negative remarks or actions could be blown into huge storms or brooding sulks because of the intense passion that we all felt. Maybe these are just the natural emotions of a family – I think that is how we all felt about our community – with huge devotion and allegiance comes responsibility and liabilities. On my part I wouldn't have wanted to swap to an easier, but less committed position and I think this research would indicate that many of the participants felt the same.

Looking at this research, it may feel as if our Music House community was a particularly special group of people. Whilst I love them all dearly, I don't believe this is the case. Teachers all over the world are working with each other and with their pupils to enrich and improve experiences and help them as they grow into our leaders, communities and teachers of the future. Music brings special qualities to working together and to education, but it is the relationships that are built between staff and students that underpin the development of trust and values that underpin effective learning in its widest sense.

Given this centrality of relationships, leaders might consider an organisation of the curriculum around themes of care. In an ideal world perhaps this would be effective, but in practical terms the UK system provides an enormous number of constraints, both on terms of policy and required outcome. My experience shows that a focus on relationships within a more traditional setting does work - both in the Music House and now applied across a whole school.

12.7 Final Thoughts

School leaders are the conductors of the music. They must understand all the performers and parts and how to combine these to make a harmonious performance. The articulation of vision is a way to explain the way forward, to outline the goal. It is a direction for people to believe in and with that belief, based on the shared values, the ethos of the school is realised. In many ways the ethos remains nebulous; it can change over a single incident or decision and never stops evolving. It may be described in different ways, but can be seen in the policy and practice of every part of the school. Each interaction between staff and students, or parents and staff, or student and governor reveals the

ethos. The values, which underlie both the vision and the ethos, cannot just be branded or talked about, they must become a way of living, being demonstrated in all aspects of the community.

My research has deliberately given voice to those who all-too rarely contribute to conceptions of educational vision; the students themselves. Based on their priorities, the findings suggest school vision could be composed of very different qualities than suggested by government leadership models. The rich data of the research highlight a different set of priorities, which put the student very much at the centre of education.

Students need a safe and supportive positive environment to flourish. We must do all we can to counteract the enormous pressures that students face in a modern world, giving them the positive relationships which will allow them to mature and develop. We must nurture and care for them, and create opportunities for them to take responsibility, so that they can develop the confidence to each be the person that they want to be.

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APPENDIX 1: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. Study title

Learning in Harmony: A case study of a school Music House to explore lessons for leadership

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This is a study which aims to consider accounts of students and teachers who were part of the Music House at FCHS 1990 – 2000 to inform an exploration of school leadership ideas.

The key research questions are:

- *How do students and staff influence the factors that shape the values and development of a school community?*
- *What is the role of leadership in this development of a school community?*
- *How does a distributed leadership approach impact on the engagement of students and staff in the shaping of personal values and sense of community in school?*
- *What is the long term impact of involvement of this kind for those involved?*
- *Which policies are effective in promoting a shared ownership of the values and vision of a school and how could policy be further developed in this area?*

The main aim of the study is a pragmatic, practical one; to gather evidence with a view to making recommendations which will impact positively on the development of school leadership.

The research will be carried out using a mixture of focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires using students and teachers involved with the Music House at FCHS 1990 – 2005.

4. Why have I been chosen?

I have identified you because you were a student or teacher or trainee involved with the Music House at FCHS between 1990 – 2005 or are someone with a direct interest in school community or leadership and I feel that you have the potential to make a valuable contribution to this research project.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What do I have to do?

You will be asked to sign a consent form before participating in the study.

- You may be invited to complete a questionnaire. You may answer the questionnaire anonymously or may give your name.
- You may also be invited to take part in a follow-up, semi-structured interview of approximately 30-45 minutes in a quiet location. The interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher, whose confidentiality can be assured.
- You may be asked to participate in a focus group which will be around 45 minutes in length. The focus group will be made of four to six people and will also be conducted in a quiet location.

7. What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

Your participation in this research will help me to gain a broader perspective on the way students and staff influence and are influenced by a school community. I will be looking at roles and influences in the Music House and the impact of ways of working to gain insight into the effectiveness of a distributed leadership model.

8. Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

There may be a small risk of emotional distress involved in discussing these issues. You are free to withdraw at any point. If you feel you would be happier contributing on a written basis, you are free to choose this option. It is my duty as researcher to ensure, to best of my ability, the well-being and security of all participants.

9. Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project?

Rhona Povey: poveyr@hendonschool.co.uk 020 8202 9004

10. What happens if you change your mind and want to withdraw?

If you feel that after taking part you no longer wish to be part of the research and wish to withdraw your data from the interview aspects of the research then please contact me by email to withdraw from the project. I will acknowledge and respect your decision without asking any questions or asking you to justify your decision. If you do wish to withdraw your data then please let me know by 1 September 2016. After this date analysis of the data will have started and it will be difficult to extract individual ideas. If you have completed an anonymous questionnaire, it will be more difficult to withdraw your contribution as you will not have been identified directly.

11. What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

I will maintain confidentiality throughout this research. If you participate in the interviews I will not identify you by name, but use a pseudonym. I will not use information which will identify you. The transcripts will be numbered and kept on a password protected computer separate from the research data. Any paper copies will be kept in a secure place. You can indicate on the Consent form if you wish to receive a summary of the research findings. I can send this to you via email.

12. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is used will have your name removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. All data will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the Data Protection Legislation of the UK. The findings of the study will be used in my final doctoral thesis and will, I hope, provide examples and reflections to inform at local, and ideally national, level.

14. Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by the Middlesex University, School of Health and Education, Health and Social Care Ethics Subcommittee.

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX 2: Consent Form

Participant Identification Number:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Learning in Harmony

Name of Researcher: Rhona Povey

Please initial each point

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated June 2016 for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that interviews and focus group discussions may be taped and subsequently transcribed

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

5. I agree that this form that bears my name and signature may be seen by a designated auditor.

Please tick here if you would like to see a copy of the research summary

Name of participant

Date

Signature



APPENDIX 3: Initial Questionnaire (student)

Participant Identification Number:

Learning in Harmony

Initial Questionnaire – (Former Student)

Please complete this questionnaire anonymously if you would prefer to do so.

Name:	DOB:	Contact Telephone:
1. How were you involved with the FCHS Music House?		
2. What five words best describe the atmosphere in the Music House?		
3. What is your clearest memory from your times with the Music House?		
4. What did you like best about being part of the Music House?		

<p>5. What did you like least about being part of the Music House?</p>
<p>6. How did being part of the Music House affect your life at school?</p>
<p>7. Are there any ways that the Music House could have supported you and/or your learning in a better way?</p>
<p>8. Do you think being part of the Music House changed you in any way?</p>
<p>9. Do you have any regrets about your involvement with the Music House?</p>
<p>10. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not at all and 10 being incredibly, and taking everything into consideration how happy are you that you were involved with the Music House? Please ring a number.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>

If there is anything further that you would like to add please write on the back of this sheet.

My thanks for your time and participation.

APPENDIX 4: Initial Questionnaire (adult)

Participant Identification Number:

Learning in Harmony

Initial Questionnaire (Adults)

Please complete this questionnaire anonymously if you would prefer to do so.

Name:	DOB:	Contact Telephone:
<p>1. How were you involved with the FCHS Music House?</p>		
<p>2. What five words best describe the atmosphere in the Music House?</p>		
<p>3. What is your clearest memory from your times in the Music House?</p>		
<p>4. How would you describe relationships in the Music House?</p>		
<p>5. How were students involved in decision making in the Music House?</p>		

<p>6. How were you involved in decision making in the Music House?</p>
<p>7. What do you think is the recipe for a successful learning community? (ie what are the components?)</p>
<p>8. Do you think that the nature of working with and through music, changes the relationship between students, and between staff and students who are involved? If so, how?</p>
<p>9. What part (if any) did involvement in the Music House Community play in your own professional development?</p>
<p>10. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not at all and 10 being incredibly, and taking everything into consideration how happy are you that you were involved with the Music House Community? Please ring a number.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>

If there is anything further that you would like to add please write on a separate sheet.

My thanks for your time and participation.

APPENDIX 5: Interview Framework

Name Form Group Date joined FCHS Date left FCHS

1. INVOLVEMENT

Can you describe how you were involved with the Music House?

- a. How did you first become involved?
 - i. What were your first impressions of the Music House?
 - ii. What did you think of the Music House before you got involved?
 - iii. Why did you get involved?
- b. Did your involvement change as you went through school? If so how?
- c. Did you enjoy being part of the Music House?
- d. How long did you stay part of the Music House? Why leave?
- e. How do you think other students felt about you being in the Music House?

2. MEMORIES

What was the Music House like?

- a. What are your clearest memories?
- b. ? Reminders –photos, magazines, production programmes?
- c. Did you like everyone in the Music House?
- d. Were you part of any concerts/productions/tours?
- e. Were there any events linked with the Music House that you didn't enjoy?

**Safe haven
Heirachy
Fairness*

3. VALUES and ETHOS

What do you think was the ethos of the Music House?

- a. Was the Music House a happy place to be?
- b. Were there rules in the Music House?
 - i. How did you know what was ok or not?
 - ii. Who made the rules?
 - iii. Did you/anyone else ever do anything wrong? What happened?
- c. What were the similarities/differences to the ethos of the rest of the school?

**Family
Relationships
Boundaries*

**Creating
Changing
Purpose*

4. IMPACT

What was the impact?

- a. Do you think being part of the Music House made a difference to you?
 - i. In school?
 - ii. Out of school?
 - iii. Later in life?
- b. What is your ethos now? – same in life/career/family?
- c. Are you still in touch with anyone from the school/Music House?

5. OTHER THOUGHTS?

** additional notes added during interview process*