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**Breaktime Matters: an
investigation into the
management of school playtimes
of children aged 4-11 years**

**A thesis submitted to Middlesex University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Breaktime Matters: an investigation into the management of school playtimes of children aged 4-11 years

Abstract

This investigation appraises the context, developments and process of change in primary school breaktimes. The inquiry assesses how schools are dealing with innovation in this domain and evaluates the effectiveness of outcomes. A theoretical perspective to underpin the research is derived from literature relevant to the field of study. The investigation is located within the bounds of one Local Education Authority (LEA). A largely qualitative inquiry has been completed in four separate but interlinked stages. At the second stage a questionnaire survey was distributed to all primary sector headteachers in the borough concerned.

One infant school formed the basis of a long-term in-depth case study. Additional data came from both the link junior school and the most recently opened primary school within the LEA. Further evidence was obtained via six small-scale case studies involving schools identifying good practice in the area under review. Multiple methods of data collection included direct observations at all relevant sites plus interviews with headteachers and samples of staff, midday supervisors, pupils and parents. Photographic and documentary evidence were also obtained. Reflections on action for improvement in the main focus school completed the inquiry at the final stage. Concepts obtained from educational management literature were additionally used for the data analysis.

This study enabled the production of fresh insights into numerous issues of concern. These include: the impact on breaktimes of campus facilities; the appraisal of recent innovations such as zoned playground regions and pupils' social support systems; difficulties arising from climatic conditions; playtime induction; and human resource management in respect of breaktime supervision, together with significant changes to the supervisory role. This results in an inquiry which takes into account a number of under-explored elements and leads to new knowledge in this domain. It is concluded that a constellation of factors contribute to the effective management of change in primary school breaktimes and that the individuality of schools is an important feature affecting favourable outcomes. Recommendations, emanating from the evidence presented, are made for further research and future practice.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Investigation

Introduction to Primary School Breaktimes

This study stems from the researcher's own involvement in school breaktimes while working for many years as a teacher in the primary sector. Until comparatively recently primary school breaktimes were of little interest to educational researchers. Playground life had simply become an inevitable and accepted feature of each school day. Breaktime (also called playtime or recess) has been defined as 'a recreational break period for children [which is] typically outdoors and typically compulsory' (Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000, p.57). Moreover, most British schools have a morning break, a midday break and often an afternoon break as well. It is further acknowledged that the amount of time children spend outside forms a considerable part of the school day.

Revealingly, it has previously been calculated that infant children (4-7 years) spend an average of 93 minutes at break (24 per cent of the school day), while junior children (8-11 years) have a total average daily breaktime of 83 minutes (21 per cent of the school day) (Blatchford, 1998). Furthermore, the play area itself represents a substantial section of the overall school landscape. In addition, breaktime is judged to be an important feature of each child's social experience. Playtime is said to provide 'a world in microcosm; a unique world which grown-ups soon forget' (Smith, 1994b, p.36). All of this leads Blatchford (1998, p.3) to describe breaktime as highly 'significant'. Nonetheless, it has been stated that breaktime epitomises a long neglected area which has only latterly captured the attention of analysts.

An elaborate picture emerges in respect of the many ingredients that determine the overall quality of primary playtimes (Lucas, 1994; Lewis, 1998). According to Docking (1996, p.122), breaktimes are affected not only by the children themselves, but also by various elements in the system, which he

identifies as 'the playground supervisors, the space available, the facilities for play, the design of the playground, and the customs, rules and sanctions'. Accordingly, numerous investigations have now taken place into diverse playground issues. There is a general conclusion that reform has long been overdue. As a consequence, schools have made substantial changes in recent years and Thomson (2003) claims that playtime is now a far from forgotten part of the school day.

The Purpose of this Study

At the inception of the study, school staff at the main focus school (where the researcher was employed) were seriously concerned about the pupils' behaviour in the playground. This led to a consideration of how circumstances could be developed to make breaktime a more pleasant experience for all concerned. In turn this led to the formulation of the central research question:

What is the existing situation relating to primary sector breaktimes, what changes have been made and to what effect, and how can practice be further improved?

Main Aims of the Investigation

- To critically examine existing approaches to the management of breaktimes in the primary sector in one London borough with further reference to innovations to practice, and their effect, in a sample of schools.
- To employ concepts from breaktime and other relevant literature as a framework for the investigation.
- To employ a largely qualitative methodology to investigate primary playground experiences from a variety of viewpoints and to make appropriate suggestions for the enhancement of existing policy and practice.

- To contribute knowledge to the ongoing debate concerning the need for improvement in primary school breaktimes.

Research Questions

The following broad research questions were subsequently identified:

- 1) What changes have schools within the borough recently been making to breaktime practice?
- 2) With regard to the focus schools, how do campus facilities and the cultural context of the school impact on breaktime practice?
- 3) What breaktime provision and resources are currently available?
- 4) How do the focus schools finance changes to breaktime practice?
- 5) How are breaktimes currently structured?
- 6) What policies do schools have relating to breaktimes?
- 7) How is playtime induction managed at the transition stages (pre-school to infant and infant to junior)?
- 8) Do schools experience problems with indoor breaktimes?
- 9) What are parental attitudes towards breaktimes in the focus schools?
- 10) In the focus schools, what are pupils' playground experiences and behaviour?
- 11) What social support systems are now provided in regard to the perceived needs of pupils?
- 12) In the focus schools, what are pupils' attitudes, perceptions and wants in relation to breaktimes?
- 13) How are breaktimes and lunchtime playtimes supervised and what is the supervisory role?
- 14) What are the attitudes, perceptions and needs of those who supervise both breaktimes and the midday session?
- 15) How can breaktime practice be further improved?

Significance of the Study

Increasingly, attention has been focused on children's behaviour in the outdoor school environment. Following a government inquiry into discipline

(Elton, 1989) it was stressed that 'much disruptive behaviour has its origins, and finds expression, in the playground' (Blatchford, 1989, p.30). Racism, name-calling, bullying and fighting have been identified among the aggressive behaviour which has been found at breaktime (Tizard *et al*, 1988). Moreover, personal experience confirms adults can spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the aftermath of poor conduct. While accepting that school playgrounds can be an ideal place for children's social learning (Sluckin, 1981, 1987; Smith, 1994b; Kelly, 1994), it is said that a peer culture exists, which may not be in harmony with the general school climate and may even serve to undermine it. Faulkner (1995) reasons that, because the breaktime culture is child-governed, adults are mainly excluded and therefore teacher-initiated attempts at playground improvement might prove difficult.

It has been judged that breaktime is valued mainly because of its historical roots as an activity which enables children to 'let off steam' following the formal classroom learning situation (Blatchford, 1989, p.5). As such, it is largely taken for granted that each school will have an outside play space. Much of this land consists of tarmac, although many schools nowadays also have grass areas. Traditionally, the playground has been a barren, rectangular patch which leads Blatchford (1989, p.7) to comment on the 'visual impoverishment' of this territory. Such large expanses stem from conventional ideas of having exercise yards for pupils (Hendricks, 2001). Furthermore, any playground equipment has customarily been supplied, not only for the benefit of children's physical development, but also to encourage children 'to use their excess energy' prior to going back indoors (Hendricks, *op cit*, p.38). Sadly, it has recently been reasoned that playgrounds have changed little over the last half-century, or so (Rigby, 1997).

Those schools undertaking playground improvements, however, have faced substantial financial considerations. With the arrival of local management of schools (LMS) in the 1988 Education Reform Act, educational institutions have acquired the opportunity to deploy funding as appropriate to perceived needs (Oldroyd and Hall, 1991). Naturally, this includes the school campus. Decisions about school grounds which were previously the domain of the

Local Education Authority (LEA) have subsequently become the responsibility of governors and staff and this has led to the sale of some school playing fields. Regardless of any environmental developments, concerns have also been expressed that schools have latterly been reducing the amount of time that pupils spend outside at play (Blatchford, 1998; Lindon, 2001a; Sturrock and Else, 2002). Lindon (2001a, pp.174-175) maintains such reductions are due to primary school teams being placed under pressure to produce educational outcomes and so, 'The objective has been to increase contact during classroom time' because, 'Playtime for children is seen effectively as lost time, as optional recreation rather than purposeful and valued learning'.

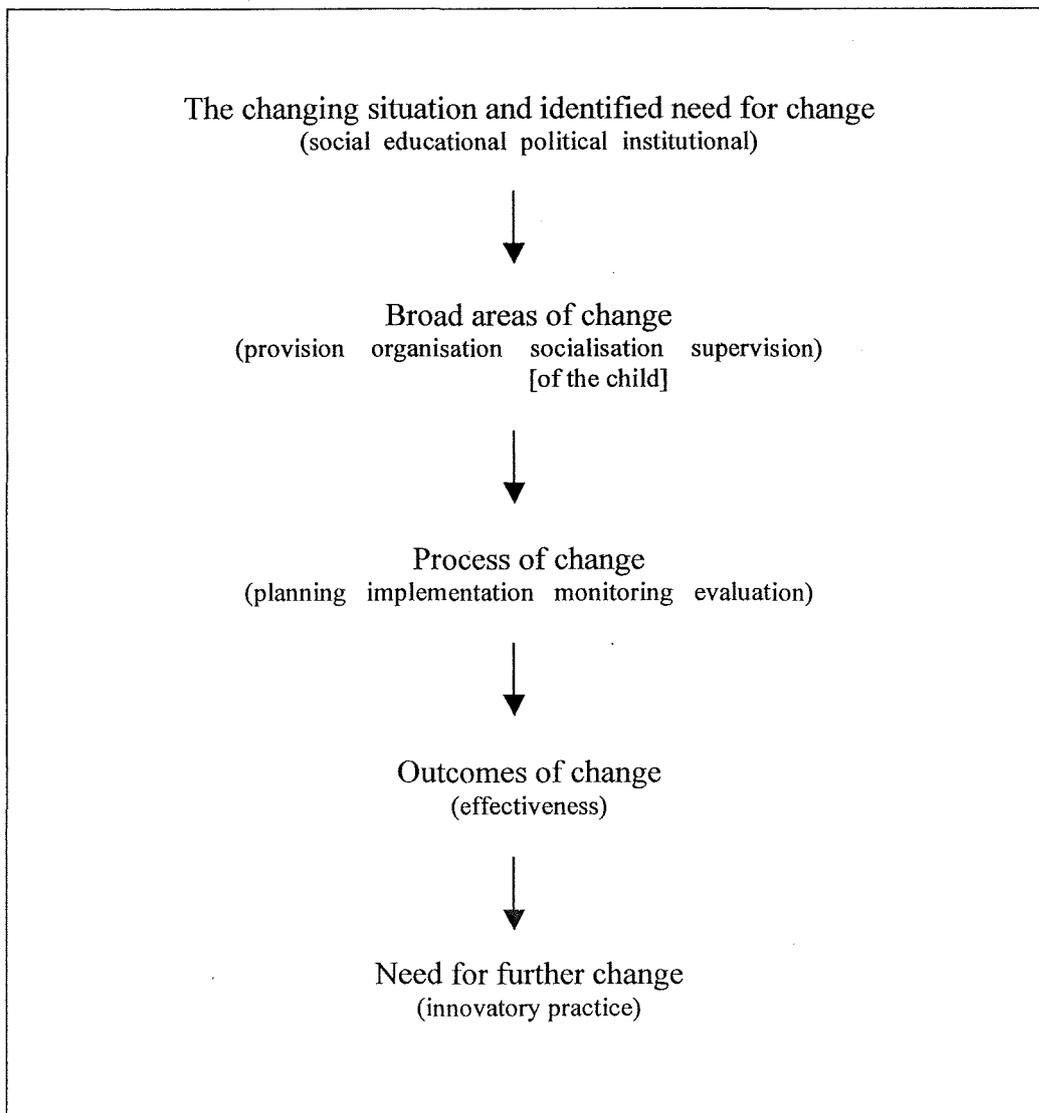
There is additional disquiet that if children are forced into a structured curriculum too early and additionally experience an environment which is increasingly indoors (because of social fears) then there is a real danger of shutting down what Sturrock and Else (2002) call the 'playdrive'. Blatchford (1998) states that schools have been shortening playtime, not only from the need to maximise time for academic subjects, but also to curtail any behaviour problems occurring during break. It is judged that one side effect of this is the consequential loss of time in which pupils are free to interact socially with their peers. In turn, this impacts upon pupils' opportunities to develop both friendships and social skills such as 'cooperation, reciprocity, [and] effective conflict management' (Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000, p.34).

The Research

If breaktimes are to continue to improve then it is argued that what is needed is a ' "holistic" approach interlinking aspects, rather than separate initiatives begun in isolation' (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994, p.189). The current study thus seeks to take full account of the many interrelated factors concerned (initial mind mapping can be found in Appendix 1). A decade ago, however, Blatchford and Sharp (1994, p.1) suggested that, due to progress in this area, 'one person would be greatly stretched' to provide an account of all relevant

issues. In spite of this assertion, there is an ambitious intention of producing a comprehensive examination of the evolving situation. This serves to locate the research firmly within the bounds of breaktime reform. Of fundamental importance to the present investigation, therefore, is the concept of change in this domain (Figure 1.1). It is this particular characteristic which augments the framework for the data analysis. Nevertheless, it is accepted that change is a complicated matter (Fullan, 1991, 1992, 2001a, 2001b).

Figure 1.1 Developments in primary breaktimes



Methods

The inquiry generally takes a case study approach, endorsing Fullan's (1992, p.110) view that, 'Intrinsic dilemmas in the change process, coupled with the intractability of some factors and the uniqueness of settings make successful change a highly complex and subtle social process'. Multiple case studies (one in-depth and six small-scale) in a sample of schools form the basis of this project. Yin (1994b, p.149) maintains that:

The same study may contain more than a single case ... A common example is a study of school innovations, in which independent innovations occur at different sites ... The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust.

A questionnaire survey has also been used. Analysis throughout this project is multi-layered covering the raft of issues given in Appendix 1. Marshall (1997, p.95) notes that 'knowledge is always complex and multi-layered [and so] this task may be a considerable one'. At various junctures evaluations are made relating to schools across the borough. Additionally, there is intra-school appraisal of each site visited plus inter-school debate involving the group of focus schools. Moreover, there is a broader application of salient issues to primary schools in the wider context.

The Investigation

The initial inquiry necessitated a detailed analysis of current practice in a selection of schools in the primary sector in one Local Education Authority, including:

- the historical and cultural contexts
- why changes have been made
- limitations due to the physical situation
- children's and parents' views on playtimes
- the perceptions of staff at various levels in the hierarchy.

Subsequently, development linked to the above expands to embrace the following:

- analysis of the process of change in primary playtimes in order to develop new knowledge in this domain.
- evaluations of the perceived effectiveness of changes made.
- recommendations for improvements in practice and procedures for effective implementation, stemming from an evaluation of innovative practice in a variety of schools.
- guidance to enable school managements to evolve a policy for playtimes.
- suggestions for appropriate human resource management developed from the data analysis and linked to original practice in playground supervision.
- analysis and recommendations relating to the impact of wet weather breaktimes.
- a comprehensive exploration of the wide ranging interrelated issues which determine the quality of primary breaktimes in order to facilitate the exposition of fresh insights in this area.

This study will be of direct interest to educators, academics in the field, and also to school designers.

A Brief Historical Overview

A fascinating glimpse of very early playground life is offered by Raymont (1937) describing the work of London schoolmaster Samuel Wilderspin (born 1799). According to Raymont (1937, p.101), Wilderspin left 'a deep mark upon the whole infant school system' when, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, Wilderspin (1840) successfully argued that each schoolroom should have an adjoining playground (Appendix 2). Raymont also provides a valuable snapshot of this outside area by noting that, 'All round the playground were flower borders', and 'fruit trees and bushes were trained on the walls' (*ibid*). Additionally, Raymont gives an insight into early

playground supervision by revealing that, 'The teachers, preferably a man and his wife, were with the children in the playground as in the schoolroom' (*ibid*).

As noted, it has traditionally been felt necessary for pupils to have some form of exercise during the day (Kelly, 1994). As a consequence children were sent out to play, although whether they actually did so was not considered relevant. It was not until a century after Wilderspin's innovatory practice that it first became desirable, during the Second World War, for children to remain at school throughout the lunch period. Naturally, this has resulted in pupils spending more time in the outdoor play space. Initially, it was the responsibility of teachers to supervise the midday session (in addition to overseeing the shorter playtimes). However, during the 1960s the teaching unions expressed strong concerns that teachers needed a break at this time (Blatchford, 1989, p.64). Consequently, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) began to employ supervisory assistants (SAs) to monitor the lunchbreak. As these employees are predominantly female they have generally become known as 'dinner ladies' (Rose, TES, 1999). Even so, headteachers have retained overall control of the midday break and remain bound by the common law of 'duty of care' (foreseeable negligence) in respect of their responsibility for children's safety (Butterworths, 1999).

It is maintained that children's play has not always been viewed as being educationally valuable (Smith, 1990). Stone (1971, p.13) notes that, 'Both children and child's play, like all other social beings, are creatures of history'. Moyles (1989, p.10) suggests that, 'It is crucial to look at different interpretations of childhood historically, to see that childhood is a social construction and not just a natural state'. It is said that the fifteenth and sixteenth century Catholic clergy did not approve of play unless it was properly preceded by work (Stone, *op cit*), and it was not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (in France) that play became acceptable. Nonetheless, in Protestant nations such as England play was still largely suppressed by the end of the eighteenth century. Subsequently, a social movement deploring the excesses of capitalism released children from the shackles of work and granted them time for play (Stone, 1971).

Children were regarded as small adults until the 1800s and no special provision was made for them (Tassoni and Hucker, 2000). When industrialisation in the late 1800s reduced the demand for intensive labour (leading to increased leisure time for all) play assumed a greater importance. In spite of this, the Victorians considered free time ought to be used for self-improvement, leading to the concept of 'play with a purpose', thereby establishing play as an acceptable activity (*op cit*). During the twentieth century the child's right to play was acknowledged (Lindon, 2001a).

In an absorbing account of his own early twentieth century London childhood Walker (1989) vividly recounts children's play activities in street and playground immediately prior to the First World War (Appendix 2). Common to that era are many games that are still present today, such as 'It', 'He' or 'Touch' (chasing games), marbles, hopscotch and rope skipping. Others, like 'cut lump' (a progressive game of leapfrog), have long since disappeared. Interestingly, Millar (1968) highlights a number of gender differences in games played during the 1920s. It is revealed, for instance, that boys most frequently played competitive games like football and other activities requiring skill, dexterity and strength. Girls, on the other hand, were most likely to participate in games involving language, such as songs and rhymes. This trend continues today.

In primary schools there has been a tendency to link outdoor play with PE (physical education) which, itself, is said to enjoy a relatively low status (Lindon, 2001a) (although this is gradually changing due to a need to increase children's activity levels). Moyles (1989, p.163) argues that, 'From the onset of state education in 1870, the basic skills of literacy and numeracy have dominated adult thought in relation to school learning'. It is therefore claimed that outside play has largely been seen as a break from the 'real work' of the school (Lindon, *op cit*, p.125). In modern times, however, there has been growing disquiet about the lack of scope children have to play out of doors. In general, this serves to place increasing importance on the need for breaktime play.

Both Blatchford (1998) and Lindon (2001a) have expressed their concerns that social and cultural changes have led to children having fewer opportunities to play outside. Titman (1992, p.3) stresses that, 'Children today have less freedom and independent mobility than previous generations' as fears over safety have made parents less willing to allow their children to play outside the home. Furthermore, there is some apprehension about the increase in children's passive, sedentary leisure pursuits, such as the extensive use of computers, videos and televisions (Lindon, *op cit*).

The Local Context of the Study

Williams advises that 'it is customary to render references to LEAs and schools anonymous' in any research study (1991, p.IX). All schools involved in this investigation have therefore been allocated pseudonyms and the LEA remains unnamed except to state that it is a Greater London Borough. The borough in question has a diverse population and the majority of local primary schools have a multi-racial intake. There are mixed regions in the borough including industrial areas and sweeping open spaces.

According to Pam (1992, p.242), it was left to the church and chapel to provide schools in the nineteenth century as the 1870 Education Act is judged to have made 'little difference' to the local area. The neighbourhood school board was not established until 1894 even though Mundella's Act of 1880 had made school attendance compulsory for all children between the ages of five and ten years. The new school board rapidly initiated the building of three primary schools just before the end of the nineteenth century. As was usual at the time of construction, each of these schools has a typical asphalt playground but no green space.

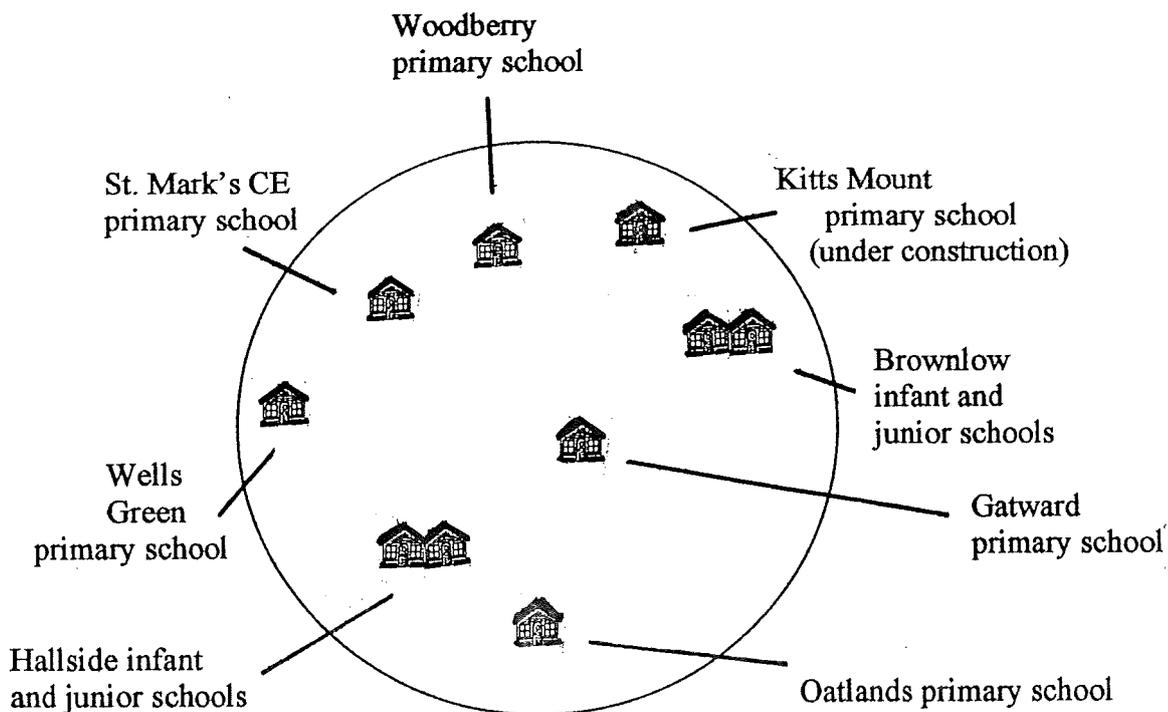
Between 1905 and 1912, more schools were built to cater for the educational needs of the growing population. House building increased in the locality between the wars causing many of the original schools to suffer from overcrowding (Pam, 1994). As a consequence, a number of new schools (the

main case study school among them) were opened to meet local needs. These newly constructed institutions had the advantage of additional playing fields. Following World War II a further increase in housing, including many local authority housing estates, led to the creation of more new schools. Schools continue to be built today in line with population demands. As will be shown, the school's outdoor environment now commands far greater attention than in previous years.

The Focus Schools

In total, nine schools (plus one primary school under construction) formed the fieldwork element of this investigation. These schools are scattered throughout the borough (Figure 1.2). A brief introduction to each school is presented below.

Figure 1.2 Location within the LEA of the focus schools



Brownlow infant school: the main case study school

Brownlow infant school (Figure 4.2) became the setting for an extensive in-depth case study during the autumn term of 1998. The school serves a socially mixed community and has a multi-cultural intake including Turkish, Greek, Asian, Italian and African-Caribbean children, as well as white British pupils. The catchment area is varied with both privately owned 1930s houses, newer developments and 1960s blocks of local authority high-rise flats. The school was opened in the 1930s and comprises of a large bungalow building with a detached purpose built nursery constructed in 1978. In 2000 the nursery was extended to include a fee-paying day care unit for three- and four-year olds.

Apart from the nursery children, the school has nine classes of approximately 30 pupils. At the commencement of the investigation the staff included: eleven full-time teachers, together with the headteacher and deputy; five full-time nursery nurses; six part-time classroom assistants and two learning support staff. Additionally, there were ten midday supervisors (two of whom were part-time). One midday supervisor was acting welfare assistant. All staff were interviewed, as was the administrative assistant and the site manager.

Brownlow junior school

A small sample of Year 2 Brownlow infant pupils were re-interviewed while in Years 3 and 4 and therefore limited research was undertaken at the link junior school, which shares a site with Brownlow infants (Figure 4.5). There are approximately 360 pupils on roll grouped in 12 classes according to age. The school is located in the east of the borough.

Wells Green primary school

At the start of the inquiry Wells Green was the most recently opened (1998) primary school within the LEA. The school is situated on the more affluent western side of the borough. At the time of the one day visit pupils were predominantly white British with a small number from Asian and African-

Caribbean backgrounds. In total, there were 120 pupils on roll (nursery and infants only) when the visit took place. The school is a large, two storey building with imposing views over the surrounding area (Figure 4.17).

Kitts Mount primary school

At the time of the study Kitts Mount school was under construction. The site was briefly visited as part of the inquiry (Figure 4.19).

The six sample schools

Hallside infant school

Hallside infant school is located in the south-west of the borough and was opened in 1909. It is a two storey building on a campus shared with Hallside junior school (Figure 4.6). There are nine classes (three form entry) with a total of 270 pupils on roll. There is no nursery. The school is multi-cultural.

Hallside junior school

Hallside junior school, together with the link infant school, was opened in the first decade of the twentieth century. The junior children are mainly accommodated in a single storey building (Figure 4.8) but the school also shares a more recently constructed two storey annex with the infant pupils (dining hall and four upstairs classrooms). In total there are 12 classes for 380 junior pupils. The school is multi-cultural.

Gatward primary school

Gatward primary school was created in 1985 from an infant school and a junior school, which were built adjacent to each other in 1937. The school is positioned centrally within the borough. Gatward is a single storey bungalow building. The nursery children are housed in a separate Horsa hut* at the rear of the site (Figure 4.10). In 2000, three new reception classrooms were

* A brick built bungalow building with a pitched roof.

completed. Just under 40 per cent of pupils come from minority groups, although this number has been rising each year. At the time of the inquiry the school was three form entry, but there were two parallel classes in each of the year groups one to six. A total of 510 pupils attended the school during the case study period with an additional 60 part-time nursery children.

Woodberry primary school

Woodberry is a two form entry purpose built primary school which is situated towards the north of the borough. There is a detached nursery which was constructed in the early 1990s. The school itself was opened in 1955 and is a two storey building of modern design (Figure 4.11). A total of 500 mainly white British children attend the school.

Oatlands primary school

Oatlands originally opened in 1937 as separate infant and junior schools and is located in the south of the borough. The two schools amalgamated in 1997 to become Oatlands primary school. Oatlands is a single storey building with sixteen classrooms, two large halls and a variety of resource areas (Figure 4.13). There are 440 children on roll with two classes in each of the primary age ranges two to six. The reception children and the Year 1 pupils benefit from smaller teaching groups (three classes in each). There is no nursery. The school is multi-cultural.

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

St. Mark's is a voluntary aided church primary school which is one form entry with 210 children on roll. At the time of the investigation there was no nursery. The school is located towards the north of the borough (but to the west of Woodberry school). It is a school with a particularly long and interesting history. At one time three separate St. Mark's schools existed. The first of these was established in 1864. In 1877 a girls' school was opened, followed by a boys' school in 1882. In 1940 all three schools were amalgamated in what is the present school's 'old building'. This typical Victorian building is currently used as an assembly hall, for physical education

lessons, and as the dining hall (Figure 4.15). During the 1950s the school governors acquired adjacent land with a view to rebuilding the school. The first phase of this new building, consisting of three classrooms, was opened in 1959. An additional four classrooms were added in 1970. Less than 4 per cent of the children are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Contribution

This thesis adopts an adventurous approach by constructing a fully comprehensive investigation into a multiplicity of disparate themes relevant to primary school breaktimes. It pioneers the integration, as an analysis tool, of concepts from management literature applicable to educational institutions. There is a focus on the process of change in the domains of the study thereby affording a new synthesis of the various elements involved. In turn, this engenders the identification of fresh concerns relating to contemporary topics, together with aspects absent from previous studies. Overall these include: the impact of campus facilities on breaktimes; the appraisal of recent innovations such as zoned playground regions and pupils' social support systems; difficulties arising from climatic conditions; playtime induction; and human resource management in respect of breaktime supervision, together with significant changes to the supervisory role. In total, this results in an exhaustive inquiry which takes into account a number of under-explored strands in this particular field, leading to recommendations for both improved and original practice.

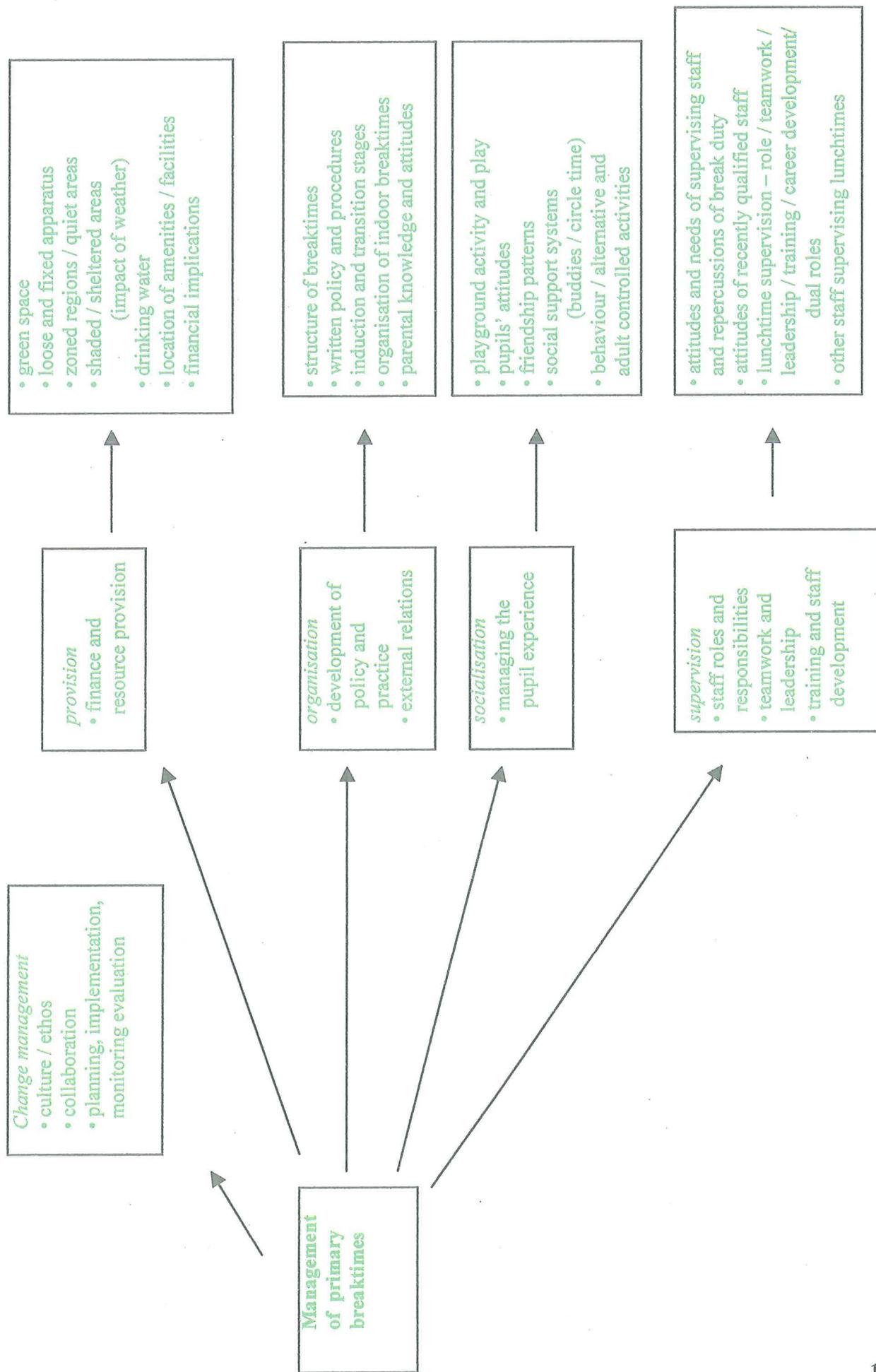
This study therefore advances knowledge by:

- Establishing a more comprehensive synthesis than is generally found in literature in this domain.
- Developing a thorough analysis via literature on breaktimes and related issues and where relevant on the management of educational change.

- Accounting for the culture, ethos, institutional bias and individuality of the schools studied.
- Investigating the restrictions imposed by campus facilities such as the location of entrances/exits, dining amenities, pupils' lavatories and welfare (medical) arrangements.
- Evaluating recent changes to playground induction systems with special reference to the youngest pupils.
- Assessing the repercussions arising from indoor breaktimes.
- Appraising recent innovations such as quiet areas of seating, 'friendship squads', peer mentoring, 'friendship seats' and extra-curricular lunchtime activities.
- Analysing the impact of morning/afternoon break duty on supervising staff, including newly qualified teachers.
- Providing an evaluation of the effectiveness of midday supervisory teams and the senior supervisory assistant.
- Assessing the training needs of midday supervisory assistants and any potential career development.
- Analysing the changing role of midday supervisors and the creation of new posts, together with an investigation into the greater variety of staff performing lunchtime supervision.
- Providing a fresh evaluation of the process of change and the effectiveness of outcomes.
- Providing a substantive update on contemporary breaktime practice.

The study concludes by providing numerous proposals for future development, as well as identifying areas requiring additional research.

Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework for the analysis



Overview of the Study

The thesis is divided into nine chapters that serve to focus the central debate relating to innovatory practice in the management of primary sector breaktimes. Following the present introductory chapter, the second chapter reviews literature that provides the conceptual framework for the investigation. The third chapter explores the research design and methods used for the inquiry. Chapters Four to Eight present the findings and analysis. Chapter Nine gives the conclusions reached, recommendations made, and areas for further investigation. Finally, the thesis contains a number of appendices. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.3.

Change Management

Figure 1.3 shows issues relevant to change management. Hargreaves (1992) identifies school culture as the beliefs, values and shared norms of those working within the organisation and West-Burnham (2001) sees ethos as being interchangeable with culture. Campbell and Southworth (1992) have suggested that culture is simply the way in which all activities are carried out within a setting. However, McMahan (2001) argues that rather than one holistic culture, within any institution there are likely to be sub-cultures. As such, micropolitical aspects can easily arise when proposed change occurs. Pollard (1985) further reasons that support staff will make their own contribution to what he describes as the 'institutional bias' of the school, with midday supervisors exerting much influence during the lunchtime session.

O'Neill and West-Burnham (2001) consider that the workgroup has a significant effect on the change process in terms of both enhancement and limitation. For example, Preedy (1993) alleges that some within the workplace may lack the enthusiasm and drive to carry out desired initiatives. According to Trafford (2001), conflicts can result and McCall and Lawlor (2000) state that there might be resistance from some quarters. Such resistance may be attributable to the values held by certain groups (Busher,

2001), although Fullan (2003) maintains it is necessary to acknowledge that any opposers might have valid reasons for the standpoint adopted.

Fullan (2001b) concludes that change occurs when there is some discontent with current practice. However, change is very complex. The process of plan, act and review, as noted by West-Burnham (1994) is shown as planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in Figures 1.1 and 1.3. This requires both local effort and local acceptance (Moos and Dempster, 1998). A collaborative approach leading to staff ownership is therefore recommended if successful outcomes are to follow (Hargreaves, 1992; Mortimore et al, 2000; Reynolds 2001; Dalton et al, 2001b). In addition, staff learning usually occurs during the change process (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1994; Fullan 2001b). Pupil involvement in playground innovation is also strongly advocated (Hendricks, 2001).

Ouston (2003) claims that the effectiveness of outcomes in the change initiative is context dependent; while Fidler (2001) alleges that it is difficult to provide evidence of success. It is judged by West-Burnham *et al* (1995) that effectiveness is the achievement of stated goals. Nevertheless, Dalton *et al* (2001) hold that any notion of what constitutes best practice is more complex. Fullan (2001b) further contends that it is not possible to know with any degree of certainty just what may be judged as best.

As indicated in Figure 1.3 (and also in Figure 1.1) core themes evolved from the literature. In management terms the following issues are relevant:

Provision

Various contributors determine that schools need to commit to financing any desired changes to practice. It may thus be necessary to deliver outcomes within existing budgets. Nonetheless, Levacic (1993a and 1993b) states that local management of schools (LMS) has served to encourage institutions to generate their own income. Even so, lack of funding can delay the

implementation process. Significantly, West-Burnham (2001) claims that a lack of suitable resource provision affects staff performance.

Organisation

A whole-school approach to policy generation via collective decision-making is revealed (Beare et al, 1989). Written documents serve to make salient the expressed values of schools. However, policies are only useful if they are translated into appropriate practice. It is also necessary to update written documents in line with changed objectives. Moreover, Fidler (2001) notes the recent increased influence of the parent body and there is a suggestion (Whalley, 2001) that parents should be involved in the decision-making process. It is also maintained that parents should receive regular information about happenings within the school.

Socialisation

Lofthouse (1994) points out that schools are not only required to manage pupils' experiences of the formal curriculum but that there is also a requirement to manage the hidden curriculum of the school playground. This view is endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills (2003) who specify that good management is needed in regard to pupils' behaviour at breaktimes.

Supervision

Monitoring the playground forms part of teachers' contracted hours. Staff have a duty of care towards pupils and Whitaker (1998) stresses that all employees should have preciseness about their roles and responsibilities. West-Burnham (1992) notes that there is also a need for good interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Midday assistants commonly supervise the lunchtime session but Anderson (2003) indicates that their lack of power and authority affects their performance. Teamwork is deemed to be of importance (Coleman and Bush, 1994; Anderson, 2003), but it is emphasised that teams need to be well led (Moos and Dempster, 1998). Furthermore, Fullan (1991) argues that all employees should receive training for their roles.

The final set of boxes in Figure 1.3 links the above four areas to the breaktime literature.

Provision

Numerous contributors (Kelly, 1994; Titman, 1994; Hendricks, 2001; Lindon, 2001; Kamen, 2005) have noted a traditional lack of provision in school playgrounds. There is a stated requirement to make the outdoor environment more varied and interesting with zoned regions and quiet areas. In addition, there is a declared need to take health, safety and security issues into account in relation to the playground (Department for Education and Skills, 3, 2004). When improvements are made issues of funding are raised (Blatchford, 1989). Here it is suggested that parental contributions may be of assistance.

Organisation

The desirability of reductions in breaktime, resulting in the loss of pupils' free time is an issue of prominence (Brown, 1994). Titman (1999) maintains breaktime is a distinct form of learning, while Thomson (2003) views it as an essential interlude in the academic day. Nevertheless, some writers acknowledge problems experienced by pupils new to the playground (Hurst, 1994; Lindon, 2001a, Tassoni, 2002; Fabian, 2005). Furthermore, difficulties associated with indoor playtimes have concerned some authors (Blatchford, 1989; Fell, 1994). Indoor lunchtimes are highlighted as being especially problematic (Mosley, 1993). An additional area of disquiet is the suggestion that parents lack information and understanding of breaktime issues (Ross and Ryan, 1990). It is argued that there is a demand for a specific playground policy (Docking, 1996).

Socialisation

It is judged by some (Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Byrne, 1984; Blatchford, 1998) that there is a seasonal bias to playground games. Even so, traditional games are said to have diminished (Blatchford, 1989) and pupils' behaviour is seen by some as both rough and anti-social (O'Donnell, 1995; Wood and Attfield,

2005). In part, this may be attributable to the existence of playful fighting, which is regarded as a common playground activity, particularly in boys (Pellegrini and Bartini, 2000). Additionally, there are said to be general gender differences in the play activities of boys and those of girls (Lindon, 2001a). Moreover, some children are judged to require extra support at breaktime, leading to the introduction of systems such as circle time (Mosley, 2005; Lindon, 2001b) and friendship squads (Mosley, 1993).

Supervision

According to Evans (1994), teachers dislike break duty. Newly qualified teachers are said to experience distinct difficulties and Evans (*op.cit*) claims playground supervision should form part of all initial teacher training courses. Lunchtime supervisors are shown to have further problems when monitoring the playground (Ryall and Goddard, 2003) and training is strongly recommended for these employees. It has further been suggested that supervisors should be entitled to career development reviews (Anderson, 2003). Furthermore, supervisory assistants are now more likely to be asked to become playleaders in addition to carrying out familiar duties. This can be problematical (Lewis, 1998). Moreover, there is now greater adult involvement (in the form of extra-curricular activities) in what has largely been seen as pupils' free time (Ashby, 1995; Stafford and Stafford, 1995; Hendricks, 2001; Bruce, 2004).

Chapter 1

The first chapter introduces the research study and provides the historical background that contextualises the project. The theoretical orientation of the inquiry is outlined and the purpose of the investigation is fully explained. The research schools are introduced and the local context is discussed. The chapter examines the original approach and contribution to knowledge which the investigation makes and concludes with a brief overview of the nine chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2

The second chapter presents a distillation of literature and contemporary research centering on primary sector breaktimes. A number of relevant issues and themes are discussed to provide a firm theoretical basis to support the analysis. These are integrated with theories and models from the management of educational change.

Chapter 3

In the third chapter the choice of research methods is justified. It is explained why a mainly qualitative approach was judged to be the most appropriate mode for this inquiry. There is a full discussion of the case study approach and the four stages of the investigation are given. The research instruments and sampling techniques are scrutinised and issues of reliability and validity are debated. The use of a questionnaire survey is examined and change management is appraised. Finally, consideration is given to the utilisation of educational management concepts as an analysis tool.

Chapter 4

The fourth chapter begins the data presentation and analysis by discussing the changes which primary sector schools within the LEA have recently been making. Issues raised are examined in greater detail in relation to the focus schools, together with the cultural and physical environments of the institutions concerned. Due attention is given to questions of financing improvements and the approaches taken. Chapter Four therefore answers research questions 1-4.

Chapter 5

Chapter Five moves the investigation forward by exploring policy and practice with particular reference to those schools that form the nucleus of the inquiry. Due regard is given to the organisation of breaktimes and an examination is made of written policies and other documents related to playground issues. There is a review of practice in respect of playground induction strategies with

an emphasis on the very youngest pupils. Subsequently, the chapter scrutinises inside ('wet') playtimes and the consequent difficulties these impose on individual schools. The chapter concludes with an exploration of parental attitudes towards breaktimes. Chapter Five thus answers research questions 5-9.

Chapter 6

In Chapter Six the analysis moves to the social environment of the playground and considers the needs of the child. Numerous elements are investigated including children's playground activities and their likes and dislikes about breaktimes. Children's friendship patterns are explored together with gender and racial issues. Also discussed are behavioural difficulties relating to the playground, including the manner in which pupils exit the play space. There is an examination of 'rough-and-tumble' play. Alternative lunchtime activities are additionally mentioned. Chapter Six thereby answers research questions 10-12.

Chapter 7

Chapter Seven continues the analysis of the social environment of the playground with a consideration of adult supervision. Initially, the chapter centres on those staff who supervise morning and afternoon breaktimes. The implications of the obligation to undertake this task on a regular basis are fully examined and the views of staff are duly considered. The chapter also provides a brief scrutinisation of staff activities while pupils are outside at play. Attention subsequently falls on lunchbreak supervision. A thorough examination of the role of the midday supervisors, together with their opinions and the changing nature of their job, is comprehensively presented. Other staff supervising lunchtime activities are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter Seven therefore answers research questions 13-14.

Chapter 8

In this chapter the analysis concerns an in-depth examination of the process of change. Chapter Eight therefore revolves around developing practice. This forms the final stage of the investigation. An account of initiatives undertaken in the main case study school is presented and evaluated. The effectiveness of all innovatory practice is carefully considered and some judgements are made to complete the debate. Chapter Eight thus partly answers research question 15. An epilogue on the remodelling of the primary school workforce completes the chapter.

Chapter 9

The final chapter draws the research together and adds fresh knowledge to this area. Limitations to the study are discussed and some important conclusions relating to current practice are provided. A number of recommendations for future research are made and suggestions are given for further changes to practice. This completes the thesis.

Résumé

This chapter has sought to introduce the investigation. It has given basic background information, not only to emphasise the significance of the study, but also to outline a number of major issues which will be expanded upon in the succeeding chapters. The purpose of the inquiry was clearly explained. The overall focus of the investigation involves the management of change in primary sector breaktimes and this is largely explored through the case study mode. Details have also been provided of the historical context relating to the area under investigation. It was demonstrated that ideas revolving around child's play and children's play activities have changed throughout the years and that it is only in more recent times that these have been valued. Breaktimes have not generally been seen as being educationally beneficial.

Subsequently, it was argued that the investigation provides a comprehensive inquiry into changes in primary sector playtimes and uses the educational management literature as an analysis tool. This engenders new insights into a number of important issues within the parameters of the study. The local context of the inquiry was also presented. Firstly, the Local Education Authority in which the investigation is situated was revealed leading to an introduction to those schools forming the nucleus of the inquiry. This served to furnish salient details of each institution and its location within the borough. In turn, this was followed by a brief overview of the conceptual and of the arrangement of the thesis with an outline of the content of the current and remaining chapters. Chapter Two explains the theoretical framework that supports the investigation.

Chapter Two

Reviewing the Literature

Introduction

The second chapter provides a critical review of current literature in the area of study. This establishes a firm theoretical foundation for the investigation. As indicated in the preceding chapter, issues revolving around the developing situation in primary sector breaktimes are complex and wide ranging. While the literature reviewed is principally located in the breaktime and related domains it is also fully integrated with relevant concepts from the management of educational change. As Kruse and Seashore Louis (2003, p.167) point out, 'Often the initial literature on which a study rests cannot provide deep enough theoretical roots to explain finds unique to a research effort' and this proved to be the current situation. Therefore, a synthesis of approaches from these different disciplines has been utilised. The chapter begins with a discussion of research methods used by other investigators and demonstrates that both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been exploited.

An examination of key topics of concern relating to the process of breaktime reform is then explored. To begin with, consideration is given to both the cultural and physical environments of the school. This is followed by an exploration of safety and health issues revolving around the school playground. It is determined that recent interest in these matters is largely related to societal changes and children's present day sedentary lifestyles. The financial aspects of making changes to school grounds are given due prominence with both local management of schools (LMS) and fund-raising receiving attention. Following on from this, there is an appraisal of present-day modifications to the structure of the school day and the resultant reduction in the amount of time pupils now spend at break. Next, the importance of policy-making is detailed. It is argued that a whole-school (collegial) approach is advantageous and that schools now need a separate playground

policy. The particular requirements of reception children in the playground are also discussed in relation to possible developments in this area. Difficulties pertaining to inclement weather conditions are subsequently closely scrutinised. It is suggested that, in the past, schools have failed to make adequate provision whenever breaktime must be taken inside the building. Parental concerns are another central factor in respect of playtimes. Attention is therefore paid to current issues centering on greater accountability and parental involvement.

Next, a comprehensive evaluation of the literature concerning the need for children to be provided with appropriate play opportunities is presented. Reference is made to the increasing importance of the school playground for children's social development with an analysis of friendship patterns and gender and racial issues ('social class' is dealt with elsewhere in relation to the catchment area of each school). The crucial topic of pupils' (reputedly) deteriorating breaktime behaviour is thoroughly examined. It is proposed in current accounts that some form of social skills training (circle time) is now desirable

The chapter continues with an exploration of the highly significant subject of playground supervision and recent changes to the adult role. It is demonstrated that there are two opposing trains of thought in this domain. On one hand it is argued that children should be left to play freely and on the other there is a contention that adult intervention is now required. Following on from this, the chapter appraises the specific needs of lunchtime ancillary staff (midday supervisory assistants) and whether or not these are currently being met. Literature relating to the effective management of change is then discussed with the assertion that a collaborative approach is vital. Notions of 'effectiveness' in the outcomes of change management are considered. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of previous studies. It is claimed there still remains a need to approach the subject matter holistically.

Previous research

As already stated, in recent years the primary school playground has become the focus of much concern and debate and this is clearly reflected in the growing literature in this area. Most notably, Blatchford (1989; 1994; 1996; 1998) continues to write extensively in this domain and concludes there are both positive and negative aspects associated with primary playtimes. Blatchford (1998) also acknowledges that there are two different approaches to playtime investigations. The first of these, using qualitative methods, involves 'descriptions of peer culture stemming from sociological and ethnographical perspectives' (*op cit*, p.11). The second concerns 'features of peer relations such as social competence and friendships, stemming from a psychological perspective, and typically based on quantitative research methods' (*ibid*).

The issues identified by such inquiries are complex with many studies focusing attention on specific aspects of the situation. For instance, there have been many investigations into bullying and anti-social behaviour (Whitney and Smith, 1993; Boulton, 1995; O'Donnell, 1995; Stafford and Stafford, 1995; McLeod and Morris, 1996; Rigby, 1997; Smith *et al*, 1999; Hunter and Boyle, 2004). Rigby (1997, pp.23-24) alleges that, 'If we watch children in the playground we will soon see many examples of bullying, varying in seriousness some seemingly playful (though not necessarily harmless) teasing; some vicious and even sadistic behaviours though the latter are more likely to take place out of sight of most observers'. Studies have also examined possible links between playground behaviour and children's performance and behaviour in the classroom (Pellegrini and Davis, 1993; Ashley, 1995).

In addition, diverse techniques have been used by those researching in the breaktime domain. Observational methods have generally proved to be very popular (Opie and Opie, 1969; Sluckin, 1981; Stafford and Stafford, 1995; Boulton, 1995; Thomson, 2003). For example, both Humphries and Smith (1987) and Lewis (1998) have used scanning procedures to record children's

playground activities. Additionally, Barnett (1988) and Playdell (1990) have recruited children to undertake direct observations of their peers at play. Moreover, Ashley (1995) has successfully combined sociometric measurements of pupils' popularity with playground interactions in order to ascertain friendship patterns. Furthermore, Titman (1994) has used photographic evidence to supplement and strengthen other data collection techniques. While it is accepted that information can usefully be acquired through systematic observations of children's playground behaviour, Blatchford (1989) believes researchers inevitably face difficulties in reliably recording what is actually happening.

As well as direct observations, interview methods have been used in numerous breaktime studies (Davis, 1982; Blatchford *et al*, 1990; Ota, Erricker and Erricker, 1997; Lewis, 1998; Thomson, 2003; Fabian, 2005; Visser and Greenwood, 2005). Stafford and Stafford (1995) found group interviews with pupils to be especially valuable due to children's enhanced involvement in discussions relating to their feelings, attitudes and conduct. Titman (1994) found group interviews to be beneficial when utilising semiotic techniques to elicit children's understanding of place. Nonetheless, caution has been expressed in respect of interview methods. In particular, Davis (1982) determines that even fairly young children are likely to respond to researcher's open questions within a range of statements which they imagine to be acceptable for such people according to their own perceptions of events. However, some investigators have found it to be advantageous, not only to interview pupils, but also to consult relevant adults (parents, teachers and other staff) regarding children's breaktime activities (Ross and Ryan, 1990; Lewis, 1998).

In addition, both survey methods and experimental techniques have proved to be popular with investigators in this field (Smith *et al*, 2004; Kutnick and Kington, 2005). Whitney and Smith (1993), for instance, surveyed 6000 Sheffield pupils as part of a comprehensive study into bullying. These particular researchers had criticised previous studies for their over-reliance on teachers' reports of the issues involved and thus set out to redress the balance

by consulting the pupils themselves. What is more, Lewis (1998) sent questionnaires to parents seeking their opinions on various playground matters as part of a multi-method breaktime inquiry. Experimental procedures have also been demonstrated to be useful in various playground investigations. Notably, Pellegrini and Davis (1993) used a within-subjects design, manipulating the amount of time spent in the classroom prior to breaktime, to study the relationship between pupils' playground behaviour and their classroom conduct. Furthermore, Smith, Madsen and Moody (1999) have been able to show that bullying decreases with age by using statistical techniques. In addition, Stafford and Stafford (1995) have exploited the action research mode to foster co-operative activities in boys who were displaying exceptionally aggressive behaviour in the primary school playground.

Cultural aspects

There is a general recognition that the cultural aspects of a school can be difficult to define. Hargreaves (1992) identifies culture as the shared values, norms, beliefs and habits of those working within the organisation. West-Burnham (1992) characterises culture as a school's personality and Whitaker (1998) sees it as the outcome of people's behaviour. Campbell and Southworth (1992, p.16) regard culture as simply 'the way we do it here'. According to Busher (2001, p.76), this nexus of shared values and norms expresses 'how people make sense of the organisation in which they work and the other people with whom they work'. Bennett (1993b) persuasively argues that individuals in schools will both affect the dominant values and also resist any attempts by management to change them.

McMahon (2001, p.127) claims that, 'Rather than a holistic school culture there are likely to be a number of subcultures' and this increases the difficulties of managing change. Significantly, it is claimed that there may be a different set of cultural assumptions about those adults within a school who are not teachers (Torrington and Weightman, 1993). It is suggested that

support staff make their own contribution to what Pollard (1985) describes as the 'institutional bias' of the school. In particular, Pollard (*op cit*, p.143) claims that the lunchtime supervisory assistants, while of 'low status', may nevertheless exert 'a considerable influence' on the organisation, especially during the lunchbreak. Marsh (1994) argues that each sub-group within a school may thus have its own norms and values and therefore conflicts can easily arise. Additionally, 'Micro-politics particularly come into play in relation to the issue of sub-cultures within schools' (Stoll, 2003, p.104).

Coupled with the general culture, schools are also deemed to have their own ethos, although McLaughlin (2005, p.306) stresses that, 'The notion of "ethos" is notoriously difficult to bring into clear focus.' While West-Burnham (2001, p.16) sees ethos as being 'synonymous with culture' Torrington and Weightman (*op cit*) usefully believe the ethos to be the self-conscious expression of specific objectives in relation to values and behaviour. Murphy (2001, p.110) believes church schools have a particularly 'strong and positive ethos' which is said to be, 'Easy to sense, difficult to define, impossible to quantify'. Docking (1996) points to the importance of a school's ethos in making a vital contribution to behavioural standards, while Jones (1989, p.3) warns 'the general ethos, climate or philosophy of a school has its own powerful consequences'. It is judged that pupils will only flourish when the school ethos is warm and supportive (Mosley, 1996).

There is also an assertion that the school playground has a dominant culture of its own. It is stressed that the playground is a world where a 'powerful hidden curriculum' exists, which adults have difficulty accessing (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994, p.187). Moreover, it is determined that the playground culture will form a resistance to any breaktime improvements a school might propose (Ross and Ryan, 1990). Furthermore, the hidden playground curriculum may have sexist and racist attributes which run counter to general school policy. The situation is summarised by Pollard (1985, p.10) who states that, 'On one hand children's culture and social activities are a source of self-directed learning, on the other, they may reinforce social inequalities and lead to increasing differentiation'.

Sharp and Blatchford (1994, p.186) warn that any adult who is researching activities in school playgrounds will soon discover that 'games can seem violent, and some rhymes and language can be scurrilous, scatological and surprisingly worldly'. The prevailing atmosphere is felt to be one where 'might is right' and thus, 'changing playground dynamics requires a holistic approach, reviewing the messages and values of the hidden school curriculum' (Ross and Ryan, 1990, p.4). Nevertheless, this is considered to be no easy task due to the secret nature of the playground (Ota, Erricker and Erricker, 1997), and, according to Opie and Opie (1969), the children's culture will always remain their own. It is additionally alleged that the playground environment is one of 'uncontrolled confusion' (Opie, 1993, p.2). In contrast, however, it is claimed that playgrounds operate in a similar vein to the adult community and instead of chaos there is order to be found (Sluckin, 1981). Lindon (2001a, p.19) argues that, 'Children do not exist separately from the society of which they are a part' and they are 'affected by the social conditions and beliefs of the time'.

Blatchford (1994, p.19) reasons that there are both 'problem' and 'romantic' perceptions of the playground but determines that these represent 'two sides of the same coin'. While the problem view stresses the many behavioural difficulties that are present, the romantic ideal highlights those activities which children can both enjoy and learn from. This latter standpoint is one which is shared by both Sluckin (1981; 1987) and Opie (1993). For instance, Opie (*op cit*, p.51) describes the playground as an 'exchange and mart for amusements'. It is considered that the playground is a special place where children can sustain rules and relationships that enhance both autonomy and spiritual development (Ota, Erricker and Erricker, 1997). Pollard (1985, p.49) suggests the children's culture develops 'within an informal social structure of friendship, hierarchy and status' and further believes that pupils bring to the school their own social expectations 'related to cultural forms within a school's catchment area' (p.142). These contribute to the 'institutional bias' of the school by representing 'a layer of social context, a "negotiated order"

which, although not immune to influence and action has to be recognised as a present social reality by any participant in school life' (*op cit*, p.145).

Provision

School grounds

Lindon (2001a, p.21) states that, 'In contemporary Europe, there has been an increasing emphasis on children's right to play' and it is asserted that children need stimulating and 'developmentally appropriate' environments (Moore, 1986, p.51). According to Kamen (2005, p.79), 'the play environment should be welcoming'. It is alleged, however, that school grounds have traditionally fallen well short of this expectation and children's play spaces are often inappropriately designed. A common thread running through the literature therefore is that school grounds have conventionally been of very poor quality (Blatchford, 1989; Kelly, 1994; Titman, 1994; Stafford and Stafford, 1995; Hendricks, 2001). Significantly, Kelly (1994, p.63) maintains the playground is often so bleak that it might more appropriately be termed as merely a 'break-ground'.

Furthermore, Hendricks (2001, p.192) contends that around the world school playgrounds have acquired a reputation 'for being dismal, barren lands' and goes so far as to liken them to prison yards by describing them as 'grim and punishing'. Hendricks also claims school playgrounds 'tell the story that the people who use these spaces are not important' (*ibid*). Both Hendricks (*op cit*) and Titman (1994) argue strongly that poor quality environments give children a clear message that they are inferior. Moreover, it is reasoned that the playground can be a breeding ground for boredom and, because of frequent overcrowding, can cause children to misbehave as they have little else to occupy their time (Blatchford, 1989).

In addition, it is observed that school grounds frequently display such negative aspects as broken fences, litter, smelly drains, dog faeces, graffiti and vandalism (Titman, 1994). It is therefore held that the dire state of school

grounds encourages child disaffection by making children feel that they are unworthy of something better. All of this has led Heseltine and Holborn (1987) to argue for the provision of a more child-friendly playground and more appropriate outdoor areas. Hendricks (2001) powerfully expresses the view that well-designed spaces for children's outdoor school life should capture the joys of living by emphasising elements of community groups, friendship and social life. Titman (1992) proposes that there should be quieter places for children to socialise. Both Humphries and Rowe (1994) and Sturrock and Else (1998) suggest that the addition of hiding places will nurture children's social, emotional and spiritual development.

It is perhaps worth noting, however, that Brown and Burger (1984, cited in Blatchford, 1989) have previously found modern playground designs do not foster desirable behaviour more than traditional landscapes. Even so, the Department for Education and Science (DES, 1990) recognises that while tarmac is hard-wearing and has been adopted by convention as a playground surface there is no justification for this area to be rectangular. Instead there should be flowing, irregular outlines with bays for informal play. Hendricks (2001) is of the opinion that landscapes should be undulating rather than flat and also considers there is a need for smaller areas. Similarly, Lindon (2001a, p.84) stresses, 'Large open spaces can actually give rise to more conflict, because the boundaries to different games overlap and so territory becomes an issue'.

Rigby (1997) holds the view that, because the traditional playground is dismal and tedious, it emerges as a place where children have little to engage either their minds or their senses. Moore (1986) goes further and maintains children's development is significantly advanced by memorable, stimulating environments. On the other hand, children's development is blocked or delayed by easily forgotten dull surroundings. It is claimed that not only is children's behaviour linked to the nature and design of the environment (Titman, 1994), but also that children's social competence is elicited in some settings but not in others (Pellegrini, 1991) and that, 'low quality environments inhibit play' (Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000, p.49). There is

additionally a consensus of opinion that there should be zoning (or sectioning) of different areas in the playground (Ross and Ryan, 1990). It is advised that zoned regions, used for divergent activities, will not only provide more readily for children's interests but will also enable the playground area to become more manageable.

It is suggested the children themselves need to be fully involved in helping to find solutions to breaktime problems (Blatchford, 1989; Kelly, 1994; Flutter, 2006). In addition, Titman (1992) feels that it is pupils who should be designing adornments, such as the surface markings, as this will increase children's interest in their use. In spite of this, Titman (1994) strongly asserts playground markings, and also wall murals, generally do little to inspire children and it is claimed that while markings for games such as hopscotch are common in school playgrounds they are rarely used. This may be because the markings have faded or because pupils have largely lost interest in them or even because children do not know how to use them properly. It is further proposed that the design of playgrounds is 'based in the assumption that the users are fair weather players' (Hendricks, 2001, p.100). In reality, school grounds are likely to receive greatest use in spring and autumn and grass areas may be unusable for much of the year because the British climate frequently produces muddy conditions.

Health and safety issues

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 3, 2004) argues that, 'An improved playground environment should be secure, safe and easily supervised'. Health and safety issues assume a special importance with regard to breaktime. For example, it is argued that adults are overly worried about safety and are consequently limiting children's free play activities (such as climbing and jumping), thereby preventing children from learning about risk taking through the realms of their play (Sturrock and Else, 2002; Lindon, 2003). Even so, schools do need to allay parents' fears about playground

safety (Blatchford, 1989; Hargreaves, 1989). Interestingly, the Department for Education and Science (DES, 1990) has previously concluded that most playground accidents involve collisions and falls at ground level, rather than resulting from climbing and jumping activities.

In spite of this, it has been found (Thomson, 2003, p.54) that a number of schools have been 'taking all the fun and spontaneity out of playtime'. Trafford (2001, p.20) suggests that teachers everywhere are showing a lack of willingness to supervise playground activities that 'bear an element of risk' because of a potent fear of litigation. Moreover, some schools have found it necessary to dismantle climbing apparatus since regulations concerning play equipment were recently changed when European standards were adopted in the United Kingdom early in 1999.

Safety has become a feature of prominence. Evans (1994) claims parents are no longer prepared to accept that playground accidents are the inevitable consequence of children's rough-and-tumble play. The onus appears to be on individual schools to develop a play area which is both safe and stimulating. Lindon (2003, p.1), refers to a 'healthy balance' and suggests 'children need a challenge'. According to Kamen (2005, p.33), 'Every child has a right to a stimulating play environment which provides opportunities for risk, challenge and growth of confidence'. Fortunately, Titman considers it is feasible to provide pupils with opportunities for adventurous play without any involvement with great heights. Nonetheless, it is judged unworkable to provide a playground which is 'completely safe from misadventure' (Evans, *op cit*, p.38). Lindon (2005, p.14) suggests practitioners should share the risk assessment process with parents and that it is possible to create an interesting outdoor environment that is 'safe enough'.

Crucially, Evans (1994) reveals that rules introduced in Australia to foster safe supervision in the playground have frequently been at the expense of producing challenging play opportunities. The highly relevant point is also made that until comparatively recently Australian pupils have been left to play unsupervised at both recess and the lunchbreak. What is even more

noteworthy is that in attempting to make playgrounds safe, thereby disallowing preferred activities, pupils are more likely to be found indulging in illicit play (Evans, *op cit*). Furthermore, parents have become increasingly aware of children's general safety and are thus unwilling to allow their children to play unsupervised in parks and streets (Blatchford *et al* 1990). Jenkinson (2001, p.xiv) claims that, 'Our children are housebound, waiting for childhood to be over in order to gain some sense of freedom'. This means the school playground remains one of the few places for children to play outside. Even so, fears over safety continue and Jenkinson (2001, p.xv) alleges that, 'Children's time is almost always supervised and regulated by adults'.

One benefit of breaktime which should not be forgotten is the opportunity it provides for enhanced physical activity (Moyle, 1989; Smith, 1994b; Sharp and Blatchford, 1994). Significantly, it is argued that children have become far more sedentary and they 'are doing less exercise today than a decade ago, prompting concern over the risk of heart disease, weak bones and obesity later in life' (Spencer, TES, 2000). It has already been proposed that pupils might easily increase their physical levels in the school playground (Blatchford, 1989). Research by O'Pray (1997) confirms adults can introduce specific activities which result in higher levels of physical exercise at playtime.

Nonetheless, there are additional concerns about potential health risks posed by the weather. According to Titman (1992, p.9), the playground is 'a tarmaced suntrap' which makes children feel unwell. Strong feelings are also expressed by Hendricks (*op cit*, p.193) who concludes that, 'Landscape design techniques in shade provision, sun exposure and wind protection need to be employed to create spaces that can be used in most kinds of weather'. A further matter of some importance revolves around the potential lack of drinking water available in some playgrounds. While schools are required to supply water the point is made (FAQ [Frequently asked questions], 2005, p.3) that there is nothing to specify 'the type and number of facilities per pupil'.

Financial matters

Blatchford (1989) claims that any playground improvements must begin with issues of finance. Titman (1992), however, alludes to the fact that relatively little has been spent in this domain in the past. Every school therefore faces issues of funding major change (Department for Education and Science, 1990). As schools are now able to use money for their own purposes it is argued that financial delegation (LMS) has given an increased incentive for schools to engage in various forms of income generation (Levacic, 1993a, 1993b). To this end it is proposed that parents might become involved in some form of fund raising activity. However, Blatchford (1989) feels that, while parental contributions to playground projects might be welcomed, schools could easily make better use of various recycled items (such as large tyres) as this obviously reduces the financial burden. Furthermore, schools should accept any volunteers who are willing to help to convert the playground into a child friendly space.

It is also alleged that many school initiatives fail because of a lack of adequate resources (Waters, 1996). It is argued (O'Neill and West-Burnham, 2001, p.12) that resources are a 'key determinant of performance' and that individuals should be able to 'control and deploy the resources they need to function and perform effectively'. Importantly also, it is noted by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) that 'Schools have a duty to achieve their objectives as efficiently, effectively and economically as possible' (NPQH [National Professional Qualification for Headship], Unit 4.1, 2001, p.5). Budgets are thus seen as providing a financial foundation for planning operations (McCallion, 1998).

Organisation

The structure of breaktimes

There is a general view that play is an activity which supports children's learning (Brown, 1994) and any attempt to limit breaktime (for example, because of supervision difficulties) is therefore likely to be counter-productive. Nonetheless, Thomson (2003, p.57) stresses that 'playtime at school is "play to order" '. While it is accepted that breaktime probably forms a larger proportion of the school day in the United Kingdom than in most other countries (Blatchford, 1989) it is judged that any reduction of play periods is not necessarily to be welcomed. Brown (1994, p.49) reasons that all such moves should be regarded as very 'short-sighted'. As stated, it is argued that playtimes form a vital part of children's social development (Smith, 1994b; Hendricks, 2001).

Moreover, Hendricks (op cit, p.190) has strong feelings about the current 'drive to use the outdoors as an extension of the formal education system' because this 'has so taken over that all outdoor space is now developed to be part of the curriculum and the children have no space to play freely, there is no playground, just outdoor classrooms'. In contrast, there are those who maintain the school grounds can be constructively utilised throughout the school day. For example, Humphries and Rowe (1994, p.113) suggest the 'opportunities for teaching in the playground are endless'. More recently, Thomson (2004, p.16) has noted that 'Forest Schools' have been 'springing up across the U.K [United Kingdom]', describing the Forest School as 'a true classroom without walls'. It is an idea based on Danish provision whereby children are able, among other things, 'to climb very high into the trees on rope ladders and swings' (ibid). The outdoor environment (a woodland setting is not crucial) is judged to foster young children's self-esteem and independence, as well as providing first hand experiences and movement to give kinaesthetic feedback.

Learning in the outdoor environment is popular in Scandinavian countries although Olsson (2000, p.16) claims that there is an internationally established concept of 'Outdoor Education ... meaning outdoor learning'. Interestingly, Olsson (op.cit.p.4) feels the outdoor environment can 'serve as both library and social meeting place'. According to Olsson (2000, p.10), 'the school yard should be a pedagogical resource for creative projects' as well as being a place that 'fosters new knowledge' (p.6). It is further alleged that the social context out of doors makes a profound impression on the memory.

Aasen and Waters (2006, p.124) additionally state that, 'In Norway the development of interpersonal skills is a central aim' of work with young children. It has recently been revealed that, in comparison to English education, Scandinavian countries (where children start schooling at a later age) place a greater emphasis on young children's social development and show less concern for developing reading, writing and mathematical skills. It is concluded (Ofsted, 2005, p.14) that in Finland and Denmark greater priority is given to 'personal and interpersonal development' and to 'the nurturing of a climate of tolerance and mutual respect', which is enacted both inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, in Finland lunchtime is seen as a central social occasion in contrast to merely being a rather noisy English event that has 'to be got through as quickly as possible' (op cit, p.27).

In the UK, however, breaktimes are generally seen as a period of recreation in the more formal education system and it is further reasoned that playtime represents 'a distinct and different form of learning experience' (Titman, 1999, p.12). In spite of this, Tizard *et al* (1988) conclude that some children would probably be happier if ways could be found to restructure playtimes, or even to provide alternatives to the set break. In keeping with this theme, Sharp and Blatchford (1994) advocate creativity in the way in which breaktime is organised. Nevertheless, these authors do recognise that overcoming traditional ideas about breaktimes and lunchtimes could prove to be difficult. One notion which has been put forward is that of having staggered playtimes (Blatchford, 1989). Another suggestion is having pupils segregated into

particular play areas with peers of the same age (Evans, 1994). Furthermore, while it may be advised that playtime should not be reduced in any way it is argued that pupils could be given a choice as to whether or not to go outside (Sharp and Blatchford, *op cit*).

However, giving children the choice of remaining inside the building is likely to present problems regarding the provision of adequate supervision (Blatchford *et al*, 1990). As such, this is not necessarily going to provide a solution. One additional proposal is the complete removal of fixed playtimes, thus allowing individual teachers to decide if and when they would like to go outside (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994). Again, there are drawbacks because teachers would then be unable to socialise with colleagues in staffrooms (Blatchford, 1989); although Titman (1992, p.4) firmly asserts that the 'Provision of break and playtime should not be merely a matter of administrative concern – a time for staff to have a "loo and coffee break" or even, however beneficial, a time for staff and children to "have a break from each other" '. In complete contrast, it is maintained that teachers (and others) do need to have a suitable break (Haigh, TES, 2004). It is also argued that fixed time breaks should be retained in order that pupils have the opportunity to forward plan the use of this period (Blatchford, 1998).

Other approaches include the introduction of the 'continental day' (morning school only) thereby eliminating the need for lunchbreaks but it is argued that this would not be popular with parents (Blatchford, *op cit*). Moreover, it is noted that most European countries have both morning and afternoon sessions. There is an added insistence that children need to have an afternoon break (which many schools have now removed) in order to enhance their concentration. It can easily be seen therefore that a number of debates centre around the overall organisation of breaktimes.

Policy

Docking (1996) insists that it is not only school ethos (although this is vitally important) but also school policy that makes a substantial difference to pupils' behaviour. Patently, this incorporates playground conduct. Both Tattum (1989) and Blatchford (1989) hold the view that schools should focus on the positive aspects of behaviour and accordingly must produce a behaviour policy which includes 'being noisy with your praise and quiet with your reprimands' (Blatchford *op cit*, p.39). While such positive strategies are vital they are judged to be far more effective when they form part of a whole-school approach (Whitney *et al*, 1994). Docking (1996, p.13) states that, 'A genuine whole-school policy is not only *about* the whole school but is *drawn up* by the whole school'. Such collective decision-making in the process of school management is now widely recognised. It is said to increase a feeling of ownership in the outcome and to bring about enhanced commitment to practice (Beare *et al*, 1989; Hargreaves, 1992; Whitaker, 1998; McCallion, 1998; McCall and Lawlor, 2000).

Blatchford (1989) determines that behaviour at playtime should not be treated any differently from conduct at other times and therefore a school's behaviour policy needs to include behaviour patterns throughout the whole day. Nonetheless, Docking (*op cit*) stresses there is a necessity for schools to also generate a separate playground policy. Other commentators present a variety of ideas for the development of such a document. Ross and Ryan (1990, p.174) see three levels to policy development which are specified as:

- Identifying the issues
- Agreeing procedures (rules and enforcements)
- Monitoring outcomes and modifying practice.

These commentators view playground improvement as a process rather than a finished product. There is a word of caution from White (1988), however, in that it may not be entirely acceptable to rely on the subjective impressions of staff and pupils when monitoring the success of any intended improvements.

A further point of debate concerns the introduction of bans for certain activities. Lindon (2001a, p.175) feels strongly about this issue and alleges that, 'One of the frustrations experienced by primary school children is that problems in the playground are sometimes "solved" by adults imposing a ban on an activity'. Lindon (*op cit*, p.176) sees serious disadvantages in bans (for example, the banning of football games and temporary 'crazes') because, 'Staff tend not to consider bans for activities and equipment that are regarded as a legitimate part of the learning environment' and therefore bans are not usually imposed on 'what are regarded as educational resources'. It is recommended that, as an alternative to bans, 'Children can learn through being properly involved in the process of discussing problems and possible solutions in a calm and open-minded way' (*ibid*).

Transition stages

It is accepted (Yeo and Lovell, 2002, p.11) that the 'National Curriculum forms part of society's policy for education'. Three stages are relevant to the current study:

- The Foundation Stage involving nursery and reception pupils aged 3-5 years (which became part of the National Curriculum under the 2002 Education Act).
- Key Stage 1 for pupils in Years 1 and 2 (5 to 7 years) in infant schools/departments.
- Key Stage 2 for pupils up to 11 years in Years 3-6 in the junior age group.

Yelland and Kilderry (2005) observe that there are new ways in early childhood education and it is noted by Tassoni (2002, p.1) that at the Foundation Stage, 'Play is emphasised as the vehicle for learning'. It is stated that there should be 'planned and purposeful activity that provides opportunities for teaching and learning, both indoors and outdoors'

(Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000, p.11). As Wood and Attfield (2005, p.13) readily acknowledge, however, 'by Key Stage 2, play in school tends to become a distant memory except as organised games and outdoor playtime'.

Furthermore, Ofsted (2004, p.12) has recognised this 'shift from play-centred activities to more formal learning and the greater demands made on ... [pupils] by "harder work" when they move from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1'. Perhaps more worryingly, recent research commissioned by the *Association of Teachers and Lecturers* (Vevers, 2004, p.6) reveals that, due to Government pressure to prepare four-year-olds for formal education, practice in the reception year is 'typically characteristic of Key Stage 1 classrooms.'

Forbes (2004, p.4) points out that 'compared with European settings in the UK there is a difference in both approach and delivery of an early years curriculum' with greater emphasis in the UK placed on early reading and writing skills (although the *Welsh Assembly* has recently introduced a play-based Foundation phase for three-to-seven-year olds, Welsh Assembly Government, 2003, 2004; Learning Wales, 2005). All of this would seem to further stress the importance of playtime and the value of an outdoor recreational break. According to Thomson (2003, p.58) playtime needs to 'act as an "interlude" in the daily life of academic study'. As such it should offer children choice in their breaktime activities.

In England, Early Years Units (nursery and reception) have now become more common and Foundation Stage pupils are provided with separate facilities from the rest of the school. Naturally, this includes outdoor play regions. Furthermore, children in reception classes in infant and primary schools may also have their own outdoor amenities. Moreover, in a number of schools Year 1 pupils are being encouraged to access the reception pupils' play areas thereby 'enhancing common experiences across the two year groups' (Ofsted, 2004, p.11).

Even so, although little appears to be said on the issue of the specific needs of reception children, there are some commentators who claim these pupils experience difficulties in the primary playground (Hurst, 1994; Lindon, 2001a). Lindon (2001a, p.175) goes so far as to contend breaktime can be 'a daunting experience' for many young children. It is further held that the youngest pupils are frequently 'perplexed about what they are supposed to do' in the playground (*ibid*). Nevertheless, it is argued that the situation can be ameliorated partly by the use of space and partly by having supportive playground staff. Fabian (2005, p.7) reasons that, 'Transitions are helped if the initial transition into the playground is not made alone'. Lindon (*op cit*) determines measures such as these can contribute to the provision of positive playtime experiences for these very young pupils.

Indoor playtimes

Various issues of great concern arise when inclement weather leads to breaktime being taken inside the school building. Both WEST (undated) and Mosley (1993) note that wet playtimes are an ordeal, especially if they are not well organised. Fell (1994) claims that difficulties occur when pupils are confined to their classrooms during wet lunchtimes but are prevented from using the normal classroom equipment. In this situation it is argued children may simply be supplied with 'a few broken crayons, some scrap paper and six tatty comics' (Fell, *op cit*, p.141). Of course this is not the only problem regarding wet playtimes. As Blatchford (1989) readily acknowledges, further complications ensue when there are inadequate numbers of lunchtime supervisors. Rose (TES, 1999) alleges supervisory assistants find wet lunchtimes a logistical nightmare.

On a more constructive note, Fell (*op cit*) reasons wet lunchtimes are a good opportunity for pupils to participate in organised games in the school hall. Another solution is to supply toys and games kept specifically for use during wet weather breaktimes. Mosley (1993) suggests pupils need to be compensated for losing out on the opportunity for outside play by having

alternative activities such as model making and drama. However, Hendricks (2001, p.100) adopts a different stance and asserts that children 'need to play outdoors in all weathers'. The playground should therefore be designed to facilitate all weather conditions, as previously stated.

Parental concerns

Fidler (2001, p.60) observes that, 'Since the Education Reform Act of 1988, parents in England and Wales have become much more influential, both as educational consumers and as members of governing bodies of schools'. Whalley (2001) recognises the importance of including parents in discussions affecting their children and it is also recommended that parents should be involved in the decision-making process (Docking, 1996; Mortimore *et al*, 2000). There is a suggestion that parents should receive regular communications from schools to provide information on current happenings (Glatter, MacBeth and Deem, 1993). It might therefore be expected that any reports would include details of ongoing playground developments. For instance, it is maintained parents need to have a very clear idea of procedures and playground rules (Ross and Ryan, 1990). Docking (*op cit*) further contends that eliciting parents' perceptions of the playground is essential if a comprehensive picture of life there is to emerge.

It has also been concluded that parents can have a great many worries about what is happening to their child at breaktimes (Ross and Ryan, 1990). It is judged that parents have concerns, not only about their child's safety, but also about whether their child is being bullied in the playground (Blatchford, 1989). In addition, Ross and Ryan (*op cit*) contend parents may have difficulties getting their child to school due to playground problems such as bullying, fighting and name-calling. Blatchford and Sharp (1994, p.5) suggest the difficulties children can face are liable to become a sensitive issue and that such upsets predominate because 'mishaps in the playground are often more easily communicated' than other aspects of the school day. Ross and Ryan (*op cit*, p.37) claim the most commonly expressed opinion from parents in respect of playtimes is that 'anything could happen'.

Socialisation: the child in the playground

Beare et al (1989) consider that schools will always be concerned with pupils' social welfare. Even so, there is a primary need to sponsor learning and for Lofthouse (1994) this includes the hidden curriculum. It thus follows that schools need to manage children's breaktime experiences. The DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2003, p.54) sees good management of playtimes and lunchtimes as 'critical to improving behaviour'. Pelligrini and Blatchford (2000, p.76) claim this gives rise to some difficult issues which mainly relate to the tension 'between a greater control of pupil behaviour and the likely value of pupil independence'. There are problems therefore with increasing adult intervention in children's play activities.

Play and games

Playtime is ostensibly a time for children to play but it is argued that play is an exceptionally complicated phenomenon which is generally not well understood (Hendricks, 2001). However, Aasen and Waters (2006, p.125) maintain that, 'Play is central to the child's well-being.'

Definitions of Play

It is judged (Kamen, 2005, p.52) that, 'There are many different definitions of play' and it is stated (Meggitt, Stevens and Bruce, 2000, p.107) that, 'Play is complex'. All attempts to define play scientifically have proved to be unsuccessful because, in Hendricks's (*op cit*, p.7) opinion, 'Play is such an intrinsic part of being human that it is difficult for us to get the scientific distance to study it'. Gilmore (1971) alleges play eludes precision because of its nature as an abstract and global behaviour and that it is simply not possible to provide a precise definition which is scientifically workable. Furthermore, 'Play seems to represent the definitionally impossible "waste basket" category of behaviour, the unmotivated act' (Gilmore, *op cit*, p.311).

Lindon (2001a, p.2) suggests that it is because of the multiple features that are included in the word 'play' that there can be 'no concise definition'. Smith (1984, p.vii) claims that, 'Objectively, play also presents some profound intellectual puzzles. What exactly do we even mean by play?' According to Wood and Attfield (2005, p.5), 'Play cannot easily be defined or categorized because it is always context dependent, and the contents are varied'. Titman (1992, p.4) concludes that play is complex because, 'it is confused with amusement diversion, "letting off steam", thought to be a "waste of time". Nothing could be further from the truth!'

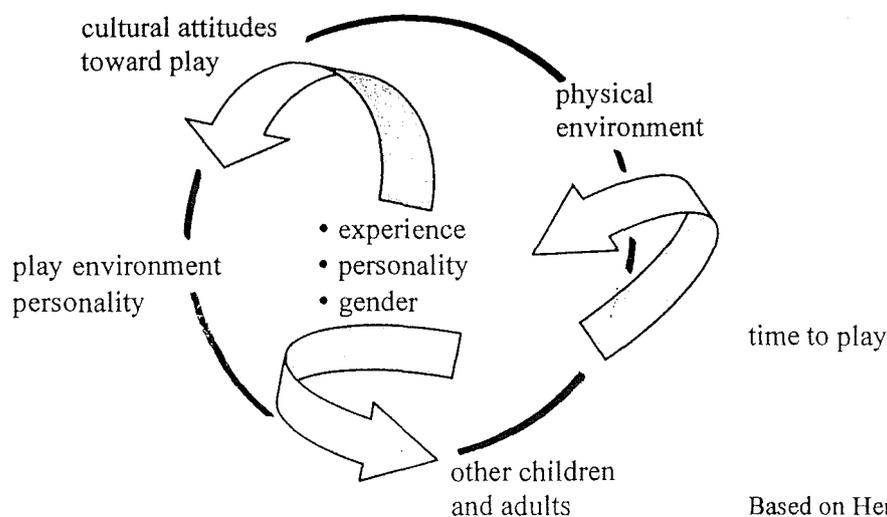
Much of the existing literature stresses various attributes of play. For instance, Matterson (1989, p.4) sees play as 'a vital part of the growth and development process' and Stevens (1977, p.242) alleges play 'is necessary and vital to "normal" development'. Piaget (1971, p.338) suggests, 'Play is an exercise of action schemes and therefore part of the cognitive component of conception'. However, Sutton-Smith (1971b, p.341) maintains, 'Play is not solely a cognitive function (nor solely affective or conative), but an expressive form *sui generis* with its own unique purpose on the human scene'. There is also an emphasis on the naturalness of play and the fact that it is a spontaneous behaviour. For example, O'Donnell (1995, p.117) reasons that, 'Like laughter, play is natural, enjoyable, very important and necessary'; while Hendricks (2001, p.100) claims, 'Play has to do with things of the everyday, ordinary things'. Furthermore, Guha (1996, p.57) indicates that, 'Play is part and parcel of children's natural behaviour embedded in their day-to-day living'. It is stressed (Chazen, 2002, p.19) that, 'Play activity is characteristic of living and life'.

It is further suggested that play springs from the imagination (Sturrock, 1999a) and that prior to each act of playing there 'lies a zone of instigation of intentionality and ideas' (Sturrock, 1999b, p.5). Lindon (2001a, p.45) views play as 'a personal creative activity'. Titman (1992, p.4) asserts that play is 'the process of doing, exploring, discovering, failing and succeeding'. Additionally, it is reasoned that play is 'an activity done for its own sake, without external constraint' (Smith, 1994a, p.15). Sheridan (1999, p.4) feels

play is simply about 'having fun'. According to Sturrock and Else (1998, p.9), children at play are 'alive in the moment'. For Raymont (1937, p.301), 'The essential feature of play ... lies not in the thing done but in the spirit in which it is done'. The open-endedness of play is stressed by Beaver *et al* (2001, p.360) who simply determine that, 'Play cannot be wrong'.

In addition, various commentators discuss the reasons why children (and adults) play; although Hendricks (*op cit*, p.9) asserts that to ask 'why do people play?' is akin to asking why people breathe because play, like breathing, is an essential activity which satisfies needs. In all cultures play seems to be the dominant activity of children (Curtis, 1994). However, 'Because it consumes so much energy to no immediate practical purpose, play has puzzled those who have tried to understand its adaptive significance' (Parker, 1984, p.272). According to Sheridan (1999, p.10), 'Theorists have struggled for centuries to describe and explain the universal significance of play without consensus'. Nonetheless, whether play is seen as cathartic (Eiferman, 1976) and a way of reducing anxiety, or whether play is viewed as a way of expending surplus energy (Gilmore, 1971), it is certain there 'are numerous, often contradictory definitions of play' but that while we 'don't know what play is, nor do we know why anybody plays, ... when we do it, we like it' (Guha, *op cit*, p.56). Each act of play is susceptible to a variety of influences. These are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 The shape of play



Various factors influence each child's play and each play activity is said to be unique. The child's personality, gender and experiences are influences within the child. Additionally, the time available for play, other children and adults, the play environment personality, the cultural attitudes towards play and the physical environment are the external influences. Hendricks (2001) states that the greatest influence is that of other children. However, any discussion of the pedagogical aspects of play items, or examination of children's play behaviour, requires the interconnectedness of these influences to be recognised. Play cannot be divorced from these internal and external factors.

Much, therefore, is claimed for the activity of play, although it is stated (Meggitt and Bruce, 2002) that children cannot be made to play; they have to want to play. As Minett (2005, p.182) argues, 'children play because it gives them pleasure'. Moyles (1989) notes that in play the brain (and usually the body) is active and stimulated. This provides motivation for the player to master the unfamiliar thereby gaining knowledge, skills, information and understanding. Quite simply, 'Playing is learning' (Moore, 1986, p.12). Numerous commentators build on this claim. For instance, Lewis (1998, p.49) declares play 'is a way of exploring and experimenting within relative safety' and Lindon (2003, p.1) maintains, 'Children need to explore new experiences in order to extend their skills of problem solving, planning and reflection'.

It is further argued that play represents more than just a rehearsal for adulthood and instead forms 'the life world of the child and their sense of identity and self' (Sturrock and Else, 1998, p.8). Bruce (1994, p.193) sees what she terms 'free flow' play as 'an integrating mechanism, which brings together everything we learn, know, feel and understand'. Forbes (2004, p.127) claims free flow play will include 'mistakes' which Knoop (2002) reasons are an important part of children's learning and creativity.

Play is thus said to provide for the holistic development of the child. It draws together children's emotional, social, physical, language and intellectual skills

(Tassoni and Hucker, 2000). This integrated view of play is one subscribed to by Sturrock and Else (2002) and can be seen in diagrammatic form in Figure 2.2. These authors argue that through play children learn to:

- Recognise new skills and behaviours
- Practice them until competent
- Integrate them into a personal ‘portfolio’ of skills and behaviours which then shape who and what the child becomes.

Healthy development comes from a balance of all four areas shown in Figure 2.2. Sturrock and Else (*op cit*) stress that different play theories form only part of the whole picture and that growth is not limited to one area.

Figure 2.2 An integrated view of play

<u>Emotion</u> Cognitive and Psychological approach	<u>Physical</u> Biological and Physiological behaviour	Individual
<u>Culture</u> Cultural development	<u>Social</u> Social/political -skills and role practice for later life	
Subjective	Objective	Collective

Based on Sturrock and Else (2002)

Even so, there appears to remain a need to continuously justify the importance of play in children’s development. Kamen (2000, p.21), for instance, points out that while children undoubtedly learn a great deal through play, the term

'play' is frequently used in reference to those activities which are deemed to be 'unimportant and frivolous'. This is a view shared by Curtis (1994, p.33) who claims that the language used in relation to children's play tends to give an impression of undervaluing the activity with 'Go and play' being a common phrase. In spite of this, it is emphasised that play is the chief activity of children in all parts of the world, including ancient civilisations (Bruce, 1994).

Increasingly, there are powerful arguments that children require real experiences in their play, such as tree climbing (Sturrock and Else 2002). Modern day living means that for many children play now revolves around electronic games. This is said to represent an adulteration of a child's mental space (*ibid*). Sturrock and Else (2002) contend that when children are playing on a computer they are playing in someone else's imagination and maintain human imagination has far greater potential than any computer. There is a strong need, therefore, to provide a balance in children's play opportunities. This notion is supported by Hendricks (2001, p.245) who argues persuasively:

Children of today, to prepare for tomorrow's work life, do not need to spend a lot of time with today's computers; for the sake of a good adult life they should be practising to use their brain in all its facilities and competencies. More than anything else they should be developing skills to deal with the new and unknown.

Hendricks then goes on to assert that children require real-life situations and not a pre-programmed series of events. Real-life requires interaction with living things which, in turn, commands an ability to find real-life solutions to situations requiring knowledge of how others think and behave. Such skills are not learnt on a computer but are developed through playing with people (*op cit*).

There is a belief that the most important aspect of play is the child's learning of social skills (Hendricks, 2001) which is vital for children's social development (Hall and Brennan, 2004). Titman (1992), for instance,

maintains tolerance, sharing and cooperation, as well as respect for others' feelings and opinions are better understood through social play. Similarly, the DES (1990) has reasoned that children also experience the consequences of non-cooperation and selfishness through their play. Lindon (2001a) claims children develop, highlight and reinforce their own opinions and experiences while playing. In addition, Moyles (1989, p.8) suggests that, 'Play helps the participants to build confidence in themselves and their abilities and, in social situations, helps them judge the many variables within social interactions and gain empathy with others'. Additionally, because play is always at the child's own level the needs of all group members will be met (Beaver *et al*, 2001). Pellegrini (1991, p.234) further alleges that social play gives children the opportunity to learn and rehearse those skills which are vital for good citizenship, stressing that, 'Good citizens should be friendly and cooperative as well as literate and numerate'.

Games

It is additionally held that play contributes a great deal of knowledge about children's underlying cognitive and social processes because play develops with age (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994). According to Guha (1996), as children get older and begin to play in larger groups, the play becomes more varied and increases in complexity, and is usually sustained over longer periods of time. This brings with it a requirement for children to develop skills to coordinate their own behaviour with others in the group. Therefore the rule structure of games provides a 'scaffold' for interactions with peers. As children develop they become involved in formalised play which requires compliance with rules (some of which are self-imposed), as well as regular patterns of behaviour (DES, *op cit*).

Smith (1994b, p.44) submits that, 'The unique learning opportunities provided by play and games are probably more in the social domain, certainly by middle childhood years when rule games and team play are common; while in rough-and-tumble play children may be cementing friendships and alliances'. A number of claims are made regarding the importance of rough-and-tumble

play (playful fighting), which is said to mostly be the province of boys (Pellegrini, 1991; Boulton, 1994; Stafford and Stafford, 1995). Hendricks (2001) insists that, in play fighting, children are able to test out emotions and actions which they would be prevented from doing in real life. Nevertheless, not all commentators are in agreement as to the desirability of rough-and-tumble games. Rigby (1997, p.175), for example, acknowledges that, while many accounts suggest games with pushing and shoving 'are healthy and desirable', there is a possibility that such activities are simply the precursors to 'violent and definitely undesirable conflict'. Even so, as noted, there is a general agreement that social play is advantageous for children's learning. Crucially, breaktime appears to be an ideal time for this to happen.

Hendricks (2001, p.188) makes the highly salient point in that breaktime gives children the necessary 'time to play to be themselves to "digest" the formal education aspects and get ready for more'. In spite of all this, it is suggested that the quality of playground behaviour is not very high (Blatchford, 1989). For example, 'much of children's play is seen to be physical squabbling, with much low-level physical play involving chasing and fleeing, jumping on backs and fighting. Much of this is in turn attributed to acting out scenes from television programmes and films on video' (Blatchford, *op cit*, p.10) and it has been stated that today's children lack the ability to play games. Games are judged to provide children with unique learning opportunities. They differ from other types of play in that at least one player must have a conception of the rules of enactment and the scenario involved (Parker, 1984). The remaining players must also have the cognitive aptitude to follow these rules, although Meggitt and Bruce (2002) note that children should also have an understanding that rules can be changed.

It is reasoned that games involve 'the ritualization of roles and the enactment of predictable predetermined scenes' (Parker, *op cit*, p.273) and they are said to be a uniquely human type of play. Interestingly, Frith and Lobley (1971) note that children will play games for sheer enjoyment even in the absence of adult guidance. These authors suggest games are a major feature in children's

lives at primary school level. Moreover, cross-cultural research shows games are tied to the culture in which they occur (Sutton-Smith, 1971a).

A wide number of games and activities are common in primary school playgrounds including:

- football
- ball games in general
- chasing, hiding, tag and variations
- pretending and fantasy games
- dares, including going to banned places
- games using the playground markings and playground equipment
- conversation and just enjoying the company of friends

(based on Lindon, 2001a, p.81).

O'Donnell (1995) reasons games can provide a means of learning both agreement and compromise, as well as relieving boredom which might lead to unwanted behaviour. It is also alleged games 'help to develop children's abilities to appreciate, discriminate, adapt, create, cooperate, communicate, learn, assess, exult and congratulate' (O'Donnell, *op cit*, p.68). Sheridan (1999) further considers that games with rules assist children's understanding of fair play, taking turns and sharing, and the accurate recording of results. Ball games, team games and individual activities are also said to facilitate self-testing and to provide a way of achieving success and impressing friends (DES, 1990). Moreover, it is argued that organised games with rules allow each child to feel a *bona fide* member of the group as children make their own individual contribution (Millar, 1968). Intriguingly, Opie and Opie (1969, p.17) suggest 'collecting players for a game can be a game in itself'.

It is held that children like to play games which have a long history, such as skipping rhymes, chanting games and tag (Lindon, 2001a). According to Sluckin (1987), many activities are handed down through the generations. Nonetheless, it is judged that, 'Despite the motherly influence of tradition ... children's play is like every other social activity [in that] it is subject to continual change' (Opie and Opie, 1969, p.8). Examples of games

documented by Opie and Opie (*op cit*) can be found in Appendix 2. Lindon (*op cit*) is of the opinion that it remains open to question whether or not traditional games have waned over the years. Eifermann (1976) concludes that some games may be played sporadically and Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Byrne (1984) suggest there are a number of playground games which are seasonal. One game which most commentators agree presents problems is football. However, Blatchford *et al* (1990) take a positive stance and claim football gives an ideal opportunity to develop teamwork and it also provides a chance to organise coaching and skills training activities. Moreover, Lewis (1998) feels large ball games can be contained in designated areas (zoning) thereby allowing space for alternative pastimes.

Friendships, gender, ethnicity and age

According to Aasen and Waters (2006, p.124), 'Friendship and children's play must be seen as crucial for children's feelings of happiness.' It is further reasoned that children are able to express their friendships in the school playground (Blatchford, 1994). There is a claim that school breaktimes are the only occasions when children can meet up with friends who are not in the same class (Blatchford, 1998). Convincingly, Davis (1982) suggests that bargaining with friends requires complex strategies and additionally alleges that children's friendships remain stable over time. In contrast to this latter assertion, however, Opie and Opie (1969) conclude there is a continuous pattern of making and breaking in children's alliances. Singer and Doornenbal (2006, p.240) have found that 'peer conflicts provide children with a charged motivational context for moral, social and emotional learning.' While much literature emphasises the beneficial aspects of playground relationships, some commentators are keen to highlight the difficulties endured by a few children.

For example, Lindon (2001a) acknowledges that a number of pupils experience the distress of being without friends in the playground. In addition, a child may be excluded from playground games by another child; although Lindon (*op cit*) determines that ejection from play might be only temporary

and the child concerned may find other playmates. Even so, there are some children who experience the isolation of continuous rejection and Blatchford (1994) maintains such rebuff can powerfully condition behaviour later in life. The possibility also exists of rejected children forming their own sub-group whereby the main play activity is that of disrupting other children's games or resorting to bullying in order to establish a focus to their playground time (Lindon, 2001a). Unsurprisingly, it is maintained that children who complain of having no one to play with can experience a great deal of unhappiness and Lindon (*op cit*) suggests happy playtimes are dependent upon having the necessary social skills to negotiate entry into games, thus preventing children from feeling isolated.

It is also noted that schools have now begun to address any isolation problems by establishing 'Friendship Stops' (for instance, introducing special seats) designed for children requiring company, or 'Friendship Squads' (buddies) to help isolated pupils. Mosley (1993) further concludes it can be helpful for older pupils to initiate playground games with younger children. In addition, Boulton (1994) advises that adults might intervene and help to integrate isolated children into peer group games. Interestingly, Ashley (1995) finds that there are correlations between the social matrix in the playground and pupils' levels of academic attainment. Ashley argues that children with poor attainment and poor behaviour in the classroom can have different playground encounters from their peers and that socially low status children may tend to have fantasy friendships rather than real attachments (*op cit*). Furthermore, Kutnick and Kington (2005, p.535) have found that the experiences of primary school male and female friendship pairs, both in and outside of classrooms, link with pupils' 'approaches ... to cognitive problem solving'.

A number of sources refer to gender issues at breaktimes and it is said that, 'Children in primary school tend to play with their own sex' (Lindon, 2001a, p.92). It is further noted that while there may be similarities between the play of boys and the play of girls, there are also variations which cannot be attributed to a child's individual temperament (Lindon, 2001a) and there are held to be sex differences in the choice of children's playground games

(Blatchford, 1994). This is judged to increase with age. Girls are said to play a wider variety of games than boys. In one study (Blatchford *et al*, 1990), it was confirmed that the main playground activity of boys is football. This appears to be played by 84 per cent of all 10 and 11 year-olds and tends to monopolise the playspace. A comprehensive picture of the differences between the two sexes in respect of contemporary playground games is provided by Lindon (2001a, p.92):

Girls' play

- Girls spend less time than boys playing competitive team games.
- Girls generally play in smaller groups.
- Girls tend to play skipping games with rules and a competitive edge. (For example, counting how many skips each can achieve.)
- Girls talk more in social groups.

Boys' play

- Boys play more football (although girls sometimes get involved).
- Boys organise teams and negotiate the rules of play.
- Boys do have occasion to talk together but appear to take on the social learning that males rarely talk about their feelings.

Even so, Lindon (*op cit*) stresses playground play is not completely segregated and that mixed groups are to be found. Nonetheless, it is felt that children who cross gender lines are likely to be teased as a consequence.

There is an idea that the playground is a 'proving ground' for boys' masculinity (Ross and Ryan, 1990, p.6) and therefore girls may feel frightened in this male dominated space (Kelly, 1994). Moreover, boys are perceived as being more involved in fighting than girls (Blatchford, 1989). On the other hand, Grugeon (1988; 1991) claims girls use traditional games as empowerment against boys. However, it is reasoned that any attempt at changing gender related behaviour would be difficult (Blatchford, *op cit*). Sykes (2003, p.335) states that 'different genetic interests' are responsible for 'the often very distinct behaviour patterns of the two sexes'. Sluckin (1987) concludes that playground games introduce children to culturally specific sex-

roles, values and attitudes. Thorne (1993, p.44) notes that in playgrounds, 'Activities, spaces and equipment are heavily gender-typed'. All the same, it is argued that school playgrounds should be organised for the promotion of anti-sexist equal opportunities. For example, Mosley (1993, p.99) maintains that, 'The football policy should include equal opportunities for both boys and girls'.

According to Smith (1994b), even in multi-cultural settings, children tend to have playmates from the same ethnic group. It is judged, nonetheless, that there has been insufficient research into ethnic differences in school playgrounds. One study, however, does highlight the fact that racism itself presents problems (Ross and Ryan, 1990). Cameron *et al* (2006, p.1216) argue for 'extended contact as an intervention to reduce children's negative outgroup attitudes'. Blatchford (1989) makes it plain that while there is an obvious need to produce clear guidelines to combat racism, it is also vital to involve parents as well as pupils and staff because racism clearly extends far beyond the school playground. A further suggestion is that multi-cultural games could be formally introduced at breaktimes.

Behaviour

Regrettably, it is asserted that playground life is a truly miserable experience for those children who must endure unpleasantness and spitefulness (White, 1988). Shaw and Wainryb (2006, p.1061) observe that 'children of all ages are likely to be critical of behaviours that target others' well-being'. Numerous commentators confirm there is a negative side to the school playground and several significant points emerge. For instance, most of the fighting which occurs in school appears to take place in the playground (Tizard *et al*, 1988). The majority of children view playground life as physically and verbally aggressive (*op cit*). Blatchford (1989) concludes most trouble in the infant playground originates from a comparatively small group of disruptive children, with the Year 2 boys posing the most problems due to

exceptionally boisterous behaviour. According to O'Donnell (1995), however, playground behaviour in general is frequently very rough.

In addition, Smith and Cowie (1991) feel some children are disliked simply because they show exceptionally high levels of aggression at breaktime. It is also judged that primary school teachers perceive playtimes mainly in terms of problems, rather than as offering the potential for play (Lindon, 2001a). Teachers express concerns about 'children idling around the playground – not seeming to know what to do with themselves' (Blatchford, 1998, p.4). Coupled with this is the perception that children have far less respect for authority these days and there is a substantial increase in pupils with behaviour difficulties (*ibid*). Research indicates most playground conflict stems from the following five aspects:

- Disobedience (for example, children ignoring requests).
- Parental attitudes (for example, children being told to fight back).
- Hierarchy (for example, children taking little notice of support staff).
- Exclusion (for example, football domination to the exclusion of other activities).
- Violence (for example, verbal and physical).

Based on White (1988, p.194).

Blatchford (1989) observes that playground behaviour is often worse during the longer lunchbreak than during shorter playtimes partly because children gradually become more tired and partly due to the fact that supervision is not as stringent during the lunch session. Certainly, the Elton Committee (1989) concluded that the lunchbreak proved to be the biggest single behaviour related problem that schools face. According to Wood and Attfield (2005,p.2), 'many children dislike outdoor playtime because it provides opportunities for conflict, aggression, bullying and anti-social behaviour'. Of particular interest, too, is the claim by Blatchford (1989, p.24) that the changing seasons can affect children's conduct with windy and cold days bringing out 'the worst in playground behaviour'. It is also judged that

children show a lack of attentiveness on their immediate return to the classroom following a period in the playground (Pellegrini and Davis, 1993).

Importantly, Whitney and Smith (1993) determine there is a link between social disadvantage and undesirable behaviour at school. It is not unexpected therefore that Stephenson and Smith (1989) have found bullying to be more prevalent in socially deprived areas. Whitney and Smith (1993, p.23) argue powerfully that bullying is a 'pervasive problem' in schools, which Blatchford *et al* (1990) maintain usually takes place out of sight of adults. This opinion is shared by both Elliott, M. (1998) and Alexander (2002). In addition, it is held that bullying is a phenomenon which has been endured for generations but which has only recently 'been brought out of the closet' (Kelly, 1994, p.65). Much research in this particular area has been inspired by the work of Olweus (1991) in Scandinavia. While Salmivalli *et al* (2005) report on a more recent Finnish study, there has also been a growing awareness of the extent of bullying in British schools (Boulton and Underwood, 1992; Whitney and Smith, 1993; Alexander, 2002). Nicolaidis *et al* (2002, p.105) discovered that trainee teachers lacked 'confidence in their ability to deal with bullying'.

Bullying has been defined as, 'Repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person' (Farrington, 1993, cited in Rigby, 1997, p.15) and, according to Ross and Ryan (1990), it stems from both power relationships and value systems. Significantly, findings by Smith, Madsen and Moody (1999, p.282) suggest young primary school pupils see negative behaviour (such as fighting) in terms of bullying because they are unable to apply the 'imbalance of power' criterion. Not unexpectedly, 85 per cent of primary school bullying occurs in the playground (McLeod and Morris, 1996). Research by Whitney and Smith (*op cit*) and Pellegrini and Bartini (2000) suggests bullying is more frequent in boys. There is a tendency, however, for girls to experience verbal abuse and for boys to be physically attacked (Blatchford, 1989; Whitney and Smith, 1993). In addition, Boulton's (1995) research indicates the victims of bullies tend to be those children who are less popular with their peers. Rigby (*op cit*) endorses this view.

Additionally, Stafford and Stafford (1995) declare friendly incidents can easily turn aggressive, presenting staff with the problem of establishing whether children are playing or fighting. However, O'Donnell (1995) contends deliberate fighting is not the same as general playground roughness. Even so, the difficulties associated with ambivalent behaviour present staff with the added problem of discriminating between playful fighting and real fighting (Boulton, 1994; Stafford and Stafford, 1995). Furthermore, it is claimed children quickly exploit such ambiguity (Sluckin, 1987; Blatchford, 1989). An additional difficulty revolves around those children with faulty social skills who see play fighting as intentional aggression by others (Pellegrini, 1991). Children who are rejected by their peers 'may attribute aggressive intent, whereas popular children, may correctly interpret the act as playful' (Pellegrini, *op cit*, p.231). Moreover, Rigby (1997) concludes bullies often justify their actions with arguments that they are only playing. In spite of all this, Lewis (1998) is keen to point out that there may be very few incidents of actual aggression, despite the widely held view that there is much intimidating and very rough behaviour in school playgrounds. Sluckin (1987, p.150) is adamant that 'children at playtime are not just like little savages (as some of their teachers describe them)'.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that a few children are simply unable to cope with the freedom of the playground and are not able to adopt acceptable forms of behaviour (Mosley, 1996). Ashley (1995, p.26) suggests, 'Some children may survive or even thrive in the traditional playtime but others of different disposition are unable to do so'. There are, for instance, those children for whom the main playground is just too large. Ashley (*op cit*) therefore reasons that schools may need to reconsider the organisation of breaktimes by creating 'smaller and more diverse play situations in which children can explore social contacts in their own way' (*ibid*). Furthermore, effective management is judged to be a crucial element in preventing disciplinary problems (Tattum, 1989). The DfES (2003, p.54) considers it is necessary to develop 'a school ethos where children know, wherever they are

in the school – in the classroom, in the playground, in the corridor, in the dinner hall – what is expected of them and how they ought to behave’.

Nevertheless, it is argued (Alexander, 2002, p.21) that, ‘it takes time and energy to create a strong ethos built on respect and civility’. Docking (1996) suggests that effective behaviour management stems from some form of control to regulate children’s behaviour because children need direction for their psychological stability. Playground sanctions are therefore required, although it is acknowledged that some children will fail to respond to these and that this presents a major problem (WEST, undated). White (1988) advises schools to adopt a playground ‘code of conduct’ in order to make children more reflective about their own behaviour. In addition, Ross and Ryan (1990) propose that conflict in the playground can be effectively reduced by adults fostering cooperative play and collaborative games. It is held there is a requirement for organised games in order to prompt a sharp decrease in aggressive behaviour (Stafford and Stafford, 1995). This is supported by Visser and Greenwood (2005, p.29) who state: ‘Our current research presents evidence to support the concept of changed playground ethos through the introduction of playground games leading to fewer playground disputes’.

In contrast, it is alleged children will learn the skills of conflict resolution and cooperation through a series of problems that require them to find their own solutions free from adult intervention (Sluckin, 1987). It is further claimed (Sharp, Cooper and Cowie, 1994) that little impact is made by simply telling children not to fight, with the suggestion that conflict is an inevitable part of normal life. Children should therefore be taught suitable skills of conflict resolution which allow a ‘win-win’ situation. Docking (1996, p.124) reasons that what matters is ‘how people respond to conflict’ and in order to provide children with the necessary skills it is vital to ‘bring the playground into the classroom’. In keeping with this, Rigby (1997) considers that a method known as ‘Quality Circles’ will help to promote cooperation through group problem solving.

Mosley (2005, p.15) describes circle meetings as 'about reinforcing good behaviour'. Circle time has been praised by the Office for Standards in Education. According to Lindon (2001b), it represents more than just sitting children in a group to talk. Instead, it is concerned with helping children to diffuse conflict, to manage their feelings, to foster self-discipline and to encourage collective responsibility (White, 1988; Ross and Ryan, 1990; Whitney and Smith, 1993; McLeod and Morris, 1996). Docking (*op cit*) asserts that when children are encouraged to debate their own behaviour it forms a valuable part of their moral education. Such discussions contribute to the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. An additional way of improving pupils' playground behaviour is to provide children with the opportunity to support their peers (Lindon, 2001a). This seems to be a relatively new idea. While peer mediation may be appropriate for unresolved arguments, children do need to be suitably trained in conflict management.

Other accounts also present a number of useful comments in relation to playground behaviour. For instance, Reynolds (1989) argues that schools should adopt an ethos of rewarding desirable behaviour rather than one of punishing undesirable behaviour. Docking (1996) additionally reasons that adults should consider the importance of terminology when, for example, 'naughty pupil' characterises the problem behaviour as malevolent and intentional. Such an approach is deemed to be unacceptable. Moreover, Blatchford (1989) expresses concerns about the problems occurring when several classes are simultaneously en route to the playground (and returning into school) and behaviour can thus easily deteriorate. In addition, it is argued children return to school in a poor frame of mind when breaktime ends abruptly by the sound of a whistle or bell (Blatchford, *op cit*). Furthermore, it is held that there is a requirement to fully research the actual causes of aggressive behaviour.

Supervision

There is much debate in current accounts regarding the role of adults in the primary school playground. Questions arise as to whether or not close supervision is appropriate. (It is held, however, that some form of supervision is always needed to ensure children's safety.) Given that such supervision is required, whether or not adults should introduce directed activities because powerful arguments have been put forward in favour of free play. Ross and Ryan (1990) maintain children should have the opportunity to participate in undirected activities in order to develop physically, creatively and socially. They conclude, even so, that the play area must be well structured because, 'Playtime can then become about the freedom to make choices from a range of activities rather than about confusion generated by the "freedom" of a chaotic unstructured playground' (p.42).

Additionally, White (1988) holds strong views that playtime is the children's own time and it should not be organised by adults. Bruce (2004, p.vii) insists children need 'genuine opportunities to engage in their own play' and Brennard *et al* (2001, p.354) consider children need to 'play in their own way'. Similarly, Ashby (1995) claims the unique contribution breaktime makes to children's social development cannot be emulated by adult-directed activities. Sluckin (1987) argues children are able to influence, initiate and change the rules of games when they are left alone in a manner which would be impossible between adult and child. It is also reasoned that adult controlled activities cannot match the enthusiasm which children have when left to play freely (Eifermann, 1976; Tassoni and Hucker, 2000). Hendricks (2001, p.192) asserts that, 'We must trust children and not over-organise their free play spaces – otherwise they will never find out how to use their free time without a calendar or time manager'.

Others tend to agree. Sturrock and Else (2002) feel adults should not intervene in children's play unless invited to do so and Sheridan (1999) claims children should be left to play spontaneously. Opie and Opie (1969) allege the outside world remains present when playground games are organised by

adults. These ideas, of course, are far from new. Wilderspin (1840, p.11 quoted in Raymont, 1937, p.102) believed children should choose their own play activities because if children 'play at what they choose they are free beings, and manifest their characters; but if they are forced to play at what they do not wish, they do not manifest their characters, but are cramped and are slaves, and hence their faculties are not developed'.

Despite this, it is recognised that adults are tempted to control children's play. Thomson (2003, p.57) observes that, 'Games encouraged in the school playground are quite often instigated and monitored by the adults; who govern, process, and organise these games into packages'. Opie and Opie (1969) point out this stems, in part, from a belief that traditional games are dying out and therefore adult involvement is required. Games such as *The farmer's in his den*, *Poor Jenny is a-weeping*, *Ring a roses* and *In and out the dusty bluebells* are said to be 'in decline' (Blatchford, 1989, p.13). As Blatchford (*op cit*) has determined, however, such rhymes and games have now become part of the curriculum and may no longer represent an attractive alternative to formal schooling. Of course, it could also be argued that in a multi-racial society these games are not part of the traditional culture for many pupils.

Even so, is suggested by some that adult intervention enhances children's play (Tamburini, 1982, cited in Moyles, 1989) and that adults will inculcate good play habits which children will then continue when they are left on their own (O'Donnell, 1995). Stafford and Stafford (1995, p.290) go so far as to conclude some children actually need to be 'taught *how* to play'. One recent innovation of particular interest has been the 'Positive Lunchtimes Initiative' in Lancashire primary schools whereby lunchtime activities (attendance is optional) are coordinated by teaching and welfare assistants (Marr, 2003, p.24). It is claimed that through the introduction of various clubs, 'The atmosphere in the playground is transformed' (*ibid*) in a positive way.

However, Beaver *et al* (2001) consider it necessary for involved adults to have appropriate knowledge and understanding of how to organise suitable play opportunities. Moyles (1989) expresses a word of caution by suggesting that

any adults who are involved in children's play should both value the activity and enjoy the opportunity to participate. Waters (2003, p.9) warns that adults must be 'extremely sensitive' when joining in with children, while Ashley (1995) suggests it is the role of the adult to facilitate play rather than to intervene. Titman (1994) agrees that the emphasis should be on enabling activities rather than on organising the play. One idea for adult intervention is the teaching of playground games in physical education (PE) lessons.

While there is a tendency for lunchtime supervision to be passed from teachers to ancillary staff, teachers are still required to supervise other breaktimes. What is of interest, however, is that there is no legal minimum ratio of adults to children in the playground (either at playtimes or lunchtimes). Instead, it 'is a matter which falls under the duty of care for pupils that every school has' and furthermore, 'The tradition of that duty into practice is the responsibility of the head, who must consider all the relevant factors' (Archimedes, TES, 2001). However, the literature distinctly suggests playground supervision ('duty') is a task which teachers thoroughly dislike. Moreover, Sharp and Blatchford (1994) claim there is a conflict that teachers experience between their classroom role and the role of non-intervention in the playground.

Evans (1994) feels that one reason for teachers' dislike of playground duty is the policing role which is necessary for supervision and the consequential confrontations with children. Nevertheless, it is generally judged to be vital for teachers to walk around the playground ensuring children are free from danger because the children's safety is argued to be a first priority. Hendricks (2001) suggests teachers who are outside and join in with the play (rather than leading the play) thereby become important role models in children's lives. On the other hand, it is claimed that teachers cannot be doing playground duty effectively and playing with the children (Evans, *op cit*). Significantly, it is also concluded that the 'first few playground duties are difficult for NQTs [newly qualified teachers]' (Taylor, *op cit*). Evans considers playground responsibilities should be included in all pre-service teacher education courses because playtime is such a crucial part of each child's school experience. Moreover, schools are now employing more teaching assistants who, along

with nursery nurses, also carry out breaktime supervision and it is likely that they, too, would benefit from suitable instruction.

Docking (1996) draws attention to the fact that under the School Teacher Pay and Conditions regulations teaching staff (apart from the headteacher) are not contractually obliged to supervise during the lunchtime session. In spite of this, some teachers do carry out activities during the lunchbreak. This can include some form of direct supervision or it might be in the form of providing extra-curricular activities for groups of pupils. Problems may occur, however, because teachers' workload has now become a feature of prominence and many teachers already 'feel themselves stretched beyond what they can reasonably be expected to manage' (Morris, TES, 2002). It has additionally been concluded that teachers need to 'concentrate on doing the job of teaching' (Morris, *ibid*). It is highly unlikely that teaching staff would again be compelled to resume the lunchtime supervisory role.

Lunchtime supervisory assistants are usually untrained (Rose, TES, 1999; Ryall and Goddard, 2003). According to Blatchford (1989) they receive low payments and work difficult hours. It is alleged that they often provide less than adequate supervision and there is acceptance that schools do not always employ the most suitable candidates (Blatchford, *op cit*). There are indications that teachers often express concerns about the effectiveness of this supervision and that such feelings contribute to teachers' perceptions that breaktimes are problematic (Blatchford, 1998). The point is also made (Ryall and Goddard, 2003, p.73) that, 'Some headteachers and teaching staff ... still find this group of principally local women insignificant except as a source of complaint when they fail to resolve problems on the playground by the end of the dinner hour'. However, Anderson (2003, p.21) argues that, 'A lack of information, resources, authority or power can influence performance adversely'. Titman (1992, p.11) is particularly informative in stating that, 'Supervisors who are relegated to performing the role of policing the playground, who through lack of training and skill, are unaware that the manner in which they address children will determine the manner of response, and who have nothing to "give" in terms of skills, are condemning children,

themselves and everyone else to a daily diet of frustration'. Docking (1996, p.119) reports that the difficulties lunchtime supervisors experience can be expressed under the following five headings:

- lack of status
- lack of communication
- lack of information
- lack of role clarity
- lack of training.

Lack of status: It is believed children often treat lunchtime supervisors in a manner lacking in respect because of an awareness that they do not have the same authority as teachers (Blatchford, 1989). There can be problems, for example, with the lack of sanctions which supervisors are able to impose (Titman, 1992). Ryall and Goddard (2003, p.75) acknowledge supervisors' feelings of 'powerlessness'. Mosley (1993, p.82) argues for a whole-school focus to raise the status of lunchtime staff, recommending that supervisors should not be viewed as 'second class citizens'. According to Whitaker (1998, p.87), it is helpful to give staff 'psychological pay-days' so they feel valued for their contributions. Riches (1994a) suggests employees who have negative experiences at work will tend not to perform to the best of their ability. Fell (1994), however, offers one possible solution by advising that the midday supervisors should be involved in school policy making as this will enhance their standing within the school community.

Lack of communication and information: It is held to be crucial for lunchtime supervisors to be able to discuss their status and role with the teaching staff (Docking, 1996). According to Sharp (1994) and Ryall and Goddard (2003), communication between supervisors and teaching staff is generally poor and White (1988) reasons that time should be set aside for discussing the various issues that arise. Effective communication is held to be vital for task accomplishment in educational settings (Fullan, 1992). Moreover, good communication and information exchange facilitates consistency of approach. Blatchford (1989) alleges teachers and ancillary

staff have different thresholds as to what constitutes anti-social behaviour. It is suggested that one solution for increasing consistency in approach is to provide the midday supervisors with their own meeting times in order that they might examine uniformity in the application of procedures (WEST, undated).

Lack of role clarity: The DfES (1, 2004) maintains there should be a 'clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and teachers when on duty'. However, there is some debate as to the exact role of midday supervisors during the lunchbreak. While Titman (1992) feels strongly that the role is one of facilitator of play, Lewis (1998) argues lunchtime supervisors have conflicting interests when they are expected to arrange positive play experiences but must also spend much of their time supervising the school meal. Moreover, having two roles (supervisor and play worker) presents problems and it might therefore be more appropriate to have just one supervisor responsible for leading the play (Lewis, *op cit*). Furthermore, there is a need for role clarity because, if the function of supervisors is likened to a playground police patrol, then there is a requirement for staff to be able to see all children at all times (Hendricks, 2001). On the other hand, if the supervisory role is one of enabling play then there is a possibility of allowing children secret places where they are hidden from adult view.

Whitaker (1998) maintains there is a need to have explicitness about all roles and responsibilities. Of course, this leads to the requirement for supervisory assistants to have a precise job description. Moreover, West-Burnham (1992) feels that not only clarity of purpose, but also good interpersonal relationships are necessary for any team if they are to work together effectively. West-Burnham (2001, p.21) considers social relationships define work for most people and that 'the more positive the relationships the more likely it is that individuals will be able to perform'. For Coleman and Bush (1994, p.271) it is necessary to have 'team members who can work together in a complementary fashion'. Even so, Reynolds (2001) claims that there is a commonly held

understanding that interpersonal relations among staff members within a school are difficult to change.

Of course, it is equally important for the senior supervisory assistant to assume the role of team leader and to lead the team in an appropriate manner. According to Moos and Dempster (1998), the way in which leaders perceive their own role will fashion how they perform the job. Watson (1996, p.263) argues that it is the meaning that individuals attach to their jobs that is crucial for how 'they think and act with regard to their work'. Intriguingly, it is asserted that humour is a vital ingredient in working life (Collinson, 1996). This is said to both define the working group and to relieve the more monotonous characteristics of the job. It is alleged that fun provides higher energy levels which leads to individuals having a greater commitment to work activities (Whitaker, 1998).

Lack of training: If adults are to closely supervise children's playtime activities with the emphasis on control and intervention then there is a very strong demand for suitable training (Blatchford, 1996; Ryall and Goddard, 2003). According to the DfES (1, 2004), there should be, 'Trained, experienced supervisors training new recruits'. Rose (TES, 1999) maintains, 'Training helps people to feel they are being taken seriously and that they do matter' by helping to raise self-esteem. Nonetheless, supervisor training presents a difficulty because Local Management of Schools is said to favour the training needs of other staff (Sharp, 1994). It is additionally concluded that the day-to-day budget for the provision of adequate lunchtime supervision is a very poorly resourced area (*op cit*).

In spite of such shortcomings, it is recommended that supervisor training on behaviour management, child protection, bullying, play, how to communicate effectively with children, how to work in a multicultural environment, and also knowledge of first aid would be very beneficial (Rose, TES, 2000). Blatchford (1989) also suggests that instruction on both Local Authority and school policies would prove useful. In addition, it is argued training ought to

be developed by LEA advisory staff and that sessions might be established by both the LEA and school heads and deputies and it 'could be compulsory' (Blatchford, *op cit*, p.79).

What is more, Ross and Ryan (1990) consider ancillary staff need to be treated in the same manner as teaching staff by having regular training workshops. Titman (1992) feels schools should implement their own 'in-service' training schemes; while Sharp and Blatchford (1994) conclude clusters of schools could unite to provide appropriate ongoing learning opportunities amongst themselves. This idea is supported by Glatter, MacBeth and Deem (1993) who advise that 'cluster' schools might cooperate to develop a wide range of in-service activities. Nevertheless, Reynolds (1989, p.39) claims 'insecure staff groups are ... least likely to take up any form of in-service exercise'. Helpfully, McCall and Lawlor (2000) feel learning is far more effective when it is fully integrated with workplace activity. However, it is accepted that there is a requirement for staff to implement changes to their practice as a result of any knowledge gained (Fullan, 1991).

According to O'Neill (1994), it is crucial to establish a positive learning culture within the school and a wide variety of development activities could be introduced. These would involve both individual and group learning, delivered sessions, reflective self-analysis and action learning. Additionally, Osterman and Kottkamp (1994) claim practitioners gain greater insights into the impact of their own performance through the realms of reflective practice. For Harrison (2003, p.31), 'It is the way in which people use knowledge to solve problems they encounter in practice settings which can be said to characterise professional activity'.

Midday supervisors' career structure: One further point of some note is the recommendation by Rose (TES, 1999) that supervisory assistants not only require suitable training sessions but they should also receive regular career reviews. It is further suggested (Ryall and Goddard, 2003, p.78) that there should be regular reviews of 'current performance preferably through

appraisal'. According to Blandford (2000, p.144), 'the purpose of appraisal is to motivate and develop individual staff members'. Whitaker (1998, p.60) thus proposes that individual schools need to take into account the personal and career ambitions of each staff member 'however lowly their status may traditionally have been perceived'.

The changing breaktime situation

It will have been determined that change has become a prominent feature of primary school breaktimes. Fullan (2001b, p.30) concludes that, 'Change may come about either because it is imposed on us (by natural events or deliberate reform) or because we voluntarily participate or even initiate change' through discontent with the prevailing situation. Issues relating to the transformations taking place (both within and outside the school), together with an identified need for further developments, as depicted in the relevant literature, all exert an influence. It is argued here that such issues can generally be expressed under four broad (but not mutually exclusive) categories (shown in Figure 1.1). These are as follows:

Social issues including: children's noted lack of outdoor play opportunities; identification of bullying as a problem; perceived deteriorations in pupils' behaviour; recognition of isolated children in the playground leading to the introduction of social support systems; and recent pupil involvement in the decision making process via pupil councils.

Educational issues including: the introduction of the National Curriculum; a greater emphasis on academic attainment; an increase in technology with the resulting escalation in children's sedentary pastimes; recognition of the importance of physical education and exercise; acknowledgement that children need real experiences; and an increase in

extra-curricular adult-led activities encroaching on what has traditionally been pupil's free time.

Political issues including: the introduction of self-managing schools (LMS); increases in special needs pupils in main stream schools; greater emphasis on parental involvement in schools; introduction of healthy schools initiatives; school workforce reforms; greater emphasis on having a well trained workforce; and Government directives on written policies that schools must now produce.

Institutional issues including: the introduction of Early Years Units; security and safety aspects; maintenance of school grounds; reductions in breaktimes; moves towards a more collaborative working style; use of INSET (in-service education and training) days for playground related matters; and policy formation.

Managing Change

Dalton *et al* (2001a, p.x) claim that, 'Improvement is one of today's watchwords' and, as previously suggested, many schools have recently been seeking ways of improving breaktimes (Blatchford, 1994). Nonetheless, it is maintained by the DfEE that, 'Major change can take a long time to embed' (NPQH, Unit 3.2, 2001, p.21). Arguably, improvements to primary school playtimes can sometimes be difficult to achieve given the wide range of interacting factors involved in determining a successful outcome. Hallinger and Kantamara (2003, p.123) conclude there are both 'change obstacles and change strategies', which serve to influence end results. Fullan (2001b, p.239) reasons that, 'Problems are so complex and context dependent to solve that they must be worked on all the time'. There is an added problem in that schools already face an overwhelming barrage of externally mandated change and may thus be experiencing 'change overload' (Brighouse and Woods, 1999).

However, school initiated change occurs when there is some dissatisfaction with current practice (Fullan, 1991). As such, 'School initiated change' requires 'local leadership, local agreement and local effort' (Moos and Dempster, 1998, p.105). Nonetheless, it is accepted that it may be far from easy to get colleagues to recognise the need to move forward (Waters, 1996). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that staff may lack both the energy and enthusiasm to participate in the process of change (Preedy, 1993). It may well be, too, that individuals and groups foster negative attitudes towards the proposed change thus forming a potent collective barrier towards any recommendations. As stated, it is easy to minimise the complexities of the change process (Fullan, 2001a and 2001b). It is further emphasised that 'successful strategies always involve relationships, relationships, relationships' (*op cit*, p.70). Nevertheless, as Trafford (2001, p.17) strongly maintains, 'In managing any organisation, however small or simple, there will be conflicts from time to time'.

Crucially, McCall and Lawlor (2000) claim that almost everyone is predisposed to resist change. This is said to be for a number of reasons, including threats to status and security. In addition, staff may believe there are no suitable improvements, or viable alternatives, to current practice due to ingrained work patterns. Additionally, staff might lack confidence in their ability to manage the change process. Moreover, some staff may be naturally obstructive towards change, although it is felt that 'no organisation is inherently anti-change' (*op cit*, p.44) and Fullan (2003, p.196) suggests considering 'the possibility that resisters have some good points to make'. Busher (2001) alleges that some people will resist change because of the values they hold. O'Neill and West-Burnham (2001, p.5) therefore argue that the workgroup can 'exert a powerful influence on individual action' both in terms of elaboration and constraint. Nevertheless, there are a variety of strategies for promoting innovation (Harris, 2001). These include having open discussions with staff and taking a collaborative approach (Hargreaves, 1992; Dalton *et al*, 2001b; Reynolds, 2001). Fullan (2001b, p.xiii) strongly asserts that, 'The answer is for individuals, especially in interaction with others, to

arm themselves with knowledge of the change process and to refine it continually through reflective action’.

The change process is usefully depicted in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.3 as a four-step course of action (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). It is cyclic in nature as shown in Figure 3.3. Fullan (1992) highlights a requirement to support staff during the implementation process because any change necessarily takes time. The psychological process of understanding something new gradually evolves and therefore ‘shared cognition is a vital component in making meaningful change a reality’ (Fullan, 1991, p.45). All concerned need to have a sense of ownership in the change process (Mortimore *et al*, 2000). Titman (1992, p.15) argues that it is ‘essential that everyone understands and supports the rationale for change’ and that all are completely clear about the aims and objectives. As previously explained, there is also a consensus in the literature that pupils should be fully involved in changes to breaktimes.

While Lewis (1998) is of the opinion that children should be included in the decision-making process, she does warn that some children might have unrealistic expectations about possible playground activities. Additionally, it is argued that pupils need to be made fully aware of how others might be affected by any breaktime modifications (Ross and Ryan, 1990). White (1988) stresses that it is vital to consult pupils about their breaktime experiences. One consideration is that there should be whole class discussions about children’s playground encounters and pupils could use questionnaires or interview schedules to consult their peers (Ross and Ryan, *op cit*).

However, Sheat and Beer (1994, p.91) advise of the need to guard against ‘tokenism’ when consulting children. These authors feel there is a possibility teachers will involve children because it ‘sounds like a good idea’ with the result that children’s contributions may become trivialised (*ibid*). Flutter (2006, p.191) maintains that effective participation ‘requires more than short-term, one-off or tokenistic strategies’. Cowie (1994) therefore warns of a requirement for genuine power-sharing if children are to participate

satisfactorily in playground matters. Suggestions for children's involvement in the change process include: asking children to design appropriate playground apparatus (Tizard *et al*, 1988); requesting that children produce drawings of ideal playtime situations (Sheat and Beer, 1994); and asking children to compile a playground contract (Sheat and Beer, *op cit*). Nonetheless, Hendricks (2001, p.198) cautions that involving children demands sensitivity and presents the following arguments:

The process of involving children is a time consuming one – it doesn't work if they are set to list what they want or to draw pictures of the play equipment they would like. There needs to be time to study and talk through what should happen outside including looking at other types of spaces and other school yards. The process should include time and opportunities to identify what the children like to do outside now and where they like to do it and what they do not like.

Hendricks also maintains children quickly understand whether this is a real process or whether they are being used as 'window dressing' (*ibid*). It is reasoned that, 'If children are simply asked what they want and then the adults decide what can be done the children end up disillusioned about their ability to influence the form of their public space' (*ibid*). When improvements are made it is essential to question 'whether activities are enabling, productive and beneficial' (Ross and Ryan, 1990, p.72). This process thereby establishes the effectiveness of the outcomes; although judging how effective any changes have been can be problematic.

Effectiveness of change outcomes

Ouston (2003, p.260), argues that, 'Effective change is very context dependent'. This would seem to link to the individuality of schools. Furthermore, questions arise as to who will define the criteria that will determine whether there has subsequently been a 'successful solution' to the outcomes of change (Bennett, 2001, p.110). Moreover, there are questions as

to who will make these judgements and whether this rests with those within the organisation, or whether it is parents (as 'customers'), or whether instead decisions remain with others (for instance, government inspectors). Bennett (1993a) concludes there are likely to be different perspectives from each of these groups. Fullan (2001b, p.110) makes the salient point that, 'No one knows for sure what is best'.

In addition, Fidler (2001) claims that it is sometimes difficult to provide sufficient evidence to show that desired improvements have been achieved and Dalton *et al* (2001b, p.141) judge that any 'concept of best practice is complex'. Bennett (1993b) claims that expectation of achievement is a key consideration. West-Burnham (1994) reasons effectiveness is the extent to which intentions have been translated into observable change. According to Bennett (1993a), effectiveness is the relationship between planned achievement and actual achievement. Beare *et al* (1989) refer to effectiveness as simply goal accomplishment. 'Goals can be big or small, short or long term, and easy or challenging' (Higgins and Davey, 2006, p.7). It is held by West-Burnham *et al* (1995, p.25) that the clearest definition of effectiveness is the 'attainment of stated outcomes'.

Previous investigations

Much existing literature in the area under review centres on specific aspects of the playground situation. Perhaps this is only to be expected given that such a course facilitates an in-depth focus on a particular issue of relevance. Nevertheless, there remains a need to comprehensively investigate the very wide range of interacting processes which are involved in the management of primary sector playtimes. Importantly, Blatchford and Sharp (1994) have suggested that there is a general lack of regard for the various interconnected issues. Some investigations show limited concern for the overall situation and fail to look at the wider picture even though it is stressed there is a need to

'consider all aspects of management policy and practice' (Titman, 1994, p.116).

For instance, while Titman's (1994) research is extensive and covers many of the points previously discussed, especially the impact of the school environment on pupils' attitudes, even this study is not all inclusive. There is no mention, for example, of pupils with special needs, although it is acknowledged that there has been a steady increase of such children in mainstream schools (Blatchford, 1998). Nor is there any discussion on the importance of the transition stages (particularly pre-school to infant), although commentators are of the opinion that reception pupils can experience distinct difficulties in the playground (Hurst, 1994). According to Hurst (*op cit*), first impressions are important. Blatchford (1989) suggests young children can be overwhelmed by large numbers of noisy pupils.

Others, too, have concluded that 'problems need to be tackled on a variety of levels' (Ross and Ryan, 1990, p.3). Certainly, Ross and Ryan (*op cit*) provide a very detailed account of innovations to breaktimes in Islington schools. Even so, there is again no mention of the requirements of the very youngest pupils. Nothing is said either about the manner in which children enter and exit the play space, although this is felt to be an exceptionally troublesome issue (Blatchford, 1989). Likewise, a study by Lewis (1998), which is fairly broad-based, completely disregards these highly salient aspects.

Essentially, there also remains a need to investigate the potential repercussions that playground duty (supervision) can have on those involved, particularly teaching staff. This vital aspect is one which appears to have been largely ignored by researchers in this area. Moreover, analysts have generally provided only limited mention of the substantial problems resulting from inclement weather. So, while there has been an unparalleled amount of research into primary sector playtimes in recent years, the current study uniquely investigates and integrates a wider range of factors of relevance.

Résumé

This chapter has provided an extensive, critical review of current literature relating to breaktimes and the management of change. Initially, methods used by other researchers in this field were explored and both qualitative and quantitative methods were judged appropriate for different aspects of the situation. Following this, the significance of both the cultural and physical environments of the school were spotlighted in relation to change. The individuality of the school's culture, ethos and institutional bias was emphasised. It was suggested that there were both 'problem' and 'romantic' views of playground life. Concern was expressed regarding the traditionally poor condition of school grounds. It was proposed that children's play spaces could potentially be made far more interesting and that this would impact favourably on pupils' behaviour. Children's health and safety in the playground received due attention and issues were linked with societal changes, such as children's present-day sedentary lifestyles and lack of opportunity to explore risk-taking situations. The need to increase children's physical activity levels was explained.

Attention then turned to financial matters with regard to breaktime improvements. It was judged schools are now more able to deploy capital to improve school grounds but that additional fund-raising might also be required. The debate then moved to changes in the structure of the school day and the resultant reduction in pupils' free time, which is largely linked to curriculum demands and behavioural difficulties. Some commentators have judged this move to be undesirable. Also examined were matters relating to school policies. The particular problems experienced by the very youngest pupils and any potential improvements were then briefly analysed. Subsequently, problems posed by the weather were reviewed with the conclusion that there is a requirement for suitable all-weather outside areas. Parental issues then came to the fore with consideration of the greater accountability schools now face. This was followed by an in-depth look at the

child's need for free play and a feeling in some quarters that children nowadays actually lack the ability to play. There is a view that traditional games are in decline. The importance of the school playground for children's social development was then discussed along with gender and racial issues. Girls and boys were noted to favour different playground activities with football being the main pursuit of boys. 'Friendship squads' were discussed in relation to supporting isolated pupils.

Breaktime behaviour was subsequently highlighted. This was judged to be a matter of increasing concern and the need for smaller play situations for those pupils experiencing difficulty in the outdoor school environment was discussed. The introduction of social skills training (circle time) was duly examined. The ambiguity of rough-and-tumble play was acknowledged. Following on from this, the debate moved to arguments surrounding the idea that there was now a requirement to produce a specific written policy for playtimes. The changing role of the playground supervisor was also reviewed. Consideration was given to the key issue of whether or not adults should intervene in children's free-choice playground activities. Arguments on both sides received attention and it was suggested that behaviour levels improved when play was adult-led. On the other hand, compelling claims were also presented that children's social development would be impaired if games were adult-structured.

Leading on from this, it was alleged that all adults involved in playground supervision should be suitably trained for this increasingly demanding and important task. The particular difficulties of newly qualified teachers were discussed. The role of the lunchtime supervisory assistant was highlighted. It was maintained that both training and also an appropriate career structure would raise the status of these largely under-valued staff. It was noted that change has now become a prominent feature of the breaktime situation. Not all change, however, would be considered effective. This is a crucial factor when any improvements are contemplated. A whole-school approach with the full involvement of pupils is the one most favoured by commentators. The chapter concluded with a critique of previous studies and argued that a fully

holistic inquiry was still lacking. The manner in which the current study sought to comprehensively investigate breaktime change is revealed in the next chapter where the research methods are discussed at length.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methods

Introduction

Chapter Three details the methods used to investigate the areas of concern raised in the literature reviewed in the previous chapter. The management of primary sector breaktimes represents a particularly complex area of inquiry due to the wide variety of interacting factors involved (shown in Appendix 1). The chosen methodology therefore needed to fully reflect this complexity in order to answer the main research question: What is the existing situation relating to primary sector breaktimes, what changes have been made and to what effect, and how can breaktimes be further improved? The decisions taken regarding the appropriateness of a largely qualitative approach are discussed in detail. The importance of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument is comprehensively explored. The chapter also amply explores the overall research design and the four phases of the investigation. Ethical considerations are given due attention.

The selection of a case study mode of inquiry is justified and the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach are fully debated. It is maintained that a case study form of inquiry allows the identification of a variety of interactive processes. An outline of the various data collection instruments is provided. From the research literature surveyed it quickly became apparent that a multi-method manner of exploration was essential for this study. The chapter examines issues of validity and reliability and suggests that triangulation by the use of more than one investigative method is required to increase confidence in the findings. The need for documentary evidence, together with observational and interview techniques, is discussed. The sampling procedures used are explained with some thoroughness.

To accompany the case study mode a questionnaire survey was judged to be essential. This technique is extensively scrutinised and there is a focus on the advantages and disadvantages of using this procedure. Ultimately, the ability of a questionnaire to yield a substantial amount of data as concisely as possible (Robson, 1993) made it the most desirable method. Change management, which represents the final stage of the inquiry, is considered in depth. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis strategy and establishes that the educational management literature is used as a tool for the interpretation of the information obtained. Both content analysis and grounded theory are discussed, together with the necessity to link both the qualitative and quantitative data that has been gathered. However, data gathering, analysis and presentation are primarily related to the researcher's ability to 'select appropriately' (O'Neill *et al*, 1997, p.29) whilst maintaining an 'open-minded approach' to the inquiry (*op cit* p.14).

Research approach

Importantly, there is a demand for researchers at 'all levels to question, discuss and justify the approach they have taken' (O'Neill *et al*, 1997, p.11). According to Hayes (2001, p.76), 'there is rarely a single correct way of conducting any research project'. Within the realms of educational research it is also reasoned that a variety of techniques will be appropriate and that there is no one standard method (Armsby *et al*, 1998). For the current study it was decided that a largely qualitative approach (to investigate current breaktime practice at the selected schools) would be the most suitable, although it is accepted that both analysis and interpretation can prove problematic in qualitative studies (Hammersley *et al*, 1994). Nevertheless, of essence to this investigation was a requirement to 'focus on natural settings' and this is a salient feature of qualitative research (Hammersley, Gomm and Woods, 1994, p.50).

In contrast to the use of 'scientific techniques' (Bell, 1993, p.5) associated with quantitative methods the major part of the present inquiry demanded a narrative mode. Such a mode is contextually embedded and pursues particular connections between events to provide meaning. Stenhouse (1975, pp. 116-117) suggests this is 'through the use of criteria and conceptual frameworks.' Maxwell (1996) is additionally informative in claiming qualitative investigations are naturally inductive and grounded. For the current study it was considered vital to investigate how those involved conceive their worlds in relation to breaktimes. This could only be accomplished through qualitative processes.

Easterby-Smith *et al* (1994, p.83) provide an illuminating discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the phenomenological paradigm and accompanying qualitative methods, suggesting that one of its strengths is the ability to gather data in a natural rather than an artificial way. Furthermore, that it facilitates the capacity to investigate change over time. This particular aspect was an essential component of the study. Even so, the data collection is often very time-consuming. Additionally, it is noted that the qualitative approach could be accused of being 'impressionistic, subjective, biased' and 'lacking in precision' as well as being a 'high-risk, low-yield enterprise' (Hammersley *et al*, *op cit*, p.50 onwards).

In order to withstand such charges it is argued that it is vital to incorporate certain procedures into the research, such as making only appropriate claims, developing reflexivity, and providing a tightness of fit between data collection, analysis and theory (*ibid*). In addition, it is essential to take account of the researcher's interpersonal skills and to 'fine tune' the self in order to develop both observational and interviewing techniques, as well as to engender trust. It is in this way that the researcher becomes an integral part of the research process. Additionally, 'a good researcher creates his or her own opportunities for serendipity' (Kruse and Seashore Louis, 2003, p.165).

It is claimed (Marshall, 1997) that investigators will bring different preconceptions and attitudes to the scenario being observed and will therefore

focus on different aspects of the situation thereby providing different interpretations of events. Maxwell (1996) emphasises personal experience is of direct relevance and Cresswell (1994) alleges the researcher will bring not only knowledge and prior understanding to the role, but that certain biases will inevitably shape the data collection. In respect of the current project, because the making of recommendations for improved practice is a salient feature, the role adopted by the researcher also becomes one of agent for change. Moreover, although every effort has been made to achieve objectivity, it is acknowledged that personal involvement in the area of study (as a teacher) has undoubtedly allowed biases to fashion, not only the data collection and interpretation, but also the presentation of the study. However, information has been collected in a manner that is judged to be partly independent of the investigator.

The design of the investigation

A useful definition of research design is given by Easterby-Smith *et al* (1994, p.21) who propose, 'It is the overall configuration of a piece of research: what kind of evidence is gathered from where, and how such evidence is interpreted in order to provide good answers to the basic research question'. Cohen and Manion (1994, p.135) take the view that the research design is simply a form of action plan which facilitates 'getting from here to there'. Maxwell feels there is a demand to create a coherent design in which the 'different methods fit together compatibly' (1999, p.81), while Marshall and Gretchen (1989) stress the need to build in flexibility. Comprehensive guidance is provided by Marshall and Gretchen (1989, p.50) who determine the research design should include each of the following aspects:

- site and sample selection
- researcher's role management, including entry, reciprocity and ethics
- research strategies
- data collection techniques
- managing and recording data

- data analysis strategies
- management plan time line and feasibility analysis.

A cautionary note is expressed by Walford (1991, p.2) who concludes that, while traditional textbooks are necessary for understanding about research, they take little account of the 'political and social realities of actual research practice'.

The present investigation has been divided into four stages. Each stage has therefore informed the activities to be undertaken in the succeeding phase.

- 1) Initially, an in-depth case study of one school, using multiple methods of data collection (Yin, 1994a) provided information on significant issues relating to playtimes.
- 2) A questionnaire survey of all primary sector headteachers within the Local Education Authority was undertaken.
- 3) Follow up small-scale case studies were carried out in a sample of those schools identifying good practice in the required area.
- 4) Incorporating ideas from 3) above, it was intended to improve current practice in the main case study school.

This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.2.

Ethical considerations

In conducting this study appropriate regard has been given to various ethical concerns outlined in the research literature. As this investigation involved a number of contributors it became vital to consider, not just what would be effective research, but also what would be morally acceptable practice. Sieber (1992, p.6), for instance, notes the need to have 'voluntary informed consent' from all participants. The informants were therefore provided with a suitable explanation of the aims of this study and participation by all individuals has been entirely voluntary. It is further concluded that, because the research might be considered to be intrusive (Cresswell, 1994) and there could be an

invasion of privacy (Kane, 1987), the participants may feel vulnerable once they have given the required information (Simons, 1984). As such, it was felt necessary to be sensitive to participants' needs while simultaneously building up a relationship of trust. Additionally, care has been taken to protect the interests of all individuals involved (Marshall, 1997). Informants were invited to check the information recorded at the various interviews in order to ensure that the opinions given had been accurately documented.

Furthermore, matters of both confidentiality and anonymity were duly explained to participants and these have been meticulously maintained throughout. Even so, as Walford (1991, p.97) acknowledges, 'it is easier to explain confidentiality and the purpose of research to adults than it is to children'. Extra consideration was given to this issue and simple accounts were therefore provided. In addition, Sieber (1992, p.113) suggests that where child participants are subject to minimal risk 'parental permission may be waived'. In view of the fact that the child interviewees were to remain anonymous and the subject matter is a familiar part of everyday school life (and the researcher is an experienced teacher) it was expected that the risk would indeed be minimal. However, because minors were involved in this project it was essential to first obtain permission from the 'adults responsible' (headteachers), and also from the 'young people themselves' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.352). Finally, heed was taken of Walford's (*op cit*, p.91) suggestion that it is imperative to 'be careful not to antagonize anyone' and also to become part of the background.

Researcher's diary

Throughout the research period a diary was kept in which reflections, suggestions, activities, progress and feedback were chronicled. In case study investigations the process of data collection and analysis are continual and interconnected with preliminary data analysis informing subsequent data

collection. As a consequence, a researcher's diary has a particularly invaluable role to play and becomes a vital part of the research process.

Case study

As it was necessary to investigate multiple issues relevant to existing breaktime practice the most fitting mode for the present investigation was deemed to be a case study approach. The primary sources of data collection were the main and sample schools and only the case study mode could recognise the complexity of social research of this kind. According to Swetman (2000, p.39), case studies are concerned with 'examining events and facets of the focused area in a meticulous and systematic way'. Case studies are regarded to be the quintessential phenomenological research strategy, involving a diversity of techniques that can include both qualitative and quantitative data collection. It is judged that 'multi-method designs allow for different types of data to be used in complementary ways, providing a holistic picture of a phenomenon' (Kruse and Seashore Louis, 2003, p.149).

Johnson (1994, p.20) describes the case study as investigating 'a contemporary phenomenon within its real context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident'. Even so, it is noted that a case study approach lacks scientific rigour and the possible uniqueness of the material means the results are not usually generalisable. Significantly, however, Johnson (*ibid*) believes the case study approach is especially suited to the resources of an individual researcher, particularly within the workplace. This was the situation in respect of the main school under investigation at the commencement of the project when the in-depth case study began.

The case study mode was additionally selected because it allows the identification of a variety of interactive processes which could not be detected by a large-scale survey (Bell, *op cit*). Furthermore, Armsby *et al* (1998, p.28) consider, 'Case studies allow the researcher to develop a full picture of their subject of study at a particular point in time, often taking into account the

interaction of factors that have led to the present situation'. It was essential for this research to uncover any previously undetected interconnections, or interrelationships, in order to bring forth fresh insights and to generate novel ways of thinking about any problems located within the parameters of the investigation. Only a case study mode raised this possibility.

Case study is an approach that explores and incorporates as many as possible of the variables impacting upon the situation being investigated. This was a key aspect of the present project. In this way a rich description can be obtained because the investigator is compelled to interpret the deeper meanings and cultural/subcultural implications of the descriptive data acquired. Yin (1994a) presents a very detailed examination of case study methods and suggests this process allows the investigator access to the unique perceptions of the individuals involved. By its very nature, the case study mode allows the influence of micropolitics upon the institution to be examined. This was crucial for the present study as the literature reviewed suggested it could be an important factor in managing change.

Bell (1993) makes a valuable contribution to the debate by stating that organisations will each have their own common and unique features. It thus becomes the task of the researcher to identify these features and to indicate the ways in which they modify and influence how an organisation functions. A case study can therefore produce a three-dimensional or well-rounded picture which illuminates the patterns of influence arising in a specific context. Essential to the success of a case study are the social skills which the researcher possesses, and the human relationships which are developed during the course of the investigation (*ibid*). While it is usually recognised that a case study produces unique material, Yin (1994b, p.143) reasons 'analytic generalization' is possible.

One additional consideration of direct relevance to this project relates to the fact that a case study can be used to compliment a larger scale survey (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). In this respect, Bell (1993, p.8) considers a case study can be used either to put 'flesh on the bones of a survey' or, alternatively, can precede

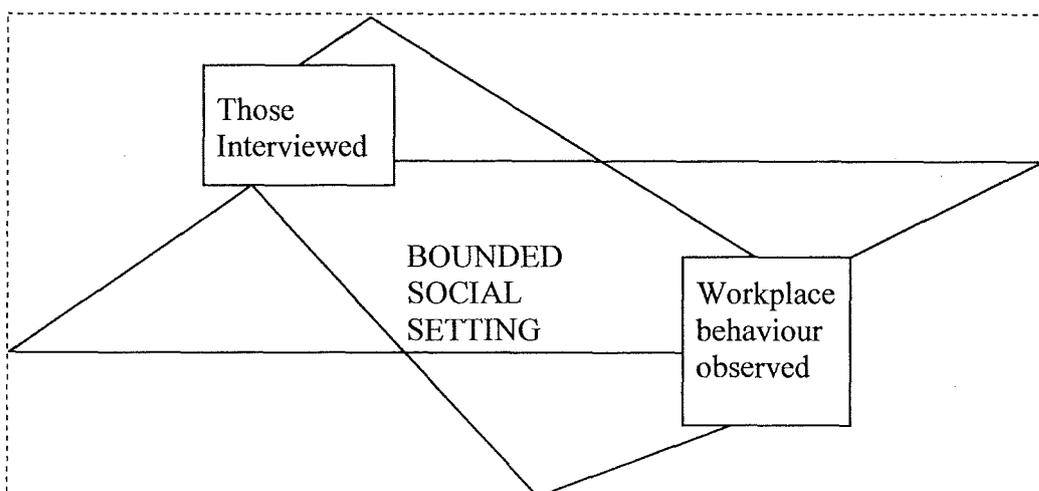
a survey to enable the identification of central issues which can then be further explored. It is this second attribute which has greatest relevance for this investigation. The initial in-depth case study afforded valuable insights into various aspects of the area under examination, many of which were subsequently incorporated into the questionnaire survey (for example, time spent at break; problems with indoor breaktimes; alternative breaks for staff completing break duty; training for supervisory assistants; buddy systems; and playground induction arrangements).

Gathering the evidence

In gathering the evidence for this inquiry particular credence has been given to Tindall's (1994, p.157) argument that it is crucial to 'recognize that *all* research is constructed, that no knowledge is certain ... and that different understandings, different ways of knowing, exist'. It is once more stressed that, 'Since no investigation of the social world can be completely value-free, all claims to knowledge will reflect the value stance adopted' (Wallace and Poulson, 2003, p.31).

In the construction of the present inquiry the main techniques for case study data collection at all relevant settings were interviews and direct observations. However, documentary evidence was also obtained in order to provide a fuller account, together with photographic records of each location.

Figure 3.1 Interconnected data (based on Holliday, 2002, p.39)



Holliday (2002, p.79) argues that data collection in bounded social settings provides an important means of obtaining a 'thick description'. It is judged that observations and interviews are socially connected within this confined group locale . Consequently, they interconnect via an environment which gives them meaning (Figure 3.1).

Triangulation

Importantly, Tooley (1998, p.43) has concluded that a 'lack of triangulation' is a key problem in social research. According to Cohen and Manion (1994, p.233), triangulation involves 'the use of two or more methods of data collection' to study a particular aspect of human behaviour. Kruse and Seashore Lewis (2003, p.166) maintain, 'Qualitative methodology has long held the tradition of triangulation as a form of increasing the validity of findings and conclusions', which Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2001, p.159) suggest might concern 'the validation of observational data through interview' (for example, children's playground activities) and Cohen and Manion (*op cit*) indicate could involve questionnaire responses corresponding to observations of the same event (for instance, alternative breaks for staff supervising morning playtime). Triangulation therefore became an essential component of the investigation. Triangulation is held to strengthen social research because obtaining evidence from several viewpoints resulting in 'a broadly similar picture' (Johnson, 1994, p.8) leads to greater confidence in any conclusions reached. Marshall (1997) indicates that we cannot begin to understand something unless we view it from many directions and in various ways. Furthermore, Bell (1993) points out that cross-checking of accounts from a variety of informants (for example, on the management of indoor breaktimes) for contrast and comparison purposes produces a well-rounded study.

Validity and Reliability

According to Easterby-Smith *et al* (1994, p.90), validity answers the question: 'Has the researcher gained full access to the knowledge and meaning of informants?' and reliability queries: 'Will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions?' For Berry (2004, p.119), 'The basic virtue of research is accuracy'. It is claimed by Hammersley *et al* (1994, p.62) that validity in any qualitative research rests with the following aspects:

- the use of unobtrusive measures as a safeguard that the data reflect the scene studied
- respondent validation
- triangulation

In order to increase validity therefore it was necessary for this investigation to fully address each of these issues (each is discussed elsewhere in the relevant context). In respect of construct validity, which Yin (1994b) feels is a criticism of the case study approach because of the subjective judgements being made, multiple sources of evidence have been used throughout this project.

Validity has also been increased by studying the informants in normal settings in some depth. Riley (1990, p.151) alleges this gives the best chance of 'producing ideas that are close to reality'. Nonetheless, some acceptance has been made of Silverman's (1993, p.163) assertion that a critical reader might not be persuaded by 'claims made on the basis of a few selected examples'. Therefore, where appropriate, deviant examples have been cited and explained (for instance, staff attitudes to break duty and indoor breaktimes). Silverman (*ibid*) declares this increases confidence in the analysis presented.

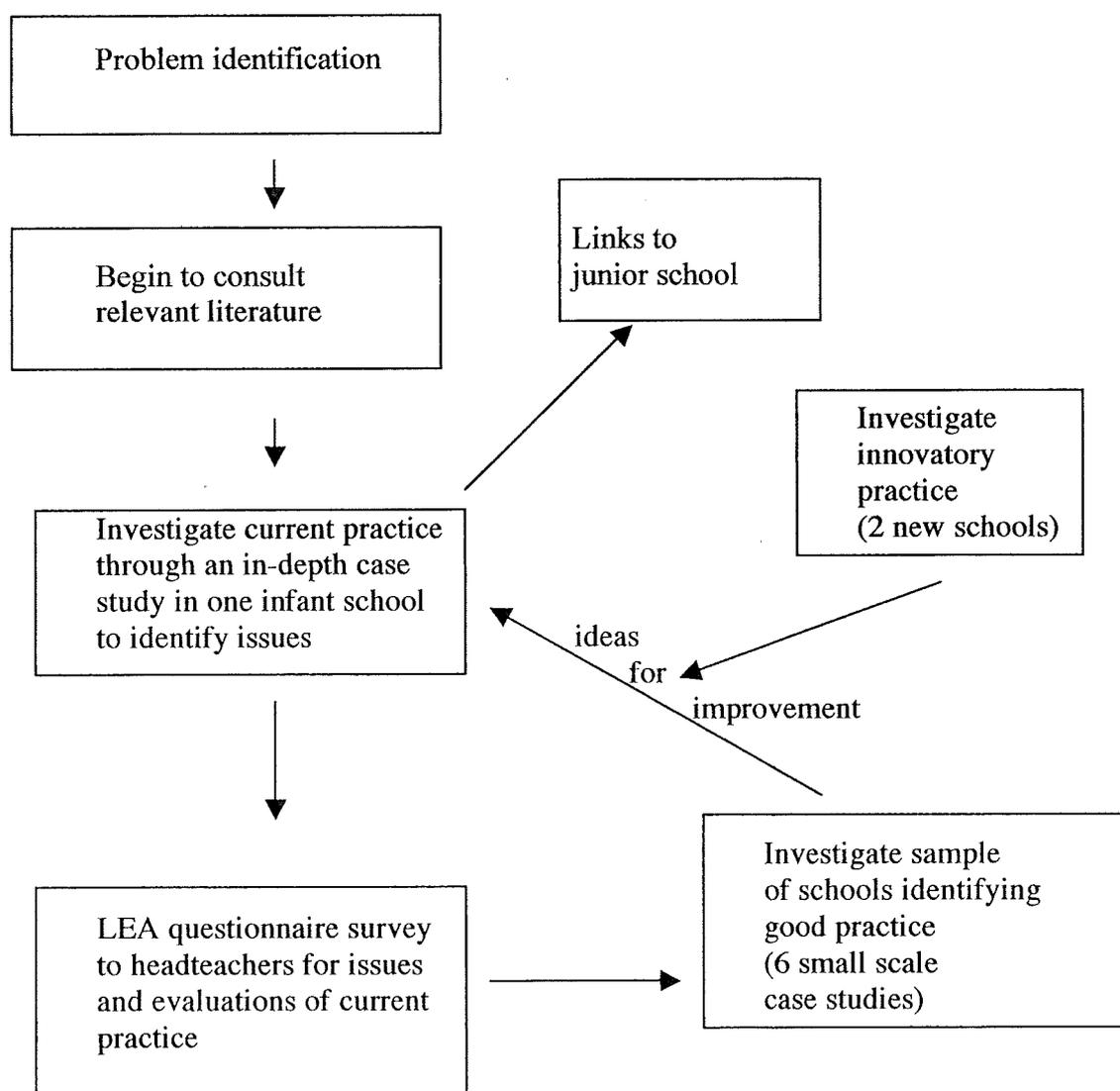
Furthermore, Allison and Race (2004, p.13) insist there is a need to 'select or devise appropriate data-collecting instruments that are valid and reliable' although acceptance is made that these 'ride largely on the skills of the researcher' (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p.6). Note has been taken, too, of Yin's (1989, p.102) suggestion that 'maintaining a chain of evidence'

increases reliability in case study research. The current study additionally endeavours 'to gather an "authentic" understanding of people's experiences' (Silverman, 1993, p.10) because Silverman concludes authenticity rather than reliability is the more frequent issue with qualitative research.

The research process

The research process is shown in diagrammatic form in Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2 The research process



Preliminary stage and Stage 1: in-depth case study

As revealed, the initial stages in the study were undertaken (in tandem with the literature review) to provide relevant information on issues of significance to breaktimes. In the preliminary stage practitioners had identified practice as a cause for concern and were beginning to seek improvement. This began with the lunchtime period. Two one-hour training sessions for the midday supervisors were observed, together with attendance at a subsequent meeting (30 minutes) between the headteacher and the training consultant. Eventually, the headteacher was consulted at length (30 minutes) to further assess any matters arising. As the researcher was employed (part-time) at the school there was obviously no difficulty with access. Existing practice was subsequently investigated in some depth to identify any prevailing difficulties.

Interviews

As previously explained, interviews became an essential feature of this investigation. In order to ascertain practitioners' views, attitudes and needs, together with deepening an understanding of playtime matters and potential problems, those staff supervising the playground at breaktimes and during the midday session were duly consulted. In addition, a number of pupils and parents were also questioned (Appendix 3). All interviews were completed with the full approval of the headteacher. It has been suggested (Cannold, 2001, p.191) that, 'The goal in collecting interview data is to generate theory.' However, Putwain (2006, p.29) maintains that, 'The choice of questions asked by an interviewer is influenced by their previous experience, beliefs and theoretical perspective'.

In the adult interview situation it additionally became feasible to further explore any impressions given. Where necessary participants were asked for fresh clarification and there was some reflective probing. This flexibility would not have been possible if questionnaires had been used instead. It is acknowledged, however, that an interview presents a 'very artificial situation'

(McNeill, 1990, p.47). It has also been suggested that a lack of trust can result in the interviewee telling the researcher only those things which they consider the researcher is likely to want to hear (Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991). Furthermore, it needs to be fully recognised that 'people are quite capable of saying one thing and doing another' even if they are unaware of this (McNeill, *ibid*). McNeill terms this the 'Interview effect' (*ibid*).

For this investigation the questions for both the children's and school staffs' interviews were devised with the research objectives and background reading firmly in mind in order to construct a series of items of particular relevance to current breaktime practice, participant satisfaction and areas for improvement. It was judged this would ensure that answers obtained would be applicable to the issues which the study sought to investigate. It was also possible to include items that have generally been neglected by other researchers in the field (for example, the impact on staff of undertaking break duty). The resulting interview schedules were adhered to somewhat rigidly to prevent the inquiry from deviating too far from the original purposes. Nonetheless, the questions were held to be sufficiently open-ended to encourage the exposition of individual views (Appendices 4 and 5).

It has been argued (Marshall and Gretchen, 1989) that the case study interview has its own style, and is usually of a loosely structured nature. The initial intention of such an interview is to allow participants to respond in their own unique manner. The researcher has a listening role at the start of the proceedings but adopts a more positive questioning strategy as the interview progresses. It is suggested (Wragg, 1994, p.272) that the semi-structured interview is the one most favoured because it affords respondents the chance to 'express themselves at some length' while preventing 'aimless rambling.' Such interviews are held to be 'focused' while also allowing some 'freedom within the topic' (Bell, 1993, p.4). 'In a semi-structured interview predetermined themes or questions are used but the order can be changed, depending on the response of the participant. Particular questions can be changed, additional questions can be added and inappropriate questions omitted' (Putwain, 2006, p.27). In addition, semi-structured interviews are

most appropriate for situations where more weight is given to gaining the convictions of a limited number of people than to ensuring information is supplied in a standardised form.

Of importance also is the location in which the interview takes place and, 'Neutral territory is recommended whenever available' (Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991, p.78). In the main case study school the majority of interviews therefore took place in a small side room (usually used for work with groups of pupils). This afforded a location which was free from interruption and was largely familiar to both staff and children. However, the youngest interviewees (reception pupils) were questioned in their own classrooms during the lunchbreak as this was considered to be a more appropriate setting for these very young children (hopefully providing a greater sense of security).

Considerable thought was given to the most suitable method to document the interview data. Tape recording was contemplated as this would have allowed eye contact with the participant to be sustained and would enable complete concentration on the interviewee. However, it was felt the use of a tape recorder might prove to be intimidating, making the interviewee reluctant to talk freely. Easterby-Smith *et al* (1991, p.79) point out audio tape recording can lead to anxiety regarding confidentiality, resulting in the loss of 'potentially revealing insights'. In addition, there follows the problem of what to do with the recording. It is further suggested that whilst the use of a tape recorder can aid data collection the transcribing can be 'considerable' (Johnson, 1994, p.48). Ultimately, therefore, it was decided that note taking would be the preferred method of recording interview data. This necessitated a more active form of listening in order to focus on what the participants were saying. Extra care was also needed to record verbatim comments which could subsequently be used to support the analysis, resulting in slightly more time being required.

In spite of this, due consideration was given to the overall length of the interviews. In the main case study school a stratified random sample (Kane, 1987; Allison *et al*, 1996) of child interviewees was selected (two boys and

two girls from each of the nine classes). The children's consultations were brief and were usually completed within 10 minutes. The staff interviews generally took no more than 20 minutes each. All staff and supervisory assistants were interviewed. The supervisory assistants were mostly interviewed within the space of half-an-hour (Appendix 4), although the interview with the senior lunchtime supervisory assistant lasted for 50 minutes, as she was questioned in greater depth including her perceptions of her leadership role. All SA interviews took place at the beginning of the autumn term when fewer children were staying at lunchtime and supervisory staff were thus more readily available. It was felt vital to obtain information on the perceptions, attitudes and needs of this group of participants to increase understanding of lunchtime supervision and who takes on this job. In due course, a number of supervisory assistants accepted a second post as a classroom assistant. In both this and other schools visited anyone in this position was reinterviewed (or interviewed) in respect of their dual role. This was in an open-ended manner solely in order to uncover opinions held relating to the twin role aspect.

The interviews with the children's parents were also of a less structured nature in order to effect a more open-ended approach in respect of parents' knowledge and opinions of school playtimes (Appendix 5). According to O'Neill *et al* (1997, p.33), 'Good practice demands that you match the type of interview to the sort of data you are attempting to gather', A more open form of approach was therefore considered appropriate because this provided the interviewees with 'more room to relate their view' (Allison *et al*, 1996, p.103). Cannold (2001, p.180) confirms that, 'open-ended questioning gives participants the freedom to answer questions as they wish'. Nevertheless, it is noted that certain weaknesses needed to be taken into account with this form of questioning, including margins of error and misunderstandings.

However, it was anticipated this method of inquiry would better enable the participants to 'open up' (*ibid*) and thereby disclose useful information. Allison *et al* summarise this type of interview as: 'Typically they operate to elicit responses which are more discursive, concerning the interviewee's

personal evaluation or attitudes towards a given issue or event' (*ibid*). (By simply asking parents for their general knowledge of breaktimes, together with any potential changes desired, it was felt that answers would also be likely to disclose parents' attitudes towards the playground situation.) It was judged that this would provide a better reflection of parents' views than methods (statement cards for group discussion) used by Ross and Ryan (1990). While the interview room was largely unfamiliar to parents it was nevertheless felt to provide a suitably relaxing, non-threatening venue for these particular participants.

Reaching parents in the main case study school who were available and willing to be interviewed proved to be a far more difficult task than had been anticipated. It was reasoned that the most appropriate time to interview individual parents would be in the morning when the children had been escorted to school and parents were therefore already on site. In the event, however, many parents were found to be in employment while others had younger children whom it was considered might be a distraction in an interview situation. Furthermore, a few parents were apparently apprehensive and thus unwilling to participate.

Consequently, following a number of negative responses, the headteacher published an endorsement of the importance of the research study in a parents' newsletter. In this way it eventually became possible to interview the parents of 18 children (six of each from reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and equal numbers of parents of girls and boys). Parents were interviewed individually and a large time investment was required (each interview lasting up to 60 minutes). It quickly became evident during the interview situation that many of these participants were developing their opinions during the course of the consultation, rather than simply relating preformed ideas. This may have been because school breaktime was not necessarily a subject at the forefront of people's minds. The interviews again provided an occasion on which to probe for meaning and gave the opportunity to reflect back impressions of what had been disclosed. The interviewees were invited to check the accuracy of the

transcripts and to make any alterations or additions to the raw data in order to reduce any misunderstandings or errors.

Direct observation

While it is argued (Nisbet and Watt, 1984) that interviews reveal people's perceptions regarding what has happened (rather than what might actually have occurred), direct observation of the events themselves is held to be rather more reliable. Observations were therefore deemed necessary to record actual playground happenings, rather than simply relying on the accuracy of informants. Rolfe (2001, p.227) claims that direct observation is, 'Probably the technique that practitioners use most, because it is the richest account of ongoing behaviour'. Given that the overall researcher role at that time was one of 'participant observation' (Mercer, 1991; Mac an Ghail, 1991; Marshall, 1997), the decision needed to be taken as to whether it would be beneficial to become an active participant, or whether to stand back and observe in a more dispassionate manner in the outdoor location. However, there was inevitably some participant observation as the children were already fully accustomed to having the researcher supervising the playground and thus some interactions with pupils took place. In spite of this, a conscious effort was made to step outside the situation and to observe in a more detached manner with the minimum of involvement. In other schools visited for the study the researcher was generally unknown and non-participant observation thus became a more feasible option.

Additionally, direct observation 'can range from formal to casual data collection' (Yin, 1989, p.91). Moreover, less formal observations can also be made during the course of field visits. The current investigation drew on a selection of observational styles in this way. For example, the initial four winter playground observations in the main case study school were carried out using a simple observation schedule based on Lewis (1998). This can be seen in Figure 6.3. Only instances of activities observed during two brief playground/hall scans (10 minutes each) undertaken each lunchbreak were

recorded. It was additionally felt necessary to supplement this information by noting relevant happenings of particular interest.

Even so, this method proved to be rather limited and did not provide a full picture of the children's activities and interactions. Subsequently, it was decided a richer portrayal would be obtained by producing a straightforward narrative account of all issues of significance to the investigation, which occurred throughout each of the five summer lunchtimes observed. In this manner games and behaviour were recorded and gender aspects were noted. This method was also used for both the morning breaktimes and the later playground observations in other schools (again observing throughout the whole of the break period). Hobart and Frankel (2004, p.38) maintain there are some disadvantages with this method in that it can be 'difficult to keep up with all that is happening' and 'an unwieldy amount of information may be produced'. In spite of this, heed was taken of the requirement to capture events as faithfully as possible as they happen (Robson, 1993).

A running record or 'descriptive narrative' (Rolfe, 2001, p.227) was kept which was free from inference and which followed Robson's (*op cit*, p.204) advice to make a 'conscious effort' to distribute attention as widely and evenly as possible. Notice was taken, too, of the necessity that all unstructured observation still needs to be systematic (Johnson, 1994), even though categories of behaviour and time units have been discarded. In this manner playground observations were completed by the researcher standing slightly to one side of the area under scrutiny. It was additionally possible to use these open-ended observations to produce divisions of behaviour to be looked for in supplementary surveillances (Faulkner *et al*, 1991). For instance, one child with special needs (emotional and behavioural difficulties) was observed throughout one breaktime and activities and interactions were thereby noted (Appendix 6). In addition, pupil/adult interactions were observed separately throughout one lunchtime and one breaktime. The junior playground squad ('buddies') were also observed separately on two occasions (firstly, to confirm or refute the headteacher's opinions and on the second occasion to ascertain

any improvement in practice). These observations were of 30 minutes duration.

Observations were undertaken in the main case study school during morning breaktimes and lunchtimes and also throughout both the winter and summer months (the literature suggests children's behaviour may differ at different times of the year). Moreover, the nursery children in the main case study school were observed during their first visit to the playground at morning breaktime (prior to school entry). In addition, these children were further observed (on two morning breaktimes and two lunchtimes) when they entered mainstream schooling (the literature acknowledges potential difficulties at this time). Furthermore, an observation was made of staff while the children were outside during morning playtime (the interview data had indicated that this was a valuable time for lesson preparation). Additionally, the senior lunchtime supervisory assistant was observed throughout one lunchbreak in order to gain a greater understanding of what this job entailed, following details supplied during her interview.

The recorder club was also studied for 30 minutes during one lunchtime (to register the impact on normal lunchtime routines) and indoor observations were completed in inclement weather throughout two morning playtimes and two midday sessions. (The interview data revealed that these could be problematic.) Written notes were made of all observations. Video recording was also considered but was eventually rejected. Tizard and Hughes (1991, p.25) helpfully advise that video recording can be 'cumbersome and intrusive in natural settings' and can prevent children from moving around freely. Such advice was felt to be especially relevant to the situation under observation. Yin (1989), however, does suggest that an investigator might contemplate taking photographs at the case study site. Photographic evidence was therefore obtained during visits to all schools (a total of 120 photographs were taken overall). This was used to supplement the written evidence and to act as an 'aide memoir'.

Documentary evidence

It was held to be essential to obtain all documents of relevance to the area of study. Nisbet and Watt (1984) believe it is vital to check documents to ascertain any decisions which have previously been made. In addition (as formerly mentioned), by analysing documents and records it becomes possible to provide triangulation of evidence that has been collected in other ways (O'Neill *et al*, 1997). Moreover, examining documents relevant to case studies 'may raise new questions about communications and networking within an organization' (Yin, 1989, p.86). There is one obvious advantage in collecting documentary evidence in that it already exists in a 'definite form' (O'Neill *et al*, *op cit*, p.58). Johnson (1994, p.25) makes a number of favourable points with regard to documentation analysis but also accepts that there can be difficulties. For example, insider knowledge may be required to make sense of the documents. On a more positive note Johnson (*ibid*) stresses that access is obtained to past issues/events and the method is unobtrusive.

It is advised that 'scrutiny of the documents will be guided by ... [the] research questions' (Faulkner *et al*, 1991, p.24). It was felt desirable to acquire:

- the behaviour policy (for references to playground conduct)
- the staff induction policy (for references to playground procedures)
- the Ofsted report (for breaktime mentions)
- the handbook for parents (this was partly to seek corroboration of the information given during various interviews and partly to gain further insights into the school's ethos and approach to breaktime mentions).
- job descriptions for supervisory assistants (for greater understanding of the role).

Stage 2: Questionnaire survey

The second phase of the investigation involved a questionnaire survey of all primary headteachers within the LEA (except the main case study school).

This was considered to be the most suitable strategy given that personal contact with each member of this group (64 in total) was not a viable option due to time constraints. Robson (1993) notes that such a technique is not without its problems and claims that any data so obtained are affected by the respondents' characteristics (for example, motivation, knowledge and memory). Furthermore, respondents may not report their attitudes and beliefs accurately (for instance, they may give a socially desirable response). McNeill (1990, p.47) supports this assumption by stating that, 'What people say when filling in questionnaires may not be the same thing as what they actually think or do' and, 'There is therefore a major potential problem with the validity of the findings of such research'. Crucially, McNiff *et al* (1996, p.98) suggest that issuing a questionnaire constitutes 'a political act' because questionnaires alert respondents 'to ideas not thought about before'.

One disadvantage of questionnaires is that self-administered surveys typically have low response rates (Robson, *op cit*). In spite of this, the many advantages of this technique made it the principal option. For instance, Robson (1993, p.128) concludes a survey is 'the easiest way of retrieving information about the past history of a large set of people ... providing large amounts of data ... in a short period of time'. Moreover, McNeill (1990, p.46) states the survey technique gives rise to data that can be expressed statistically enabling 'comparisons to be made between different groups and populations'. A questionnaire was therefore designed to yield elementary and background data for the main investigation. Accordingly, great care was needed in planning the answer sheet to ensure that it would bring forth the information required, linked to issues depicted in the areas shown in the conceptual framework (Figure 1.3), aspects highlighted at Brownlow infant school, and various related broad research questions. There was an aim to include a number of variables in order to ascertain whether there were common features in those schools identifying good practice.

Due attention was also paid to the overall length and complexity of the document in order not to reduce the headteachers' willingness to complete it. In accordance with Bell's (1993) recommendations, the questionnaire was first

piloted by willing volunteers who would not be involved in the final study but who were typical respondents. Allison *et al* (1996, p.95) advise that volunteers should be of a similar background to the target population (in this instance two former headteachers) and recommend noting down any 'lack of clarity for rewording'. This resulted in changes to the order of a number of questions posed. For example, questions relating to the SA training sessions (whether these were external meetings, or whether instead an external consultant visited the school) were reversed, as such questions were deemed to be unclear. May (2001, p.100) claims, 'The most important part of the actual design of questions is to construct them unambiguously'. Eventually the questionnaire was found to be satisfactory in that the purpose was clear and the questions displayed clarity. Importantly, the paper took no longer than 10 minutes to complete and this was considered to be vital if a good response rate was to ensue.

The answer sheet was compiled following Bell's (*op cit*) advice to begin with simple, easy to answer questions. Notice was taken, too, of Youngman's (1994, p.249) recommendation that 'there should be some theoretical justification for including a particular question', together with such considerations as neat appearance and providing a mixture of questions and instructions. Heed was also taken of Allison *et al*'s (1996) proposal to avoid a set response by preventing all items from being answered in the same way. Robson (1993, p.243) additionally advocates keeping 'open-ended questions to a minimum' because of the length of time required for analysis of such responses. Nonetheless, Allison *et al* (1996, p.76) recommend the inclusion of some open questions to 'capture matters overlooked by other items'. In addition, Marshall (1997, p.39) concludes closed questions may 'impose a direct threat to the validity of the findings' because imposing a frame of reference effectively limits the way the participant may answer. Faulkner *et al* (1991, p.53) further suggest that questions should be grouped according to similarity of issues although they do determine that 'questionnaires are never perfect'.

Therefore, while the questionnaires were designed to yield substantial amounts of quantitative data it was felt these would inevitably be somewhat limited and unlikely to provide a full picture of current playtime practice. It was thus considered to be worthwhile to furnish respondents with the opportunity of contributing additional qualitative information at appropriate junctures throughout the answer paper (Appendix 7). This produced some especially illuminating results. Sixty-four headteachers in the primary sector within the borough were sent a copy of the questionnaire (via the internal post system), together with an explanatory letter. A self-addressed envelope was also enclosed. Advice from Bell (*op cit*) regarding the need to look critically at the answer sheet to assess the impression it gives recipients proved to be invaluable. A generally good response rate followed and a total of 46 replies (just under 72 per cent) were received (Appendix 3). These comprised five infant, six junior and 35 primary schools. The answer sheets were first inspected to ascertain 'adequate completion' (Allison *et al*, 1996, p.96). The analysis of the closed questions was comparatively straightforward (by simple counting techniques). The qualitative responses were analysed separately and complimented the rather shallow coverage obtained from the closed replies.

Stage 3: the remaining schools

Brownlow junior school

It was felt to be useful to investigate the Brownlow infant school pupils' transition to the link junior school and to compare any changes in the children's opinions of breaktimes. Those children who were originally interviewed when in Year 2 were subsequently followed through to Brownlow junior school and were reinterviewed when in Year 3, and again in Year 4 (to ascertain any further changes in perceptions). This small sample thus produced a longitudinal dimension to the interview data. In order to contextualise this data, further information was acquired in this setting. An

observation of the playground was completed at morning breaktime (15 minutes) and a surveillance of the play area was made during one midday session (60 minutes). A copy of the school handbook was acquired and three teachers, together with the headteacher and senior lunchtime supervisor (who was also a classroom assistant), were briefly interviewed (15 minutes each). Interview questions followed those used elsewhere.

Wells Green and Kitts Mount primary schools

Being the most recently opened primary school in the borough, Wells Green received a one day visit to observe any innovatory breaktime practice. The headteacher was interviewed (for approximately 30 minutes to follow up questionnaire responses) and observations were carried out throughout both morning playtime and the midday session. A copy of the school brochure was obtained, together with a document provided by the 'playground working party'. Kitts Mount school was still under construction and a two hour visit of the site (escorted by the architect who articulated his views throughout this period) was completed.

The six sample schools

As indicated, the primary purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain appropriate information to enable a choice of suitable schools for follow up visits to be made. In this way six schools were eventually selected for the small-scale case studies (Appendix 8). Selection was principally on the grounds of self-identified 'good practice' in the area of study. Evaluations of practice were based on the judgements of the headteachers in their response to salient questions in the survey. All schools identifying some element of good practice were considered for further investigation. However, further criteria were also used to make the final choice of schools. These criteria included the following:

- initiatives taken to improve practice (for comparison purposes).

- size and age of school (to detect any particular problems related to these aspects).
- locality (in order to include schools from various parts of the borough to provide a differing social mix with regard to pupil intake).

Because the main case study school is an infant school with a link junior school two similar schools were chosen, together with four primary schools. No particular problems with access were experienced and those headteachers approached were generally extremely cooperative and willing to participate. (Had difficulties arisen the head teacher of the main case study school had offered her additional support.)

Interviews

The longest interviews were with the headteachers of the schools directly involved in the study. These interviews lasted for up to an hour and were always by prior appointment at a time convenient to the interviewee. It was judged to be vital in these interviews to follow up the information given by the headteachers in the respective questionnaires. Consequently, questions were of a more individual nature, relevant to each setting. Nonetheless, a few general themes were included in order to acquire some equivalent data for comparison purposes (for example, relating to the planning of improvements, finance, difficulties encountered and so forth). Although it was possible to interview all staff in the main case study school, time constraints made this impractical in the six sample schools. In these schools opportunity samples of those staff who were supervising both breaktimes and lunchtimes provided the interview data. In each school four breaktime supervisors (teachers, nursery nurses, teaching assistants) and three midday supervisors were consulted (Appendix 3).

All interviews (approximately 15 minutes in duration) took place in the playground whilst the interviewees were undertaking supervision duties (with the prior consent of the respective headteachers). Other adults were also supervising and, although not all interviews were entirely free from the

occasional interruption, this generally proved to be a very satisfactory location. It was convenient in that the participant was not required to devote extra time from an already busy schedule, and it was also highly appropriate given the subject matter. Quite by chance, a newly qualified teacher at Hallside junior school took a particular interest in the study by expressing her initial reactions to playground duty. This led to further interviews with new and recently qualified teachers whenever such staff were employed in the fieldwork schools (Appendix 3). These particular teachers were questioned, not only about their attitudes towards playtimes, generally, but also about whether they had received any training for playground supervision (and the universities attended).

In each of the six sample schools pupils were randomly selected to provide the interview data on the basis of one boy and one girl from each year group. The children were interviewed in various places as convenient for each setting (for example, quiet space in a corridor, hall, classroom or library). Because the researcher was not known to these participants, some of whom were very young, any child wishing to bring along a (silent) friend for company was able to do so.

As previously explained, a total of 18 parents were interviewed in the main case study school. The parents interviewed in the six sample schools were simply those who were present in each school during the period of fieldwork and they therefore represent 'accessible subjects' (Allison *et al*, 1996). Even though it was convenient to interview such parents it is noted that they may epitomise a potentially biased sample (i.e. they could hold different opinions from those parents who have little contact with the school or little direct experience and knowledge of school breaktimes). Appendix 3 gives the numbers of interviewees. Interviews lasted for approximately 20 minutes each.

At one venue (the infant and linked junior school in the sample) a group interview of ten mothers attending an hour long coffee morning took place.

While it was largely felt desirable to interview parents individually (rather than allow group members to influence the opinions of others), Gough (2003, p.185) maintains a group consultation 'can sometimes be particularly revealing as respondents prompt each other to think through their views'. All the same, it is acknowledged that 'group interviews may be less effective in allowing personal matters to emerge' (Allison *et al*, 1996, p.122) and the interviewer is also required to manage the group dimensions while conducting the interview. In spite of this, Alison *et al* (*op cit*) allege there are certain benefits with this kind of questioning. These authors (1996, p.122) argue a group interview can be a valuable research tool precisely because of 'the potential for discussion to develop among the group'. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) interviews of this nature can lead to unexpected insights, information, ideas and interactions and this was certainly the situation with the present study (for example, matters relating to the current position regarding communications to parents concerning playground happenings came very much to the fore).

Direct observation

In each of the six sample schools one breacktime and one lunchtime playground observation took place (observing throughout the whole period). As stated, in these schools the researcher was unknown and non-participant observation thus became a more feasible option (as with Wells Green). Observations generally came after the staff and supervisory assistant interviews and pupils had therefore become accustomed to seeing the researcher in the playground. It was believed that this gave an increased opportunity for pupils to habituate to the situation. However, it is accepted (Rolfe, 2001) that behaviour might have been influenced by the presence of an observer.

Other activities taking place during the lunchtime (for example, clubs) were observed in all schools where these had been introduced (usually for 10-15 minutes each). Added to this, casual data collection (Yin, 1989) took place in all schools (for instance, discussions with welfare assistants, monitoring of

supervisory assistant gatherings). It was hoped to provide a more rounded picture of the culture and ethos of individual schools in this way. The possibility also arose to observe a prospective midday supervisor's job interview in one school visited (20 minute observation). In addition, lunchtime supervisory assistant training sessions were observed at Woodberry school (two one hour observations). (The training consultant and three midday supervisors were briefly questioned about the usefulness of these sessions). Inside (wet weather) breaktimes and lunchtimes were observed in all case study schools (one observation of each covering the whole of the breaktime or lunchtime period).

Documentary evidence

It was felt desirable to acquire any relevant school behaviour policies (where these contained references to playground conduct) and any staff guidelines (for example, induction policies) where mention was made of appropriate playtime procedures. This facilitated triangulation with the direct observations. Copies of each school's handbook for parents were also collected to ascertain coverage of breaktime issues.

Stage 4: return to the main case study school

Managing Change

The final stage of this investigation sought to observe further changes in practice at Brownlow Infant school. It was determined that staff would need to be fully involved in the change process. Titman (1992, p.16) asserts that, 'Whatever the nature of change, one element which appears to be integral to a successful outcome is that of participation'. As previously noted, powerful arguments have been put forward in favour of practitioner involvement in change management. This was considered to be an essential strand of the

concluding phase of the study. However, the researcher was no longer teaching at the main case study school at this stage in the inquiry and this presented problems because researcher engagement (as in most forms of action research) was not possible. Nevertheless, researcher input (as an additional source of initial ideas for improvement, stemming from initiatives observed in the preceding stage of the investigation) would occur, as would monitoring and reflection on the action taking place.

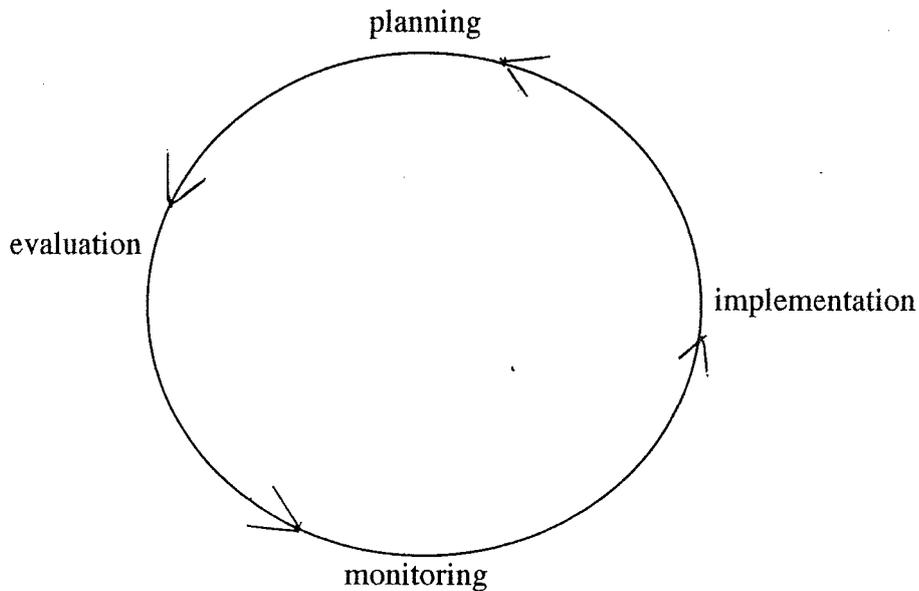
The cyclic nature of the improvement process is given in Figure 3.3. According to Fullan (2001b, p.270) 'improvement only occurs in context' because of individual and setting uniqueness. Schon (1983, p.147) has argued that practitioners not only have 'an interest in transforming the situation from what it is to something better' but also have 'an interest in understanding the situation' by an involvement in the process of change. This concept of reflective practice is defined by Osterman and Kottkamp (1994, p.46) as 'a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for professional growth and development'.

It has already been noted that change is a complex process. Fullan (2001b, p.91) sees four related problems:

- Active initiation and participation
- Pressure and support
- Changes in behaviour and beliefs, and
- The problem of ownership

These aspects, together with the management cycle, formed part of the observation process.

Figure 3.3 The management cycle



Monitoring and evaluation at Brownlow infant school took place on an almost weekly basis throughout one lunchtime session (90 minutes) over the course of five school terms. This facilitated consultations on progress with various participants, attendance at any lunchtime meetings, direct observations of advancements, and the taking of photographs at various intervals to record environmental developments. Although the researcher was now teaching elsewhere there was no problem with access, which was freely granted. It was also judged that familiarity with the school and staff assisted in the production of a more authentic account of the proceedings than would normally be obtained by an external researcher.

Data analysis

The relationship between data collection and analysis is held to be a complex one. As this was primarily a qualitative study it therefore became important (as previously mentioned) to attempt to make valid sense of the data by endeavouring to reconstruct the social world of the participants. It was

acknowledged, however, that there would inevitably be a difficulty in determining what constitutes a suitable depiction of social reality. Allison and Race (2004, p.13) stress that there is a need to 'collate and analyse data using appropriate techniques'. This phase of the research thus brought with it a requirement for complex decision making.

Furthermore, Berry (2004, p.6) concludes that a thesis seeks to 'assert an evaluation of the material' presented. Subsequently, the end results of this investigation were evaluated against a framework evolving from the outcomes of previous research and other literature reviewed. From the initial analysis, which utilised concepts from breaktime and related literature, it became apparent that an alternative literature was also required to fully reflect the findings and thus provide a more rounded picture. Of particular relevance was literature on the management of change.

Kruse and Seashore Lewis (2003, p.167) maintain that it can become necessary 'to seek literatures other than those initially explored' in order to adequately explain the data presented. For these commentators, 'The introduction of a new literature in the analysis phase of the research can have the result of providing multiple lenses with which to view data' (*ibid*). A variety of educational management issues were therefore scutinised and these have been integrated into the conceptual framework for the analysis (Figure 1.3). These include matters relating to:

- the culture and ethos of the school;
- collaborative planning;
- finance and resource provision;
- development of policy and practice;
- external relations;
- managing the pupil experience;
- staff roles and responsibilities;
- teamwork and leadership;
- training and staff development.

Figure 3.4 The analytical framework

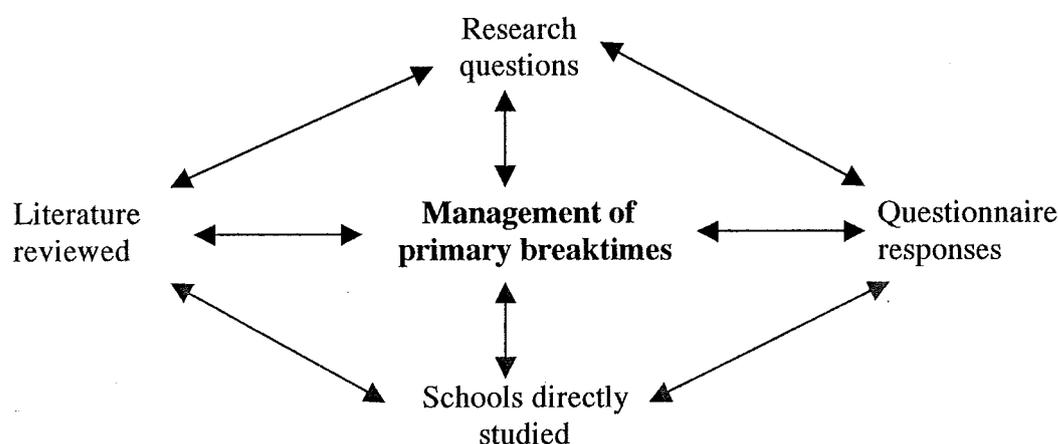


Figure 3.4 shows the straightforward analytical framework for the inquiry. Accurate analysis commanded detailed knowledge and judgement concerning a wide range of interrelated issues relevant to the domains of the study. Whilst again acknowledging that data collection, analysis and interpretation cannot be value free a conscious attempt has been made to remain as objective as possible in order to minimise this impact.

In respect of qualitative data, Easterby-Smith *et al* (*op cit*) suggest two kinds of analysis are possible: content analysis and grounded theory. Both types have been used in this investigation. Grounded theory is described by Zuber-Skerritt (1996, p.5) as ‘theory grounded in experience and practice, by solving complex problems in totally new situations.’ The data thereby suggest a theory ‘rather than beginning with theory and looking to see if the data fit it’ (Marshall, 1997, p.47). It is noted that grounded theory follows the stages of familiarisation, reflection, conceptualisation and linking. With regard to content analysis, Robson (1993) states that categories, codes and themes need to be generated as the material is sifted. It is necessary to search for patterns and themes within the data while simultaneously ‘being sensitive to inconsistencies such as divergent views offered by different groups of individuals’ (Bryman and Burgess, 1994, p.7).

A thematic framework was thus set up within the material by the identification of key issues and concepts. This framework was in keeping with ideas submitted by Richie and Spencer (1994) who maintain the researcher needs to draw upon, not only the *a priori* issues which were used to inform the original aims of the research, but also the emergent issues raised by the participants, and the analytical themes which have arisen from the patterning of particular views and experiences. Emergent issues, for example, revolved around: the significant need for teachers to have a break; the substantial impact of break duty; the particular difficulties experienced by newly qualified teachers; the notion of break supervision as a 'duty'; the lack of use of quiet areas in the playground; and matters relating to supervisory assistants' dual roles, among others. While undertaking this analysis it also became useful to revisit various concepts to ascertain whether either further elaboration or simplification would be appropriate.

The field notes from this project were extensive and the systematic analysis which was undertaken required a very large time investment. Yin (1989, p.105) reasons case study evidence presents the researcher with particular difficulties which command 'rigorous thinking' on the part of the analyst. Richie and Spencer (1994, p.177) claim, 'Real leaps in analytical thinking' require not only the need to jump ahead, but also the reworking of earlier ideas. In this way the data analysis became a somewhat prolonged process. It was essential therefore to obtain an overview of the data in order, not only to look at its diversity, but to also begin the process of abstraction and conceptualisation. Strauss (1987, p.171) argues data require microscopic examination, and additionally that '*the most difficult skill to learn is "how to make everything come together"*'.

A further issue of importance with regard to this study was the need for data reduction. Miles and Huberman (1984) provide an illuminating discussion on this subject and advocate compiling matrices to reduce the data to manageable levels. This led to the production of a number of appropriate matrices which served to facilitate the analysis (Appendix 9). Of great significance for this project, as well, was the proposal that for multi-site case study it is profitable

to compare the data in each study with that of the remaining studies (Burgess *et al*, 1994, p.142). In this manner 'the topics and themes within individual cases [lead] to cross-site comparisons'.

In addition, it was necessary to link the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the investigation and here Mason (1994) supplies a thoughtful discussion of the problems and these ideas have been incorporated into the data analysis to produce an integrated study. According to Mason (*op cit*, p.107), it is necessary to determine 'what mix of data ... [is] appropriate to particular issues.' Thus, for example, data presented in various tables have been supplemented with comments from a selection of interviewees. Bryman and Burgess (1994, p.224) moreover maintain that data presentation in qualitative studies generally appears to rely on the frequency with which something is stated in interviews or is observed during the fieldwork. These commentators therefore reason that presenting appropriate counts 'could substantially enhance the reader's appreciation of the salience or significance of percentages' (*ibid*). Such counts have thus been included in the resulting presentation. Even so, it is worth repeating here that 'no knowledge of the social world can ever be beyond all doubt' (Wallace and Poulson, 2003, p.14).

Résumé

Chapter Three has presented a detailed account of the research methods chosen to complete this project. The chapter began with an in-depth discussion of the qualitative approach and argued that this was particularly appropriate for an investigation featuring social settings. Subsequently, the design of the study was thoroughly explored and the gathering of evidence was explained in detail. It was stated that the inquiry has been divided into four stages with each phase informing the data collection in the succeeding stage. The importance of conducting ethical research was outlined and matters of participant confidentiality and anonymity were summarised. The use of a

research diary was judged to aid the reflective processes of the inquiry (Appendix 10).

It was further stated that the investigation has largely been centred around a case study mode. This was justified mainly on the grounds of providing a well-rounded picture and a thick description of the situation under examination. It was concluded that case studies enable the researcher to examine issues in the context that gives them meaning. Interactive processes can also be identified. A full explanation of the data collection techniques was given. It was determined that both direct observation and interview techniques were the most suitable, although documentary evidence and photographic records were also found to be useful. A multi-method approach is said to increase confidence in the findings and the need for triangulation was discussed, together with issues of validity and reliability. Sampling techniques have also been reviewed.

Due consideration has been given to the use of a questionnaire survey at stage two of the project. It was reasoned that this was an appropriate means of inquiry because it enabled the gathering of a large amount of information in a comparatively brief period of time. Reference was made to the issues raised during the piloting of the questionnaire. The questionnaire data obtained were then used to identify sample schools for follow up visits at stage three. This was followed by a discussion on change management for the final phase of study.

Finally, the chapter specified the framework for the data analysis. Consideration was given to both *a priori* and emergent issues and to both content analysis and grounded theory. It was established that the research needed to link both quantitative and qualitative data. It was noted that concepts from the management of educational change were utilised in the analysis process. The following chapter now begins the data presentation and interpretation by contemplating the cultural and physical environments of the school and the changes recently made to the breaktime situation.

Chapter Four

The Changing Breaktime Scene

Introduction

Chapter Four focuses on the data presentation and analysis. The first part of the chapter concentrates on recent innovations in primary sector breaktimes. To begin with, there is an overview of the current situation. This serves to provide a coherent examination of the many initiatives recently taken by the borough's schools. The present research indicates that changes can generally be grouped into four broad categories: provision, organisation, socialisation and supervision (although these are not mutually exclusive). Consideration is also given to the planning of developments and whether or not schools have utilised the much favoured collaborative approach which was outlined in the second chapter, as this is deemed by some to enhance the change process. Additionally, pupil involvement in the planning process is explored.

Following on from this, attention centres on Brownlow infants, the main case study school. Initially, both the cultural environment (Docking, 1996) and the institutional bias (Pollard, 1985) are identified and discussed. It is again explained that the playground culture is linked to the values that children bring with them to the school. Next, there is a systematic analysis of recent innovations. This analysis facilitates reflection on many of the key issues involved in breaktime reform. Following this, the remaining schools forming the nucleus of this study are briefly examined and a number of comparisons are then outlined. The uniqueness of each institution is emphasised.

The second part of Chapter Four centres on playtime provision. This includes the physical environment of the school and encompasses the facilities and resources available. The school campus is felt to impose restrictions on any improvements the institution may wish to make. Following a synopsis of practice across the LEA there is contemplation of the particular amenities

available at each of the schools visited. Plans are provided of each site in order to assist clarity. A new primary school (under construction) is then investigated with regard to originality of design in respect of the outdoor environment. Provision and location of appropriate amenities are also discussed. Concepts arising from this evaluation are fully explored and due consideration is given to the financial implications involved. The chapter concludes by making some comparisons of relevant features at each of the focus schools.

Changing practice

It has already been established that there is an evolving situation relating to primary sector breaktimes. In the questionnaires headteachers were asked to clarify any relevant initiatives schools had been making. Data obtained in this manner thereby gave a useful insight into the kind of issues where schools considered there was an identified need to improve practice. In addition, schools were asked about which staff and other sectors (governors, parents, pupils) were involved in producing these innovations. As already stated, contemporary thought on development procedures strongly advocates a collegial or collaborative approach as this will lead to more effective improvement (Hargreaves, 1992; McCall and Lawlor, 2000). It has been acknowledged, however, that there is also a need to monitor and evaluate initiatives in order to determine their perceived effectiveness (Beare et al, 1989, 1993). Even so, Fidler (2001, p.64) does claim that it can sometimes be 'difficult to collect evidence to show what has been achieved in the improvement initiative'. Moreover, any outcomes of improvement as judged by practitioners may be viewed as value laden.

Across the LEA

It was found that most primary schools within the borough had made changes to breaktime practice as Table 4.1 shows (37 out of 46, 80.4 per cent). For example, the majority of schools had already established some form of training for their midday supervisors. Staff development can be looked upon as one way of attempting to improve the lunchtime situation. A wide spectrum of complimentary reforms had also taken place. In general terms, these innovations are entirely in keeping with popular thinking on playtime developments (Titman, 1992, 1994; Blatchford, 1989, 1998). The benefit of these initiatives, however, may vary depending largely upon the unique circumstances and prevailing situation within the institution, as will be revealed later.

The school grounds and physical environment are shown to be an especially popular area for change within the borough's schools. *Learning through Landscapes* (2004) has found that the three main reasons for London schools to improve their campuses are the appearance of the grounds, the increased play opportunities, and the need to improve behaviour and social interaction. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that any such improvements may be restricted by the overall space and site facilities. This may be linked to the era in which the school was constructed. The most common developments reported in the current study are zoned regions (Ross and Ryan, 1990), quiet areas of seating (Titman, 1992) and some provision of shade (Hendricks, 2001). Intriguingly, pergolas now appear to be fashionable. In a number of schools there has been an increase in playground markings. Supplying a selection of loose equipment is another well-supported initiative and contemporary accounts fully endorse this addition to playtimes (Ross and Ryan, *op cit*). As well as the more usual skipping ropes and balls a few schools have chosen to accommodate board games and various table-top activities such as reading and card games.

Table 4.1 Have schools made any changes to breaktimes?

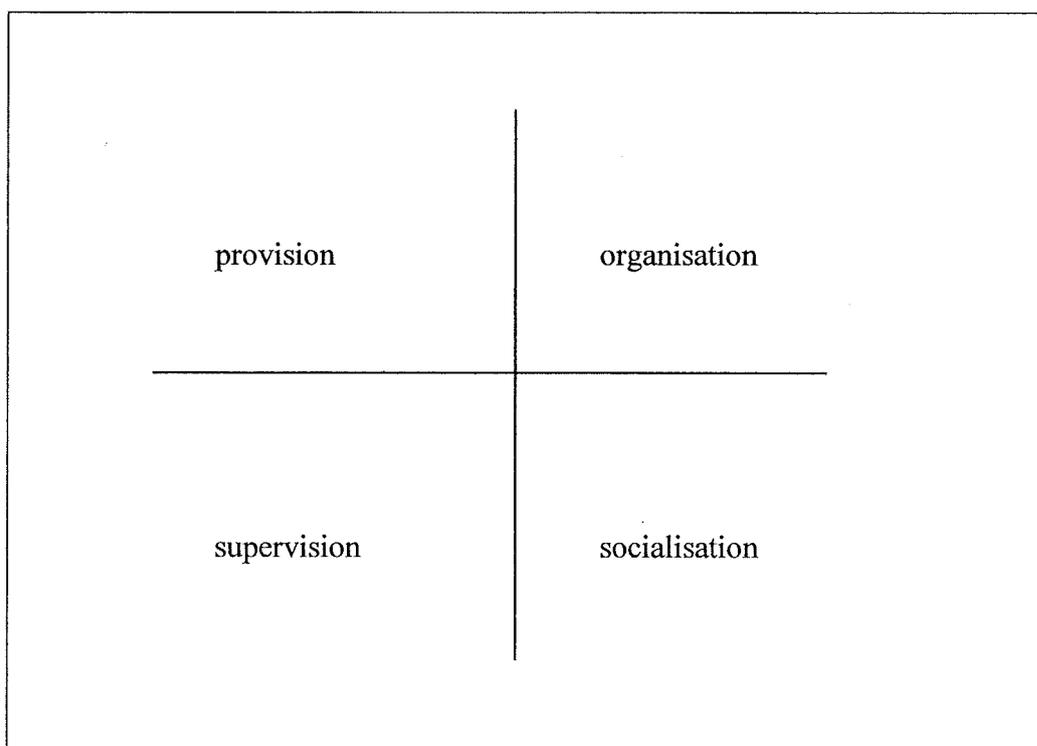
<u>Questionnaire responses</u>			
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No response</u>	<u>Total</u>
37	7	2	46

Further developments revolve around provision for pupils' social and emotional needs. Within this range has been the introduction of 'friendship benches' and 'friendship stops', 'playground squads' or 'buddies' (Lindon, 2001a) and the training of child playleaders and mediators. In addition, a number of schools have reported launching extra-curricular activities such as lunchtime clubs. It was found from the follow up sample of schools that these have usually been established for children experiencing 'difficulties' in the playground (Ashley, 1995). Furthermore, some schools have formulated a 'code of conduct' specifically for the playground (White, 1988) or have begun to award badges for appropriate behaviour. Moreover, there has been the specific teaching of playground games (Lewis, 1998) and many schools (38 out of 46, 82.6 per cent) have commenced circle time activities (Mosley, 1993; Rigley, 1997).

In addition, substantial changes are reported to the overall organisation of playtimes. The removal of the afternoon break and the shortening of the lunchbreak are common (Tables 5.3 and 5.4). It is suggested that these are frequently linked with a need for extended time to deliver the curriculum. Introducing separate playtimes for different age groups (thereby increasing playground space) is also a popular initiative outlined by some schools (Table 5.1). The introduction of separate playtimes (or sectioned play spaces) for the

youngest pupils (Hurst, 1994; Lindon, 2001a) is another stated change (Table 5.11). Removing whistle blowing to signal the end of break is also reported. Additionally, one school reveals that the headteacher now maintains 'a very high profile at lunchtime' possibly to help alleviate potential behaviour problems. Moreover, a number of schools have recognised the need to improve inside playtimes (Fell, 1994). Measures taken include the introduction of 'wet play boxes' (i.e. specific equipment for pupils to use during inclement weather) or allowing pupils to watch videos during wet lunchtimes. A few schools have established pupil monitors whereby older children help to supervise younger ones during inside break.

Figure 4.1 Broad areas of change



All in all, this gives the impression of being a very wide range of reforms. It is judged that developments can usually be categorised into four broad areas shown in Figure 4.1. Clearly, an increased interest in school playtimes has become a noteworthy feature of contemporary practice within the borough (and presumably elsewhere). Headteachers were also asked to indicate who

had been involved in planning the various changes. Thirty-five of the thirty-seven schools shown in Table 4.1 responded to this question. Eleven schools noted that 'all staff' had played a part and a further eleven schools indicated that pupils were also involved.

The inclusion of pupils is an interesting new idea, which is championed in many present-day accounts (Lewis, 1998; Hendricks, 2001; Flutter, 2006). Unfortunately, Factor (2004, p.142) reveals that there is a 'lack of consultation with the playground's users when well-meaning but ignorant "landscaping" of a school playground is undertaken'. Docking (1996, p.126) argues strongly that 'the pupils who use the playground must be involved in its development, since what adults value may not always be what children want'. However, a cautionary note comes from Hendricks (2001) who warns that once children have been included their views need to be heeded and for the most part there is no way of knowing the exact level of pupil participation in those schools claiming pupil involvement.

The remaining thirteen schools specified certain members of staff who were said to have joined in with planning innovations. These included Senior Management Teams, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (Sencos) and, in one school (Oatlands), a recently appointed playground co-ordinator. In addition, four headteachers were keen to point out that the supervisory assistants had been instrumental in drafting reforms. Moreover, three schools had involved their governors, two had included parents, and one school had uniquely established an 'environmental working group' who assumed responsibility for all campus developments. It can therefore justifiably be claimed that the value of adopting some form of collaborative (or collegial) approach has been recognised by many schools.

Moreover, unless there is a high degree of staff endorsement for the ideas advanced it is unlikely any changes can succeed in the longer term. It must be accepted, nevertheless, that in the main, it cannot be established just how effective the changes outlined above have actually been (the exception being

those schools visited). However, headteachers were also asked to make evaluations of current practice. This was considered to be satisfactory, or better, in the majority of schools (40 out of 46, 87 per cent for playtimes and 34 out of 46, 73.9 per cent for lunchtimes) and so some measure of success might be assumed (Tables 7.1 and 7.9) at least in terms of practitioner assessment (Fidler, 2001).

Headteachers were additionally invited to add any further comments at the end of the questionnaires. Many remarks related to the changes that had already been made or to those that headteachers would like to see in the future. One primary head, for example, considered that 'all staff' should be trained in playground supervision. Furthermore, one infant headteacher reasoned that, 'Lunchtimes should be supervised by others in school or else there should be more money for fully trained staff'. Patently, this focuses attention firmly on the midday supervisory assistants as they are frequently untrained for the job (Rose, TES, 1999). One primary headteacher in particular made a series of highly salient remarks which serve to summarise the views of other respondents:

I do have concerns about breaktime. We are getting more 'difficult' children and whilst they are usually well-managed in class, the situation can be very different outside. Support for 'statement' children never seems to take account of playground issues.

Of course, this raises a major topic concerning special needs children (i.e. statemented) and consequent problems presented at breaktimes. Other headteachers also mentioned these difficulties. It was further suggested that:

Money is also an issue. We have 8 people supervising at lunchtime for 14 classes. On fine days this is manageable, on wet days it is very hard and teaching staff often stay in their classrooms to help with supervision. Being very pragmatic, they say they would prefer to forego a break than spend an awful afternoon sorting out the ramifications.

Again, these problems were similar to those found elsewhere (St. Mark's being one example). It was concluded that:

We have just changed our staffing structure to have 4 Classroom/Supervisory Assistants and 4 SAs. The former work in class from 9 – 11.45/12.00 and then go into the hall/playground to supervise the children at lunchtime. The SAs are just employed for lunchtime. The new structure has helped the Classroom/Supervisory Assistants have a higher status and children are more respectful (usually). Without me, my deputy, the SEN co-ordinator [special educational needs] having a high profile every lunchtime things would be even more difficult.

These anxieties spotlight dilemmas experienced by other schools and distinctly show a number of the very serious concerns that some headteachers now have. The recognition of worsening behaviour and the increase in EBD pupils (those with emotional and behavioural difficulties) was repeated by other headteachers. Problems resulting from insufficient numbers of lunchtime supervisors is another fairly common theme (Table 7.10). Schools receive funding on the basis of one SA for two junior classes with a more favourable ratio for younger pupils. Any school wishing to increase this provision (and some of those studied find this to be beneficial) must find funding from elsewhere in their budget. In spite of this, headteachers probably feel that this is money well spent given that lunchtime is identified as presenting a challenge. According to Blatchford (1989, p.132) 'At the very least there should be enough supervisors to allow one for every class in the school'. This has yet to happen.

A further matter of note is that teaching staff are increasingly involved in some form of lunchtime supervision on a regular basis (Table 7.12). For instance, it was found that some Sencos assume extra responsibilities at midday. Moreover, additional problems originating from inside ('wet') lunchtimes, as expressed by this headteacher, were discovered to be typical of many schools throughout the course of this investigation (Table 5.16). A further point of significance is the establishment of the supervisory assistant/classroom assistant dual role, which appeared to become increasingly

popular during the study period. All such aspects (and others) have formed a key part of the present research.

Brownlow Infant School

The cultural context

The main case study school is situated in a socially and culturally diverse location on the less affluent, more industrialised, eastern side of the borough. It was noted in a recent Ofsted inspection (June, 2002) that a well above average 54 per cent of pupils are registered as having English as an additional language. Furthermore, a higher than national average number of children arrive and leave during the course of the school year. Many pupils come from families described as asylum seekers or refugees. All of these characteristics contribute to the 'institutional bias' of the school which Pollard (1985, p.115) describes as the 'rather intangible "feel" of schools as organisations'. The Ofsted report (2002, p.21) recognises that the school presents 'a team effort and shared ethos that puts children and their families first'. In addition, the school is considered to maintain a harmonious, caring environment by providing good standards of behaviour. Ofsted also acknowledged that the headteacher provides strong leadership.

Changing practice

As Appendix 11 shows, Brownlow infant school became the main focus of the current investigation with the instatement of a newly appointed headteacher. This change in leadership provided the impetus for a thorough review of current practice in respect of playtime management. The new headteacher had been deputy head at the same school and came to the headship with a sound knowledge of the prevailing situation, together with what the DfEE describes as a clear 'vision' (NPQH, Unit 3.2, 2001) of what she hoped to achieve during her time in office. However, in order to facilitate effective change it

was essential to first ascertain the exact needs of the school (Leigh, 1994). According to Dalton *et al* (2001b), this includes an appraisal of how something may best be done. It was thus determined that the midday supervisory team and the broader lunchtime scenario were priority areas for improvement.

Subsequently, an external consultant was employed to deliver a series of three training sessions for the supervisory assistants (during October 1998). In due course, the headteacher received feedback from the consultant (the researcher was present at this meeting). The main findings concerned the following aspects:

- The SAs had a lack of time to talk with each other.
- All SAs felt a general confusion and lack of role clarity.
- There was a lack of strong leadership.
- The leader (senior SA) needed to be given a clear message that it was her responsibility to provide leadership.
- The new SAs needed induction from a clear leader.
- There was a great deal of negativity within the group.
- Even so, a number of SAs were doing a very good job.

Obviously, this state of affairs required a speedy solution. Fortunately, the consultant was able to offer the following well-chosen advice:

- The SAs should be provided with a time for meetings but they would require help as they might not be able to work things out for themselves.
- All SA meetings would need a facilitator to do the internal organising otherwise the session would become rambling and anecdotal.
- Each session should last for one hour.
- It might be appropriate to appoint a leader for the meeting who could then discuss any points arising with the headteacher.
- All SAs should be in school five minutes before the lunchtime session as they are paid for this time.

These suggestions were acted upon immediately and the process of change had begun. The headteacher introduced half-termly meetings for the SAs but

mindful of any potential difficulties she remained present and led the group herself. The meetings provided a useful forum for an exchange of information. At the initial meeting a number of supervisors suggested the children did not enjoy being in the playground for such a long period of time at midday. However, 'There was no way to shorten the lunchbreak [90 minutes] – the children take too long to eat – there are no options here' (Headteacher). It had additionally been noted that behaviour had deteriorated during the midday session. The headteacher revealed that, 'There were lots of problems at lunchtime ... These rumbled on into the afternoon – took up teacher time – the children were upset – this affected learning for the afternoon'. This is not an uncommon problem. The literature suggests it is one crucial reason why schools have been making changes to practice.

All difficulties were fully discussed with the Senior Management Team (SMT) thus there is some evidence of a more collegial approach (Hargreaves, 1992) although it is noted that the midday supervisors were not consulted at this point. It was decided that alternative activities would be made available in the school hall during the midday session. Additional activities would be provided in one classroom (two teachers volunteered to supervise these pastimes). The headteacher explained that, 'We gave the children options and one SA remained in the hall'. Giving the children a free choice as to whether or not to remain outside is a key issue here. This is fundamentally different from those schools who require any child experiencing difficulties in the playground to attend adult-structured activities (as a number of schools have chosen to do). The headteacher explained the range of basic pastimes being offered (drawing, books and construction toys) and then added, 'The children seemed keen and it left more space in the playground and so we took out hoops and bats and balls – the problem had previously been a lack of space out there.'

This description of the change process plainly shows the modest beginnings, the trying out of novel ideas and the informal evaluations (i.e. 'the children seemed keen'). Fullan (1992, p.123) sees monitoring of change as important because 'it exposes new ideas to scrutiny, helping to weed out mistakes, and

further develop promising practices'. Also of importance is the realisation that a lack of play space had been the root cause of many of the problems. As will be shown, space is yet another key issue where breaktimes are concerned. Furthermore, it is possible to detect how these original changes were subsequently modified and refined because supplementary equipment was introduced, 'Some different things from the classroom apparatus'. This had necessitated fund raising in which the pupils (and parents) had become involved. The children were also consulted about what equipment to buy and 'adventure playthings, puppet theatre, puzzles, tent and tunnel, space hoppers and different construction toys were suggested'. The children's own ideas were thereby being incorporated into the plans.

Nevertheless, all activities required support and commitment from adults and this presented the headteacher with a number of challenges. It was disclosed that, 'The SAs [supervisory assistants] – we had a talk – not all were keen and they kept throwing up problems. I suggested the children would be less likely to present problems if they were playing happily'. Even so, the headteacher did recognise that, 'The SAs were asked to do something which was very different from anything they had done before'. It is noted, too, that the proposed changes had not originated from the lunchtime assistants but had come from the school management team, representing a 'top-down' approach. It can easily be detected that finding the right strategy to implement the proposed innovations was problematic. Crucially, the headteacher recognised the need for the SAs to adopt a new and demanding role. The change process continued, although the difficulties were still present at the time of this interview. The headteacher conceded, 'Some [SAs] still find it difficult to cope in the hall – the children should be responsible for counting equipment but I haven't convinced the SAs of this and so we're still losing equipment ... There is a lack of organisation by some SAs'.

For a minority of midday supervisors the new role appeared to be too exacting and a lack of enthusiasm prevailed. Perhaps this is predictable given that this represents a fundamental change which seems to have been imposed with little consultation. Those SAs experiencing most problems were long

standing members of the school community with well-established work patterns. They may well have held a different set of values from those which were now required. According to the headteacher, the more recently appointed supervisory assistants were better able to adapt to the essential modifications and to develop the necessary skills to carry out the new role effectively. Staff development was thought to provide a possible solution to these problems. The supervisors were duly invited to join other staff for an INSET (in-service education and training) day on behaviour management. In spite of this, the headteacher felt that the original consultant would need to revisit the school for further sessions with the supervisors.

The headteacher continued to reveal the remaining problems by acknowledging that, 'The SAs now have different perceptions of lunchtimes but there are still adjustments to be made ... We need to make sure the equipment is well looked after – it's not being put away properly'. Equipment was being lost or damaged and the headteacher felt this was due to a lack of adequate supervision by some of the midday staff. One solution would be to select which SAs would oversee the hall because in her view 'not all are suitable'. This shows very clearly that modifying practice is not necessarily a straightforward procedure particularly when new skills may be required or where there may be some resistance to procedural changes. The head admitted that, 'We are trying to avoid situations where problems occur'.

According to O'Neill (1994, p.209), 'it is inevitable that any attempt to diverge from historical patterns of employment will create tensions'. This would seem to be the situation with the midday supervisors. However, it must also be recognised that several changes were occurring simultaneously as there were additional alterations in the children's 'lining up' procedures. This is likely to have intensified any problems. In spite of this, the headteacher continued to seek new ways forward. Nonetheless, for these initiatives to succeed they needed to be accepted by all SAs and this appears not to have happened. Such innovation implies a change in values and there seems to be little indication that this was occurring for some supervisors.

Other transformations were taking place in the playground. The head explained, 'We have junior [pupil] helpers ... They might teach games – turn taking etc.' This is seen as one way of improving playtime experiences (Lindon, 2001a). Regrettably, this proved to be yet another initiative which was beset with complications in the early stages. As the head disclosed, 'There are some problems – the juniors don't all necessarily feel they are here for the little ones – it's not worked quite as we hoped, but it's still been valuable'. Informal monitoring of the playground led swiftly to the realisation that the junior helpers were not carrying out their new roles as effectively as anticipated. The headteacher remained resolute and emphasised that, 'Lots of infants enjoy seeing the older children ... Often they just hold hands so they've still got a lot out of it ... and the juniors have got a lot out of it, too, especially those who previously had behaviour difficulties in the infants and have difficulties still'.

Once more, this change to practice fell short of expectations. The headteacher was seen to be exploring possible reasons for this. Ultimately, she adopted alternative justifications for having junior helpers in the infant play space. The playground observations (completed for the present study) served to spotlight the weaker characteristics of the junior 'playground squad' (discussed later). According to Brighouse and Woods (1999, p.163), 'there needs to be a healthy recognition that the first time of doing anything is not going to be without blemish' and this might have been the situation here. The headteacher took the view that the next group of helpers would perform to a higher standard. Further innovations were also in the pipeline. The head stated that, 'The climbing frame is coming to the end of its life – it's boring. We're going to replace it with something that is more fun'. Another sponsorship day was required to fund this equipment (an adventure play area, as requested by the pupils). Fund raising therefore illustrates a different level of parental involvement in the change process but it relies heavily on the ability and willingness of parents to make a financial contribution.

Disappointingly, problems revolving around a small number of supervisors remained. There were continuing tensions and this particular group of

employees found great difficulty in adjusting to the new system. There was sustained opposition to the new ways of working and the difficulties intensified. Preedy (1993, p.14) warns that, 'Staff who feel that they will be disadvantaged as a result of the change will oppose it either actively or through passive resistance, and the innovation fails'. This may have been the situation here. The headteacher expressed her further concerns that those SAs who were fully supportive of the modifications might eventually become influenced by what was judged to be the highly negative stance of a minority of group members and the new practice would need to be abandoned. Following this interview with the headteacher the awkwardness persisted for several months and there seemed to be no solution to these problems. However, the situation changed rapidly in early 2000 when a number of supervisors, including the senior SA, sought alternative employment (apparently due to these difficulties). This enabled the building of a new team (with a new leader at the helm) all of whom were fully committed to the innovatory practice that was being established. The group dynamics changed dramatically and finally teamwork flourished (as revealed in the interview and observational data).

The supervisory assistants at last began to work extremely well together (discussed in detail later). This was partly due to the very strong leadership skills of the newly appointed senior midday supervisor. As will be shown, other school staff also began to more readily appreciate the value of this team. Four supervisors subsequently adopted a second role and became teaching assistants (classroom or learning support assistants). They were eventually interviewed about their dual roles during the autumn term 2001. All expressed a desire to continue with both jobs. By the end of the autumn term 2002, however, those in this position had become part-time rather than full-time SAs. The reasons for this additional change in circumstances centred on such perceptions as, 'I see my main job now as a CA [classroom assistant]' (Supervisory / Classroom Assistant).

By the beginning of 2003, three of these staff had relinquished their original roles as midday supervisors. The rationale for this further change included, 'I

found it too tiring' as well as, 'It's too emotionally demanding' and, 'There's no time for myself'. Sustaining both jobs therefore appears to be a challenging task for some and the perceived greater status of being a teaching assistant can lead the post holder to forsake the lesser role. Obviously, in turn, this has brought about further major developments in this excellent supervisory team. These changes culminated in the deputy headteacher expressing his concerns that the outstanding teamwork which had now been achieved might accordingly deteriorate.

Modifications to the by now well-established midday routines were also required due to the appointment of a number of replacement supervisors (some of whom were employed part-time). The senior SA found it necessary to adopt new methods because she felt that the recent recruits were not sufficiently experienced to cope with established practice (brief interview). Inevitably, this placed an extra burden on the rest of the team as their own work was affected and working practices were substantially modified. The senior SA was consequently finding her own job increasingly demanding because she was heavily involved with the induction of a number of new colleagues. Nevertheless, she accepted this to be a vital part of her role. One of the freshly appointed SAs was briefly consulted and she conveyed her appreciation for the guidance and tuition provided by the senior supervisor.

By the end of 2000 the adventure play area (low level climbing apparatus) was completed (Figure 4.3b). The playground observations show this was popular with all age groups. Moreover, the children showed their approval for the increasing selection of materials available for use during the lunchbreak (interview data). All changes had been introduced with high hopes and for the most part these appeared to be justified. The teamwork which had ultimately been achieved by the supervisors, coupled with the wide variety of equipment available, received praise in the school's Ofsted report. It was stated that, 'Playtimes and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions' and 'the very good quality supervision by the lunchtime assistants helps in providing for the pupils' social development through the wide range of games and activities they provide' (June, 2002, p.19).

This standard had not always been easy to achieve, even though the school had evolved clear objectives for the improvement of lunchtimes (i.e. to stop perceived lunchtime boredom and to improve pupils' behaviour; to develop the role, skills and teamwork of the midday supervisors; and to increase the lunchtime activities). Navigating these objectives had presented many difficulties because it was necessary to win the hearts and minds of those involved. This seemed to be no easy task. In part, this may have been due to feelings that these changes were being prescribed rather than developed through open discussions to ascertain the views of the supervisory group. In due course the objectives were met. If, as Beare *et al* (1989, p.20) argue, ' "Effectiveness" means that one has a set goal and achieved it' then plainly these changes could be evaluated as being effective, at least in these terms.

However, it remains uncertain as to whether the original group of midday supervisors would have ultimately adapted to the new methods. Fullan (1992, p.123) alleges, 'People can and do change, but it requires social energy'. It is not clear whether some SAs would have become sufficiently motivated to subsequently make the necessary adjustments to their practice. It seems far more likely that effective change resulted from the recruitment of a number of replacement supervisors who were willing to take the new practices on board. This appears to be a key factor in the change process. Other schools have reported similar difficulties concerning proposed developments to the supervisory assistants' practice. It is a very important issue, which runs throughout this inquiry.

Brownlow junior school

The cultural context

Being the link school and sharing the same site, Brownlow junior school has a similar institutional bias to that of Brownlow infant school. In addition, there appears to be a culture of pupil participation via the school council and 'pupils

are actively involved in the decision-making process' (school brochure). This was confirmed by the headteacher but was not discussed with the pupils themselves. In common with many schools during the period of this study, Brownlow was experiencing difficulties in recruiting and retaining teaching staff. This aspect led one relief teacher (with many years experience of providing supply cover in both this and other primary schools in the borough) to conclude there was 'a great deal of instability' due to the high number of supply teachers involved in the school. Obviously, this represents one opinion and time constraints prevented further investigation of this issue. Nevertheless, it is a noteworthy view from a highly experienced professional. It is an aspect which would be likely to impact upon both pupil behaviour and any proposed changes to breaktime practice.

Changing practice

The change process was fully underway at Brownlow junior school at the time of the research. Innovations were wide ranging and were based on the premise that pupils' behaviour in the playground was deteriorating. The headteacher reported the following initiatives:

- the shortening of the lunchbreak
- the introduction of a quiet area (known by the pupils as the 'red house')
- the introduction of a board games lunchtime club
- introducing Year 6 mediators.

The headteacher revealed that selected pupils had received 'mediation training' with the expectation that they would then help peers 'to sort out problems' in the 'quiet area'. Incorporated within this idea it is also judged that mediators will develop their own levels of responsibility.

In general terms, this seems to be a productive range of developments. Sadly, however, each initiative encompassed difficulties. For example, the shortening of the lunchbreak (in order to retain an afternoon playtime and still meet teaching requirements) resulted in a lack of time for all pupils to eat in

the dining hall. One solution (allowing pupils with packed lunches to eat in their classrooms) required teaching staff to voluntarily supervise children at midday (which they do). This could, nonetheless, prove to be problematic when current staff leave and others arrive who might not so willingly comply with this arrangement.

Further problems had arisen with regard to those pupils receiving mediation training. This procedure had been evaluated and according to the headteacher it had 'not embedded'. The assessment made was that 'much more work' was required. It is unclear as to whether or not pupils had received insufficient instruction or whether they were simply unable to apply the tutorage given to the realities of the situation. Undoubtedly, peer mediation requires certain skills on the part of the mediator, coupled with a willingness by those in dispute to allow a third person to arbitrate. It is therefore a complex state of affairs which needs very careful handling.

The lunchtime club presented further complications. At first sight this had emerged as a particularly attractive idea and certainly one growing in popularity in a number of the borough's schools. However, the club was now in suspension due to the very poor behaviour of those pupils who had been attending. A brief consultation with a Year 4 pupil (class representative on the school council) produced some instructive comments on the subject. It was admitted that the club had 'been stopped because sometimes people throw bits about'. The interviewee made a further remark about the recently introduced quiet area which was fraught with its own difficulties: 'The quiet area is not quiet because people are climbing all over the tables'. Such climbing is shown by the current study to be a problem that other schools also face.

Again, due to time constraints these criticisms were not followed up and so reliance is being placed on the accuracy of the informant. Nonetheless, it certainly appears to indicate a need for continual close monitoring of the situation. The headteacher showed an awareness of the problems and conveyed an impression of seeking suitable solutions. It is possible, however, that any potential improvements to practice which might work perfectly well

in one school may not yield the same measure of success in another. This might rest both on the institutional bias of the school, including the culture and ethos, and the management strategies employed to implement the changes as these may vary greatly. On this particular occasion the headteacher remained optimistic and suggested that future solutions would be found and practice would be improved.

Hallside infant school

The cultural context

Hallside infant school serves a multi-ethnic community with children from Asian, Turkish, Greek and white British backgrounds, all of whom contribute to the institutional bias of the school. The school is located in the more affluent western half of the borough. Hallside attempts to promote a shared value system revolving around respect for others and fostering a caring attitude (school brochure). The pupils are compliant and behaviour standards appear to be high. The headteacher appears to be an effective leader and all staff consulted appreciated his management style. Of specific note is the headteacher's declared support for the inclusion and development of ancillary staff, particularly the midday supervisors (the SAs were appreciative of this aspect).

Changing practice

In the six years since his appointment, the headteacher had made a number of changes relating to breaktimes:

- timing of lunches – infants eating first
- new equipment in the playground
- planting and wall sculptures introduced
- new seating
- SAs spending time in the classrooms
- playground games introduced in assembly

According to the headteacher, these innovations had involved, 'Staff, governors and parents' and so there is evidence of a collaborative approach to

change. Nevertheless, there is little indication of pupil participation (for instance, discussing new equipment), although the children had helped to make the wall sculptures. The playground had acquired a number of innovative features all of which were well used by the children. In this respect improvements could be regarded as effective. The revised timing of the lunchbreak had not yet been evaluated but the headteacher judged the situation to be greatly improved and he was planning to build on this success.

Hallside junior school

The cultural context

Hallside junior school shares a site with the infant school and thus has the same socio-economic, multi-ethnic catchment area and a similar institutional bias. At the time of the visits the infant headteacher was temporarily at the helm and the school was in a transition process. The acting headteacher was found to be taking full advantage of his short residence and had already initiated a number of significant changes, most notably to the midday session. These developments had met with opposition, however, and the lunchtime supervisors indicated their reluctance to embrace these innovations (discussed below).

Changing practice

The changes made at Hallside junior school involved:

- changes to the timing of the lunchbreak and dining hall arrangements
- the introduction of lunchtime clubs
- SAs supplied with shoulder bags to store equipment

There were plans for transforming the outside environment with the addition of fixed apparatus. It is to be hoped, therefore, that pupils' views would be sought. Changes involving the midday supervisors had met with a great deal of resistance possibly due to well-established working patterns or due to a lack of appropriate discussion of the issues. Initially, the SAs had fully agreed to the acting headteacher's ideas (for example, to wear tabards for easy identification) but subsequently withdrew their support. Compromises were

reached but there were still contentious issues. For instance, although the SAs had been persuaded not to have shopping bags in the playground (the head perhaps justifiably felt these were 'a barrier') they could not be induced to leave their handbags in secure storage. The headteacher considered this was unlikely to be resolved. The acting headteacher described the supervisors as 'difficult'; although it is acknowledged that this represents only one perception of the situation. As a consequence, the supervisors' relationship with the headteacher had apparently suffered enormously. According to Fullan (2001, p.5), for change to be successful 'leaders must be consummate relationship builders' otherwise 'ground is lost' together with goodwill.

On a more constructive note, the lunchtime club had proved to be so successful that it was due to be extended. Those staff (classroom assistants) directly involved were briefly questioned and all were clear as to its efficacy. It was judged that those children who had been experiencing difficulties in the playground were deriving benefits from the alternative activities on offer (and pupils consulted expressed their appreciation for the club). It could be argued that the club was serving a useful purpose because all playground behaviour observed was of a generally exemplary nature. To this extent at least it was beneficial.

Gatward primary school

The cultural context

Gatward reflects the multi-cultural community in which it is located. The institutional bias is, in part, related to the owner-occupier neighbourhood which surrounds the school. The staff handbook expresses the school's general philosophy by stating that 'we aim to develop team spirit'. To this end pupils are awarded house points for positive contributions to school life. The headteacher had arrived some three years earlier and had made substantial changes to midday practice during this time. She stated that when she started at Gatward, 'There was a different ethos in the school ... children were punished if they misbehaved'. Consequently, she had begun to create an ethos

which placed the emphasis firmly on rewarding positive behaviour (Blatchford, 1989). Nevertheless, conveying these values to the midday supervisory staff had presented problems (for example, there had been expressed concerns that the clubs meant children were receiving privileges for displaying unsatisfactory behaviour). The teaching staff, however, showed their commitment to all developments and interviewees echoed the ethos which the headteacher sought to cultivate. There was some evidence of a culture of collaboration with staff involved in the decision-making process. The pupils also played a part by expressing their views via the school council. Even so, the headteacher appeared to remain the driving force for innovation, articulating clear goals for all improvements to lunchtime practice.

Changing practice

The changes made at Gatward are briefly summarised below:

- removal of the afternoon breaktime
- introduction of lunchtime clubs
- Year 6 child monitors introduced
- introduction of a 'friendship stop'

The observations and interviews leave little doubt as to the overall success of the many and varied lunchtime clubs. This aspect of pastoral care had been singled out by Ofsted as a particular strength of the school. A number of classroom assistants had recently been employed and they were contractually committed to assuming responsibility for individual clubs (gardening, sewing, board games and book reading). It is, however, difficult to assess the effectiveness of the 'friendship stop' (akin to a miniature bus-stop) as no child was seen to be waiting at this sign. It may be that this signpost was forgotten, or ignored, or simply that no child was in need of friendship. On the other hand, the Year 6 monitors seemed to be a highly effective squad who were observed busily organising young pupils during inside (wet weather) playtimes. This innovation was therefore deemed to be working well.

Woodberry primary school

The cultural context

Woodberry has an intake of predominantly white British pupils. The school is located in an area which includes both local authority high-rise flats and owner-occupied dwellings. These features contribute to the institutional bias of the school. The headteacher is again judged to be the architect of change in respect of playtime practice. Her leadership skills were referred to in a recent Ofsted report as 'outstanding'. Even so, changes had presented problems and it seems that what O'Neill (1994) terms a 'sub-culture' had evolved with regard to the supervisory assistants who had formed a collective opposition to progress (see below). Nevertheless, Woodberry appears to have clear and consistent expectations of desirable behaviour for pupils and a whole-school approach serves to encourage success in this domain.

Changing practice

The Woodberry headteacher had been in post for 11 years and she had previously been head of another primary school within the borough and was therefore one of the most experienced headteachers consulted for this study.

The changes made are given below:

- lunchtime club for pupils experiencing playground difficulties
- recent changes to the junior pupils' procedures for exiting the playground
- introduction of weekly meetings between the headteacher and supervisory team
- training sessions for the midday supervisors

There is some evidence of collaboration with 'all staff' involved in the initial discussions relating to the lunchtime club. A lack of consultation with the midday supervisors over procedural changes to the junior pupils' re-entry into school at the end of lunch may have contributed to their less than positive

attitude towards this initiative. All three supervisory assistants interviewed expressed their disapproval that class lines had been abandoned. It is true that there was a certain amount of confusion with the re-entry system, although this may simply have been the result of difficulties during the initial change-over period.

On the other hand, the benefit of the lunchtime club leaves little room for doubt. Pupils were busily involved in a range of interesting activities and games and expressed their approval for these pastimes. The club was well organised by the two welfare assistants. Little desultory behaviour was observed in the playground and this serves to provide some measure of the success of this venture. Nevertheless, other initiatives involving the midday supervisors had met with resistance and this had prevented the headteacher from achieving her goals. According to Stoll (2003), micropolitics can prevent desired improvements from being successfully implemented. Confirmation of the situation came from one supervisor who declared, 'Whatever the head suggests we try it for a day and then give up. We say it doesn't work and go back to how we are'. Clearly, this seems to indicate a very definite barrier to change (O'Neill, 1994) which needs addressing, possibly through more democratic approaches.

Regardless of these problems, the headteacher was continuing to press for improvements to lunchtime practice, which she had assessed as being simply 'satisfactory' (Table 7.13). To this end, the SAs received training via an external consultant (this tuition was observed). The consultant felt that the SAs 'could make dinner times more fun' for the children. Guidance was forthcoming on suitable games and activities which the supervisors could introduce. It was further suggested that the Year 6 pupils should become playground monitors. The consultant was charismatic and she appeared to fire the SAs with enthusiasm during the presentation. All ideas were practical and potentially workable but they were reliant on a willingness by the supervisors to adopt new working practices. Three SAs were consulted about the training session. While it was judged to be 'informative' (supervisor for 15 years) there was a consensus that 'we try to do most of it anyway'. An impression was

given that there might continue to be some reluctance by the SAs to change their ways of working but obviously further observations over a longer time period would be required to confirm or deny this belief.

Oatlands primary school

The cultural context

The headteacher describes the locality in which Oatlands primary school is situated as 'semi-industrial'. While some limited light industry exists nearby, the school resides in a neighbourhood of largely privately owned semi-detached and terraced houses. A multi-racial intake contributes to the institutional bias of Oatlands. There is a strong corporate identity and pupils express pride in their school. All staff interviewed were equally appreciative of the school's achievements and appeared to be fully supportive of the headteacher's philosophy and vision for the school; especially with regard to improving playground practice. Oatlands shows a particularly strong ethos of promoting positive behaviour among its pupils with tangible rewards (a class points system) and firm reinforcement. The headteacher clearly demonstrates his concept of what desirable behaviour entails and his values seem to be effectively communicated to staff and pupils (pupils showing a clear understanding of the boundaries and staff reiterating the head's views).

Changing practice

Since the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools to form Oatlands primary school (some four years previously) the headteacher had initiated a number of meaningful changes. These included:

- introduction of a separate play area for the reception children
- gradual development of playground apparatus and equipment in all playground areas
- appointment of a playground co-ordinator
- banning football in the junior playground

The playground co-ordinator stated playground matters had been discussed with the headteacher and staff and so there is some evidence of collaboration. It was also maintained that the pupils had been included. The co-ordinator explained that, 'The children said what they wanted and we adapted their ideas'. However, it was admitted that this had given rise to some 'far-fetched requests' (for instance, having a swimming pool). Such demands are recognised in the literature, of course, and children need to be made aware of what is and is not possible.

The playground co-ordinator felt there were growing signs of improved practice. The headteacher made a similar assertion and determined that the school was in the process of 'making the playground an interesting environment'. This was supported by the observational evidence and each play area had a variety of engaging and original equipment. The school, therefore, shows signs of achieving its aims and goals (West-Burnham *et al*, 1995). Oatlands has plainly given playtime improvement a high profile and staff spoken to were fully supportive of these changes. Fullan (1991, 1992) claims that any change which is received favourably will become institutionalised because it becomes embedded in usual practice.

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

The cultural context

The institutional bias of St. Mark's is largely governed by the school's strong Christian ethos. Murphy (2001) suggests church schools usually promote a very positive ethos. Because St. Mark's is a church school there is no designated catchment area, but the majority of pupils live in the immediate vicinity. The locality is one of socio-economic diversity. The pupils are predominantly from white British backgrounds and all families are required to be regular church attenders. School staff are expected to be sympathetic to the aims of a church school. There is an ethos of fostering a caring attitude and also of establishing positive behaviour with a whole-school approach to

discipline. Pupils were observed to behave in a calm and responsible manner and staff expectations are high. The headteacher appears to offer strong and supportive leadership and, in general, staff interviewed showed a consensus to her clearly articulated views. Nonetheless, some tensions were discovered and not all ancillary staff were found to be in agreement with the headteacher's approach to lunchtime practice (discussed below).

Changing practice

The headteacher of St. Mark's had made a number of significant changes since her appointment to the school some three years earlier, including:

- the building of a substantial quiet area
- re-instatement of the afternoon breaktime
- SA training sessions
- head or deputy supporting the SAs at lunchtime
- introduction of lunchtime clubs

St. Mark's had taken a collegial approach to planning changes and both pupils and parents had been fully involved. Parents had provided practical help with the creation of the quiet area. This level of parental activity was not found elsewhere (although Hallside infant school had received a great deal of parental assistance). It may well be that because St. Mark's is a comparatively small school, or because it is a church school, or even a combination of these two factors, that there is a heightened sense of community, which results in increased levels of parental involvement.

At St. Mark's (in common with elsewhere) football was judged to be dominating the playspace. However, the headteacher felt it necessary to involve the children in the decision-making process; they had been asked to discuss the issues and offer a possible solution. After much deliberation an agreement was reached 'to have a rota for football and basketball' (an idea proposed by the children themselves). This was a solution which was apparently working successfully. With only four junior classes (the three infant classes were provided with alternative equipment for activities) pupils

did not have too long to wait for their chance to participate in these pastimes. Games of football and basketball were confined to one part of the playground and, although largely the province of boys, girls were also seen to be involved.

A further issue of some importance revolved around the midday supervisors. The headteacher and deputy (herself comparatively new to the school) had established a pattern of providing additional support at lunchtime in both the dining hall and playground. The supervisors had previously tackled these tasks without assistance from senior staff. This initiative afforded a good level of extra support for the supervisors but it did create certain tensions. While the majority of SAs were fully appreciative of the additional help, one SA expressed her dislike of this policy and considered it to be a reflection on the ability of the supervisory team to perform to acceptable standards. To a certain extent this judgment was justified. The deputy head suggested that one member of the headship team needed to be present otherwise the children's behaviour deteriorated to an unacceptable level. While the deputy revealed strong feelings that this additional supervision was 'very necessary' it did result in an 'extra drain' on her valuable time.

The quiet area provided an extremely attractive feature in what would otherwise have been a very bland playground. In spite of this, little in the way of quiet activity (i.e. sitting chatting with peers) was noted to be taking place (in common with other schools). Rarely did children linger for social contact such as talking with friends. The quiet area, placed centrally in the playground, thus became a thoroughfare rather than a place of tranquility.

Wells Green primary school

The cultural context

As previously explained, at the time of the one day visit Wells Green had only admitted pupils in the nursery and infant age ranges. The school is located in one of the more affluent parts of the borough. The headteacher clearly

expresses her philosophy and her values would appear to permeate the school (but naturally further evidence would be required to substantiate this impression). There seemed to be a particularly strong ethos of encouraging children's independence and developing self-esteem within a calm and caring atmosphere. The headteacher maintained that, in any disputes, 'The children are empowered to resolve things for themselves'. The documentary evidence obtained suggests that staff are fully involved in the decision-making process with regard to playtime practice but as no staff were consulted this was not confirmed by practitioners.

Changing practice

Being a newly opened school, Wells Green was not generally in a process of change. Instead, the school was establishing playtime practice, although the headteacher had introduced some innovatory ideas including:

- not having supervisory assistants but having classroom assistants oversee the lunchbreak
- forming a working party comprising of staff at various levels with responsibility for playground improvement
- providing a large selection of outside activities at breaktimes and lunchtimes including dressing-up clothes

The playground development team held regular meetings and also liaised with other staff. Plainly this shows evidence of collaborative processes. Additionally, this reveals the importance the headteacher placed on playground matters. Even so, there is no evidence to suggest that pupils were consulted about playground activities. Nevertheless, the headteacher stressed that all pupils were 'closely monitored' and insisted that their perceived needs were being met as a result of these observations.

All procedures introduced at Wells Green gave a sense of being effective in terms of what the school sought to achieve. The play area could best be described as full of purposeful activity and pupils were supplied with a range of colourful (and durable) equipment for outside use. Adult input was exceptionally high. The headteacher argued that employing classroom

assistants (rather than SAs) was a particularly successful way of meeting the children's needs. This practice was further considered to have eliminated many of the problems which would normally be prevalent during the lunchbreak (i.e. linked with behaviour management). This is an interesting innovation which is definitely worthy of further investigation. The headteacher stated that the playground situation would remain under review as part of a continuing programme of development.

Discussion

As will have been determined, those schools forming the nucleus of the present investigation depict a wide cross-section with regard to socio-economic background. The uniqueness of each institution is again emphasised at this point. There are striking differences between Brownlow infant school and other schools in this study, and of course between the various schools themselves. What draws them together, however, is an intention to improve playtime practice. In all cases the headteacher is judged to be the driving force for breaktime innovation. All headteachers appeared to present keenly expressed values, well-defined goals, awareness of needs, and a positive approach towards playground improvement. The Oatlands headteacher, for example, revealed that he had 'always believed that if children behave well in the playground they'll behave well in the classroom'; adding the proviso, if 'the entry and exit is okay they will be okay in the classroom'.

All changes to practice mentioned by headteachers in the questionnaires were confirmed by the observational and interview data. Achieving successful outcomes is not always an easy task, as might be anticipated. Behavioural expectations were found to be exceptionally high in some schools (most notably at Oatlands). In all schools, however, staff appeared to show an

awareness that positive relationships encourage desirable behaviour and a whole-school approach seemed to prevail. This was further supported by clearly expressed policy documents. According to Docking (1989, p.33), 'A reward based rather than punishment orientated school ethos' is beneficial. This was generally judged to be the norm in those schools visited (with house/team points, badges and social rewards observed).

Each headteacher's outlook with regard to breaktime practice was largely (though not universally) shared by staff and a 'we' culture was generally seen to exist in most institutions. This serves to substantiate staff involvement as indicated in the questionnaire responses. When referring to any recent innovations many of the teaching staff consulted would explain a school's approach in terms of 'we felt that' or 'the staff here agreed that'. Fullan (2001, p.118) describes this attitude as a 'shared commitment to selected ideas and paths of action'. It is a vital ingredient for successful change. Generally, a change culture was present in these organisations in respect of breaktimes. While all schools had already made substantial improvements, most headteachers acknowledged that initiatives were ongoing (only the St. Mark's head felt there was a lull in the proceedings). This is in keeping with Fullan's (1991, 2001a, 2001b) ideas of change as a process rather than as an event.

Even so, this is not to imply that chosen courses of action were always running smoothly. When targets had been set the process of bringing these to fulfilment had sometimes had its own impact. Some headteachers had experienced pockets of resistance to their proposals, mainly from the ancillary staff. Fullan (2001a, p.74) claims that, 'In a culture of change, emotions frequently run high. And when they do, they often represent differences of opinion. People express doubts or reservations and sometimes outright opposition to new directions'. However, Fullan (2003, p.196) also notes the necessity to realise that resisters may 'have some good points to make'. In a number of schools (Brownlow infants, Hallside juniors and Woodberry), problems had arisen and some midday supervisors had been disinclined to become fully engaged in the change process. At both Woodberry primary and Hallside juniors, in particular, this seemed to have led to ancillary staff

forming a 'collective barrier' (O'Neill, 1994) against proposed innovations, which had resulted in the formation of interest sets.

One reason for this could have been a lack of consultation to allow midday staff to express their own ideas. In spite of this, schools were sometimes attempting to include the lunchtime staff whenever improvements were contemplated. In-service (and often in-house) training had been available for many supervisory assistants. As will be shown later, supervisors consulted mainly had a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and contributions to their respective schools. Additionally, some schools had introduced school councils (Brownlow juniors, Gatward and Woodberry) and pupils were therefore being given a forum in which to express their own views on playground matters. In itself this might be judged as desirable. The DfEE maintains that 'listening to the pupil voice can be a positive force for change' (NPQH, Unit 3.1, 2002, p.35).

Provision and Environmental Resources

Across the LEA

With regard to provision, it was anticipated that primary sector schools would vary widely in respect of their physical environment and other resources. The questionnaires were designed to yield basic information about play areas and facilities provided for the borough's pupils. As previously stated, one reason for this was to provide information for the selection of the sample schools. It was also predicted that the available outside space would be a key factor in limiting any changes a school might wish to make to the campus. Table 4.2 shows the number of playgrounds individual schools have. Table 4.3 gives an indication of other amenities provided. The quality of the outside environment is deemed to be a crucial feature where playtimes are concerned. Pellegrini

and Blatchford (2000, p.49) suggest that, 'Quality environments are those where children exhibit playful behaviour' while the reverse is also true.

As clearly depicted in Table 4.2, school playground facilities do show variations. All infant schools and all junior schools have their own play areas. However, three infant and two junior schools are rather more fortunate and have additional shared amenities (the two Hallside schools are both represented here). Naturally, this increases the overall size of the play space for the pupils concerned. Nine of the 35 primary schools (25.6 per cent) report having only a shared playground (i.e. used by both the infant and junior children), which may easily lead to reduced opportunities for campus enhancement. There is variation, too, in other resources offered to the borough's primary pupils. As seen in Table 4.3, only 11 of the 46 schools (23.9 per cent) have any kind of shelter available; although a higher number (25 out of 46, 54 per cent) do have an environment affording some form of shade (which a number of respondents noted came solely from the buildings and thus varied throughout the day during fine weather). For health reasons shade from the sun is increasingly becoming a significant issue (Titman, 1999; Hendricks, 2001).

Dividing the play space into sub-sections for assorted activities (zoning) has obviously become a popular feature with 33 schools (71.7 per cent) reporting this innovation. The provision of quiet areas of seating is even more common (42 out of 46 schools, 91 per cent). This probably reflects the view now widespread in contemporary accounts that such areas are highly desirable. According to the DfES (4, 2004), it is advantageous to have 'a covered seating area for conversation' although, as will later be shown, areas of seating may not be as appealing for children as might be imagined. Interestingly, the majority of schools also have green space (34, 73.9 per cent). However, a few headteachers did qualify this by stating that it was 'a small area'. (Again, as will be discussed, green spaces may receive restricted use.) Even so, more than a quarter of primary schools within the LEA do not have this amenity. In all instances these are schools which were constructed prior to the First World War.

Table 4.2

Types of playground in the 46 schools

	<u>Number of Schools</u>
<u>Infant schools</u>	
Infant playground only	2
Infant playground plus shared playground	<u>3</u>
Total	5
<u>Junior schools</u>	
Junior playground only	4
Junior playground(s) plus shared playground	<u>2</u>
Total	6
<u>Primary schools</u>	
Separate infant and junior playgrounds	20
Shared infant/junior playground only	9
Infant plus junior plus shared playground	3
Infant plus junior plus reception playground	1
Four separate playgrounds	1
No response	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>35</u>

Table 4.3

Physical environment, amenities and resources available in the 46 schools

<u>Facilities available</u>	<u>Number of schools with this facility</u>
Shaded area	25
Sheltered area	11
Zoned area	33
Quiet/seating area	42
Field/green space	34
Planted area	40
Fixed playground apparatus	26
Loose equipment at breaktime	29
Loose equipment at lunchtime	43
<u>Drinking water facilities</u>	
Do have adequate water fountains	32
Do not have adequate water fountains	10
No response	4
Total schools	<hr/> 46 <hr/>

Loose equipment (balls, ropes and so forth) is more readily available at lunchtime (43 out of 46 schools, 93 per cent) than at breaktime (29 schools, 63 per cent). This is probably due to the longer period of time spent outside at midday and therefore represents a greater need. Schools are generally perceived to have sufficient drinking water fountains. Nonetheless, ten schools (21.7 per cent) report inadequate facilities. Drinking water has now become an important matter and difficulties associated with lack of a satisfactory fluid intake have recently been spotlighted (FAQ, 2005). It is argued that this leads to potential health problems and also results in poor concentration. According to Shepherd (TES, 2004), 'children who need to run around for exercise at breaktime risk all of the uncomfortable and unhealthy side-effects of dehydration' when there is no easily accessible drinking water.

Brownlow infant school

Rather aptly, the school handbook describes Brownlow infant school as 'a pleasant oasis in a mass of bricks and mortar'. The grounds are portrayed as 'spacious and very attractive with lawns and different varieties of trees'. The playground is situated at the front of the campus (Figure 4.2). A small grassed area is located to one side of the playground but this receives limited use due to adverse weather conditions. As Blatchford (1989, p.80) readily acknowledges, 'Grassed areas may seem on a summer's day to be a valuable extension of the playground, but many are often too muddy to be used for much of the school year'. The site also has a large field, but this is almost exclusively used by the link junior school as there is restricted access for the infant pupils due to the location. The school additionally has a fully enclosed quadrangle, which is available for use during session times but is seldom used at breaktime. Obviously supervision of this space is required and adults are not always available.

The school is particularly fortunate in having separate dining facilities, although this does create problems when pupils must navigate their way to the

canteen during wet weather. The school hall is easily accessible with doors opening directly into the playground. This is particularly fortuitous because it allows admittance to inside activities during the lunchbreak. Both the location of the medical room and the pupils' toilets mean that children must first enter the main building, which can lead to behaviour problems. An exceptionally wide range of loose equipment has now been made available for midday use (both inside and outside). In addition, the playground has the usual scattering of surface markings (Figure 4.3a). In keeping with other schools visited, however, the observations show that these receive little attention from the children. For a number of years pupils have been encouraged to bring both marbles and skipping ropes to school for playground use, but few children do so (possibly as a result of limited interest).

There are two main entrances to the building and some congestion occurs when children leave morning assembly to enter the playground. At midday the situation is easier because the three Year 2 classes arrive from the Horseshoots; although this does involve a substantial walk for some children. Questions of safety arise as a result of pupils needing to cross the internal driveway to access the dining hall. A busy highway also runs parallel to the front perimeter of the playground. A number of parent interviewees expressed their concerns about the children's safety, feeling that the site lacked sufficient safeguards (for example, high fencing). Docking (1989, p.6) argues that 'parents need to be assured that conditions in school guarantee physical safety and psychological security'. For some schools this can clearly be problematic, although extra security measures have subsequently been taken at the school (new fencing, gates and closed circuit television).

At the time of the interviews with pupils, parents and staff (2000) the fixed climbing apparatus had just been removed from the playground (due to failed safety checks). A few parents were glad to see its demise. One mother (boy, reception) stated, 'I don't think a climbing frame is a good idea – the old one frightened me'. (Interestingly, while some parents expressed safety concerns, a number of pupil interviewees would like increased climbing equipment.) A major problem with the playground is that little shade is provided. Previously,

parents had voiced their concerns about this state of affairs. It was eventually decided that pupils could wear sunhats during hot weather. While offering some respite from the sun this is by no means an ideal solution.

Figure 4.2

Plan of Brownlow infant school

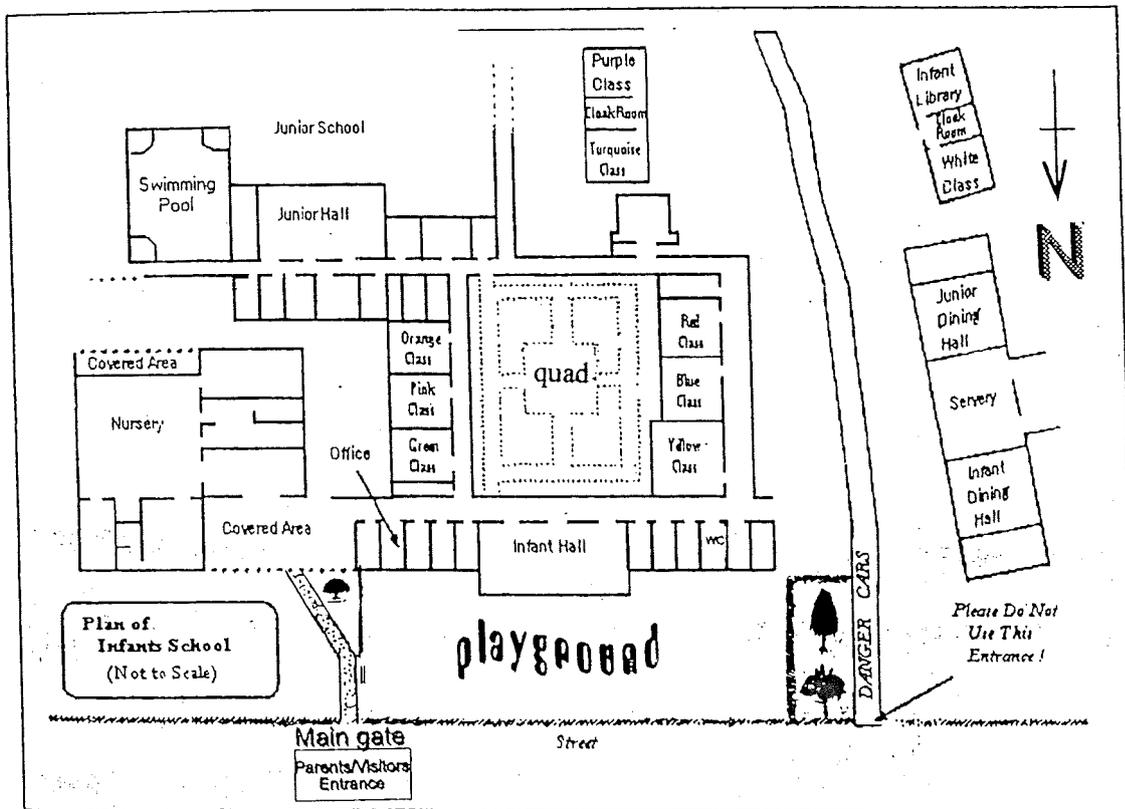
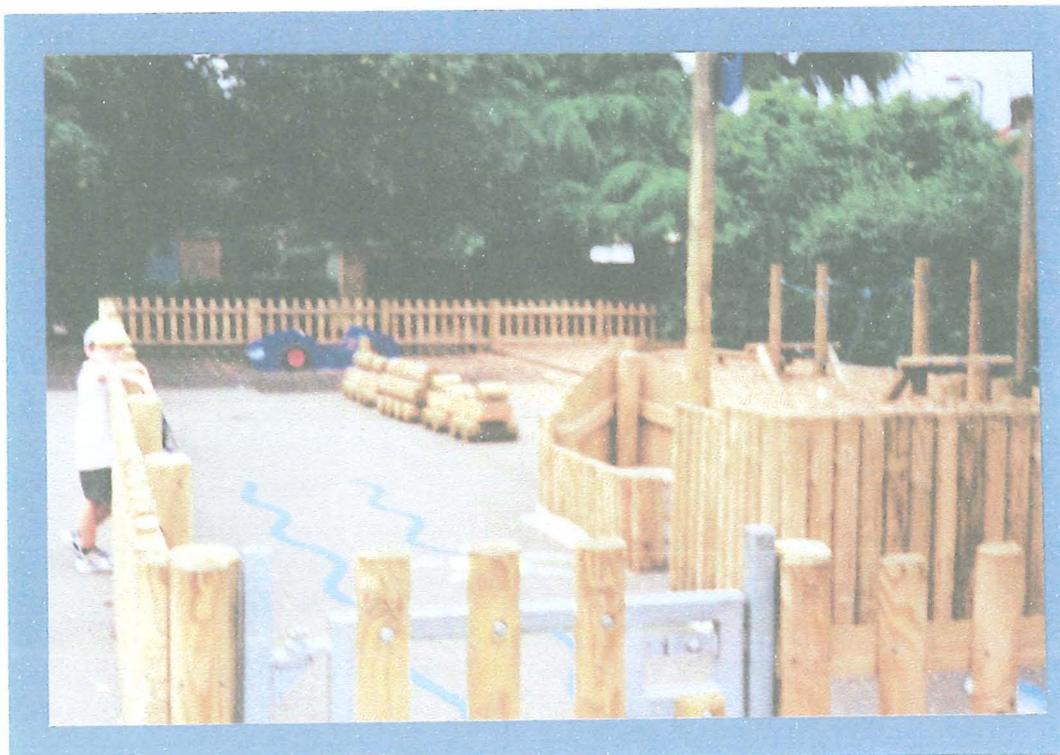


Figure 4.3 **Brownlow infant school playground**



a) The Brownlow infant playground showing the location of the school hall



b) The newly established adventure play area

Figure 4.4 **Brownlow infant school outdoor environment**



a) The newly established reception pupils' play area



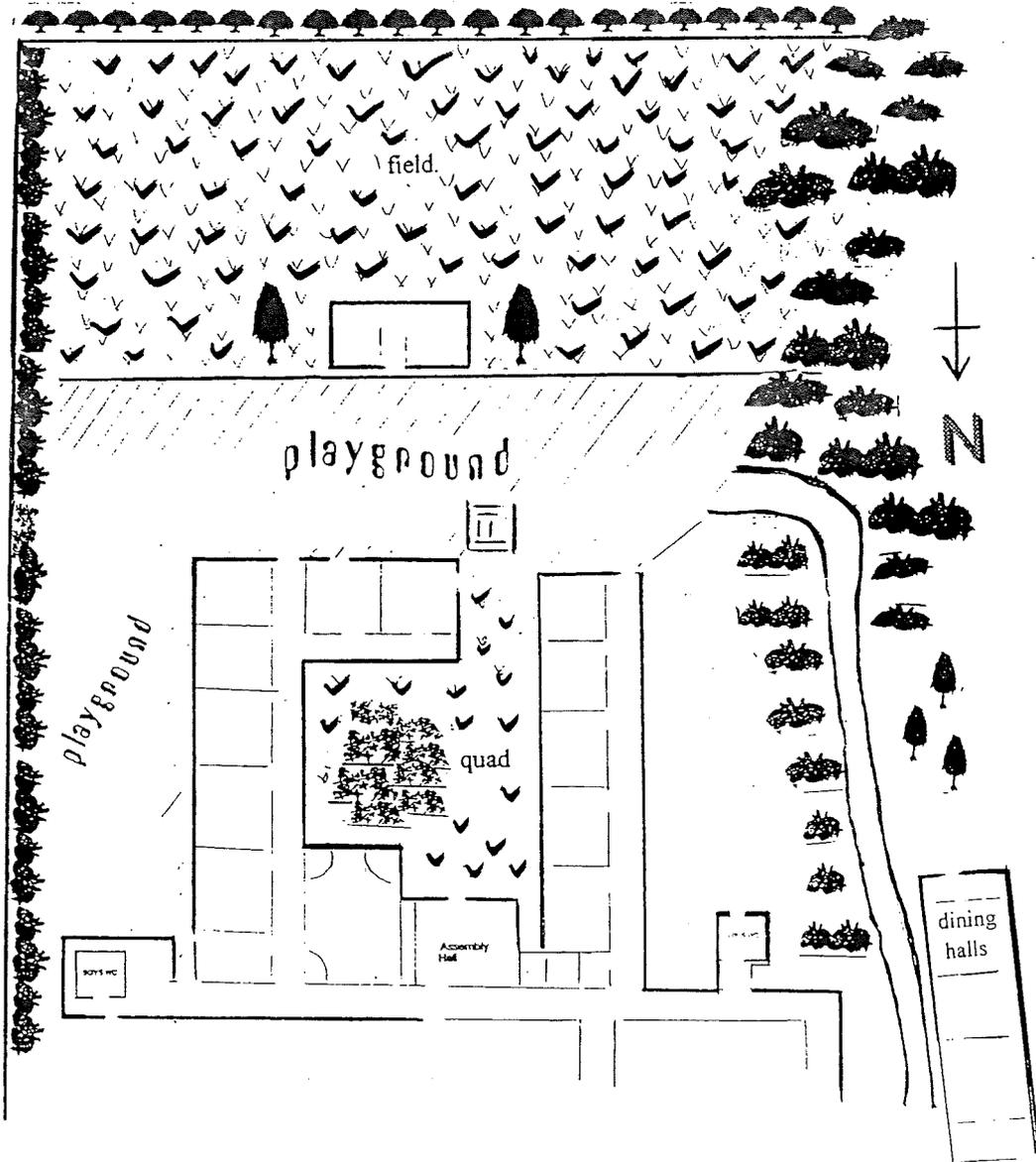
b) The newly established quiet area

Brownlow junior school

Brownlow junior school shares its spacious grounds with Brownlow infant school (Figure 4.5). The school is adjacent to a sizeable recreation ground and is overlooked by high rise housing built by the local authority in the 1960s. Climbing apparatus and swings in one corner of the school field had failed recent safety checks at the time of the study and these were no longer in use (a point noted by the child interviewees). A fairly new addition to the playground was a trellis work seating and planted area, which the children had named the 'red house' due to its overall appearance. In keeping with comments made by one child, pupils were observed to be climbing and indulging in noisy activities in this location. This construction had not been entirely without its problems, and the headteacher stated that it had been 'vandalised'. Eventually the pupils were involved in the planting and the vandalism stopped. Once more, pupils must access the dining facilities via the internal driveway, resulting in some supervision difficulties.

At the time of the study, the school had just relocated its welfare provision so that direct access from the playground had become possible. This was proving to be a highly successful move, which had eliminated the tribulations caused by injured pupils trailing through the school buildings. Nevertheless, informal observations show problems (behaviour-wise) were arising from the boys' toilets when pupils were first entering the main building unsupervised (the girls' toilets have direct outside access). The school has a number of entrances/exits and so there are no complications with overcrowding caused by pupils en route to the playground. One major difficulty, however, stems from the south facing playground when pupils must spend time in the hot sun during mid-summer, although mature trees at the edge of the field do afford limited shade.

Figure 4.5 Plan of Brownlow junior school



The playground is equipped with the usual surface markings but, if the observations are typical, these receive little attention from the children. Brownlow junior pupils are supplied with skipping ropes and balls for use at midday. Games of football are confined to one area of the playground thus encouraging 'successful containment' (Lewis, 1998, p.52). Some additional activities (board games and jigsaw puzzles) had been supplied for the lunchbreak. These had been funded by the local 'Behaviour Support Services' (such funding is no longer available).

Hallside infant school

The Hallside infant pupils have their own playground plus an additional area shared with the junior school. There is no green space, a fact which was bemoaned by some of the interviewees. The playground has many attractive characteristics including a number of colourful wall mosaics. A pergola provides shade and there is ample seating. Low level climbing equipment is well used. A wooden boat graces the centre of the playground (built by parents). There is a small under-cover area complete with brightly painted wall mural; however this is used for storage rather than as play space (Figure 4.7b). In total, Hallside has an exciting outside play environment with many imaginative features. Parents have made both financial and practical contributions.

At lunchtimes pupils are given a selection of small equipment but children are also encouraged to bring their own skipping ropes and soft balls for playground use. Additionally, children consume drinks and fruit in the playground. The surface markings are uninspiring and were not observed to be used. The play area poses fewer security problems than at Brownlow infants as it is located at the rear of the site and is surrounded by high fencing and copious trees (Figure 4.6). There is ample shade on sunny days. The main building has two exits and some congestion occurs following morning assembly when pupils find their way to the playground. However, the toilets have outside access and the welfare room is nearby and so is easily accessible.

Figure 4.6 Plan of Hallside infant school

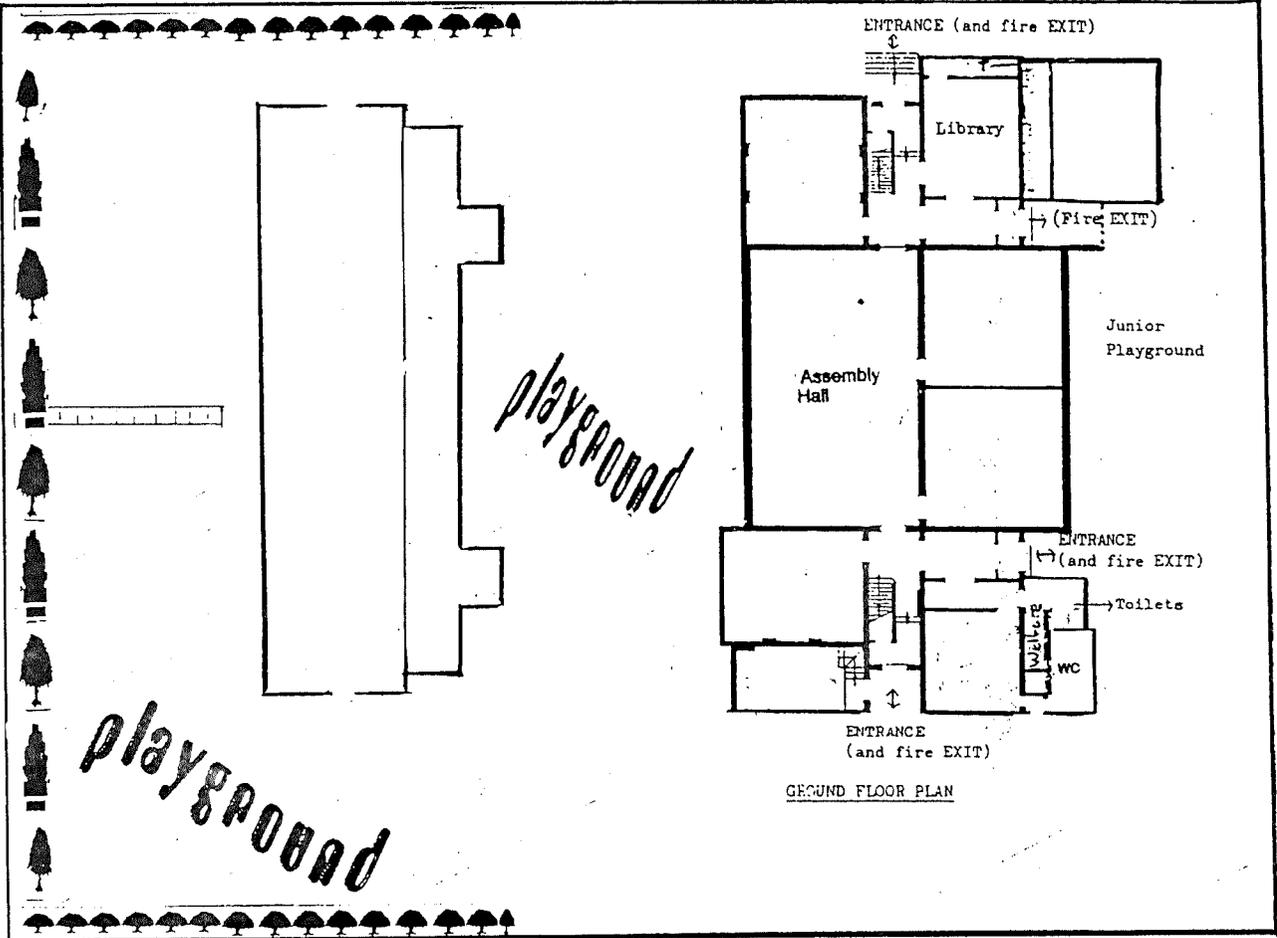


Figure 4.7 Playground areas at Hallside schools



a) Hallside infant playground with the junior play area in the background



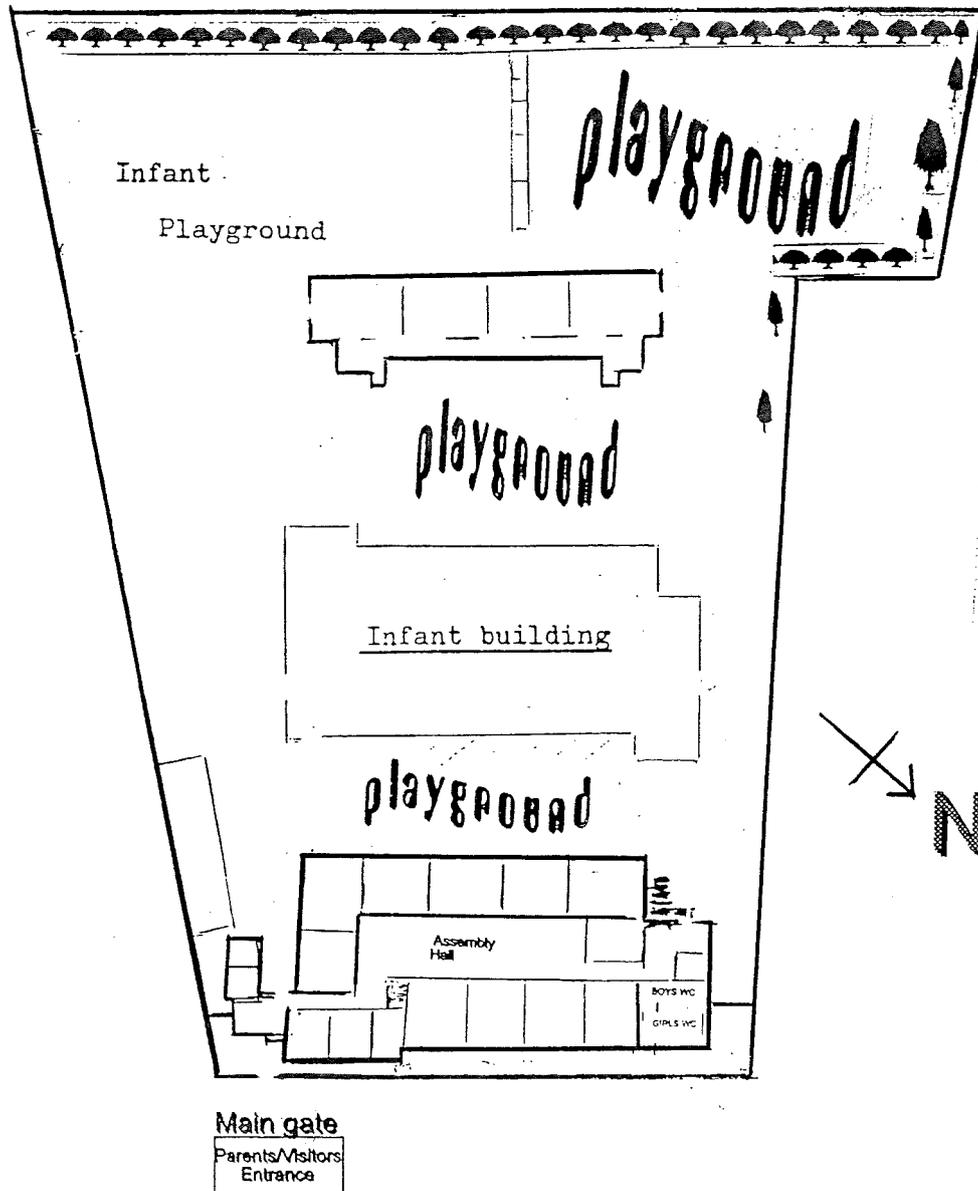
b) The under cover area at Hallside

Hallside junior school

As shown in Figure 4.8 there are three playground areas for the junior pupils. Years 5 and 6 share one play space (also used for football and basketball), Years 3 and 4 share another, and one playground is available to all pupils. There is no field. Seats and benches are placed in all areas but there is no designated 'quiet area'. Boundary trees provide some shade on sunny days (Figure 4.7a). The surface markings are uninspiring and appear to be little used. Children have balls for use at both morning and afternoon breaktimes plus a wider selection of loose equipment at lunchtime. Pupils are allowed to bring skipping ropes and soft balls from home. Again, fewer problems are posed by security as the site is only accessible through the main junior building, which is located at the front of the campus.

The playground was devoid of climbing apparatus (a fact bemoaned by the child interviewees). Pupils are encouraged to bring fruit and drinks to consume in the playground (supervising staff were also observed eating fruit). There are two entrances from the main junior building to the play space and some congestion was noted as pupils left assembly to make their way outside. However, this was minor and pupils were well behaved. The toilets and welfare facilities necessitate a long walk from the various play areas. Pupils conducted themselves well when re-entering the school to use these facilities and no problems were observed. Because the dining amenities are in a detached building the biggest difficulty observed at lunchtime revolved around poor weather conditions with pupils getting very wet when both leaving and returning to the main building. Apart from the equipment available for lunchtime use (purchased from school funds), little money had been spent on the play space. A pergola and planting divided the infant and junior playgrounds. Money for this had come from the 'friends' (parents) of the school. Unfortunately, because the school was being used by the local community at weekends, some damage was being incurred and the planting was in need of replacement. Naturally this would entail extra cost to the school and the headteacher was seeking ways of resolving this problem.

Figure 4.8 Plan of Hallside junior school



Gatward primary school

Gatward has extensive grounds with an exceptionally spacious playing field (Figure 4.10). The playground is located centrally and is subdivided by a small, enclosed grass area which is complete with low level climbing apparatus (not observed to be in use as the grass was too muddy to allow access and so this is a fine weather facility only as shown in Figure 4.9b). Other attractive structures include a 'quiet area' of seating in one corner of the junior section of the playground plus an ample supply of fixtures in the infant play space (Figure 4.9a). The separate reception playground has a number of colourful and interesting features (playhouse, large caterpillar, basketball nets and recycled tyres). Basketball is played in all areas and football is confined to the junior play space.

A 'friendship stop' (similar to a bus stop) is located in the infant play region. Unfortunately, the play space lacks any shaded areas. Playground equipment had been funded by the 'friends association' (parental contributions) and therefore had not involved the school in any direct cost. The school is particularly fortunate in having numerous entrances to the play environment thus eliminating congestion. However, welfare and toilet facilities have no direct outside access. This can create supervision difficulties. One teacher (Year 2) declared, 'I stand by the boys' toilets sorting out problems. They [pupils] tend to come in and run up and down the corridor at breaktimes' (supported by the observational evidence). At Gatward one school hall doubles as the dining room and meals are transported from elsewhere. Pupils having packed lunches eat in their classrooms. This presents supervision difficulties and seems to be far from ideal but there appears to be little scope for alternative solutions.

Figure 4.9 The playground at Gatward

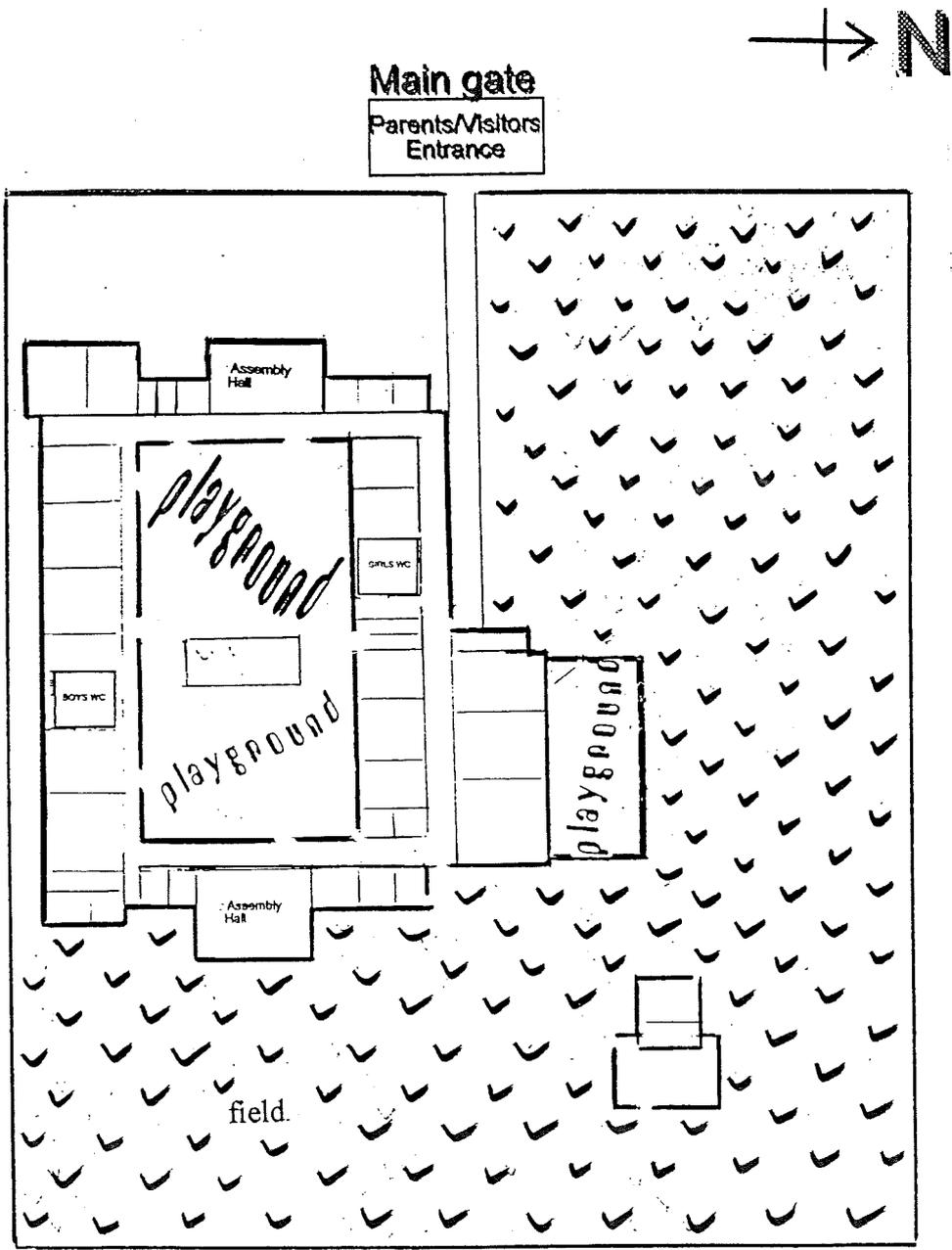


a) The infant children at play



b) The grassed area (only used in fine weather)

Figure 4.10 Plan of Gatward primary school



Woodberry primary school

At Woodberry, the infant and junior playgrounds are completely separate (Figure 4.11). The infant play environment is rather bland except for the more recent addition of an expanse of seating (Figure 4.12a). A large tree offers shade from the sun and the playspace overlooks a substantial playing field. The junior playground has seating on two sides and a gazebo is situated in a small grassed area (unfortunately too muddy to access when the grass is wet as shown in Figure 4.12b). Football is confined to one section of the playspace. Playground markings seem uninspiring. Both the infant and junior toilets have direct outside access. This is judged to be particularly advantageous and minimises any potential behaviour difficulties (such as those found at Gatward). Medical facilities are brought out into the playground (in the junior department during all breaktimes and in the infant department during lunchtime) as the welfare room does not offer easy access. The infant pupils bring a selection of items from home to play with outside (not electrical toys) and balls and other loose equipment are available at lunchtimes in both playgrounds (footballs are allowed at morning break for the junior pupils only).

The infant classrooms each have direct outside access. This is felt to be a distinct benefit when children are entering and exiting the playground. The junior part of the building (first floor) has central access with a stairway leading to the outside. One supervisory assistant was unhappy about this situation feeling that the stairs were potentially hazardous. Nonetheless, the junior playground itself appears to pose no particular safety or security problems as it is located at the rear of the site. The infant play space, on the other hand, is adjacent to the internal drive-way and close to the main site entrance, and this could be cause for concern. The observations indicate that visitors frequently leave the main gates open (despite notices to the contrary) and so this presents difficulties. At the time of the investigation the school had allocated funding for new playground equipment, wet weather apparatus, and also for supervisory assistant training sessions.

Figure 4.11 Plan of Woodberry primary school

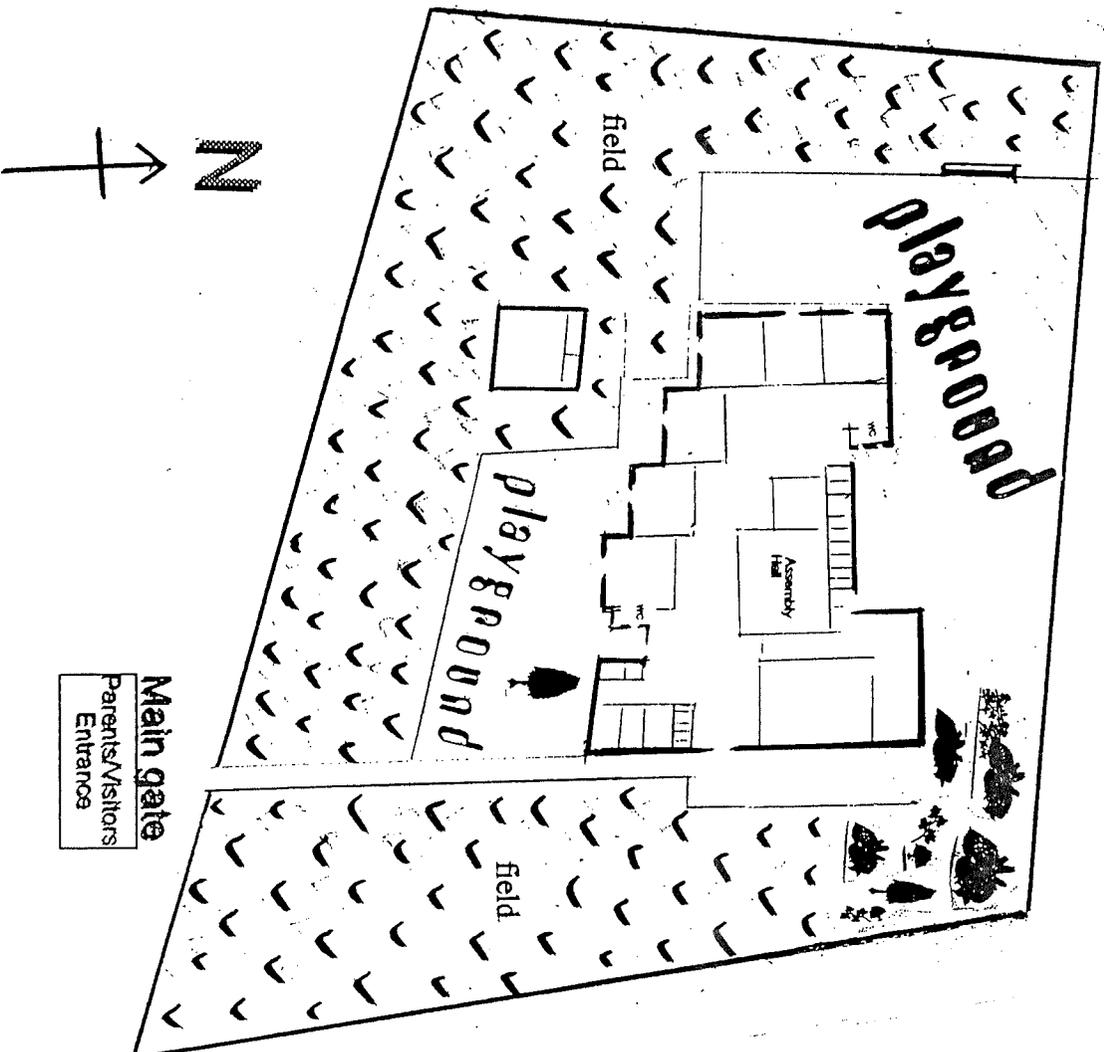
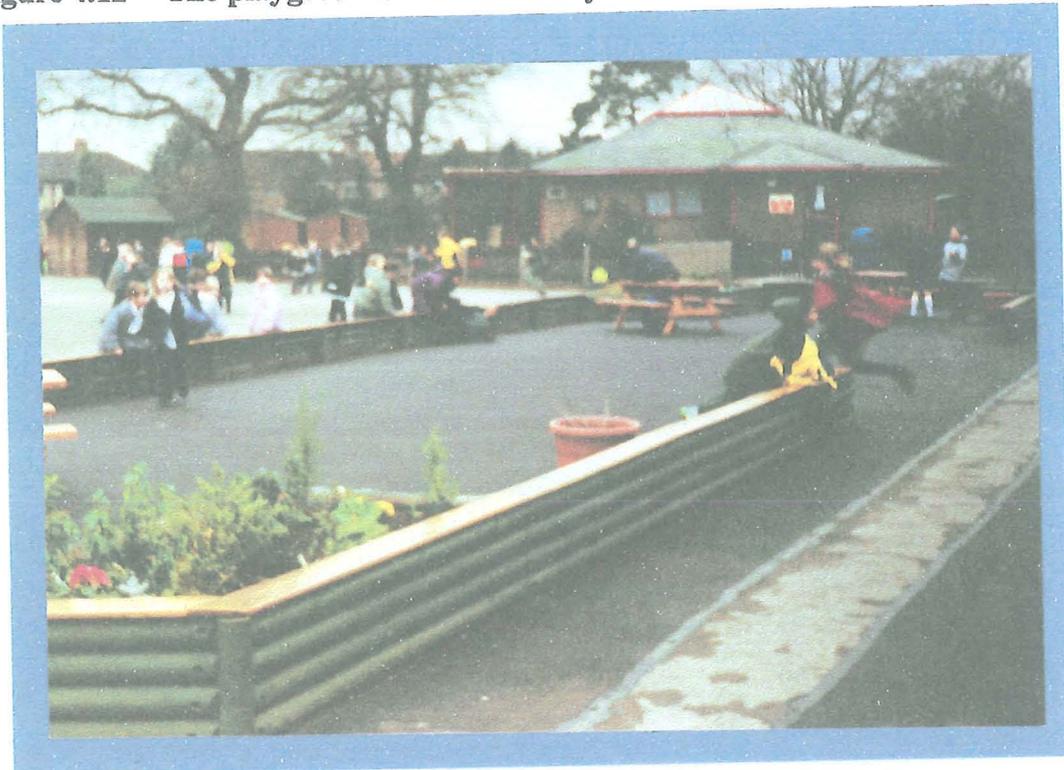


Figure 4.12 The playgrounds at Woodberry



a) The quiet area in the infant playground



b) The junior playground (under cover area used in fine weather)

Oatlands primary school

Oatlands is particularly fortunate in having four separate playground areas (Figure 4.13). The school also benefits from a playing field, which is adjacent to the main campus. All play areas have interesting features including gazebos, items of seating, a quiet area in the junior play space (Figure 4.16a), a roadway (reception play area) and various fixed play structures such as a wooden train (infant playground). Shade from the sun is limited in some playgrounds. The principal infant play space may be especially vulnerable due to its location close to the main gate, which must remain unlocked for visitor access (Figure 4.14a).

All playgrounds have a good selection of surface markings but these were observed to be largely unused (with the exception of the undulating roadway that forms a major part of the reception play area). Children must first enter the building to access both toilet and welfare facilities. The headteacher suggested this could lead to some behaviour problems. Informal observations would appear to lend some support to this assertion with some mild tomfoolery. The junior pupils are provided with an exceptionally stimulating array of loose equipment at lunchtimes such as large skittles and skis (Figure 4.14b). The infant children are supplied with a selection of more familiar bats, balls, hoops and skipping ropes. Football is a banned game at Oatlands (the only school found to impose a ban) and basketball is promoted instead. There are a number of school building entrances/exits for the various age groups and pupils are encouraged to walk in single file when navigating the long narrow corridors. The school had just allocated funding to provide additional playground equipment for the older pupils.

Figure 4.13 Plan of Outlands primary school

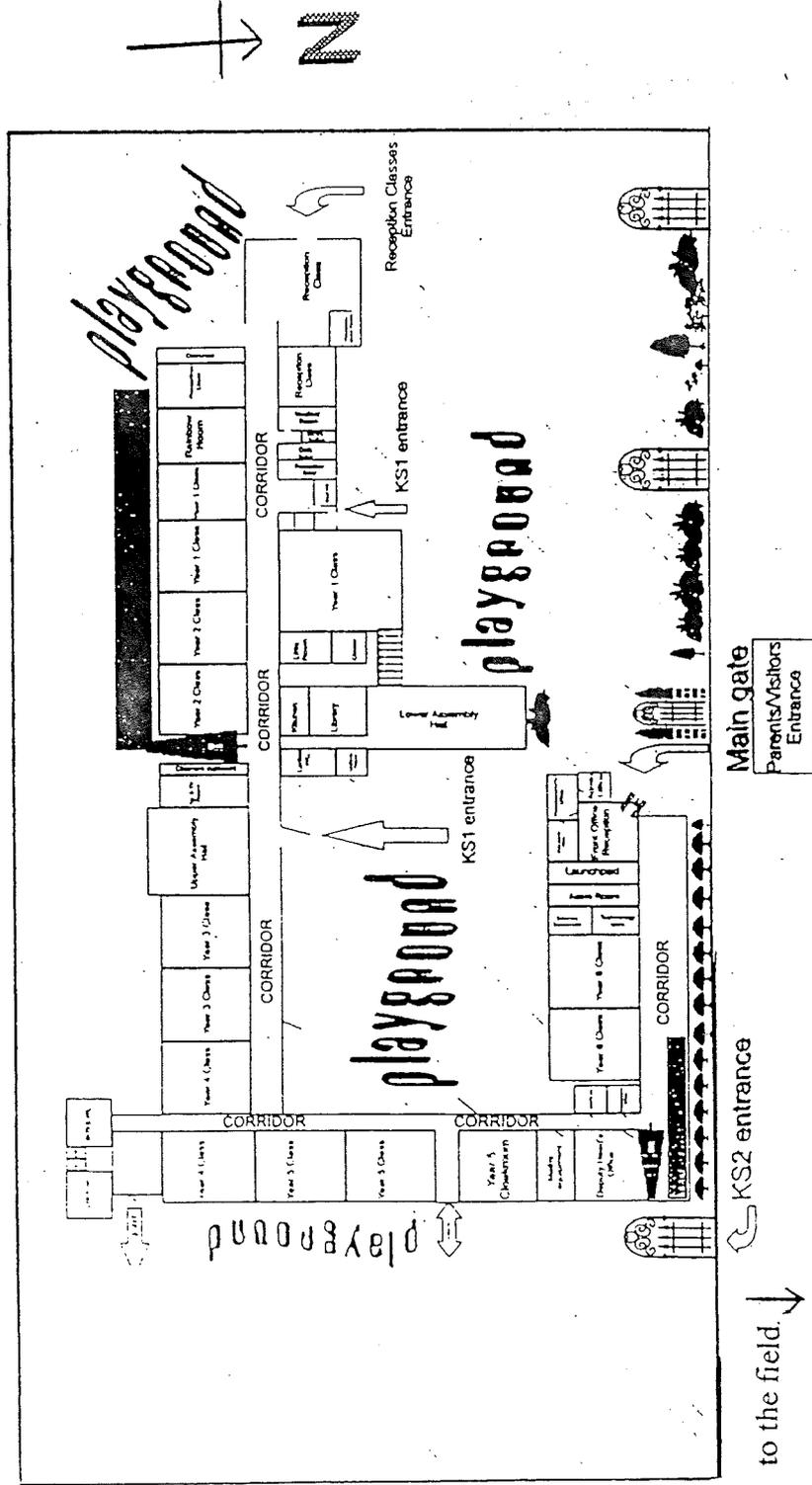
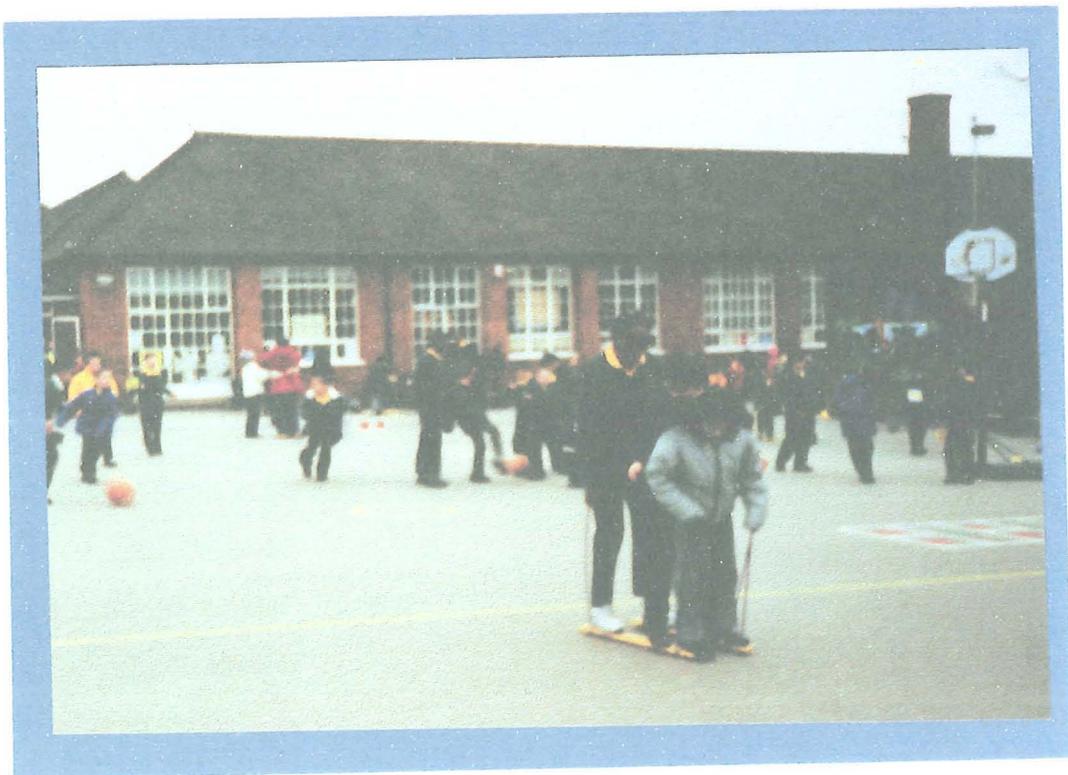


Figure 4.14 The playgrounds at Oatlands



a) The infant play area adjacent to the roadway



b) The junior play area

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

At the time of the fieldwork, St. Mark's had just finished constructing a substantial and attractive quiet area of seating and planting (Figures 4.15 and 4.16b). Funding for this had come mainly from parents. Parents had also given practical help in the design and erection of this region. Both football and basketball at St. Mark's are confined to the junior end of the playground. Trees around the perimeter of the play space provide some shade on sunny days. There are a variety of surface markings and games of hopscotch were occasionally observed. Loose equipment (balls, skipping ropes and quoits) is available at both breaktimes and lunchtimes.

St. Mark's is a small school with a separate entrance for those junior pupils located upstairs (two classes). The remaining pupils use the front entrance to access the playground. The toilet and welfare facilities are inside but, as pupils numbers are small and behaviour levels are high, this does not present any observable problems. Some potential security concerns arise as the main site entrance allows easy access to the playground. The school additionally boasts a substantial playing field although the grass had not been cut and the area was rather wet at the time of the study (a nursery was built on part of this ground in 2003).

Figure 4.15 Plan of St. Mark's C of E primary school

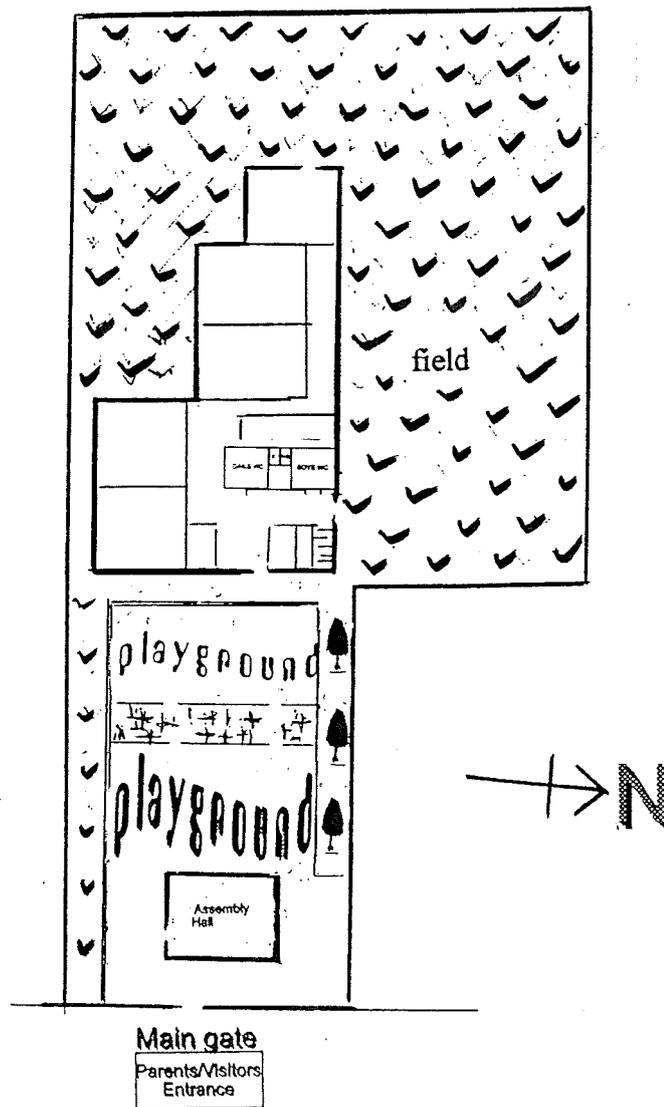


Figure 4.16 Play areas at Oatlands and St. Mark's



a) The quiet area at Oatlands



b) The quiet area at St. Mark's

Wells Green primary school

Being a newly constructed school it was reasoned that Wells Green would have the most favourable facilities. To a certain extent this proved to be true. The infant play area has curved bays, inspiring features and a good selection of fixed apparatus. In spite of such attributes, no separate dining facilities have been provided and so the school hall is dual purpose. This is felt to be particularly regrettable for reasons discussed later. Furthermore, neither the pupils' toilets nor the welfare room have direct outside access. As such, pupils must first enter the building when requiring medical assistance or to use the lavatory. This could give rise to supervision problems (as seen elsewhere).

On a more positive note, all classrooms adjacent to the playground have doors leading directly to the outside. This allows pupils to return inside easily. Shade is provided by a small canopied area. Children play in comparative safety as the playground is situated on the far side of the campus (Figure 4.17). An abundant supply of loose equipment is available at both breaktimes and lunchtimes (including mobile toys such as tricycles). The surface markings are engaging and are well used due to adult involvement in the children's activities (Figure 4.18a). In general, the external landscape is one of pleasant distinctiveness. According to Titman (1992, p.9), 'It is essential that grounds offer diversity, flexibility and change.' Wells Green gives an impression of offering these attributes.

Figure 4.17 Plan of Wells Green primary school

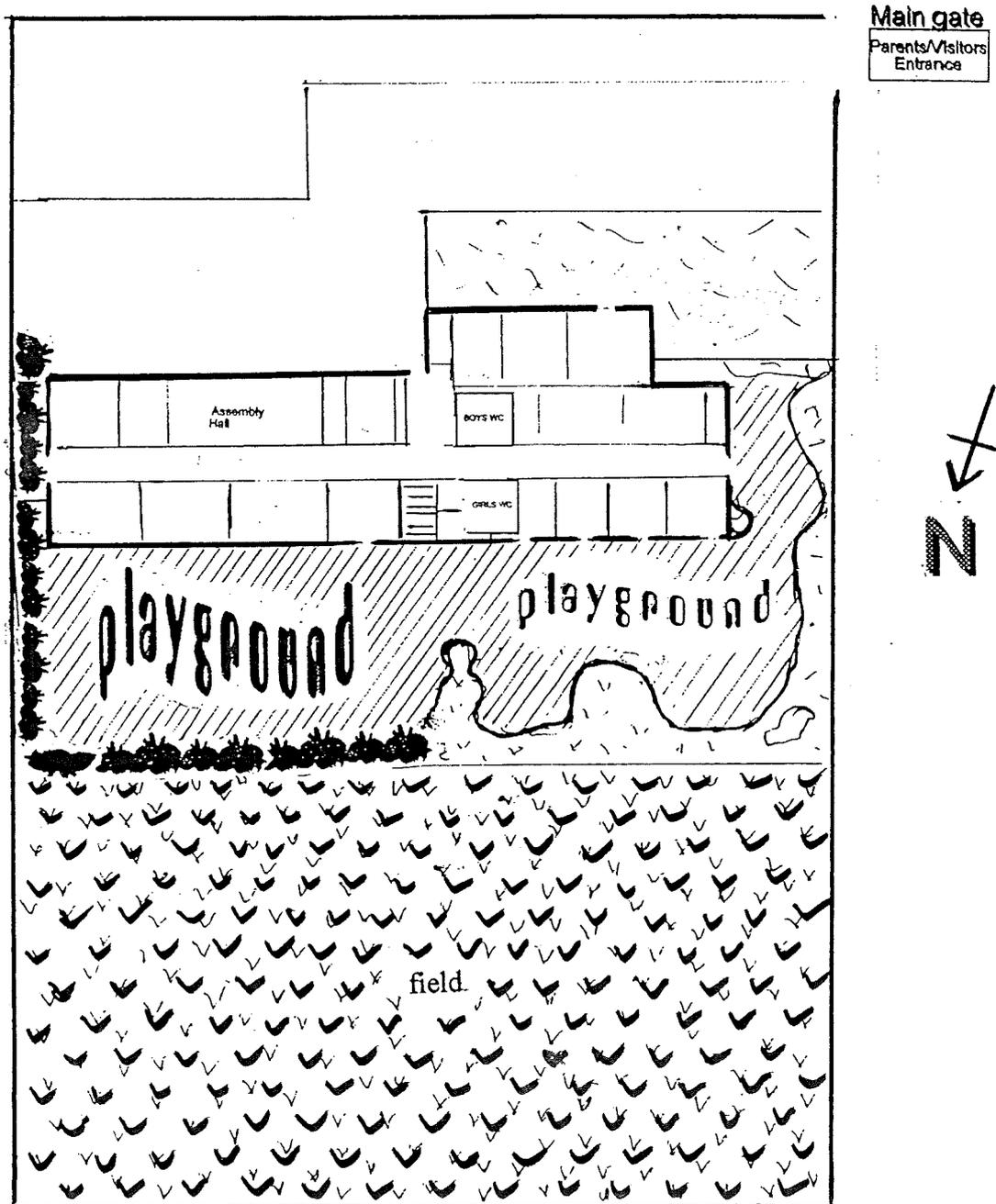


Figure 4.18 Play areas at Wells Green and Kitts Mount



a) Adult directed activities at Wells Green



b) The new Kitts Mount school showing classrooms with direct outside access

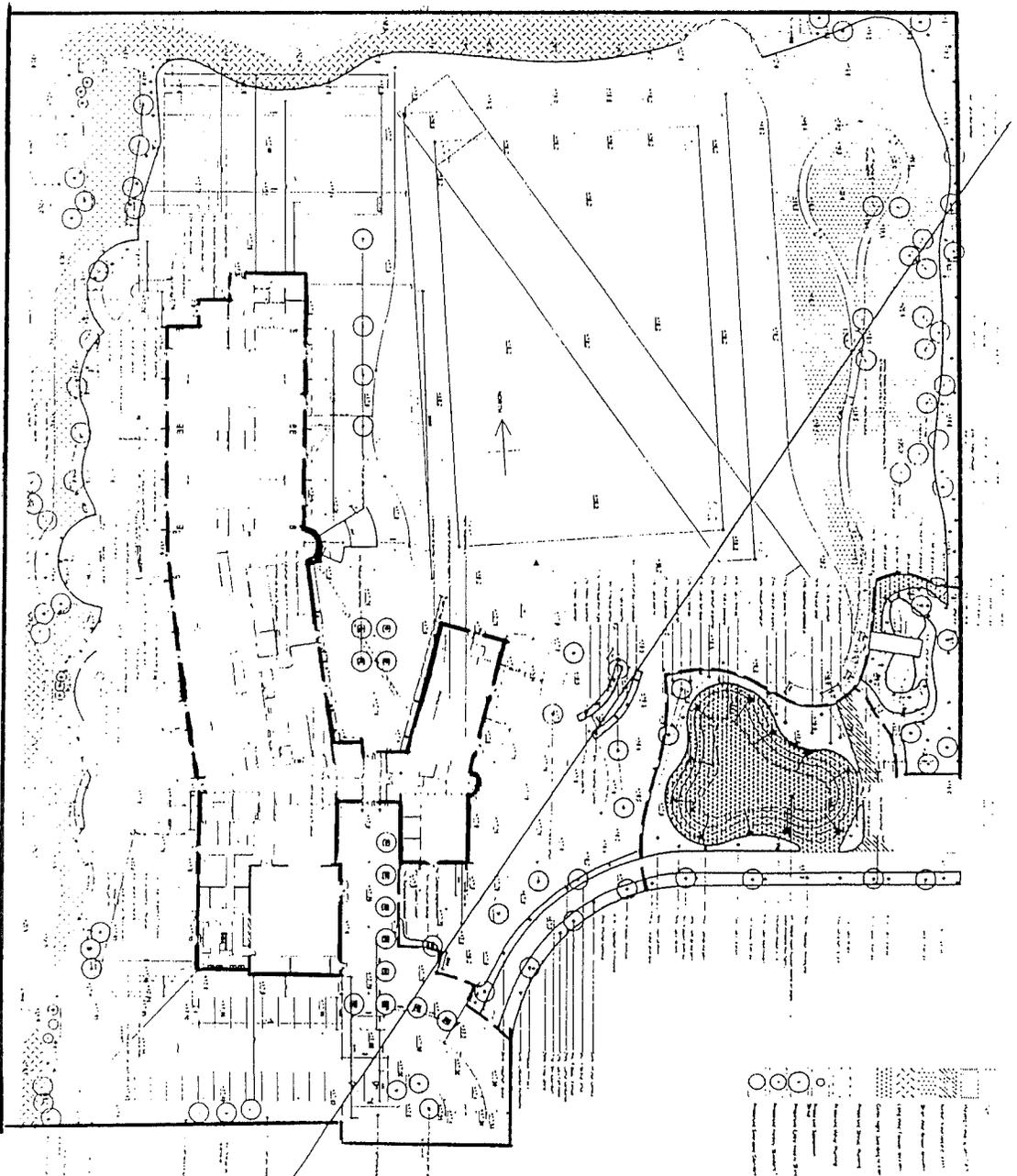
Kitts Mount primary school

Towards the end of the research period a new primary school was under construction in the north-eastern corner of the borough. During a tour of the site the architect explained his ideas for the school. It was initially stated that it had been difficult to follow the remit, which was described as 'a fairly specific schedule for the accommodation from the borough's development officers', within the LEA budget. The plans for Kitts Mount can be found in Figure 4.19. According to the architect, the school possesses a field 'big enough for a football pitch' with further 'green areas around the perimeter.' The green space was likened to 'the village green and heart of the school.' The architect had designed the buildings in relation to these grassed regions. Kitts Mount is located in the centre of a newly established industrial estate and its designer described the school as 'an oasis in a fairly hostile environment.'

A number of highly salient points emerged. To begin with, the children's toilets have no direct outside access (although they are located close to the entrances). Secondly, the welfare room is placed centrally within the building (to be close to the administrative office). While this provides accessibility for parents collecting sick or injured pupils, it does necessitate a long journey from the playground for children requiring assistance. More fortuitously, there are canopied areas projecting some four metres away from the building. Although this space is somewhat limited it does provide potential shade and some shelter. All classrooms have doors leading outside (Figure 4.18b). Significantly, there are no separate dining facilities. The school hall is therefore dual purpose.

It was stated that no additional dining amenities were to be included because 'the council decided these would be under used throughout the day.' This seems to be particularly disappointing and there was a mutual feeling (architect and researcher) that this had more to do with cost than need. On a more promising note, the school does have an Early Years Unit (Foundation Stage) with its own

Figure 4.19 Plan of Kitts Mount primary school



play area. It became clear from the architect's comments that much thought had been given to the design of the new school and that the outside environment was now seen as being of crucial importance to children's development.

Discussion

Questionnaire responses regarding playgrounds, amenities and resources were substantiated by the observational data obtained at the focus schools and the value of the school landscape cannot be underestimated. Titman's (1994) semiotic research suggests children's feelings of place are important:

Where, by design, the grounds met at least some of the children's needs, they read this as a reflection of the fact that the school valued them and understood their needs. Where the design of grounds failed to meet their needs and playtime was an uncomfortable and often unpleasant experience, they believed that the school knew this and by implication "didn't care".

(Titman, 1994, p.57)

Mortimore *et al* (2000, p.137) maintain, 'School environments that are attractive give positive messages to students and staff and can have a positive effect on their attitudes and self-esteem'. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that, to a certain extent, the school's campus is pre-set. The age of the school may have a crucial bearing on the resources available. Space is at a premium in some schools (as indicated in the questionnaires), while others (like Gatward) are fortunate in having abundant acreage. Sufficiency of space is obviously one vital feature in facilitating change. Even so, Factor (2004, p.150) is of the opinion that, 'Whatever the advantages of well-thought-out and well-designed playgrounds and playground equipment, one cannot argue that they are essential for children to play. Children will play, whatever adults do – or don't do.'

It is plain, however, that schools within the borough have recently been enhancing their landscapes (this may be judged as equally true of schools throughout the country, of course). One reason for this is to improve behaviour levels. Those schools visited have generally made substantial changes to the outdoor environment. A number of major initiatives have been observed, including the

newly established outside play areas for reception children (Gatward and Oatlands) and the construction of quiet regions (St. Marks, Woodberry and Brownlow juniors). Furthermore, some schools have inaugurated a whole raft of external improvements (Hallside infant school). According to Titman (1994, p.116), 'unless due account is taken of the effect of the environment on children's behaviour, the root cause of many of the problems will not be recognised and any strategies to modify children's behaviour are likely to be, at least, only partially successful'.

Maximising the potential of the available environmental space consequently enables the organisation to enrich pupils' breaktime experiences and allows the school to further defend its values. This is not simply a matter of cost (important though that might be) but more a question of rethinking the possibilities presented. The literature consulted, however, gives two distinct and opposing views of the school campus. While it is felt by some (Titman, 1994; Ota, Erricker and Erricker, 1997) that children need secret places to play this has not generally been found to be the situation. Only at Oatlands were pupils observed to be out of sight of supervising staff as the quiet area (Figure 4.16a) is located to the rear of the junior playground (and even here children can still be seen by staff inside the building). When playing outside, therefore, pupils in this study tend to be under the continuous scrutiny of adults. Schools directly studied thus seem to favour the alternative argument concerning 'the elimination of areas which are hidden from sight', as put forward by Rigby (1997, p.178). This is deemed to help prevent unwarranted behaviour and to facilitate safety.

In contrast to the idea that school landscapes are often unkempt (Titman, 1994), thereby leading children to believe they are undervalued, all sites visited were found to be in good order and litter free. This is especially praiseworthy given that pupils in some schools are generating extra waste due to the encouragement of drinks or snacks in the playground (Hallside and St. Mark's). All schools studied provide some form of seating and children who are eating and drinking are able to sit down, if desired. It was discovered, however, that children show a tendency to roam the play area whilst consuming permitted refreshments. It is also stressed that to describe areas of seating as 'quiet' is a misnomer. This is one

change that does not appear to be living up to expectations. Regions of seating (such as those at St. Mark's, Woodberry, Gatward and Brownlow juniors) usually fail to afford respite from the normal sounds of the playground. Furthermore, pupils occupying quiet areas were not necessarily indulging in peaceful activities. It would seem from the children's interview data (discussed later) that children like to be active at breaktime with freedom to run about being frequently cited as a preference.

The schools directly studied mainly have traditional, rectangular, asphalt playgrounds, including the very latest school, Kitts Mount (although here there are additional curved features as shown in Figure 4.19). There are two notable exceptions. Firstly, the Oatlands reception children's play space has an interesting and well used winding roadway. Secondly, the infant playground at Wells Green is an imaginative shape, which incorporates irregular curves and bays (Figure 4.17). Some schools visited had introduced zoned (sectioned) regions or areas (Table 4.4). Frequently this was for the containment of football (St. Mark's, Woodberry, Hallside and Brownlow juniors). The observational data suggest this idea is reasonably successful and it does allow alternative games to be played in the remaining space. Titman (1992) argues that it is always worth considering zoning, rather than imposing bans on certain (troublesome) activities. Banning is another important issue because Lindon (2003) maintains primary staff have a tendency to ban pupils' most favoured pastimes and then complain that children no longer know how to play.

What is of particular note is that, while the majority of schools visited do have substantial playing fields (Hallside being the exception), on only one occasion was a grassed area seen to be occupied (Brownlow juniors) because constant bouts of wet weather had rendered these regions unusable (observations and interview data). As noted, Hendricks (2001) argues green spaces are likely to be an under used resource due to poor climatic conditions. While this seems to be true, there can be little doubt that green expanses, together with trees and planting, do serve to contribute to the overall appearance of the school site. As such they provide pupils, staff and visitors with an aesthetically pleasing and calming landscape. According to the DfES (Key points, 2004), the Government is now

committed to 'the protection of playing fields' and it might be premature to say that these have only limited value. A comparison of the amenities at the focus schools can be found in Table 4.4.

Both the location of the children's toilets and the siting of the welfare (medical) room can be a matter of some concern. Direct outside access (Woodberry, Hallside infants and the girls' toilets at Brownlow juniors) serves to eliminate any behaviour problems resulting from pupils having to first enter the main building when requiring the lavatory during breaktime (a point mentioned at both Gatward and Oatlands). Further difficulties can arise when the welfare room is positioned some distance from the playground. Such problems are not insurmountable. Schools may find their own solutions either by moving the location (Brownlow juniors) or by taking medical supplies outside (Woodberry). Such changes appear to be successful in improving practice, as assessed by those involved. Nevertheless, these are clearly issues that the designers of new schools might wish to examine. Potential lack of access to drinking water is a further consideration. Whilst acknowledging a growing trend for children to bring bottled drinking water to school, it is still worrying to find that more than a fifth of the borough's schools (21.7 per cent) have less than adequate facilities of their own. Shortages of this basic amenity are repeated nationwide (Shepherd, TES, 2004; FAQ, 2005) and there is certainly scope for improvement.

A further cause of unease uncovered by this study involves the many tribulations emerging from the absence of proper dining facilities, as witnessed at some schools (Table 4.5). At Gatward, Oatlands and St. Mark's where school halls are used for eating the midday meal there was found to be considerable disruption to the normal (educational) routine. More significantly, halls are then unavailable for use at lunchtimes during wet weather, or for any extra-curricular pursuits. Additional problems occur when classrooms are used by pupils eating packed lunches (as at Gatward). This depletes the number of midday assistants available for other duties (such as overseeing the playground) because classrooms must obviously be supervised. It is therefore disturbing to discover that new schools (Wells Green and Kitts Mount) do not have separate dining facilities. This seems very short-sighted (particularly as dining halls could easily be put to use at other

times of the day to fulfil various teaching requirements, for example, with small groups of children).

It is evident that the majority of schools within the LEA now supply pupils with loose equipment at lunchtime (93 per cent). Many also provide equipment at breaktime (63 per cent). This makes a beneficial difference to the range of games children can play (Lindon, 2001a). Additionally, some schools encourage pupils to bring playthings from home for playground use but there are usually restrictions on what can be brought. Where this was in operation (for instance, at Woodberry) it was seen to be working very well and those children informally consulted appreciated having this option. It is accepted, nevertheless, that this custom could result in arguments over ownership or even lost or broken toys. A major difference at Brownlow infants is that the school is able to provide a selection of both inside and outside activities, which are accessible to all pupils. The children have freedom of choice as to whether or not to participate. This extra opportunity is largely brought about because of the availability and location of the school hall with its easy playground access (Figure 4.3a), although it does also show a school making the best use of its campus.

Observations of other aspects of playground experiences suggest there is little interest in surface markings (Blatchford, 1989). This could result from the restriction these impose on children. As already noted, the observational and interview data reveal that children appear to appreciate the opportunity to simply run about that playtime brings. At Wells Green adults organise games on the surface markings (Figure 4.18a) thereby providing a framework of support for these activities to take place. However, this calls into question the extent to which adults should intervene in children's free choice pastimes (Thomson, 2003). Opinions on this are polarised. According to Thomson (*op cit*, p.58), 'continual intervention and monitoring of playtime activities has a deleterious affect on children because it limits their play experiences and de-skills them in the general characteristics of spontaneous play.' As shown earlier, acknowledgement of the importance of free play is by no means new (Wilderspin, 1840 cited in Raymont, 1937). Whether the development of adult intervention represents an improvement is therefore open to debate.

Table 4.5 Dining arrangement at all schools visited

School	Facilities		
	Integral dining hall	Detached dining hall	No facilities – school hall used
Brownlow infants		√	
Brownlow junior		√	
Hallside infants		√	
Hallside junior		√	
Gatward primary			√
Woodberry primary	√		
Oatlands primary			√
St. Mark's CE primary			√
Wells Green primary			√
Kitts Mount primary			√

Significantly, there seems to be a dearth of suitable climbing apparatus in schools. The questionnaires reveal that just over half of the borough's primary schools have this amenity (26 out of 46, 56.5 per cent). Older pupils in particular lament this lack of provision. Where no legitimate equipment was available children were observed climbing on other items such as seats and tables (or even litter bins). Deprivation of resources can thus contribute to undesirable behaviour (Titman, 1994). Nevertheless, the current social climate means schools have become far more cautious in allowing pupils to pursue activities which can result in accidents (Thomson, 2003). This may well be one reason for the absence of climbing structures. It has been stated that 'the compensation culture has brought with it a climate of fear' and '79 per cent of LEAs say school claims are increasing' (*Independent Television News*, 10th March, 2004). According to Trafford (2001) teachers are now much less willing to take risks.

In more general terms, health and safety issues feature prominently with regard to breaktimes. In particular, security could pose problems when playgrounds are close to boundaries (Figure 4.14a) and main site entrances (Oatlands, Woodberry, St. Mark's and Brownlow infants). There are also obvious dangers when schools have internal driveways (Woodberry and Brownlow). In such cases supervisory staff are required to be extra vigilant. Moreover, there is a potential health risk from the scarcity of shade in many playgrounds (Titman, 1992). Almost half of the borough's schools (45.7 per cent) are in this position. Given the well documented and rapidly mounting concerns relating to sun exposure this, too, can be viewed as a matter for considerable disquiet and is certainly an area for improvement.

Naturally, any environmental developments require both time and energy, as well as financial input. Some improvements may be too expensive to be financed from normal school budgets. Often extra funding comes from parents. This was the situation with some schools visited. It is dependent upon the ability and inclination of parents to make a financial contribution. Additionally, some schools have approached outside agencies for extra funding (for example, Oatlands). Much therefore might rely upon the negotiating skills of the senior (or other) staff and much also rests upon the enthusiasm of staff to participate in

various fund raising events. These can require a substantial level of personal commitment.

What is equally important, however, is that any resources are only useful if they are fully utilised by the school. Regardless of any limitations placed on individual institutions, schools can enhance the playtime experiences of pupils by maximising the resources at their disposal. This usually requires research, imagination and some practical thinking. Campus improvements involve both vision and staff expertise. It is not simply a matter of throwing out random ideas but more a question of 'joining up the dots'. While there has been an explosion of change, Blatchford (1989, p.94) readily acknowledges that 'individual schools are largely left to identify their own problems and needs for the playground, and then both design and finance improvements'. It is argued that this is in sharp contrast to the resources and assistance available for other aspects of the child's school experience.

Résumé

Chapter Four was structured to firstly provide an overview of changes made in respect of primary sector breaktimes and secondly to facilitate an examination of resources available on individual school campuses. It was reasoned that the school site would serve to impose limitations on practice and also on further developments. The chapter began with a consideration of current improvements throughout the borough's schools. Initiatives were shown to be wide ranging but were judged to broadly fall into four identified categories: provision; organisation; socialisation (of the child); and supervision. Many schools were discovered to have been making changes in all four domains.

It was found that problems were being tackled on various levels. Schools are therefore frequently attempting to take a more 'holistic' approach (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994) to innovation. Subsequently, the focus schools were discussed in relation to their cultural climate and any significant changes made to

playground practice. It was determined that there has generally been a more collaborative pathway to development within these schools. Nonetheless, the strongly recommended (Hendricks, 2001) pupil involvement in this process has not always taken place. Furthermore, some schools were found to have experienced difficulties due to a lack of support from ancillary staff. It has also been noted that financial considerations may impose restrictions on proposed improvements.

The second part of Chapter Four has thoroughly investigated the amenities and resources available at individual school sites. This provision was found to vary considerably across the borough. It was noted that lack of site facilities has implications for both actual practice and for potential developments. The focus schools were subsequently spotlighted in respect of these issues and site plans were displayed to assist clarity. Issues of both health and safety came to the fore. In some situations the school campus was discovered to pose security problems while children were outside at play. Safety was assessed as being a problem area linked with societal changes, resulting in increased parental awareness and the school's greater accountability.

In addition, it was judged that a number of school playgrounds give rise to consideration of serious health issues emanating mainly from children's exposure to direct sunlight. The lack of appropriately shaded regions in many schools was highlighted as a cause for particular unease. Concern was also expressed about the inadequate dining arrangements at some schools, resulting in logistical problems and restrictions to midday practice. In this respect the design of new school buildings without separate canteens was deemed to be a matter for especial disquiet. The next chapter extends the study by investigating the organisation of breaktimes, including matters of both policy and practice.

Chapter Five

Organisation, Policy, Playground Induction, Indoor Playtimes and Parents

Introduction

Having set the scene in the previous chapter, Chapter Five moves the argument forward by investigating organisation and practice under five major themes: the structure of the school day; written policy; playground induction; inside ('wet') playtimes; and parental knowledge and understanding of the management of breaktimes. Firstly, practice concerning the organisation of the school day in schools across the LEA is considered and then particular reference is made to all schools visited, beginning with the main case study school. Close attention is given to any reductions in breaktime. Specific reference is made to staff attitudes towards the removal of the afternoon playtime where this is relevant. Following on from this, the importance of written policy documents in respect of playground practice is discussed. Documents from all focus schools are carefully scrutinised and playground procedures are assessed.

Subsequently, this chapter presents an appraisal of contemporary practice in respect of the transition stages: pre-school to infant and infant to junior. The needs of the very youngest pupils receive special consideration in relation to current thinking on playground induction. Following this debate, attention turns to inside (wet weather) playtimes and any changes made to practice in this area. It is judged that inside playtimes are under-researched, therefore 'wet' breaktimes and lunchtimes are explored in some detail. These are found to be of particular concern due to the substantial impact that the lack of an outside break has on the working life of the school. Finally, the discussion is structured around parents' knowledge and attitudes towards playground issues. Present-day accounts maintain parents should have a clear idea of playtime happenings (Ross and Ryan, 1990). Sources of parental information are duly explored.

Organisation

It was anticipated that many similarities would be found in the structure of the day in the borough's primary schools, but that a number of significant differences would arise. It is accepted that there has recently been a curtailment in the total amount of time that pupils spend at break. As noted, Blatchford (1998) alleges this is linked to both behaviour problems and a need to allow greater time for National Curriculum requirements. The questionnaires therefore pursued information relating to the length of the midday session and also to the removal (or otherwise) of the afternoon playtime. Again, this information contributed to the selection of the sample of follow up schools.

Across the LEA

The data from the questionnaires confirm that all primary sector schools have retained the morning break. Schools were also asked whether there were split sessions due to lack of outside space. As Table 5.2 shows, while almost half of these schools experience no particular problems (22 out of 46, 47.8 per cent), a substantial number do have inadequate playground space, resulting in two-tier playtime sessions. In addition, schools were asked whether morning breaks were at set times. According to Blatchford, 'A more radical departure is not to have fixed period playtimes at all, but to allow class teachers and their children to decide if and when they would like to use the playground' (1989, p.108).

Table 5.1 Questionnaire responses regarding set times for morning breaktime

Is morning break at a set time?		
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
45	1	46

However, only one school (Table 5.1) has no set time for morning break. This may mean the flexibility of choice discussed by Blatchford (1989), or it could be that morning break follows a school assembly which is of uncertain duration leading to variations in the finishing time.

Table 5.2 Questionnaire responses regarding split sessions for morning breaktime

Is morning breaktime split sessions due to lack of space?			
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Response</u>	<u>Total</u>
17	22	7	46

The situation relating to afternoon breaktime is somewhat complex. Many primary schools report that some children (mainly the younger age groups) continue to have this break, but not all. For instance, a total of 24 out of 38 infant schools, and infant departments in primary schools, retain the afternoon playtime (two schools did not respond to this question). Clearly, this represents a majority (63.1 per cent). In contrast, a completely different picture emerges for the older pupils. Out of a total of 37 junior schools/junior departments, only 12 provide children with an afternoon break (three schools did not respond to this question and one primary school, Wells Green, had no pupils in this age group at the time of the questionnaire). All but three schools have a set time for afternoon recess. The three schools concerned may therefore have breaks at the class teacher's discretion. Additionally, five schools report the need for split sessions due to lack of space. Obviously, space problems are probably not so great in the afternoon if fewer children are accessing the outside play area.

The evidence provided by Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 is particularly illuminating. Generally, infant children spend a longer total time at break than junior pupils. Nevertheless, a number of very young children have just one hour at midday

(not long given the need to also eat a midday meal) and additionally have no afternoon breaktime (six infant schools/infant departments in primary schools). In 12 schools (junior or junior departments) the older pupils are also in this position and in one school pupils have just 55 minutes at midday coupled with no afternoon break (it is accepted however that junior pupils are likely to take less time eating than younger children). Overall, therefore, some of the borough's primary pupils now spend a comparatively short time span outside with the resultant loss of opportunities to socialise with peers.

Table 5.3 Questionnaire responses from infant schools and infant departments indicating the length of the lunchbreak and whether schools have an afternoon break

Length of lunchbreak	Number of schools or departments	<u>of these</u>	Number not not having an afternoon break
1 hr	8		6
1 hr 5 minutes	4		2
1 hr 10 minutes	3		0
1 hr 12 minutes	1		1
1 hr 15 minutes	18		2
1 hr 20 minutes	1		1
1 hr 25 minutes	1		0
1 hr 30 minutes	2		2
	<u>38</u>	Total	<u>14</u>

Note: Two schools did not respond to these questions.

Table 5.4 Questionnaire responses from junior schools and junior departments indicating the length of the lunchbreak and whether schools have an afternoon break

Length of lunchbreak	Number of schools or departments	<u>of these</u>	Number not not having an afternoon break
55 minutes	2		1
1 hr	19		12
1 hr 5 minutes	5		4
1 hr 10 minutes	5		4
1 hr 15 minutes	4		2
1 hr 20 minutes	-		-
1 hr 25 minutes	-		-
1 hr 30 minutes	1		1
1 hr 40 minutes (split sessions)	1		1
	<u>37</u>	Total	<u>25</u>

Note: Three schools provided incomplete data and are not included in the above table. Additionally, Wells Green school had not admitted junior pupils at this time.

The Focus Schools

Additional data regarding the structure of the school day were collected at all schools visited. One reason given for the reduction of time spent on breaks is a need to comply with guidelines relating to minimum teaching hours (21 hours per week for 5-7 year olds, 23.5 hours for 8-13 year olds). It was useful therefore to assess any impact this might have on those schools directly involved in the present study. A further point of note revolves around the timing of school assembly. There are two main reasons why this is a factor worthy of consideration. Firstly, when assembly is positioned immediately prior to morning break large numbers of pupils may cause congestion as they make their way to the playground from one central area (causing potential worsening in behaviour levels). Secondly, when assembly is held adjacent to playtime there is an opportunity to release duty staff relatively easily for an alternative break. This is an extremely important consideration as will later be shown.

Brownlow infant school

At Brownlow infant school the lunchbreak spans an hour and a half. As previously noted, it is not possible to reduce this period as this is judged to be the minimum amount of time needed to enable all pupils to eat in the dining hall. Ninety minutes, however, may be rather longer than the optimum amount of time for a midday break (and it is certainly longer than the majority of schools shown in Table 5.3). This aspect was noted by some staff and parents as well as by the headteacher. The morning break is of 15 minutes duration. The afternoon playtime was discontinued in 1997 in order that government requirements for actual teaching time were being met. Staff were asked to express their opinions about the removal of the afternoon break. As Table 5.5 indicates the response was varied. Interestingly, a third of those questioned expressed mixed views, highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of the situation.

The most commonly held view overall was that the children still need a break. This opinion was shared by teachers and nursery nurses. In contrast, four staff (one nursery nurse and three classroom assistants) alleged the children did not require a break in the afternoon because this period was comparatively short. The deputy head was additionally asked for his own beliefs on this key issue and his response is particularly noteworthy. To begin with the deputy considered the importance of breaktime for the pupils, suggesting that, 'The children need social/free time'. This can be characterised as the socially desirable view of breaktime.

Table 5.5 Opinions of Brownlow infant school staff regarding the removal of the afternoon breaktime

Opinion held	Teachers	Nursery Nurses	Classroom Assistants	Other Staff	Totals
Prefer not having afternoon break	5	2	2	0	9
Mixed views	5	1	1	1	8
Dislike not having afternoon break	1	2	0	1	4
Not applicable (part time staff)	0	0	3	0	3
				Total	<u>24</u>

Nevertheless, the practicalities of the situation served to make afternoon playtime seem less attractive and he finally concluded that, 'There's no solution at the moment, [pause] I don't feel the afternoon break is as vital – the children are not so desperate – they've had a long play at lunchtime.' It is noted, however, that the deputy has no teaching responsibilities and therefore the lack of an afternoon break has less direct impact than it would on most staff. Other staff raised more personal issues and considered how the removal of the afternoon recess affected them (i.e. not having a hot drink). In spite of this, staff mainly judged that the children's requirements were paramount.

Even so, joint adults' and children's needs came very much to the fore during the interviews. The sentiments of one nursery nurse are typical, whereby she expressed first the pupils' requirements in that 'they need a break - to go out. It's important for children to have time out of the classroom - to let off steam.' Then she acknowledged the benefits for adults with the claim that 'it's better/quieter at storytime - it's easier. It also gives staff a time to have a break - go to the toilet - have a drink.' Of course, this was not the only argument. A further comment from yet another nursery nurse provides the opposing view and she asserted that, 'Not having a break works well, I think. You haven't got to settle the children again when they come in from play. Also, they get to spend more time on work and you're not rushing around to get them out. The teachers haven't got to keep an eye on the time.' Not having an afternoon break therefore throws up some contrasting arguments. There is a staff preference to work through the afternoon (Table 5.5) even though some staff still feel children need to go out to play.

In addition, staff were asked to articulate their general views about morning playtimes. What is of special note is that these comments were largely negative (Table 5.6). It will be recalled, however, that at the time of the staff interviews no playground apparatus was present because the older climbing frame had been removed in preparation for the subsequent adventure play area. Therefore, little was available to occupy the children apart from marbles and skipping ropes brought from home and these were very scarce. This must be taken into account as the backdrop to staff opinions. One third of the staff questioned mentioned boredom as the dominant feature of breaktimes. A further 25 per cent described morning break as 'a nightmare' (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Brownlow infant school: staff views regarding morning playtimes

<u>Main opinion expressed</u>	<u>Number of staff</u>
The children are bored	8
It's a nightmare	6
Do not do regular duty (no opinion)	3
Too many adults now supervising	2
It's difficult, but the children need it	1
Should be split – reception and Year 2	1
Timing should be flexible	1
It's too short a time	1
A time to laugh with the children	1
	—
Total	24
	—

Both groups cited children's desultory behaviour as the most salient feature of playground life. On a slightly more positive note, one staff member concluded breaktimes were too short (15 minutes) and should be extended by at least five minutes to facilitate games and activities. Sundry other judgements were made and interestingly two staff felt there were now too many adults (three each playtime) supervising the play space. Previously, only two staff supervised but this had increased as the total number of support staff grew. The two interviewees judged the third person was unnecessary. The playground observations, however, paint a rather different picture with all three staff fully occupied. A different picture emerges too in respect of the overall staff assessments of lunchtime playtimes. At the time of the interviews, lunchtimes had become a focus for major change. Unsurprisingly, therefore, staff presented some highly positive evaluations of the current situation (Table 5.7). For example, 13 of the 23 staff (one CA was questioned on this issue in her SA role thus 23 staff only are recognised here) consulted on this issue (56.5 per cent) maintained the provision of plentiful equipment,

coupled with the use of the hall for those children wishing to play inside, resulted in lunchtimes being vastly improved.

Table 5.7 Brownlow infant school: staff views regarding lunchtime playtimes

<u>Main opinion expressed</u>	<u>Number of staff</u>
They have improved	13
No opinion/don't know what happens	7
They are too long	3
	23
Total	23

In spite of this, the main assessment of three staff was that the midday break (90 minutes) was far too long for the children (this supports the original assertions of the midday supervisors, the headteacher and some parents). What is particularly striking, however, is that seven staff (30.4 per cent) offered no opinion as they admitted to having only limited knowledge of lunchtime practice. This was generally due to their having little personal involvement during this period. As one nursery nurse disclosed, 'I don't really have a lot to do with them [lunchtimes]. It's difficult to comment – I'm normally having my lunch.' This, perhaps, begs the question as to why there had not been a whole-school approach (i.e. inclusion of all staff) when changes had been planned. In the main, staff are not involved in the midday break, as this is largely the domain of the supervisory assistants, but this does not mean they should not be party to the decision-making process (together, of course, with the midday supervisors).

Other schools visited

A comparison of the structure of the day in the remaining schools visited can be found in Appendix 12. A number of variations are apparent and these are discussed below.

Brownlow junior school

As noted, the midday break had been reduced to 60 minutes in order to retain the afternoon playtime. The headteacher felt the children appreciated having three breaks but this had led to difficulties. It was not possible for all pupils to eat in the dining hall in the space of one hour. It will be recalled that this had resulted in those pupils bringing packed lunches eating in their own classrooms at the class teacher's discretion. The school was relying heavily on the goodwill of teachers to voluntarily supervise this session and such a procedure might be called into question.

Hallside infant school

Hallside infant pupils again have three breaks. A recent initiative had been to allow infant pupils first sitting in the dining hall. The headteacher was now considering introducing 'family groups' (mixed infant and junior children). Of course, this would have implications for the midday supervisors who would, presumably, be required to work with their junior counterparts.

Hallside junior school

Junior pupils do not have an afternoon break. When questioned, three teachers reasoned pupils worked better without this interruption. A fourth teacher disagreed and alleged, 'In the afternoon you don't get two hours work done if there's no break.' It was also argued that, 'Staff need the opportunity to manage things in the break – it puts pressure on the lunchtime [for preparation].' This raises a significant point, which was repeated throughout the inquiry.

Gatward primary school

The Gatward pupils have no afternoon break. One classroom assistant felt such breaks were unnecessary because 'the afternoons are quite short.' The reception teacher pointed out that the youngest pupils could go outside anyway. The remaining two teachers said staff had (together) decided on the removal of the third break. Initially, both had found it difficult. The Year 4 teacher made the interesting remark that it was possible to reinstate afternoon play 'as a reward' to pupils (for good behaviour). In this view, therefore, playtime is seen as something to be earned rather than as an integral part of the session.

Woodberry primary school

Only the infant pupils have three breaks at Woodberry. Two junior staff were asked for their views about the loss of the third break. The Year 3 teacher said, 'When we did have a break I thought it was a good idea but now we have to cover the rest of the curriculum in the afternoons.' The Year 5 teacher again raised the issue of 'no spare time for preparation – you have to be more organised.'

Oatlands primary school

Oatlands pupils have three breaks. Unusually, each morning and afternoon playtime lasts for 20 minutes whereas all other schools studied have 15 minute breaks (Appendix 12). Twenty minutes may afford greater play opportunities for pupils to organise games.

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

St. Mark's children have three breaks. The current headteacher had reinstated the afternoon playtime, which had been discontinued by the previous head. Two teachers who had experienced this restoration were enthusiastic about the idea. It was stated, 'Afternoon play – I want to hold on to it' and, 'We're lucky to have it.' Both felt it was beneficial for pupils (and staff) to have this break.

Wells Green primary school

All pupils (except the reception children) have three breaks. Intriguingly, the headteacher felt the youngest pupils were too tired to appreciate an afternoon playtime. This is in contrast to other schools (like Brownlow) where it is more likely to be the reception children who have this final playtime. Nevertheless, the head felt afternoon break was generally very necessary.

Discussion

In summary, the evidence from the questionnaires (confirmed by the observational data in those schools visited) undeniably supports the traditional pattern of school breaks at set times in the day. The figures also show a trend for schools to dispense with the afternoon playtime. Only 25 of the 46 schools report any kind of afternoon break which, even then, is not available to all pupils. In addition, a number of schools note the introduction of a shortened lunchbreak. Many pupils in this study, therefore, spend less time in the playground than pupils in previous decades. This is entirely in keeping with contemporary accounts (Brown, 1994; Blatchford, 1998). It is suggested that curriculum pressures and potential behaviour problems are reducing breaktime, although schools were not specifically asked whether this was the case and so it would be inappropriate to speculate on this aspect.

Interestingly, opinion seems to be divided, at least among those staff spoken to, as to whether or not schools should retain an afternoon break. Of the 34 staff questioned in those schools where there is no longer an afternoon playtime (Brownlow infants, 24 staff; Hallside juniors, 4 staff; Gatward primary, 4 staff; Woodberry primary, 2 staff in the junior department) 16 felt it was preferable not to have this break. Furthermore, the Brownlow infant deputy headteacher also concluded this break was unnecessary (but this was apparently a matter of expediency). In only one school (St. Mark's) had the afternoon playtime been re-established. It seems likely, therefore, that the

current trend towards working through the afternoon will remain. This will be supported by some but strongly contested by others, as shown. For some staff this represents improved practice but for others it clearly does not.

A few teachers expressed the opinion that pupils reappear from the playground in a boisterous frame of mind (as with the nursery nurse quoted earlier) and on this basis playtime is seen as a less than desirable interruption to the afternoon's work. This state of affairs is acknowledged by Blatchford (1998, p.5) who asserts, 'There is a view that breaktime can use up time during the school day when pupils could be working, and that teachers' time and effort can be expended calming pupils down after returning from vigorous activities in the playground'. In spite of a number of negative responses about playtimes, coupled with a feeling that pupils may be better engaged in more formal activities in their classrooms, it is worth reflecting briefly at this juncture on the issue of inclement weather when pupils are simply unable to play in the playground. As will be shown later, when questioned on this aspect, teachers overwhelmingly indicated a preference for children to be outside due to a deterioration in behaviour when children are compelled to remain inside the school building.

Furthermore, there is little indication of schools providing flexible playtimes. It is accepted, though, that such a move could prove difficult due to the organisation of other aspects of the timetable. A flexible system would also result in the likelihood of extra playground supervision duties for all staff. This could be unpopular with some staff for reasons examined later. An additional problem arises with regard to the shortening of the midday session. Shorter lunchtimes mean fewer hours worked by the supervisory assistants with correspondingly lower pay. This aspect certainly presented difficulties for the Woodberry headteacher when the lunchbreak was reduced. The solution was to introduce a weekly briefing session. Once a week the midday supervisors arrive at the school earlier thereby continuing to work the same weekly hours overall. This seemed to be working well for all concerned and may be a useful idea that others could follow.

Policy

In reference to behaviour and anti-bullying procedures, all schools must now have policies for positive behaviour management. According to Docking (1996, p.12), 'A school's behaviour policy must address issues which include aggressive playground behaviour, hurtful teasing and ostracizing others'. Even so, Docking strongly advises schools to produce a separate policy for playtimes. In accordance with this idea, the questionnaires elicited information, not only on behaviour policies, but also as to whether schools had produced additional playground guidelines (Tables 5.8 and 5.9). Other relevant policy documents were also examined in all schools visited (for example, staff induction policies).

Table 5.8 Questionnaire responses regarding behaviour policies

Are playground issues mentioned in the behaviour policy?			
Yes	No	No Response	Total
38	6	2	46

Table 5.9 Questionnaire responses regarding playground policies

Does the school have a separate playground policy document?				
Yes	No	In progress	No Response	Total
4	40	1	1	46

Note: Additionally one school, while not having a playground policy, did have a supervisory assistant policy document.

Brownlow infant school

The school has no separate playground guidelines but mention is made in the *Behaviour Management Policy* of 'sanctions'. These include missing playtime for undesirable conduct. While there are explicit reasons (for instance, 'hurting others outside') why penalties might be administered it is likely any forfeits are applied very infrequently. The observational data suggest pupils rarely appear to miss playtime. Furthermore, a sanction specifying that a child will be sent home to lunch in the event of unreasonable behaviour does not seem to be implemented (no child was required to have lunch at home during the 14 term research period). Bullying is tackled with the suggestion that 'additional support' will be offered (again, no recorded instances during the inquiry). Interestingly, the staff induction document indicates pupils must 'stop play and stand still as soon as the whistle goes.' Direct observations show this does not happen in spite of such clear instructions to staff (discussed in detail later).

Other schools visited

Most of the remaining schools directly studied also provide copious guidance in respect of breaktimes. Even so, no school was found to have a specific playground policy.

Brownlow junior school

Straightforward advice is given in the behaviour policy. The teacher's playground supervisory role is 'to prevent difficult situations from arising' by policing the play space. While a range of sanctions are present for such conduct as 'rude', 'disobedient' or 'violent behaviour' there is also a stated general aim that 'children should enjoy their playtime.' This was the only school found to include such a positive assertion in its policy documents.

Hallside infant school

There is no specific mention of playground issues in the behaviour policy. This is somewhat unusual but not unique (Table 5.8). However, the observations indicate there are high standards of behaviour and so perhaps this is felt to be unnecessary. On the other hand, it could be argued that standards of good practice should be documented. Nonetheless, children are encouraged to behave 'in a socially acceptable way towards everyone' (*Standards of Behaviour*).

Hallside junior school

Once again, no specific mention of playground matters is made in the behaviour policy. Even so, pupils are expected to follow a set of 'Golden Rules', which form the basis of behaviour expectations. According to the headteacher, rules such as 'be kind and gentle' are regularly reinforced in school assemblies and during circle time. Again, behaviour standards were observed to be high and pupils were polite and compliant.

Gatward primary school

Gatward pupils likewise follow 'Golden Rules' to promote appropriate standards of behaviour. However, here the children are fully involved in setting rules and codes of behaviour and have set up their own *School Charter*. In keeping with the school's general philosophy the school policy for behaviour and discipline 'is based on the positive reinforcement of good behaviour.' The staff induction guidelines again emphasise policing the playground with the inclusion of, 'Please do not stay in one area'. Staff were observed to generally follow this guidance.

Woodberry primary school

The Woodberry behaviour policy contains frequent mentions of breaktime issues. The policy is unique amongst the focus schools in highlighting the need for all adults working in the playground with children to have training 'to develop management and organisation skills.' Of further significance in the

behaviour policy is acknowledgement of the impact that the school environment has on the pupils. Additionally, detailed information is provided about the lunchtime activities offered to those children with behavioural difficulties.

Oatlands primary school

The behaviour document again contains a spectrum of issues relating to breaktimes. Of particular interest is a pronouncement that all staff are required to position themselves along the corridors at the end of break. They should then 'use the opportunity to welcome the children and thus promote a friendly, happy atmosphere'. 'Whistle blowing' procedures are also included and the Oatlands pupils are required 'to stand still, stop talking and listen for instructions' (which they do actually do).

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

Breaktime matters are only mentioned briefly in the St. Mark's *Behaviour and Discipline Policy*. Rewards and sanctions are included. The sanctions involve such measures as, 'Restriction of freedom at playtimes and lunchtimes'. Behaviour levels are high and it is unlikely this sanction is applied very often.

Wells Green primary school

Children again follow the 'Golden Rules'. Both rules and sanctions are documented to encourage appropriate behaviour. There is an additional document for 'Outdoor Play', which gives staff specific guidance for games and activities. Other advice includes the declaration that, 'One member of staff has to have overall vision of the children' when on duty. Given that all duty staff were observed to be organising games or play opportunities this instruction might be a little difficult to fulfil.

Discussion

There is a definite trend in the borough to use behaviour policies for issues relating to playtimes (38 out of 46 schools, 82.6 per cent), rather than, as Docking (1996) recommends, producing a separate policy document. Questionnaire and interview responses by headteachers in the focus schools were verified by scrutiny of the actual policies. What is generally evident from those schools visited, however, is that there are clearly stated guidelines for all staff (and frequently for parents) in respect of codes of conduct for pupils. Tattum (1989, p.71) suggests that it is 'much better for a school to create policies which are proactive, that is, they initiate practices which are anticipatory and reduce the incidence of indiscipline throughout the pupil body'. Such proactive strategies as those found in the focus schools appear to pre-empt behaviour problems and to take a school-wide stance on behaviour management. This involves conduct throughout the school day and naturally includes breaktime behaviour, whether this is specifically highlighted or not.

Nonetheless, the onus is on staff at all levels to comply with written guidelines if consistency in approach is to be achieved. Information relating expressly to lunchtimes and other breaktimes is mentioned in further documents in a number of schools visited. For example, staff induction policies frequently contain relevant facts. Usually, however, this is limited to a brief discussion of appropriate procedures. In spite of this, the observational evidence suggests that staff do not always follow the written word (at Oatlands, for instance, staff were not seen to be actually 'welcoming' the children back from playtime). Possibly this is because playground issues can be 'lost' in a document (such as an induction policy) which contains a spectrum of other matters. Again, this tends to accentuate the need for a separate playtime policy.

Playground Induction

Periods of transition (starting school and transfer between departments or schools) are highlighted by some commentators as being an area of particular concern with regard to breaktimes. It is noted though that little direct evidence of the difficulties experienced by very young children is provided in the literature. All the same, it is judged necessary 'to create conditions for a gradual transition from nursery to infant' stage in the school playground (Blatchford, 1989, p.46). Fabian (2005, p.7) argues that, 'Having strategies in place to support children's emotional and social well-being can ease transitions between outdoor learning and the Foundation Stage and the school playground'. The current investigation therefore sought information in the questionnaires as to how schools organise both this transition and also the progression from infant to junior stage.

Across the LEA

As Table 5.10 plainly shows, the majority of schools in the borough have specific induction arrangements for the youngest pupils. Table 5.11 gives more detailed knowledge as to the exact nature of this provision. As indicated, a number of schools (15 out of 34, 44.1 per cent) provide these very young children with their own play space. This is more usually found in Early Years Units (Foundation Stage) where the reception pupils and nursery children have separate facilities from the rest of the school. While this may be commendable it does raise the further question of just how these children are finally integrated into the main play space. It may well be, however, that schools encourage the reception pupils to mix with the older age groups at certain times, such as during the lunchbreak (as was the situation at Gatward and Oatlands).

Table 5.10 Questionnaire responses relating to infant playtime induction

Do schools have special playtime arrangements for transition from pre-school to infant school?				
Yes	No	Not applicable (junior school)	No response	Total
34	4	6	2	46

Table 5.11 Questionnaire responses as to the nature of the provision for induction from pre-school to infant playtime

<u>Main arrangements made in each school</u>	<u>Number of schools</u>
Separate reception playground (or shared with the nursery)	15
Different playtimes / gradual integration	11
Summer term induction	3
Involvement of Key Stage 2 children	2
No response	3
	34

Brownlow infant school

At Brownlow infant school particular care is taken to induct the nursery pupils into the infant playground. Appendix 13 gives an account of the children's first encounters and clearly shows that a number of children are apprehensive at this time choosing to remain close to adults. For a small number of pupils the playground proves to be an especially traumatic experience and tears were frequently observed when the children started school (Appendix 14). This is unsurprising as Fabian (2005, p.5) suggests that, 'The level of skill needed for dealing with the playground is high' and children 'are expected to self-direct their play and rely on their own resources.' For some this may prove difficult.

The transition from infant to junior playtime

The transition from infant to junior playtime (Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2) was also investigated as it was felt some pupils would find this, too, a daunting experience. Table 5.12 gives an indication of those schools that provide special arrangements at this time.

Table 5.12 Questionnaire responses relating to junior playtime induction

Do schools provide induction arrangements for transition from infant to junior playtimes?			
Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
12	32	2	46

Note: Two pairs of infant and linked junior schools responded 'Yes' and are included separately. One infant school and one junior school have no link schools hence 'not applicable'.

Table 5.13 Questionnaire responses regarding the nature of induction into junior playtimes

Nature of arrangement made	Number of Schools
Induct Year 2 in the summer term	3
Induct Year 2 plus a buddy system/ separate playtime	2
Buddy system	1
Afternoon break gradually phased out	1
Separate playground	1
No response	2
	2
Total	10

Note: Infant and linked junior school responses from Table 5.12 are counted as one response in Table 5.13

As Table 5.13 shows, the most common form of induction into the junior playground occurs prior to entry but buddy systems (pairing of Year 3 with older pupils) are also highlighted within this group.

Brownlow infant and junior schools

In keeping with a small number of other schools in the borough (Table 5.13) the Brownlow infant school Year 2 pupils have an excursion to the junior playground in the summer term. No direct observations were made but the junior school headteacher noted there were various procedures in place (Table 5.15). This was one of the few schools found to have a comprehensive induction programme for junior pupils.

Transition stages: other schools visited

It was obviously not possible to directly observe any playtime induction processes in other schools visited (as visits took place throughout the school

year), but information was supplied by the various headteachers in the questionnaires. Table 5.14 provides comparisons of infant induction and Table 5.15 gives data on junior playtime induction in these particular schools. As shown, all focus schools arrange initiation into infant school playtimes in some form or other (where applicable). This is not the situation (Table 5.15) when children move into Year 3, however, and of those primary schools actually visited only Woodberry offers any form of induction, and even this appears to be minimal.

Table 5.14 Questionnaire responses from headteachers of those schools visited regarding induction into infant playtimes.

School	Details of induction
Brownlow junior	Not applicable
Hallside infant	Separate play area to begin with. Lunchtime children go home when they begin school.
Hallside junior	Not applicable
Gatward primary	Reception children have their own playground plus exclusive use of grassed area during first half of autumn term
Woodberry primary	Induction in the summer term. High adult supervision.
Oatlands primary	Reception playground. Children go home to lunch until mid-October.
St. Mark's C of E primary	Reception teacher supports children in the playground until they have settled.
Wells Green primary	Inducted into the playground during the summer term with additional staff support.

Note: The Brownlow infant headteacher did not complete a questionnaire and is thus not included.

Table 5.15 Questionnaire responses from headteachers of those schools visited regarding induction into junior playtimes

School	Details of induction
Brownlow junior	Year 2 visits at playtimes. Year 3 own play for first few days. Year 6 partner Yr. 3 to lunch.
Hallside infant	Induction of Year 2 to get them used to the junior playground
Hallside junior	
Gatward primary	_____
Woodberry primary	Briefed on rules etc.
Oatlands primary	_____
St. Mark's C of E primary	_____
Wells Green primary	Not applicable (no junior pupils at the time of the questionnaire)

Discussion

It was anticipated that the majority of schools receiving infant pupils would have introduced some form of induction into the playground, and this proved to be the case (34 out of 40, 85 per cent). What is rather surprising is that four schools in this category indicate that no induction procedures are present (Table 5.10). As already acknowledged, it is strongly maintained that reception children may experience problems at this time (Hurst, 1994; Lindon, 2001a; Fabian, 2005) and it is therefore rather strange that no additional

support is provided. As can easily be seen from the detailed observations at Brownlow infant school (Appendix 14), some of these exceptionally young pupils have a particularly harrowing ordeal.

Within the borough as a whole, there is evidence that schools are heeding Blatchford's (1989) suggestion that reception pupils be granted access to nursery play areas. As Table 5.11 reveals, a number of schools now provide this level of assistance in either the more recently introduced Early Years Units (as at the new Kitts Mount school), or, alternatively, by introducing separate reception play spaces (seen at Oatlands and Gatward). Clearly, it is only possible for schools to develop reception playgrounds if they have sufficiently spacious campuses. This, again, leads to the conclusion that playtime innovations may be restricted in those schools with limited outdoor space. The core debate therefore centres around the difference between what is deemed desirable and what might be achievable. Compromises may need to be made when space is limited and staff may have to prioritise according to perceived needs.

In keeping with practice at Brownlow infant school, and as shown in Table 5.14, some of the focus schools (Woodberry, St. Mark's and Wells Green) provide additional staff support in the playground when children first begin school. This may help to ease the situation for the pupils concerned. However, this does place an additional burden on early years staff, as will later be shown. There is no apparent solution to this problem if such support is felt to be beneficial. In addition, Hallside infant school had previously introduced a system of half day schooling for the reception pupils, with the lunchbreak gradually being included, before full time schooling was established. Staff spoken to considered this practice to be successful in helping children integrate into the playground.

Little evidence is found that schools arrange for induction into the junior playground. It may be that because Year 3 pupils are judged as more mature than reception children they are therefore felt to have better coping strategies.

Additionally, in many primary schools the older and younger pupils share the same play area (Table 4.2) and so induction may be unnecessary. It must be remembered, however, that there are frequently separate playtimes for infant and junior children and Year 3 pupils (being returned to the position of being the youngest pupils) could easily feel overwhelmed when initially experiencing a playground occupied by older and bigger children. Again, this aspect is recognised by Blatchford (1989, p.47) who recommends pairing Year 3 children with Year 6 pupils (as shown at Brownlow junior school) who will then give 'care and protection' as well as developing their own 'sense of responsibility'. This happens in only a small number of schools (Table 5.13) but it is an idea which could easily be extended.

Inside ('wet') Playtimes

In inclement weather, of necessity, children usually remain inside the school building. The literature suggests this gives rise to an array of problems (Blatchford, 1989; Fell, 1994). Again, little direct observational evidence is given in current accounts on this important issue. In particular, the midday break can present numerous difficulties. This leads Mosley (1993, p.96) to assert, 'Wet lunchtimes can be a nightmare for teachers and lunchtime supervisors if there are inadequate facilities to occupy the children's time.' The questionnaires sought comprehensive information regarding each headteacher's own evaluations of the school's performance during wet breaktimes and wet lunchtimes. The results are presented in Table 5.16.

The evidence plainly indicates that headteachers in the borough perceive more difficulties with wet lunchtimes than with wet breaktimes. This could well be due to the fact that heads have far greater involvement in supervising lunchtimes than breaktimes. It is also accepted that the midday break involves a longer period of time. Additionally, supervision presents greater problems at lunchtimes than at breaktimes as midday supervisors have other duties (such as overseeing the school meal) and also may not have adequate access to suitable activities (Fell, 1994).

Table 5.16 Questionnaire responses giving headteachers' evaluations of inside breaktimes and lunchtimes

<u>Wet playtimes are difficult at breaktime.</u>				
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No response</u>	<u>Total</u>	
12	31	3	46	
<u>Wet playtimes are difficult at lunchtime.</u>				
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>No response</u>	<u>Total</u>
29	13	2	2	46

Brownlow infant school

Breaktimes

Morning breaktimes are taken inside the main building at Brownlow infant school when the weather is wet (although Year 2 classes sometimes use the Horsa huts). However, there would not appear to be a sufficiently clear policy in respect of wet playtimes and staff interviewed report feelings of uncertainty and confusion (borne out by the observations). For instance, it is not at all certain as to who is responsible for taking the ultimate decision as to whether or not the children will go outside. This is especially noticeable when the weather conditions are ambiguous. This situation can also be extremely confusing for pupils, as the observations reveal. Staff were asked for their views about wet playtimes and the results are presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 Brownlow infant school: staff assessments of inside ('wet') breaktimes

Opinions held are:	Teachers	Nursery Nurses	Classroom Assistants	Other Staff	Totals
Negative	8	3	3	0	14
Positive	1	1	0	0	2
Mixed	2	1	3	2	8
Totals	11	5	6	2	24

Some staff conveyed strong feelings about the bewilderment that occurs on rainy days. A typical response came from one nursery nurse who alleged, 'It's not organised. To get a decision whether it's wet or not is quite a nightmare really. I wouldn't know who to ask. I'm told different things. I spend my time trying to find out. Some classes are putting coats on and some aren't'. All the same, one obvious difficulty with wet playtime is that it cannot always be planned for in advance. Regrettably, rain often falls unexpectedly resulting in the kind of confusion portrayed above. Further problems occur when the children are already outside and a sudden downpour arrives. In this situation children must be shepherded rapidly and excitedly inside and staff quickly contacted. Unhappily, there can be no easy solution to such dilemmas.

Two observations were made of inside breaktimes and the results are given in Appendix 15. These observations show variations in the pastimes of individual classes. There seems to be no system of designated wet play activities and this may serve to fuel any confusion occurring at this time. Additional problems arise with the three Year 2 classes and the nature of the school buildings. As these classes are housed in detached Horsa huts morning

breaktime had originally been spent in the school hall with one teacher remaining to read a story (a rota system operated). However, assembly time was subsequently rearranged to take place immediately prior to breaktime. As a direct result pupils (albeit the oldest) remained seated in the hall on wet days for a substantial period of time (a point noted by a number of staff). Further problems emerge in respect of the nursery children who are generally time-tabled to access the hall during the breaktime period. Difficulties ensue when arrangements must be changed at the last minute. Four teachers mentioned the complications associated with the Year 2 pupils (only one of the eleven teachers interviewed had had no prior experience of teaching this age group). A Year 1 teacher declared, 'Wet playtimes are a nightmare ... Nobody wants to stay in [the hall] with three classes. The whole thing is a nightmare'.

One potential solution to the dilemma of wet breaktime was given by a classroom assistant who proclaimed, 'Wet play's horrible ... It's just horrible for them [pupils], especially if it also rains at lunchtime – then they've been in all day. It's a shame there's not a sheltered area they can use'. In spite of these negative assessments some staff felt wet playtimes were reasonable (Table 5.17). However, two of those holding mixed views were support staff who are rarely involved in supervising playtimes (i.e. they are able to have a normal break during this period whatever the weather). Likewise the headteacher and deputy have no involvement with inside playtimes beyond providing information for staff on appropriate procedures. Curiously, two staff held very positive opinions of wet weather breaktimes. One nursery nurse maintained, 'The children have a social time – talking, singing, mini discussions. The nursery nurses and teachers take turns for a break. Wet play works very well'. Nevertheless, this was very much a minority judgement. For the majority of staff wet breaks simply result in having to make the best of a very trying situation.

As the observations reveal (Appendix 15), some teachers expect pupils to continue with formal school work during inside playtime. The wisdom of this was questioned by a number of interviewees. There were strong views that

both staff and children needed a complete break. With some activities, such as listening to a story or class singing, it was further acknowledged that, although pupils experience respite from more formal work, they are still being deprived of freedom of choice. This point was emphasised by one reception teacher who stated, 'We have a social time on the carpet [during inside playtime] – milk and a chat. But there's no release from an adult – they're still monitored. We have a tape of music – so it's different from the classroom routine. But the children still miss out'. This provides an endorsement for the notion that children need their own space without adult involvement (in contrast to the growing trend for adult directed activities).

As indicated, very strong feelings come to the fore in respect of wet playtimes. A number of staff alluded to the fact that wet play is quite simply a thoroughly unpleasant time for both adults and children. Significantly, it was judged that pupils' behaviour rapidly deteriorates when they remain inside the building deprived of outside activity. This was well expressed by a Year 1 teacher who claimed, 'Wet play is horrendous! Horrendous! The children are stuck in the same room with the same people and don't get to release any energy. This rolls over into lesson time – they get noisier and there's generally more squabbling' (time constraints prevented further observations to validate this claim but other staff made similar remarks).

On a brighter note, one recent change to wet play routines had met with general approval. Previously, duty staff had patrolled corridors during inside playtime to give colleagues a break (pre-dating the recent employment of classroom assistants). This was presented as less than satisfactory practice and a nursery nurse of long standing explained that now, 'There's two of us in each classroom [a teacher and either a nursery nurse or classroom assistant] so we take turns to have a break. When we had to police the corridor it was awful [due to poor behaviour]'. However, she did have concerns about classroom assistants being left alone with sole responsibility for a class even for a relatively brief time span.

In summary, the problems at Brownlow infant school relating to inside playtimes seem to fall into three main categories:

- 1) Confusion over whether the children will be in or out at playtime.
- 2) Once a decision is taken to remain inside what will be provided to occupy pupils.
- 3) The repercussions on children's behaviour that result from being indoors.

Indoor play difficulties had already been acknowledged by staff and had been discussed at an earlier staff meeting but wet play problems had remained unresolved. This situation was explained by yet another nursery nurse who said, 'It doesn't work ... It just doesn't work. Some staff [at the meeting] felt it would just be better to go outside regardless'. As the observation (below) shows, however, young children might be unhappy with this suggestion.

Lunchtimes

Wet lunchtimes pose a number of additional anxieties. Firstly, there is the evident problem of escorting pupils to the dining hall in heavy rain. Secondly, there are similar difficulties to those experienced at morning breaktimes when the weather is in a changeable mood and downpours arrive suddenly. Thirdly, there is the obvious dilemma of having to supervise and occupy pupils. Two observations were made during inclement weather. On a day of incessant rain the midday staff were well prepared with a video (cartoons) in the hall. Two classrooms were made ready with alternative activities such as jig-saw puzzles and drawing. All of this was organised in a short time span but it did allow some limited choice for the children.

A second observation was completed on a day of uncertain weather conditions. Many children were playing outside when the showers started. There followed a period of great uncertainty. The midday supervisors could not decide whether (or not) to pack away the cocktail of activities already in progress in the hall (to accommodate the television). Eventually the senior supervisor made a decision to show cartoons, although the children were left

to make their own judgements as to whether they wished to remain outside in the light rain. Many chose to stay put. Gradually, however, as the rainfall increased, the majority sought sanctuary inside. It would seem from this brief episode that light rain is of little consequence to children but that they are far less content to linger in anything worse. It is noted though that these are pupils from the infant age group. Older children might feel more comfortable in the rain (junior pupils were often observed outside while younger ones were kept indoors at other schools visited).

Three midday supervisors mentioned the tribulations caused by the weather. One supervisory assistant (2 years) explained that wet days caused a great deal of confusion and she felt some better organisation was needed. In addition, she concluded that, 'It would be a good idea to have part of the playground that's covered' because then the children 'could let off energy'. This assessment ties in with the views of informants elsewhere. Another midday supervisor (2 years) remarked on differences in the children's behaviour when they had stayed inside the school building during morning break. This was described as 'horrendous'. A third supervisor (1 year) felt the children were 'bored' with looking at videos on wet days. It must be recognised, nevertheless, that this is a very difficult situation and there are limitations as to what can be achieved.

Other adults also mentioned problems imposed by the weather. Of the 18 parents interviewed, four raised this issue. One parent thought the children listened to stories during wet lunchtimes (this might be judged as an educationally more desirable pastime than watching cartoons). Two mothers were aware that pupils looked at videos and a fourth mother expressed her annoyance at children being allowed outside in the rain. This leads to the conclusion that, even if pupils are happy to play outside in inclement conditions, some parents might not approve. In addition, three teachers broached the subject of inside lunchtimes. One teacher considered the midday staff were 'frazzled' by current practice and a second suggested children were returned to their classrooms 'too early' on rainy days (thus upsetting her lunchbreak). The third teacher experienced a number of difficulties as a direct

result of having her classroom used for inside activities. Wet lunchtimes can thus be seen to have an immediate negative effect on some of the other staff.

Inside breaks: other schools visited

As previously discussed, all schools responding to the questionnaire were asked for an evaluation of wet weather practice at both breaktimes and lunchtimes. A comparison of results from those schools visited can be found in Table 5.18. It is noteworthy that only the Brownlow junior school headteacher perceived both lunchtimes and other breaktimes to be problematic during inclement weather (discussed below). Interestingly, four headteachers saw no difficulties with either breaktimes or lunchtimes when the children needed to stay inside. The remaining heads followed the general overall trend (Table 5.16) of experiencing difficulties with wet weather midday sessions. Observations of actual practice, together with staff and supervisory assistant interviews, were carried out in the six sample schools as part of the small-scale case studies. The activities seen during wet weather in these schools can be found in Appendix 16. Procedures varied between schools although, as anticipated, there were some similarities.

Table 5.18 Assessments of ‘wet’ playtimes made by headteachers of schools visited (excluding Brownlow infants)

<u>School</u>	Wet playtime is difficult at breaktime		Wet playtime is difficult at lunchtime	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Hallside infant		√	√	
Hallside junior		√	√	
Gatward primary		√		√
Woodberry primary		√	√	
Oatlands primary		√		√
St. Mark’s CE primary		√		√
Brownlow juniors	√		√	
Wells Green primary		√		√

Brownlow junior school

While time constraints prevented the direct observation of wet weather routines, the headteacher was quite clear about the resulting difficulties and claimed, 'Children find it hard to be still for extended time and so find wet play extremely difficult. They easily squabble as their ability to amuse themselves is very limited.' It was additionally acknowledged that there were insufficient midday staff to supervise adequately. These problems were echoed by the senior supervisory assistant who suggested the children's behaviour rapidly deteriorated, partly due to sparse supervision, and partly due to a lack of engaging activities. Neither problem seems to be insurmountable but both are likely to necessitate financial input.

Hallside infant school

The headteacher felt morning and afternoon breaktimes presented no problems in wet weather. The observational data, however, highlight some restlessness when children remain seated in the hall following morning assembly (normal wet weather practice). Nevertheless, there was a generally calm atmosphere. A Year 2 teacher felt that 40 minutes, or so, in the hall was less than desirable and stated, 'I have mixed views. It's too long in the hall following morning assembly. They [pupils] should be moving around'. (Echoes of Brownlow infant school.) This opinion was endorsed by a classroom assistant, although a learning support assistant judged wet play to be 'well organised'. The reception teacher considered pupils became 'like caged animals – climbing the walls by the end of the day'.

The headteacher acknowledged 'logistical problems' in relation to inside lunchtimes. There were difficulties in organising the midday supervisors given the necessity of overseeing meals and supervising classrooms. It is notable that this problem exists in a school with a high ratio of supervisory assistants (ten for nine classes). All the same, the observations show generally good practice and a variety of activities on offer. However, two of the three

SAs who were consulted did feel there were problems. One SA (5 years) suggested, 'It depends upon the teacher – it's better if they [pupils] can have the toys to play with'. No specific apparatus was provided for wet play and normal equipment was used with the class teacher's agreement. Regardless of any lack of suitable activities it remains the midday supervisors' responsibility to, 'keep young children occupied when they have to stay indoors' (Appendix 20). Clearly, this can be an exacting task. O'Neill and West-Burnham (2001) do make the point that for effective performance appropriate resources are needed.

Hallside junior school

The acting headteacher expressed similar opinions about wet play practice in the junior school and judged that morning breaktime was not a problem. Staff questioned, however, disagreed. Once more it was stated that the children's behaviour deteriorated. One Year 6 teacher said, 'Wet - in the classroom. I hate them. The Year 6 boys need a hamster wheel in the classroom. There's more tension. The behaviour – it's more risky.' In spite of this, each class had a range of interesting games and equipment kept specifically for inside play. All pupils were gainfully occupied. A comparable picture was seen during wet lunchtime but, again, the acting headteacher noted 'logistical problems'. The midday supervisors had mixed views ranging from 'difficult' (SA 11 years) to 'alright' (SA 6 years). A third supervisor felt pupils spent too long outside in the rain. This is especially interesting when compared with the opinions of a Woodberry teacher (see below).

Gatward primary school

The Gatward headteacher saw no difficulties with either inside lunchtimes or indoor breaktimes. A reception teacher was also extremely positive about wet breaktimes because, being the music co-ordinator, she was able to use this opportunity for extra singing activities. Naturally, this represents a highly personal view. In contrast, the three remaining staff maintained the children's behaviour rapidly deteriorated. Duty staff patrol corridors. A Year 4 teacher accepted that wet breaks were, 'A necessary evil – games help. We're

patrolling ... but some classes move around a lot.' Nonetheless a good range of games and equipment supplied specifically for inside breaks was provided. Some pupils were actively engaged with these pastimes but others appeared to be a little restless. All three midday supervisors had very negative attitudes towards the situation. Wet lunchtimes were described as generally 'difficult and noisy' and it was concluded the children needed to 'get out and exercise' (SA 4 years).

Woodberry primary school

Wet playtimes are rather more complex at Woodberry. In the infant department teachers patrol the corridors when on duty but classroom assistants also remain in their rooms. In the afternoon some teachers also prefer to stay with their classes. The Year 6 pupils additionally act as monitors during morning wet break (no afternoon break for the older children). The four staff consulted did not share the headteacher's positive assessment of wet breaks. A Year 3 teacher declared, 'I hate them – I'd rather the children came out'. A Year 2 teacher said, 'Teachers tend to stay in their classrooms. They choose to do so because life is easier afterwards' (alluding here to a need to maintain appropriate behaviour levels). There was a feeling children ought to be outside and a Year 5 teacher stated, 'It's a bit of an issue – what I would consider wet. Sometimes it's just spitting at lunchtime and they stay in. At playtime we're out or we know we're not going to get any work done. We have an awful afternoon if they're in at lunchtime.' In spite of these remarks, pupils once more have a good selection of activities provided. The three midday supervisors felt these were especially beneficial, but they experienced difficulties due to insufficient numbers of supervisory staff to adequately monitor the proceedings.

Oatlands primary school

As indicated in Table 5.18, the Oatlands headteacher takes an optimistic attitude towards all wet weather breaks. In contrast to other schools, all four staff interviewed shared his opinion. Even so, a support teacher did admit that she did 'not enjoy wet play'. A nursery nurse also claimed, 'It makes the

children higher, restless and noisy when they haven't been able to get rid of excess energy'. The midday supervisors were also unanimous in feeling inside lunchtimes presented no particular difficulties. This is a somewhat surprising response, especially given the lack of activities provided for the pupils. However, the deputy head patrolled throughout each lunchtime and other staff were observed to remain in classrooms informally (using the time for preparation). Year 6 pupils also monitor other year groups. Undoubtedly, all of this serves to ease any pressure on the midday staff.

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

While the headteacher showed an optimistic attitude towards wet weather breaktimes and lunchtimes the four teachers consulted did not share her opinion. Their views are summarised by a Year 1 teacher who explained that, 'It can be a problem for children if they don't get out all day – but there are activities for them. They can be excitable afterwards – there's a slightly different atmosphere in the classroom – you can't do anything about it'. Morning and afternoon breaktimes once more saw staff patrolling (with extra backing from a welfare assistant). During wet lunchtimes a number of teaching staff remain in their classrooms informally preparing work. The midday supervisors are probably better able to cope with the situation due to this additional support. Year 6 pupils again became monitors for other year groups.

Wells Green primary school

No specific wet weather data were obtained other than the headteacher's assessment of no problems during this time. It was also revealed that on wet days pupils watched videos or used the normal classroom apparatus to occupy their time.

Discussion

Even though there is evidence in the present study that some staff do perceive inside breaktimes positively (nursery nurse at Brownlow infants and reception teacher at Gatward) this is very decidedly a minority opinion. Overwhelmingly, staff interviewed recounted the horrors of wet playtimes and the impact these inevitably have on all concerned. This lends strong support for Mosley's (1993, p.96) contention that wet lunchtimes are 'a nightmare'. The activities available at the focus schools show certain significant variations. Equipment can provide a useful diversion, especially in schools like Hallside juniors where an engaging range of desk-top activities is on offer (i.e. pupils are required to remain seated for these pursuits). Nonetheless, an appealing selection of wet play pastimes in no way diminishes the resulting deterioration in children's behaviour, and the subsequent lack of concentration on formal tasks which occurs following inside break.

Schools can also choose to keep all pupils together in the hall for more sedentary activities, such as listening to a story (as at Hallside infants). While this allows the majority of staff to have a break it does result in some staff showing concerns about the length of time young children must remain seated. No school appears to offer a perfect solution to the organisation of wet play. The situation further intensifies if the midday session is additionally spent indoors. There is a general feeling that pupils require time outside. This links with a traditional perception that children need to expend excess energy (Blatchford, 1989). In addition, Sturrock and Else (2002) note that children go outside in inclement weather in Scandinavian countries and that this leads to fewer behavioural difficulties. Furthermore, in Denmark there are outdoor schools specifically to support pupils with behavioural problems.

Crucially, in a number of schools many teachers prefer to forego their own playtime or lunchtime escape from the classroom. There is a belief that if children are not adequately supervised (by qualified staff) there will be 'consequences' afterwards (teacher at Woodberry). One significant problem

occurring at some schools is the lack of adequate numbers of supervisors for midday wet weather activities. Even in those schools with above average ratios of supervisory assistants there are still reported difficulties because midday staff must also oversee the eating of a meal (as at Hallside). Moreover, this situation is exacerbated when there are fewer supervisors (as at Woodberry, Brownlow juniors and Gatward).

The fact that there is a general keenness to allow pupils outside access in inclement weather comes as no surprise. It was found that there is a trend for older (junior) pupils to be allowed outside in the rain. It tends to be the teaching staff, rather than the midday assistants, who view this practice favourably but then it is the teachers who reap the greatest benefit. A number of children who were informally consulted at all locations also voiced their own support for being outside regardless of the rain. In spite of this, pupils at schools where there was a good selection of inside equipment available (such as Gatward) did show their appreciation for these activities. The overwhelming feeling, all the same, was that this was very much a second best option although it can patently be viewed as a change for the better.

Parents

Information was sought in respect of parental knowledge of the organisation of playtimes (including an understanding of any recent changes schools had made) and also with regard to the messages that schools were giving parents about playground practice. It is suggested that, 'Many schools now include a paragraph in their prospectus, naming their lunchtime supervisors and explaining how important their work is' (WEST, undated, p.2). Undoubtedly, this is seen as beneficial. Whether or not schools conformed to this statement was unknown but it was judged to be an essential part of the inquiry. As noted, others have contended that, 'Parents need to be clear about playground rules and procedures' (Ross and Ryan, 1990, p.71). Again, this was viewed as a necessary line of inquiry. According to Ross and Ryan (*op cit*, p.37), 'playground related incidents are the main reason for informal visits of parents to primary schools'. This paints a somewhat dismal picture of parental

attitudes towards breaktimes although the DfEE regards it as vital for schools 'to acknowledge parental opinion' (NPQH, Unit 3.1, 2001, p.18). Parents' general perceptions may therefore be considered to be a key component of any investigation into playground practice.

Brownlow infant school

Parents at Brownlow infant school receive information about breaktimes in the *Parents' Handbook*. Although the messages parents receive are somewhat basic they do cover three important aspects of playtime practice: provision, supervision and the weather. Even so, there is scope to extend some of these ideas by providing parents with greater knowledge and understanding of playtime happenings. As explained, it was felt particularly important to ascertain parental comprehension of playground matters and in order to do so open-ended interviews were carried out during the summer term 2000 (Appendix 5). It will be recalled that interviewees were randomly selected within each year group on the basis of consulting the parents of three girls and three boys (18 in all). It is noted (Table 5.19) that neither African-Caribbean nor Asian parents are included in this sample. Unfortunately, those parents approached in both these categories declined to be interviewed due to work or other commitments. Of the eighteen parents interviewed only one was male (again, work commitments prevented more fathers from being available for interview). Parents were first asked whether they had helped (or did help) in the school on a voluntary basis and whether they thereby had experience of morning breaktimes. In all cases no parent helpers had had direct exposure to breaktimes (i.e. they had remained inside the school building during playtime and were unaware of outside happenings).

Of the 18 parents interviewed, eleven claimed not to know what usually happened during morning breaktimes and four parents declared no knowledge of lunchtime playtimes. Parents generally revealed a greater understanding of midday procedures because some had witnessed the daily happenings while escorting children to the afternoon nursery. Additionally, parents had observed the lunchbreak when returning reception children to school

following admission. Parents largely appreciated the range of activities on offer. No parent disclosed dissatisfaction with either morning breaktimes or lunchtime playtimes (i.e. none stated they were 'unhappy' with the situation). On the other hand, seven parents expressed satisfaction with breaktime practice and eight parents said they were 'happy' with school lunchtimes. Typical remarks in this category came from the mother of a Year 1 boy who stated that, 'Generally I'm happy about lunchtimes and playtimes ... generally it's okay.'

Table 5.19 Ethnic origin of the 18 parents interviewed at Brownlow infant school

<u>Parents of reception children (3 boys and 3 girls)</u>	
<u>Ethnic origin</u>	<u>Number of Parents</u>
White British	5
Italian	1
	6
<u>Parents of Year 1 children (3 boys and 3 girls)</u>	
<u>Ethnic origin</u>	<u>Number of Parents</u>
White British	3
Italian	1
Greek	1
Irish Republic	1
	6
<u>Parents of Year 2 children (3 boys and 3 girls)</u>	
<u>Ethnic origin</u>	<u>Number of Parents</u>
White British	5
Turkish	1
	6

There were no particular differences between the parents of boys and the parents of girls in their assessments of school breaks (i.e. the parents of four boys and three girls were pleased with playground practice at both morning and midday sessions). However, it is accepted that the majority of those interviewed had other children in different year groups in the school (or who were now in the junior school) and thus most parents usually had children of both sexes. The issues highlighted by parents varied widely. For instance, two parents felt there were insufficient drinking water fountains in the playground; six parents mentioned their dislike of the (previous) high climbing frame; five parents suggested there should be more staff supervising lunchtimes; and six parents claimed the midday session was too long (in keeping with views expressed by the headteacher and some staff). In addition, two parents noted the lack of shaded areas and two mothers were worried about security.

In spite of this, the majority of interviewees (14) welcomed the opportunities for free play and acknowledged the importance of the social aspects of playtimes. Only a small number of parents (3 out of 18, 16.7 per cent) had experienced any problems with their child (all boys) in the playground. All considered these difficulties had been satisfactorily resolved by the school. The mother of a Year 2 boy concluded, 'I'm happy with the way the situation was dealt with by the school ... I'm quite pleased overall ... I notice that they [the school] do listen to us and that we're not just silly parents.'

Other schools visited

Parental issues were also briefly investigated at other schools.

Brownlow junior school

No parents were interviewed. It is not possible therefore to assess parental knowledge of playtimes in a direct manner. However, the *Parents' Handbook*

is replete with information about both playtimes and the lunchbreak. Given that parents take time to read this document they will have a clear idea of procedures and expectations. Unfortunately, much of this information focuses on negative aspects such as anti-social behaviour. The headteacher accepted that parents did 'come to complain about [playground] incidents'. Her personal judgement (not investigated further) was that, 'The school gets the blame for children's behaviour but parents don't realise this is being caused because they don't give their children adequate social skills'. All the same, the headteacher showed a particularly keen desire to continuously improve the playground situation and to fully involve parents in this process.

Hallside infant school

The school regularly sends parents newsletters with updates of information, including anything of relevance to playtimes. Brief details are also given in the *Parents' Handbook*. Parents spoken to at the group interview professed to have no direct knowledge of playground happenings apart from occasional accidents involving their own child. Even so, all interviewees were fully conversant with the many changes that had taken place in the playground. Overall, parents concluded the school had 'a happy playground'. No adverse comments were made.

Hallside junior school

The *Parents' Handbook* contains only limited details of lunchtime playtimes and these involve appropriate behaviour. Previously, a weekly newsletter had mentioned items such as the latest playground 'craze' (mother, boy, Year 5). A few mothers in the group (eight of the ten parents consulted at the infant school coffee morning also had children in the junior school) expressed concerns about breaktimes. For instance, one parent claimed her daughter had received inadequate medical attention (no one available) when unwell at lunchtime (the observations, however, show the welfare room to be continuously supervised throughout the midday session). There was also a feeling that football was an issue. Parents were mainly in favour of the lunchtime adult-structured activities. Nevertheless, parents felt strongly that

children should have some free choice time and it was judged that ‘playtimes seem fine’.

Gatward primary school

The *Parents’ Handbook* contains a wide spectrum of detailed information about playtimes and Gatward parents are better briefed than parents elsewhere in this study. The parent interviewed currently had her grandchildren at the school (her own children had previously attended Gatward). This grandmother had observed playtimes and concluded that ‘it’s good here – I don’t think they could do more’.

Woodberry primary school

Woodberry parents are supplied with only basic information about playtimes in the handbook but both peer mediation and the lunchtime club are discussed. An interview with an exceptionally perceptive mother revealed that the deep-seated concerns she had had when her daughters started school had stemmed from her own childhood memories of the school playground which she described as ‘shark infested waters’. This parent acknowledged that ‘concern is more of a parental thing’ because there is ‘a worry that children are not controlled in the playground’; although ‘it’s good that control is indirect – but you are concerned that they are on their own’. Her fears had fortunately proved to be unfounded and she was generally satisfied with the Woodberry playground situation and could think of no changes or improvements.

Oatlands primary school

When interviewed, the headteacher recognised the valuable contribution parents made to Oatlands school. The *Parents’ Handbook* contains copious information and positive messages under the heading, ‘Use of the playground’. One mother again made a series of insightful remarks having seen the situation for herself. Her overall feeling was that ‘it’s very good here and the children enjoy it – it keeps them awake’. In spite of this, she expressed misgivings about wet weather breaks and judged that ‘there’s not enough facilities’. It

was argued that the children needed an outside all-weather play area (an echo of views found elsewhere).

St. Mark's Church of England primary school

Again, the headteacher emphasised the very good relationship the school had established with parents, claiming that where breaktime 'instances' are concerned 'parents here are cool, calm and collected'. The two parents interviewed held positive opinions. One mother spoke at length and then said, 'Playtime looks excellent – I can't think of any way of improving it.' Even so, it was suggested that if problems did occur it was 'usually at lunchtime when they [pupils] aren't supervised by teachers'. A sense here that the midday supervisors might be undervalued. Very limited information is conveyed to parents via the *Parents' Handbook* in respect of breaktimes. No mention is made of lunchtimes.

Wells Green primary school

At Wells Green parents are supplied with elementary information about playtimes. This revolves around acceptable standards of conduct. The school emphasises 'the value of good behaviour within a framework of rights, responsibilities and rules'. No parents were interviewed during the one day visit to the school.

Discussion

Parental perceptions are naturally a matter of utmost concern to all schools and no less so in respect of parents' opinions of school breaktimes. In this study those parents consulted were largely supportive of each school's endeavours to develop and improve the quality of playground activities. All the same, for a number of parents there was a lack of knowledge and comprehension of breaktime matters such as rules and procedures. This may link to the somewhat limited information that some schools studied appear to provide for parents. Of course, there could be a positive side to this deficiency in that

parents expressing little understanding of the playground presumably do not, therefore, have offspring who return home to complain about playtime experiences. To a certain extent, this seems to be in contrast to the popularly held notion that many children discuss playground problems at home and that parents respond by visiting the school (Ross and Ryan, 1990).

A small number of parents interviewed at Brownlow infant school (three) did have children who had experienced difficulties in the playground. It is gratifying to find, however, that such problems had been dealt with successfully by the school. These complaints appear to have strengthened relationships rather than had a detrimental effect. According to West-Burnham (1992, p.44), meeting the needs of customers (parents) is 'the objective of all management processes'. Most parents spoken to conveyed the impression of being satisfied 'customers', at least where playground practice was concerned.

There is scope, nonetheless, for supplying parents with more specific information about playground matters. Much of the briefing to parents centres around procedures and appropriate behaviour. Important though these may be there is a missed opportunity to equip parents with information about the midday supervisors and the valuable contributions they make to the smooth running of the school (Gatward does supply these details). Many supervisory assistants consulted claimed parents generally undervalued their work. In view of this, a profitable exercise in 'bridge building' could be established by spotlighting the role and responsibilities of the midday staff in the school's handbook. It can be seen that not all parents (Brownlow and St. Mark's) appear to fully appreciate the worth of these ancillary workers.

Résumé

This chapter has reviewed the organisation of the school day, written policy, playground induction, 'wet' playtimes and parental understanding of

playground matters. The chapter began with a discussion on recent changes to the overall structure of the school day. It was concluded that many schools within the LEA have now substantially reduced the amount of time pupils spend at break. In general, infant children spend a longer time outside at play than their junior counterparts. No schools were found to have removed morning breaktime, although elimination of the afternoon playtime has now become commonplace. Staff opinions on the desirability of the retention of the afternoon break were mixed and tended to vary as did existing practice at individual schools.

Following on from this, the chapter examined the evolving situation regarding written policies. The majority of schools mention playground issues in recently produced behaviour policies. Few schools in the borough acknowledged having a separate policy for playtimes, although such a document has been highly recommended (Docking, 1996). While playground matters are mentioned in other guidelines (such as staff induction policies) it was found that staff do not always comply with written instructions. This may be due to a lack of knowledge, or commitment to the guidance given, or simply due to a lack of energy to carry out the procedures. Attention then turned to the induction of children into the playground and the two transition stages. While the majority of schools have developed special arrangements for introducing the youngest pupils into playground life only a small number of schools make provision for the transition to junior breaktimes (although this might be judged as unnecessary).

Subsequently, the spotlight fell on the crucial matter of inside ('wet') playtimes. Headteachers across the LEA especially reported noticeable difficulties with inside lunchtimes. Other staff consulted often considered that all breaktimes spent inside the building had significant repercussions, not least in relation to children's deteriorating behaviour. Those schools visited offered pupils varied activities at this time and there was some evidence that schools have been increasing wet play provision. Nonetheless, there was a strong feeling that pupils really needed to be outside. Chapter Five concluded with an investigation into parental attitudes towards playtimes. Parents consulted

were largely supportive of each school's endeavours to improve breaktime practice. Uneasiness about playtimes was often linked to parents' own childhood experiences but fears were usually unfounded where their own child was concerned. It was argued that there is scope to increase parental knowledge of playtime matters. The next chapter extends the study by concentrating on the child in the playground.

Chapter Six

Socialisation: The Child in the Playground

Introduction

Chapter Six now extends the study by considering those to whom policy and practice apply, namely the children in the playground. According to Blatchford (1998, p.15), children's play can be viewed as a 'more general topic of relevance to breaktime.' The cultural and physical environments of the school, as discussed in Chapter Four, are not the only environmental elements requiring examination. Brown (1994, p.54) maintains 'the environment also includes personal and social factors', which encompass the availability of other children because these strongly influence behaviour as do 'factors relating to the gender of the participant players and the relationship between them'. Various topics revolving around pupils' playground activities, choice of play partners and children's playground behaviour thus form the main body of this chapter.

Data from all schools visited structure the arguments presented. Initially, there is an in-depth investigation into the principal issues at Brownlow school followed by a discussion of similar themes at the remaining schools. To begin with, the debate centres around children's likes and dislikes as well as children's play, games and other pursuits in the playground. Friendship patterns, including gender and multi-cultural issues, are examined in detail. Added to this, there is an appraisal of 'friendship squads' (buddies) and peer mediation, both of which appear to be increasingly popular. Alternative lunchtime activities are evaluated and any additional pastimes children would like to have at breaktime are fully considered.

Of particular importance is pupils' playground behaviour, coupled with an adult perception that this has deteriorated in recent years (Lindon, 2001a). Prominence is therefore given to children experiencing difficulties and any changes schools have been making for the improvement of playground

conduct. This includes extra-curricular pastimes and the development of social skills training (circle time). The chapter explores ideas revolving around rough-and-tumble play (playful fighting) and notes the ambiguity surrounding this activity. Children's behaviour when exiting the play space is another topic of some concern and various aspects are therefore analysed.

Playground life

Direct observations were completed at all schools visited. Children were also consulted about their playground pursuits. It has already been mentioned that the school playground is a prime setting for the forging of friendships (Blatchford, 1998, Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000; Lindon, 2001a) and that friendship patterns are central to children's playground life. Pupils interviewed were therefore questioned about their choice of play partners. Some longitudinal data were also obtained. There is much concern about unacceptable levels of behaviour (Ross and Ryan, 1990; Blatchford, 1998; Lindon, 2001a), which represents the 'problem' view of breaktime (Blatchford, 1996). This aspect was generally explored through the observations.

As stated, in each of the case-study schools (Brownlow and the six sample schools) a small sample of pupils provided information about breaktime experiences (Appendix 3). At the start of the consultation, children were asked whether they enjoyed playtimes. It was anticipated there would be a mixed response to this question (Blatchford, 1998). However, pupils spoken to were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about school breaks (104 out of 106). Only two children (both at Gatward school) showed a lack of keenness for being outside. Each stated that he 'sometimes' liked the playground environment. One boy (Year 3) declared, 'Sometimes people boss me around and sometimes I have no one to play with'. While other pupils questioned did not raise such issues as a reason to generally express their disliking for playtime, overall there is an indication that exclusion by peers is one of the

least attractive aspects of life in the playground. Blatchford (1998, p.17) confirms that breaktime is, 'One of the main settings in school for peer rejection and other social difficulties'.

A second boy (Year 5) claimed he liked 'bits of playtimes'. In particular, he enjoyed the more structured lunchtime session. He stated, 'I usually go to the club' to become involved in the adult-directed activities on offer. The interviewee continued to explain that, 'In the morning [at break] I usually just walk around and sometimes I talk to the girls in my class'. A training consultant (observed at Woodberry school) suggested that any boy not wishing to participate in traditional male pastimes would be more likely to spend playtimes with female peers. This would seem to be the case because the child in question announced that, 'I would play with the boys but I'm not very sporty and not many people want to be my friend' (shown in Table 6.8). This paints a very negative picture of playground life for some children (although circle time might provide a suitable forum to tackle such difficulties). In spite of this, there was limited appreciation for the more obvious benefits of outside break when the Year 5 pupil also stated that, 'You can talk to your friends ... you can't do that in the classroom.'

Brownlow infant school

All 36 pupil interviewees at Brownlow infant school valued and enjoyed breaktimes. Indeed, a number seemed slightly incredulous at being asked this initial question. These reactions proved to be in keeping with many pupils in the remaining schools. Children were additionally asked about the most liked aspect of playtime (Table 6.1). Some children cited the opportunity to simply play and have fun as the most pleasurable attribute (ten out of 36, 27.8 per cent). Moreover, the chance to spend time with friends was an important factor for some (seven out of 36, 19.4 per cent). Blatchford (1998, p.16) is of the opinion that, 'One of the main functions of breaktime is the opportunities it provides for friends to meet.' There is some evidence of this in the current study. One Year 2 girl acknowledged, 'I like it best 'cause my friends get on with me and we do lots of things.' According to Pellegrini and Blatchford

(2000, p.34), 'friendships support cooperation, reciprocity, effective conflict management, intimacy and commitment, and these begin early in life'.

Interestingly, the chance to just run around was popular with some pupils (six out of 36, 16.7 per cent). This was expressed as 'You can run and play' (Year 2 boy). Five children felt that playing in the school hall was easily the most preferred aspect. In addition, four boys brought up the subject of football. This is perhaps not very many given that 18 boys were questioned. Predictably, perhaps, none of the girls gave football as a preference (although this changes slightly in the junior age group).

Table 6.1 Brownlow infant school: what children like best about playtimes

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of children</u>
Playing games / having fun	10
Playing with friends	7
Running around and getting fresh air	6
Playing in the hall	5
Playing football	4
Freedom from work	2
The toys in the playground	1
Helping the teachers	1
	36
Total	36

Pupils were also asked about dislikes (Table 6.2). Falling over and getting hurt was the least attractive feature (30.6 per cent), but anti-social behaviour was also frequently cited (27.8 per cent). This is summarised by the comments of a Year 2 girl who claimed, 'Sometimes children come up and do silly things in front of me and they keep on doing it.' Breaking up with friends was additionally found to be disagreeable for some of those consulted. A Year 1 girl remarked, 'The worst is when our friends tell of us and we get

told off ... Then they tell everyone not to be our friends anymore.' In spite of such dislikes, three pupils could find absolutely nothing of which to disapprove (an assessment made by children elsewhere). Furthermore, one child was adamant that the most annoying aspect of breaktimes was that they finished far too quickly. Again, this was an attribute mentioned by some pupils in other schools.

Table 6.2 Brownlow infant school: What children like least about playtimes

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Number of children</u>
Falling over	11
Others being nasty/silly	10
Breaking up with friends	5
Nothing at all	3
Having no one to play with	2
Not being able to play with everything wanted	1
There's not long enough outside	1
Lining up	1
Boys getting in the way playing football	1
The worms in the grass	1
	Total 36

The children's interviews, as well as the direct observations of the playground at breaktimes and lunchtimes, were carried out in both February (18 interviews) and June, 2000 (18 interviews). The rationale for this decision stems from literature suggesting that children's pastimes show a seasonal bias

(Blatchford, 1998). The situation regarding data collection was not quite straightforward in respect of the lunchtime observations. Data were collected in the first series of surveillances (February) by completing two 10 minute scans during each of four midday sessions. As previously explained, this method closely follows that of Lewis (1998, p.49) who, herself, admits that 'scan observations can only give a partial picture'. Data which were obtained in this way are therefore presented separately in Table 6.3. The summer (June) data were gathered by continuous observation throughout each of five midday sessions (as were the morning breaktime data, both summer and winter). It was hoped that this would provide a more realistic picture of the overall situation. The midday data were collected on different days of the week, as a weekly rota showed different activities were available on each day.

One dissimilarity noted between the winter and summer surveillances was that the game of marbles was not recorded during any of the summer observations (see Table 6.5 and Table 6.6). Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Byrne (1984), too, argue that playground games are seasonal. While this provides one possible explanation for this phenomenon it is felt that an alternative interpretation may simply be that children became less interested in playing marbles during the course of the school year. Of course, it might also be that pupils still played this game on days when observations were not taking place. No conclusions are therefore drawn from the data presented with regard to seasonal activities. Additionally, those pastimes seen during morning breaktimes indicate there were no differences between the summer and winter monitorings. Nevertheless, because it is argued (Blatchford, 1994; Lindon, 2001a) that there are variations in the playground activities of boys and those of girls these data are displayed separately (Tables 6.5 and 6.6).

The results of the Brownlow infant pupils' choice of playtime activities are presented in Table 6.4. It will be seen that more than one response was recorded from each interviewee and therefore the total number of mentions is given within each age and gender group. The overall totals appear in the final columns. There were no perceivable differences between the responses of winter and summer interviewees (with the exception of basketball because this

was not introduced for the Year 2 children until the summer term) and so no distinctions have been made within the data presentation. Intriguingly, while chasing games are easily the most popular pastime (21 mentions) the observational data show this to be mainly a lunchtime occupation (Tables 6.5 and 6.6). It will also be determined that games of chase were less frequently mentioned by reception pupils. It is likely that, because such games require some organisation, the youngest children are simply less adept at co-ordinating their activities with those of their peers. According to Guha (1996), this is a developmental process and Tassoni and Hucker (2000) suggest it is not until six or seven years of age that children can start to describe the rules of games.

While the running of races is mentioned across all age groups (particularly by boys) no races were observed (Tables 6.3, 6.5 and 6.6). Of course, these may have been missed during the observations but this seems unlikely. The children therefore show signs of perceiving activities to be present when the situation indicates otherwise. Quite why this should happen it is difficult to determine and no firm conclusions are made. Observations over a longer period would be required to provide valid judgements. Of course, one explanation might be that children could be saying what they think the adult wants to hear. However, when Year 6 pupils interviewed their peers they obtained comparable responses and so this would seem to refute this notion.

Issues of gender undoubtedly impact on the school's planning for playground resources and therefore specific note was taken of the pursuits of boys (Table 6.6) and the pastimes of girls (Table 6.5). Differences were found to exist. For example, four girls gave rope skipping as a play activity but no boy mentioned this pastime. This was confirmed by the observational data, although boys were observed playing with skipping ropes in alternative ways (for example, rope spinning). Interestingly, both girls (six) and boys (eight) acknowledged the playing of 'pretend' games. Significant differences were recorded, however, in the nature of male and female imaginative activities. The inventive games of boys were of a far more adventurous variety and were usually influenced by media heroes (Brown, 1994). The girls' pretend play

was of a fantasy or domestic nature (interview data). Playful fighting was not cited as a playground activity by girls (again, this was supported by the observational evidence). Appendix 2 gives examples of current playground games.

All interviewees were also questioned about any activities they would like to be able to do in the playground. There was a mixed response to this question. Seven of the 36 children wanted climbing apparatus (not present at the time of the interviews). This preference was endorsed by pupils in other schools visited where no climbing structures were available. (Although it will be recalled that a number of Brownlow parents expressed concerns about having climbing equipment.) In addition, three of the younger children wanted to play basketball (only available for Year 2), two wanted bicycles and two boys requested football nets. The more original ideas included ice-skating, a sand-pit, and pony rides around the playground. Poignantly, one child lamented, 'I'd just like to play games with my friends. They won't play with me any more.' Again, this records how distressing it can be for a child not to have play partners (Lindon, 2001a).

The 36 children were also asked to name who they usually played with outside (Table 6.7). The present investigation endorses the view that children often show a preference for peers of the same sex (Smith and Cowie, 1991). Mixed sex play groups were also witnessed (Lindon, 2001a). In general, friends tended to be in the same class. Contrary to Smith's (1994b) opinion, however, little evidence was found that children have a tendency to choose play partners from the same ethnic background (Table 6.7). This was equally true of other multi-cultural schools studied, although time constraints prevented a more detailed examination of this issue. At Brownlow, the groups observed were frequently multi-ethnic and confirmation of this came from the children themselves. It can be concluded from this evidence that children at this school do not usually choose their friends merely on the basis of ethnicity. It must be remembered, however, that racial integration was highlighted by Ofsted as a strong feature of the ethos of the school.

Table 6.4 Brownlow infant school: what children say they do in the playground

Activities mentioned	Number of Mentions												Total number of mentions		
	Year 2 children		Year 1 children				Reception children		boys	girls	combined				
	The 6 boys	The 6 girls	The 6 boys	The 6 girls	The 6 boys	The 6 girls	The 6 boys	The 6 girls				boys	girls	combined	
'it'/chasing games	5	4	5	5	1	1	5	1	1	11	10	21			
pretend games	1	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	8	6	14			
hide and seek	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	6	6	12			
play in the hall	0	3	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	5	7			
small equipment	1	1	0	0	3	3	1	1	1	4	2	6			
races	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1	5			
football	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4			
skipping	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	4			
action songs	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	4			
run around	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	4			
marbles (from home)	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	3	3			
walk around	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	3			
play with friends	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3			
pretend fighting	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2			
basketball	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2			
team games	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1			
hopscotch	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1			
circle games	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1			
just talk	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1			

Table 6.5 Brownlow infant school: girls' playground activities

Activities mentioned by girls at interview	Activities observed		
	<u>morning break</u> 4 winter observations	<u>morning break</u> 4 summer observations	<u>lunchtime</u> 5 summer observations
'It'/Chasing games			√
Pretend games	√		√
Hide and seek			√
Hall activities	NA	NA	√
Small equipment	NA	NA	√
Races			
Skipping	√	√	√
Action songs	√	√	√
Running around	√	√	√
Marbles	√		
Walking about	√	√	√
Playing with friends	√	√	√
Basketball	NA	NA	√
Hopscotch			√
Circle games	√	√	√
Talking	√	√	√
Activities not mentioned but observed			
Using surface markings (other than hopscotch)	√		
Use of water fountains		√	√

Table 6.6 Brownlow infant school: boys' playground activities

Activities mentioned by boys at interview	Activities observed		
	<u>morning break</u> 4 winter observations	4 summer observations	<u>lunchtime</u> 5 summer observations
'It'/Chasing games	√		√
Pretend games	√	√	√
Hide and seek			√
Hall activities	NA	NA	√
Small equipment	NA	NA	√
Races			
Football	NA	NA	√
Action songs			
Running around	√	√	√
Playing with friends	√	√	√
Pretend fighting	√	√	√
Team games			
Hopscotch			
Activities not mentioned but observed			
Rope spinning games	√		√
Marbles	√		
Basketball			√
Traditional games (What's the time Mr. Wolf?)			√

Table 6.7 Brownlow infant school: the nationality and number of playmates identified by the child interviewees

Child Interviewees	Greek	Turkish	Asian	African-Caribbean	White British	Italian
Reception						
Boy-Greek				2	2	
Girl-white British				1	1	
Boy-white British			2	1	2	
Girl-white British	1				3	
Boy-white British					1	1
Girl-Asian				2		
Boy-white British				1	4	
Girl-Greek	1				1	
Boy-African-Caribbean	1		1		3	
Girl-Turkish				1	4	
Boy-white British					3	1
Girl-African-Caribbean					3	
Year 1						
Boy-African-Caribbean			1	1	2	
Girl-Turkish		4				
Boy-white British					5	
Girl-white British				1		
Boy-Greek					5	
Girl-African-Caribbean					3	1
Boy-Asian				1	1	
Girl-white British		1	1		2	
Boy-white British				1	2	
Girl-Greek				2	4	
Boy-Turkish			1	1	8	1
Girl-white British				1	2	
Year 2						
Boy-African-Caribbean			2		3	
Girl-Greek		1			1	
Boy-white British					1	
Girl-white British				1	2	
Boy-white British					4	
Girl-Turkish	1	1			1	
Boy-Asian	1		1	2	1	
Girl-white British		2			1	1
Boy-white British					1	
Girl-white British					2	1
Boy-African-Caribbean					7	
Girl-white British		1	1	2	4	

Alternative activities at lunchtime

Some of the teaching staff voluntarily organise extra-curricular activities during one lunchbreak each week. These are usually popular with pupils and there is no shortage of participants. The music co-ordinator was observed over-seeing a recorder club (attended by 60 Year 2 children). When in progress this necessarily restricted other activities available in the hall. In addition, one teacher was responsible for a country dancing club (Year 2 only). During the research period this was discontinued when the teacher concerned accepted a post at another school. This highlights a dilemma that all schools must face. When staff leave such pursuits may be stopped but of course the possibility exists of new staff creating fresh initiatives. Two teachers were also involved in managing art and craft activities. Once more, as these teachers moved on this situation changed and the midday supervisors subsequently assumed responsibility for creative pastimes. Extra-curricular lunchtime pursuits at Brownlow therefore represent something of a fluid state of affairs.

Buddies

Buddies (in the form of junior helpers) became established during the initial case study period. As stated earlier, by the headteacher, this initially had limited success. Sadly, the observations reveal that these older pupils appeared to be providing little in the way of positive play experiences for the younger children. Buddies were more usually seen chatting amongst themselves, racing around the playground or just playfully pulling the younger ones about. On a more constructive note, one older child was seen to initiate games, but this was a rare occurrence. When questioned, the helpers were fully aware that their role was to play with the infant pupils and they stated that they enjoyed these visits. The visits were subsequently discontinued by the junior school (no reason given), although they were eventually reinstated at a much later date. Subsequent observations show these were productive with increased and more appropriate interactions between older and younger pupils (for example, organising games).

Exiting the playground

A whistle signalled the termination of break. Pupils were observed not complying with the command to cease playing and remain still. It was difficult for supervising staff to check most of the offenders. The playground acoustics (due to passing traffic) were poor and in some cases children's attention wandered. Delaying the proceedings for too long had adverse effects as those pupils attempting to stand still simply became restless. Similarly, class lines showed varying degrees of continuous movement. Consequently, staff trying to settle children frequently resorted to ushering them inside as quickly as possible. This was in contrast to behaviour at other schools where lining up was the normal method of re-entry (although it was in keeping with behaviour observed at Brownlow junior school). Exiting the playground became a cause for concern. In an attempt to improve the situation class lines were abandoned and children simply filtered back into school. However, this process gave staff much disquiet due to the substantial distance some pupils were required to navigate (often in a less than exemplary manner). Eventually, original practice was re-instated as this was felt to be the better option (an example of change not meeting expectations).

Playground behaviour

To reiterate an important point made earlier, pupils' playground behaviour has now become an issue of concern to school staff (Lindon, 2001a). In spite of this, and consistent with trends found elsewhere it is especially encouraging to find that little in the way of aggressive or provocative behaviour was observed at Brownlow infant school. Crucially, behaviour which might be assessed by supervising adults as hostile was viewed by the individuals involved as simply an acceptable part of the game (i.e. playful fighting). This is in line with other accounts (Boulton, 1994; Stafford and Stafford, 1995). Schafer and Smith (1996, pp.173-174) characterise rough-and-tumble play as taking the form of 'wrestling, grappling, hitting, kicking, chasing and rolling on the ground, but without the intent of hurting the play partner'. A group of Year 2 boys who were observed participating in one episode were indulging in many of the

above activities (Appendix 17). It is worth mentioning, however, that each member of this group was experiencing behavioural difficulties in the more formal classroom situation (verified by the class teachers).

The unsatisfactory nature of children's playground behaviour was mentioned by nine of the eleven teachers consulted. According to Lindon (2001a), primary teachers perceive playtimes in terms of problems. Comments from the Brownlow infant teachers centred around feelings that, 'They [pupils] can't seem to play gentle games' (Year 1 teacher) and, 'It's not productive play' (Reception teacher). The five nursery nurses were in agreement. One nursery nurse complained, 'there's lots of fighting – it's not very nice play ... I spend five minutes after play sorting out problems'. In addition, four of the six classroom assistants voiced opinions about inferior behaviour. One classroom assistant declared, 'It's hell on earth! I'm amazed at how belligerent the children are towards each other.'

In spite of such negative comments, as stated, behaviour levels were not observed to be unduly aggressive, although low level complaints by pupils appeared to be continuous. There were further suggestions that the children were bored and didn't know how to play. This assessment was shared by the deputy headteacher. Wood and Attfield (2005, p.5) make the point that, 'Play does not take place in a vacuum: everything that children play at, or play with, is influenced by wider social, historical and cultural factors, so that understanding what play is and learning how to play are culturally situated processes'. It will be recalled that a rather barren playground at this time meant there was little for the children to do and certainly no playthings to share with friends. A few children did play self-organised games.

Eight of the ten midday supervisors also spoke about behaviour issues. However, this was in a more constructive manner. The supervisors typically felt lunchtime behaviour had greatly improved since the introduction of the additional activities and new equipment. The senior supervisor admitted that 'we used to get a lot of fighting and we don't get that now'. A number of parents also raised the subject of playground behaviour, although this was

generally not in such disparaging terms as might be expected given the view from the literature (Ross and Ryan, 1990). Encouragingly, eleven of the eighteen parents interviewed made no mention of breaktime conduct at all. Clearly, this did not seem to be an issue at the forefront of most parents' minds. Nonetheless, in addition to the three parents who had experienced particular problems with their own child, four parents did make somewhat negative comments. The mother of a Year 1 boy was typical of this group and she claimed, 'The kids are running about and shouting a lot.' Of course, it could be argued that this is legitimate playground conduct (letting off steam).

While the observations reveal a great deal of what staff perceived to be low level complaining, in the main, as disclosed, behaviour was found to be at an acceptable level (with a few notable exceptions). A few episodes of rough-and-tumble play were witnessed. Whenever supervising staff saw this activity it was stopped immediately. If playful fighting remained unseen it quickly evaporated of its own accord. However, as noted, one exceptionally prolonged occurrence was recorded (Appendix 17). The DfES (2, 2004) takes a fairly tolerant view of conduct of this nature and suggests, 'Apparent fighting or bullying can simply be rough-and-tumble play or "play fighting" which some children enjoy' (although not all would agree with this assessment).

Special needs pupils

As with many schools, Brownlow infants has a number of pupils who have been identified as having Special Educational Needs, and these are frequently related to behavioural issues. Of particular interest to the present investigation was the arrival (Easter, 2000) of Year 1 twin boys who were both awaiting statementing on EBD (emotional and behavioural difficulties) grounds. The observations, together with the staff interviews, plainly show the great impact these new admissions were having on the school despite attempts to quell any problems. Docking (1989, p.16) readily acknowledges that as far as the playground is concerned '*some* children will misbehave even when the school

staff do everything which seems humanly possible to alleviate the situation' and this would appear to be the situation here.

The deputy head suggested that the twin boys (and also a number of Year 2 pupils) required additional support while outside, more especially during the lunchbreak. Unfortunately, none was available. (This is therefore similar to the views expressed in the questionnaire by the primary headteacher quoted earlier.) One teacher felt strongly that children presenting problems at lunchtime should be sent home for their meal in order to ease the burden on the midday staff. It will be recalled that the school behaviour policy makes similar provision. Nonetheless, this did not happen. However, following one particularly traumatic morning breaktime (autumn term 2000) a decision was taken to separate these brothers (now in Year 2). One child would be given extra adult support in the quadrangle while the second child remained in the playground. This was seen to offer a partial solution but some problems continued as Appendix 6 clearly shows. This account highlights the difficulties schools face and indicates that resolving the matter is not necessarily going to be an easy task.

For comparison purposes a second observation of another Year 2 pupil 'E' was also made. This can be found in Appendix 18. The observation of 'E' is significant in itself for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a contrast with the original observation of the twin boy 'D'. It is noted, however, that 'E' himself was a child described by his teacher as 'no angel but generally compliant'. For example, 'E' complains to the duty teacher about another child, although nothing of an untoward nature was seen to have taken place. (This may provide an example of the low level complaining identified by some staff interviewees.) The observation also shows that 'E' socialises with a wide variety of peers, including those from other year groups. Finally, it indicates that there is a high level of physical activity for some children in the playground. This is felt to be a very desirable attribute of playground life (Blatchford, 1989).

Circle time

In keeping with many schools in the borough (38 out of 46, 82.6 per cent), most children at Brownlow infants had been introduced to circle time. Rigby (1997) concludes the 'Quality Circle' approach has a great many strengths. Mosley (1996, p.72) stresses that circle time strategies are 'designed to help individuals understand their behaviour and the responses of other people towards it'. It is a technique which has been praised by Ofsted. In spite of this, not all staff at Brownlow were convinced about its usefulness, although in those classes where it was well-established the teachers concerned felt it was a very worthwhile activity. Furthermore, according to the headteachers and staff consulted, all remaining schools visited for this study found circle time to be beneficial. It provides one way of helping children deal with social situations, such as those occurring at playtime (Mosley, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2005) but, as no further research was undertaken on this aspect, no overall evaluations on the efficacy of circle time are possible.

Brownlow junior school

As previously mentioned, the twelve Brownlow infant pupils questioned whilst in Year 2 were consulted again when in Year 3. They were re-interviewed whilst in Year 4. One additional question was asked at the junior stage, which was related to differences (and preferences) between the infant and junior breaktimes. Given the variety of activities available to infant pupils it was anticipated that children would show a clear preference for infant playtimes. Unexpectedly, however, the majority of interviewees (nine of the eleven pupils remaining at Year 3) showed a strong inclination for the junior playground. The larger play space (six mentions), including the field, had made a substantial impact on many of these pupils as had the extra playtime (mentioned by three children). Space and time in which to play is clearly an important issue for some children. This may well be linked to the general lack of freedom for outdoor play which children are said to have in present day society.

By Year 4 the strength of feeling in favour of junior playtimes had increased. Only one child (of the nine remaining at the school in Year 4) gave any consideration to the variety of activities on hand in the infant school. At the Year 3 consultations two of the eleven interviewees favoured the infant breaks. Neither pupil, even so, cited the greater choice of activities as the reason for their preference. One child bemoaned the lack of surface markings in the junior playground. This is particularly surprising given an apparent absence of interest in such adornments. A second boy expressed his concerns about the 'dangers' of the junior play space, as posed by the older children. Interestingly, this particular child had made his own presence felt in the infant play space (observational evidence). He could certainly have been likened to the 'Playground bosses' described by Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Byrne (1984, p.313). Being Year 3, he was probably now far from being 'master' in the outdoor play area and possibly felt intimidated by the older and larger pupils. Pellegrini and Bartini (2000, p.701) note that, 'When younger and smaller individuals enter a group of older and physically larger individuals we expect their status to decline'.

The children were asked about their playground activities. What must be borne in mind, however, is that these responses may not reflect the reality of the situation as no direct observational data are available to substantiate these numerous claims (only limited observations were made in the junior playground). According to the children's reports, 'chase' appears to be a popular game across the age span. Football was mentioned as a chosen activity at some stage by all boys except one. Two girls also cited football as a preference during their junior school years. When questioned about the most liked aspect of playtime no child consistently mentioned one particular feature across all three consultations. There was a strong bias for pupils to simply enjoy the freedom that playing outside promotes with a desire to be away from the formal classroom situation. This tendency outweighed any preference for football amongst the boys in the group. Therefore, it seems that these pupils value playtime for the release it brings rather than for any selected activities.

When questioned about the least enjoyable feature of breaktime, being physically hurt was a fairly consistent response at all ages. Sadly, pupils' perceptions of their peers also revolved around anti-social and verbally aggressive behaviour (Tizard et al, 1988). Whilst no overt bullying was witnessed it is acknowledged that this may have been due to 'observer effects'. When asked what they would like to do at breaktime (not currently available) pupils acknowledged the lack of playground apparatus and general shortage of equipment in the junior school. Responses were characteristically more realistic in the junior years. One child expressed his desire to play on the school field. Not having an opportunity to do so was due to frequent inclement weather, showing once again the under-use that green spaces have. Nevertheless, some children were more than content with the status quo and could think of nothing extra they required.

The longitudinal data also give further insights into children's friendship patterns. There is some endorsement for the notion that friendships are stable over time (Davis, 1982). Even so, certain alliances appear to be of a more transient nature and no child identified an identical set of playmates over the whole three years. Interestingly, children continued to pinpoint play partners from a variety of cultural backgrounds. No racial segregation was apparent from the direct observations of the playground (although it is acknowledged that observations were limited). An attempt was also made to include the junior pupils more directly in the current project and Year 6 children were invited to consult their peers during one lunchbreak. In this manner, a total of 16 children (from Years, 4, 5 and 6) were interviewed. Again, some of these pupils could identify nothing to dislike about playtimes. A few interviewees requested more activities and equipment. A popular reason for liking breaktime was the opportunity to escape from formal work and play with friends. Responses from this group were therefore compatible with the responses of other pupils interviewed by the researcher.

Pupils were briefly monitored at both morning breaktime and the midday session. No pupil was observed seated in the quiet area. During the midday surveillance children were seen playing on the school field. This subsequently

proved to be a unique event in this investigation. Children were also observed to be playing mainly in single sex groups. Some gender differences were noted with girls tending to either gather socially (i.e. chatting to friends) or play rope skipping games. Boys, on the other hand, were more likely to be involved in football and chasing games; although some social groups were apparent. Many pupils were simply running, roaming or standing in the playground.

Behaviour

In keeping with opinions expressed by the senior supervisory assistant, episodes of extremely rough play fighting were documented. Moreover, although supervised while en route to the dining hall some children were unruly. One supervisory assistant stopped two boys who were fighting (the only time a fight was witnessed). Behaviour appeared noticeably wilder and more boisterous than that subsequently observed at other schools. The headteacher explained the situation as, 'Rough-and-tumble play quickly dissolves into aggression' with the conclusion that 'the children charge about in the playground without any concern for others.' The senior supervisory assistant (working additionally as a classroom assistant) confirmed that 'sometimes there's a fight to be dealt with, but not too often'. It was claimed, however, that 'things are generally better at [morning/afternoon] playtimes because they are shorter'. This serves to affirm previous findings (Blatchford, 1989). The school was attempting to improve the situation and was in a period of prolonged change.

The remaining schools

As explained, pupils were interviewed at each of the six sample schools. Observations were completed at all schools (including Wells Green). A brief overview of the playground pursuits of boys and the activities of girls is given in Appendices 19 and 20. Once more, children were seen 'idling around' (Blatchford, 1998, p.4) or just roaming in the play space. Surface markings

appeared to be barely noticed at most schools and traditional games seemed sparse. Any fixed apparatus was very well-used, however, as was any loose equipment. It is judged that these are very welcome additions to the play area. Schools considering changes would do well to provide these accessories or increase provision if these are already available. The most liked feature of breaktime was the freedom it brings following the restrictions of the classroom. This was mentioned by 23 of the 70 children consulted in the six schools. Once more, it seems that these pupils value playtime for the release it brings. Amusingly, a Year 6 girl at Oatlands acknowledged that, 'You don't have to do SATs [Standard Assessment Tasks] at playtime'. Also important was the opportunity to play with friends (20 mentions) and the chance to simply run about (13 mentions).

Interviewees showed a familiar trend for the same age, and mainly same sex, playmates (Table 6.8) but as shown, at St. Mark's there is a higher proportion of identified play partners of both sexes. This is a one form entry school and girls join with boys to play football. However, it appears that some older pupils at both Woodberry and Oatlands also choose playmates of both sexes although these were fewer in number than identified play partners of the same gender. In keeping with the Brownlow pupils, when asked about the least desirable aspect of playtime the main complaint (25 mentions) involved anti-social behaviour (bullying, fighting and children hurting others were alluded to). Next came falling over (12 mentions) and falling out with friends (12 mentions). Interestingly, seven children were slightly amazed by such a question and firmly insisted there was absolutely *nothing* to dislike about breaktime.

A significant remark was made by a Year 2 girl at Woodberry who revealed that playtimes allowed her just to be 'wild'. Brown (1994, p.54) argues that 'play area activity will include play of a nature which runs contrary to the expressed values of schools'. Time for unconstraint may, however, be of value for children, particularly when there has been an increasing emphasis placed on academic attainment. When questioned about further requirements many personal issues were raised (such as not having to play with younger siblings).

The most cited request was to have fixed climbing apparatus (10 mentions). Again, twelve children could identify no extra requirements and were perfectly content with the status quo.

Table 6.8 Who do children play with?

Hallside infants school

	<u>B Reception</u>	<u>G Reception</u>	<u>B Yr.1</u>	<u>G Yr. 1</u>	<u>B Yr.2</u>	<u>G Yr.2</u>
B Reception	X					
G Reception	X	X				
B Year 1			X			
G Year 1			X	X		
B Year 2					X	
G Year 2		X				X

Hallside junior school

	<u>B Yr.3</u>	<u>G Yr.3</u>	<u>B Yr.4</u>	<u>G Yr.4</u>	<u>B Yr.5</u>	<u>G Yr.5</u>	<u>B Yr.6</u>	<u>G Yr.6</u>
B Year 3	X							
G Year 3		X						
B Year 4			X					
G Year 4			X	X				
B Year 5					X			
G Year 5						X		
B Year 6							X	
G Year 6								X

Gatward primary school

	<u>Reception</u>		<u>Year 1</u>		<u>Year 2</u>		<u>Year 3</u>		<u>Year 4</u>		<u>Year 5</u>		<u>Year 6</u>	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
B Recp.	X													
G Recp		X												
B Yr.1			X											
G Yr 1				X										
B Yr 2					X									
G Yr 2						X								
B Yr 3							X							
G Yr 3								X						
B Yr 4									X	X				
G Yr 4										X				
B Yr 5											X			
G Yr 5											X			
B Yr 6												X		
G Yr 6													X	

Woodberry primary school

	Reception		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5		Year 6	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
B Recp.	X													
G Recp.		X												
B Yr.1			X											
G Yr 1				X										
B Yr 2					X	X								
G Yr 2				X		X								
B Yr.3							X							
G Yr 3							X	X						
B Yr 4									X	X				
G Yr 4										X				
B Yr 5											X	X		
G Yr 5											X	X		
B Yr 6														X
G Yr 6														X

Oatlands primary school

	Reception		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5		Year 6	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
B Recp.	X													
G Recp.		X												
B Yr.1					X									
G Yr 1				X										
B Yr 2														
G Yr 2						X								
B Yr 3							X							
G Yr 3							X							
B Yr 4								X	X					
G Yr 4									X					
B Yr 5										X				
G Yr 5										X	X			
B Yr 6													X	X
G Yr 6														X

(*No one)

St. Mark's C of E primary school

	Reception		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5		Year 6	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
B Recp.	X													
G Recp.		X												
B Yr.1			X	X										
G Yr 1			X	X									X	X
B Yr 2					X	X								
G Yr 2						X								
B Yr 3							X	X						
G Yr 3							X	X						
B Yr 4									X	X				
G Yr 4										X				
B Yr 5											X	X		
G Yr 5											X		X	X
B Yr 6													X	
G Yr 6											X		X	X

Hallside infant school

No alternative lunchtime pursuits (adult-directed) were provided. Given the plentiful supply of playground equipment/apparatus in place and the exceptionally high behaviour levels this might be considered unnecessary. Buddies performed their duty conscientiously (having been well-trained). Class lines (following a handbell) returned into school in silence.

Hallside junior school

A lunchtime club was in operation, described by the acting headteacher as for those 'finding playtimes difficult plus a small selection of others'. The club was supervised by four recently appointed classroom assistants. It was somewhat noisy but well-run. Buddies carried out their tasks in a caring and helpful manner. Pupils returned to school in orderly class lines following the whistle. No adults consulted mentioned any particular behaviour problems.

Gatward primary school

Extra-curricular activities were in abundance at lunchtime. These were mainly organised by non-teaching staff (the recently appointed classroom assistants each had a club to organise). All pupils could participate but most activities were for the junior age group and there were waiting lists. As mentioned, Ofsted had recently assessed these activities as one of the strengths of the school. Pupils experiencing problems were required to attend the midday activities. While conduct was generally good, a Year 2 teacher concluded there were now 'more discipline problems', and a midday supervisor suggested behaviour had deteriorated. A bell signalled the end of break and class lines entered the building smoothly in part due to the high number of entrances.

Woodberry primary school

No overtly aggressive behaviour was seen, although a Year 2 teacher stated there were 'minor disputes' and children were 'tearing around uncontrollably at times'. A single lunchtime club was held on a daily basis. The headteacher revealed that, 'Many children have poor social skills and can't cope in the

playground ... The school decides who goes [to the club] – those with the greatest need'. Club activities were organised very efficiently by the two welfare assistants, both of whom had taken National Vocational Qualifications in Special Needs. Junior pupils volunteered to play in the infant playground. While generally sympathetic towards the younger children, little was seen in the way of constructive play or games. At the end of play the infant pupils returned to their classrooms. As previously noted, the junior pupils were settling into a new system of 'walking' inside when their class identification card was shown. This procedure was problematic as children strolled and sometimes ran in rather haphazardly.

Oatlands primary school

The junior pupils had recently received a wide selection of interesting playground equipment (Figure 4.14b). This had not gone unnoticed by the younger pupils. One Year 2 interviewee proclaimed that 'the juniors get anything they want'. It is also very unusual in this study for older children to have such a good selection of apparatus as it tends to be the infant children who are most favoured. Despite this, as previously noted, the younger pupils were well-occupied with standard playthings (bats, balls, ropes, hoops and bean bags) and behaviour levels were high. There was no buddy system and the newly appointed playground co-ordinator maintained that older pupils adopting this role would dominate the younger children's play space. This is a relevant point, but, of course, is dependent upon suitable training. Re-entry was exemplary in the junior school where class 'points' would be lost if pupils were not silent. Infant class lines simply filed inside in a reasonable manner. No extra-curricular lunchtime activities were available.

St. Mark's C of E primary school

Pupils' responses to questions conformed to the general pattern. Older pupils played with the younger ones at midday. This system seemed to be working well. Behaviour levels were high and the playground was described as 'pretty peaceable' (Senco). However, one midday supervisor (15 years) felt that, 'Today there are some pretty difficult children here'. All the same, behaviour

was generally commendable, particularly when pupils filed silently back into school following the whistle signalling the end of play. The lunchtime extra-curricular activities revolved around music and sport and were 'run by staff – not linked to behaviour – lunchtime is just a convenient time' (Headteacher). This is therefore similar in nature to the activities of the Brownlow infant teachers, described earlier.

Wells Green primary school

Again, behaviour levels were high. However, the playground was far more adult-controlled and there were a number of organised activities. The headteacher concluded that, 'There are not many incidents in the playground to be dealt with'. At the end of break (no whistle) pupils were simply instructed to return into school through classrooms adjacent to the play space. There was no lining up and this system seemed to work extremely well.

Discussion

It can be concluded at this stage that children's free choice play interests follow similar patterns in all schools visited. Where differences do occur these are due to individual schools introducing new equipment and extra facilities. As Moyles (1989) suggests, play is largely governed by the materials provided. By extending the overall scope of activities available schools are increasing pupils' range of freely chosen pastimes. However, as the observations show, some children were still noted to be generally roaming around in the play space. According to Brown (1994, p.52), 'many activities take place during any session of "playtime" which do not take the form of actual play'. This seems to remain unchanged regardless of any innovatory play opportunities. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there was a strong impression that fewer children appeared to be wandering in those playgrounds where there was a good supply of alternative activities on offer. Even so, it is highly probable that it is those pupils idling around who lead some staff to conclude that children no longer know how to play.

For many children one of the main reasons for enjoying playtime is simply the respite it affords from formal academic learning. Given the increasing emphasis in recent years on the need for schools to encourage academic achievement, with the resulting trend towards more structured study, there is a feeling that playtime assumes even greater importance in children's lives. Research by Alerby (2003) shows pupils see break as an opportunity to have fun. Moreover, 'this time is experienced as very positive' (*op. cit.* p.26). For pupils (and very likely for staff) breaktime presents the chance for recovery and recuperation between lessons. All the same, as some staff suspect (at Brownlow infants) some children may simply not know how to occupy themselves. Staff perceptions in a number of cases also centred on the notion that children's play had deteriorated (Lindon, 2001a). Admittedly, the evidence from the present study indicates that few traditional games are being played. It has already been pointed out that, while traditional games seem diminished, 'it may be that activities have changed, and young people have found new forms of expression' (Blatchford, 1998, p.170).

Additionally, where adult-directed pursuits are provided pupils join in with obvious enthusiasm. At Woodberry and Gatward, children expressed strong approval for the lunchtime clubs; while Hallside junior school was planning to expand its lunchtime activities. It is difficult on this evidence to be overly critical, therefore, of adult involvement. However, others (Brennard et al, 2001; Thomson, 2003; Bruce, 2004; Wood and Attfield, 2005; Kamen, 2005) might disagree by suggesting that children's pastimes should generally be free from adult intervention. One game which was still very much to the fore was football (except at Oatlands where it had been banned). In general, football is being contained in designated areas or zones (as at Brownlow and Hallside junior schools and Woodberry and St. Mark's primary schools), but there is still a tendency for this activity to dominate the overall available space (Brown, 1994). As noted, according to Blatchford *et al* (1990), there is a very positive side to football with the claim that it develops teamwork and therefore it should not be banned. Interestingly, Thomson (2003, p.58) recently found

that the confiscation of footballs contributed to the older boys 'becoming a nuisance ... because they had nothing to occupy them'.

The playground games witnessed, especially those of boys, were frequently based on television/film characters and were mainly very physical in nature. Blatchford (1989, p.16) argues these should not be dismissed as being 'inferior to older, more traditional games'. According to O'Pray (1997, p.49), such activities have 'a tremendous influence over children in terms of raising their activity levels'. Given the now well-documented argument that children need increased physical exercise these pastimes can be judged more favourably. It is noted, however, that Wood and Attfield (2005) suggest superhero sagas give rise to perceptions of violence. More significantly, few children were observed using designated 'quiet areas' appropriately (as previously mentioned). Indeed, only the occasional child was seated, although pupils did roam through these zones (Figures 4.12b and 4.16). As a Year 5 boy at St. Mark's concluded, 'It would be nice if the quiet area was *quiet* so we could sit and talk'. Climbing over benches (and even standing on tables) was noted at Gatward, Oatlands and Woodberry. It is worth emphasising that pupils had no alternative climbing apparatus and often, as stated, bemoaned the absence of legitimate structures (although at Oatlands a climbing frame would soon be in use for the junior pupils).

Pupils frequently quoted a greater variety of games played than the observations support. It is accepted, however, that an increase in direct observations might reveal a wider range of activities. Regardless of any playground pursuits, the importance of the social aspects of playtime cannot be underestimated. Breaktime may assume value in children's lives because, 'For some children it may be just about the only setting within which friendships can form and develop' (Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000, p.30). Pellegrini and Blatchford (*op cit*) suggest breaktime gives pupils the opportunity to make friends with peers in different classes. The evidence here, however, suggests this may not be the norm as play partners cited were often, but not exclusively, in the same class as the interviewee.

There is an *a priori* assumption in the present investigation that children generally play with those whom they consider to be friends, rather than arbitrarily engage in activities with anyone available (although it is accepted that this might happen from time to time). Consistent with previous accounts, children often choose to play with partners of the same sex (Smith, 1994b) although some interviewees did choose play partners of both sexes. Yeo and Lovell (2002, p.40) maintain 'the peer group seems to have become increasingly important' in 'socialising children into gender roles'. Gender differences in all schools studied lend support to the idea that pupils sometimes engage in gender specific activities. Brown (1994) claims pupils may already have well-established value systems which suggest some activities are the domain of only one sex. It is argued that this might be a negative feature which 'conserves the stereotypes of the wider community' (Brown, 1994, p.59). Equality of opportunity is therefore an issue for schools to consider when contemplating changes. Naturally, football seems to remain a constant matter for debate.

Interestingly, there is evidence that some schools are attempting to provide support for isolated children. 'Friendship squads' or 'buddies' (Brownlow and Hallside) and 'friendship stops' or 'friendship seats' (Gatward and Wells Green) are recent innovations. While this might be viewed as a desirable move some caution is required. Some children may not wish to be assisted in this way. The quality of buddies also varies widely. It cannot be concluded that the simple addition of companions is always going to be advantageous. Instead, it is the character of the support given that appears to make the difference and this might be reliant on appropriate training. In spite of this, all buddies spoken to expressed enjoyment at assuming this new role. It can probably be determined that those involved in this task are benefiting from the activity themselves through enhanced feelings of self-worth. Research by Fabian (2005, p.7) indicates pupils enjoy 'helping children to make friends and looking after them'.

Another recent innovation has been an explosion of extra-curricular pursuits available at lunchtime particularly for children experiencing problems in the

playground. In this respect, Brownlow infant school is unique in this study in that *all* pupils are free to participate in these indoor pastimes (apart from activities introduced specifically for Year 2), as desired (i.e. no pupils are instructed to do so and there are no waiting lists such as those found at Gatward). As explained, this situation is principally due to the fortuitous location of the school hall (adjacent to the playground and with direct access). Obviously, greater adult involvement is a necessity whenever extra-curricular activities are on offer, particularly when these pastimes are highly structured. This may be reflected in additional costs to the school, especially at schools such as Gatward where classroom assistants are employed on the basis of assuming responsibility for overseeing lunchtime clubs. On the other hand, extra provision at midday might rest on the goodwill of staff already employed. This happens at Woodberry where the two welfare assistants supervising these activities rarely have an opportunity to be reimbursed for their time later in the day. Relying on staff goodwill, however, might be problematic if existing staff move on to new posts.

In addition, there can be problems caused by children exiting the play space. Schools observed commonly terminated break with whistles or bells and, most usually, class lines were then formed. In some schools this worked extremely well (Hallside and St. Mark's). In others, far less so (Brownlow). Blatchford (1989, p.25) does suggest that, 'Petty niggles' can occur at this time. In those schools abandoning class lines this, too, could be successful (Oatlands junior pupils) but not always (Woodberry junior pupils). Much seems to depend on the strategies used, such as the reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and on pupils' ability to respond in a suitable manner. Re-entry is also greatly affected by the number of entrances available. Schools with multiple entrances (Gatward) or direct classroom access (Wells Green and the infant pupils at Woodberry) may be in the most favoured position.

Behaviour is a key issue which clearly links with the cultural climate and institutional bias of the school (Pollard, 1985) examined earlier. Blatchford (1998, p.57) stresses that the, 'Differences between schools ... may well be an important factor affecting breaktime'. Evidence gathered at various locations

visited emphasises the individuality of schools and supports this assertion. Docking (1996) argues that the context and ethos of individual schools impacts upon the way in which pupils conduct themselves. The present study endorses this opinion but it is still felt that, 'Serious misbehaviour is still a minor part of the playground experience of most children' (Lewis, 1998, p.49). No overt bullying was seen, although it is accepted that this primarily takes place out of sight of adults (Blatchford *et al*, 1990). Nevertheless, there was generally found to be an absence of desultory conduct (with the notable exceptions previously mentioned).

In effect, behaviour observed was at a far more acceptable level than would be expected from opinions expressed by both pupils and staff. It is recognised, too, that the sample schools, chosen on the basis of self-assessed good practice, may not be representative of primary schools throughout the borough. In each school there appeared to be a whole-school approach to behaviour management (Docking, 1996). This was founded in underlying principles of adopting a caring attitude towards others based on mutual respect. All schools had reward and sanction procedures but higher level sanctions, such as exclusion during the lunchbreak, do not appear to be used very often, if at all.

Low level complaining was noticeable in some playgrounds (Brownlow). In other playgrounds pupils were less demanding of adult attention (for example, Hallside). This may reflect the higher economic status of the catchment area and associated child rearing patterns. According to Byrne (2006, p.1001), 'parenting involves practices and identities which are classed, as well as raced and gendered'. As noted, Whitney and Smith (1993) believe social disadvantage links with lower behaviour levels. That some staff were found to hold negative views of playground conduct is likely to reflect a nationwide trend (Lindon, 2001a). It is further acknowledged that there has been an increase in main stream schools of children with behavioural difficulties (Blatchford, 1998) and one such child was observed (Appendix 6). The behaviour of these pupils is likely to add weight to staff perceptions of pupils' generally inferior behaviour. Added to this were the many instances of rough-

and-tumble play which Smith (1995, p.15) maintains is simply 'a cultural universal'.

While the episode of playful fighting documented at length in Appendix 17 did not turn overtly aggressive it was of a far more militant nature than other recorded confrontations. It is difficult to ascertain whether this activity would eventually have ceased of its own accord or whether it would have led to something more serious. There is some divergence of opinion on this issue (Rigby, 1997; Hendricks, 2001). Only tentative conclusions are drawn, but overall it appears that rough-and-tumble play may be largely harmless. Nonetheless, it is suggested that the increasing number of pupils already experiencing behavioural problems (now referred to as BESD, Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties) may be at risk of becoming involved in play fighting of a much more hostile nature, as demonstrated by the above mentioned episode.

Résumé

Chapter Six has served to move the inquiry forward by concentrating on numerous issues surrounding the socialisation of the child in the playground. In the main, children enjoy breaktime for the freedom it brings to depart from the formal learning situation. One of the principal reasons for disliking playtime is the possibility of being physically injured. In spite of this, pupils expressed an overwhelming liking for breaktime, often referring to it as the 'best part of the day'. An important feature of playground life is the opportunity it brings to socialise with peers. According to Blatchford (1998, p.18), 'children necessarily have to learn to manage both friendship and conflict' while playing outside. The development of social skills appears to characterise the playground experiences of the children in this study. Children's choice of play partners confirms that children mainly choose the same sex, same age playmates but exceptions are to be found. Racial issues have been examined briefly and demand more detailed investigation.

However, it is concluded that in those schools visited there is racial integration in the playground in multi-ethnic settings, although evidence is limited.

Curiously, children were found to perceive a wider variety of games and activities being played than the observational evidence supports. Few traditional games were seen. The anti-social behaviour of others also features prominently in pupils' perceptions of the school playground. Many children judge the play space to be an area of verbal and physical hostility. The observational evidence does not generally tend to support this viewpoint (but this may be due to observer effects). Behaviour levels on the whole (with notable exceptions) were seen to be at a mainly higher level than many children and adults believe (Lewis, 1998). Despite this, some pupils do experience difficulties and schools have begun to address any problems by introducing additional provision for these children. This increasingly results in the establishment of adult-controlled activities. These impinge greatly on children's free time.

In addition, many schools within the LEA have inaugurated social skills training (circle time) as one way of helping children to cope with playground life. A number of schools have recently established friendship squads (buddies) to assist isolated pupils and also to initiate playground games. However, buddies were discovered to be far more effective in some schools than in others. This may result from a lack of adequate training or lack of maturity of those involved. Also studied was pupils' behaviour when exiting the play area. Most commonly, class lines formed following a whistle or bell to signal the end of break. Conduct during this procedure varied between schools. This is judged to be dependent upon a number of variables including exiting procedures, entrances available, staff expectations of suitable behaviour and pupils' ability to respond appropriately. Rough-and-tumble play was witnessed at all locations. In the main, this quickly terminated of its own accord. The following chapter continues the data presentation and analysis by focusing attention away from the child and on to the adults who supervise the outside play area.

Chapter Seven

Adult Supervision

Introduction

While attention in the previous chapter was focused solely on the child, Chapter Seven recognises the importance of those adults who provide playground supervision. There are two key elements to the current chapter. Firstly, there is a reasoned analysis of all issues surrounding morning (and afternoon) supervision. Secondly, there is a drawing together of themes related to the supervisory role at midday. To begin with, there is a close inspection of morning (and afternoon) breaktime practice across the LEA. This includes the frequency with which staff undertake break duty, the numbers of staff supervising, and the categories of staff who now perform this task.

A distinctly crucial part of the study, which concerns any repercussions that carrying out playground duty has on those involved, is fully explored; initially at Brownlow infant school and subsequently at the remaining schools. A number of other aspects are also discussed. These relate to playground interactions, staff activities while pupils are outside, and the potential lack of consistency in playground surveillance. One further issue of importance revolves around the particular difficulties experienced by newly and recently qualified teachers.

Subsequently, Chapter Seven provides a reflection on the many arguments surrounding midday supervision. This is yet another essential feature of the investigation. Again, practice throughout the borough is first inspected. Special reference is made to the adequacy of the supervision provided and to the supervisory role. Additionally, other staff engaging in lunchtime activities are studied. Practice in the focus schools is then carefully scrutinised and comparisons are made.

In this section of the chapter a principal factor is the actual role performed by the midday ancillary staff and how this is changing. There is a very close examination of the ways in which supervisory assistants execute their duties and responsibilities. Teamwork is revealed as being especially salient, as is the complexity of the role of the senior supervisory assistant, particularly with regard to leadership. Training and career issues are then probed. In the concluding part of this chapter the innovative midday supervisor/teaching assistant dual role is thoroughly investigated.

Breaktime supervision

Crucial to the present study is the issue of breaktime supervision. Because the breaktime focus is generally on the child there is limited mention in previous studies of the views of those who perform play area surveillance in relation to their own role. This investigation gives such adults a 'voice'. In many ways this contributes to the individuality of the current study. There is some ambiguity as to the nature of the exact role which adults should undertake in the primary playground and whether or not intervention in children's activities is required (Sluckin, 1987; Blatchford, 1998; Thomson, 2003). In order to gain insight into this task adults were observed in all playgrounds studied. In addition, staff at various levels in the organisation were questioned about supervisory duties.

Morning and afternoon breaktimes

Across the LEA

In the questionnaires headteachers were asked to evaluate their own practice. As explained, this was principally to ascertain appropriate schools for follow

up visits. A very basic question was therefore included, which was carefully worded in respect of practice judged to be less than acceptable. It was felt headteachers would be disinclined to assess their own practice as 'unsatisfactory' and so this word was consciously avoided. Obviously, headteachers were left to draw their own conclusions as to which category best described breaktimes at individual schools and further guidance was felt unnecessary. As can be seen in Table 7.1, 'satisfactory' was the most chosen evaluation (27 out of 46, 58.7 per cent). The Brownlow infant headteacher did not receive a questionnaire but her verbal judgement (when given the same three options) was also one of 'satisfactory' in respect of morning breaktimes. There were no particular common features relating to those schools identifying good practice.

Table 7.1 Headteachers' evaluations of morning/afternoon breaktime practice in the 46 schools

	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>An area for some improvement</u>	<u>Total</u>
Number of Responses	14	27	5	46

The questionnaires were also designed to elicit elementary information relating to playground supervision. For instance, headteachers were asked about the number of weekly duties staff were expected to carry out (Table 7.2). As shown, the majority of schools do not expect staff to complete more than two duties each week (on a rota system). In keeping with Brownlow infant school, many schools now have enough staff for playground duty to be performed on a once a week basis only (19 out of 46 schools, 41.3 per cent). Patently, this does not appear to be unduly demanding. Even so, staff highlight a number of difficulties associated with playground supervision and these are discussed below.

Rather surprisingly, one school has the expectation that staff will complete four duties weekly. It is noted, however, that this is a small school (one form entry) with separate infant and junior playgrounds. In addition, two staff supervise each of these areas. Furthermore, the infant pupils have an afternoon break. All of these features, therefore, are likely to impact on the total number of weekly duties that staff must perform. Curiously, one headteacher reports that the number of duties varies for different teachers. Why this should be so is unknown but perhaps it is linked with other expectations for carrying out different tasks within the school. Moreover, three schools require non-teaching staff to undertake more duties than teaching staff. This is a particularly intriguing concept and is one which will be returned to later.

Table 7.2 Number of weekly breaktime duties performed by staff in the 46 schools

<u>Number of outside breaktime duties per week each member of staff completes</u>	<u>No. of schools</u>
1	19
1/2	5
2	12
2/3	4
3	0
3/4	0
4	1
Variable – CAs do more	3
Various – Yr. 2 teacher every fortnight	1
No response to the question	1
	Total 46

Schools were also asked to supply details of the numbers of staff supervising each playground. For most schools either two staff supervise (23 schools) or three staff supervise (15 schools). A further two schools, both one form entry, report that only one adult is supervising (St. Mark's being one of these two).

As these smaller schools have fewer children occupying the play space it is likely each school considers one adult to be sufficient for adequate surveillance. Interestingly, the remaining six schools report far higher levels of supervision, with four or more staff involved. In some cases, however, this was qualified by explaining that teachers patrolled the playground while non-teaching staff (NTS) were overseeing climbing apparatus.

Table 7.3 Categories of staff undertaking playground supervision at breaktime (morning/afternoon) in the 46 schools

<u>Staff who do duty</u>	<u>Number of schools</u>
Teachers	46
Nursery nurses	28
Classroom assistants	36
Deputy headteacher	2
Welfare assistant	1
Site manager	1

Table 7.3 shows the categories of staff who carry out breaktime duty. Teachers are responsible for duty in all schools responding to the questionnaire. This is only to be expected given that the DfEE (NPQH, Unit 4.2, 2001, p.17) acknowledges that 'break duty or playground duty' is included within the 1,265 hours of directed time. As is customary, headteachers and deputies do not normally assume responsibility for overseeing the playground at morning or afternoon breaktime. Nevertheless, it is clear from Table 7.3 that two schools actually expect their deputies to undertake playground monitoring. St. Mark's is one of these schools. Moreover, Woodberry is unique in this study in that the welfare assistant also goes out into the playground at breaktime. One aspect of some importance arising from the Brownlow staff interviews is whether duty staff receive an alternative break. As Table 7.4 shows, in 28 of the 46 schools (60.9 per cent)

staff do not have the benefit of a substitute recess. In addition, one further school, while allowing classroom assistants to have this break, does not offer the same facility to teachers. As will be shown later, not having any form of replacement break serves to compound any difficulties associated with playtime duty.

Table 7.4 The 46 schools: alternative breaks for duty staff

Do duty staff have an alternative break?					
<u>Yes</u>	<u>CAs Yes / Teachers No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Very briefly</u>	<u>Total</u>	
16	1	28	1	46	

Brownlow infant school

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that many of the Brownlow infant school staff take a particularly dim view of pupils' breaktime behaviour. One possible reason for such negative attitudes is postulated by Lewis (1998, p.49) who claims that, 'because the adults in the playground do have to spend time dealing with the problems, it is these that remain at the forefront of their consciousness'. All the same, it has already been stated that the majority of pupils show little evidence of behaving in a belligerent manner. In spite of this, poor behaviour was often cited as a reason for disliking break supervision possibly linked with the stream of low level complaints reported by some staff, as previously discussed. Three staff supervise each playtime and a rota system operates. One change which occurred just prior to the staff interviews was the rescheduling of assembly to take place immediately before morning playtime. While being excused from assembly would afford duty staff the opportunity for an alternative break this was not the position at that time. Comments relating to this situation were made during the course of the staff interviews.

In the staff consultations general opinions were sought in respect of morning playtime. Some staff claimed pupils needed to be provided with a variety of activities. Others mentioned the number of staff currently supervising (i.e. too many or too few). Additionally, interviewees expressed their attitudes towards break supervision. As shown in Table 7.5, staff were fairly equally divided between those who do enjoy playground duty and those who do not. Significantly, a number of staff were simply resigned to undertaking playground supervision and felt that, 'It's just one of those things that has to be done' (Reception teacher). Interestingly, three staff suggested that the head and deputy should be involved in break duty. The deputy head had a different perception of his role and stated, 'I see duty in terms of organising [the duty rota]'. Plainly, he saw no requirement for participation in playground surveillance.

Table 7.5 Brownlow infant school: staff opinions regarding playground duty

	Teachers	Nursery Nurses	Classroom Assistants	Other Staff	Totals
Opinion held					
Like duty	2	3	3	1	9
Resigned to duty	2	0	2	1	5
Dislike duty	7	2	1	0	10
				<u>Total</u>	<u>24</u>

In addition, the need for an alternative break was raised by six staff (25 per cent). One reception teacher explained her difficulty by maintaining, 'I think we should get a short break. If I didn't have a classroom assistant I'd be rushing around getting things [resources] out afterwards'. Having a substitute break when supervising may be judged as highly desirable, not only for the respite it provides but also because it offers a little extra time for preparation,

particularly with regard to the succeeding lesson. Lack of preparation time proved to be a crucial issue for a number of staff in relation to the overall impact of playground duty; more especially so for teachers than for non-teaching staff.

Other points of note were also mentioned. For instance, when assessing the consequences of duty, interviewees frequently disclosed feelings of tiredness. One reception teacher alleged, 'It exhausts you'. Susceptibility to stress was also recognised. One Year 2 teacher admitted, 'It doesn't give me breathing space – it makes me feel more stressed.' Another Year 2 teacher confessed, 'I'm much more tired and bad tempered.' One nursery nurse claimed, 'It makes me feel tense afterwards – very stressed.' In spite of such disparaging remarks, five staff felt there were no repercussions from carrying out playground supervision. For example, one classroom assistant insisted, 'No, it doesn't affect me in any way.' However, one learning support teacher argued, 'It only affects me if I don't get a break because then I feel really tired.' Table 7.6 presents an overview of responses to this question. The key issue to keep in mind is that classroom assistants appear to be less affected by playground duty than other categories of staff (but it is accepted that these responses are from a very small sample of interviewees).

Table 7.6 Brownlow infant school: staff views about the impact of playground duty

Playground duty impacts on the day					
	Teachers	Nursery Nurses	Classroom Assistants	Other Staff	Totals
Yes	9	4	2	2	17
No	1	0	4	0	5
Mixed response	1	1	0	0	2
Totals	<u>11</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>24</u>

In addition, adult/child interactions were documented during the playground observations. As staff had suggested, these were largely linked to a variety of problems. Most interactions therefore were child initiated and consisted of complaints about another's wrong doing. For instance, the following pupil grievances are typical of those recorded:

'Someone pulled my jumper.'

'He hurt J.'

'They're beating me up.'

'She won't play with me.'

Staff initiated interactions were mainly related to following up these complaints with the alleged perpetrators. Other interactions involved the prevention of undesirable conduct such as illicit climbing. It is small wonder then that staff perceptions of the playground revolve around children's unacceptable behaviour. Consequently, the adult role consists of 'policing' the play space.

Given that carrying out playground duty was seen by many staff as impacting on the formal learning situation (i.e. 'an unpreparedness' for the following lesson) staff were subsequently observed throughout one breaktime while the children were outside at play. This produced some especially illuminating data regarding staff activities at this time. It must be emphasised, however, that the data obtained were confined to a single observation, which may therefore be unrepresentative of the situation in general. No particular note was made of those staff who were having refreshments in the staffroom, although they, too, were in evidence. Teachers' activities while children were outside at play included the following:

- photocopying
- checking apparatus
- colleagues discussing appropriate teaching strategies for the succeeding lesson
- seeking resources from the stockroom
- paperwork (record keeping and evaluation)
- distributing resources.

Teaching staff consulted acknowledged that they either sat briefly in the staffroom, or alternatively brought hot drinks back to their classrooms. The newly qualified teacher was an exception. This staff member maintained she was too busy preparing for the next lesson to even visit the staffroom and therefore did not have sufficient time to arrange any refreshment. One experienced teacher (Year 1) explained her system: 'Someone makes me a cup of tea before the queue forms. I go to drink it straight down and come back to work in the classroom.' Of course, it will be deduced from the above list that some activities occupying teachers during the break could, instead, easily be undertaken by non-teaching staff (but not all). The non-teaching staff were also observed during the playtime period. Four classroom assistants were helping with medical attention and one nursery nurse was busily supervising children elsewhere. One learning support assistant was discussing matters with the visiting speech therapist. Others were having a break in the staffroom.

The staff at Brownlow plainly tend to put breaktimes to very good use. If this school is typical (and there is no reason to think that it is not), then any perception of staff enjoying a social interlude in the company of congenial colleagues seems to be erroneous. A heavy workload leaves little time for such pleasantries. Furthermore, breaktime assumes even greater importance if it also contributes to the smooth running of the school by providing space for vital tasks. In any event, breaktime does afford both teaching and non-teaching staff some respite from the continuous demands of pupils. As such, it makes a potentially valuable contribution to reducing staff stress levels. Sadly, however, 'It seems a pity that although primary schools have started to think carefully about breaktime activities for children – play apparatus, buddy systems, outdoor seating – they have often allowed the adults' recreational time to deteriorate almost to vanishing point' (Haigh, TES, 2004).

The 24 staff were also asked about possible improvements to playtimes. Five staff could think of no particular changes, but (as with some of the pupils interviewed) six staff suggested there was a demand for more equipment (a

rather barren playground at that time will be recalled). There were also four mentions of the desirability of having separate playtimes for the reception children. Furthermore, there were three arguments in favour of teaching appropriate playground games. In addition, two staff claimed there was a need to clarify wet playtimes as these were felt to be confusing. Other issues raised included: better use of the school field; having Year 2 buddies; zoning the playground for different activities; and having a relief person to cover break duty in the event of staff absence. There was also the previously noted argument that duty staff should be entitled to an alternative break.

These therefore represent requirements in each of the four domains (provision, organisation, socialisation and supervision). A number of these issues are returned to later when there is a specific focus on the process of change at this school. While playtimes are naturally of direct concern to those staff responsible for playground supervision it was reasoned that other staff would also be affected by breaktimes, but possibly in different ways. With this assertion in mind both the welfare assistant and the administrative assistant were subsequently consulted.

The welfare assistant considered morning playtime to be the busiest part of her day. It was felt this could present problems and she maintained she needed to be highly organised in order to manage the situation effectively. Even so, it was admitted that she 'would struggle to deal with everything' by herself. As such, she was grateful for any extra help given by various classroom assistants who were able 'to deal with minor injuries'. On the other hand, the administrative assistant saw a beneficial side to breaktimes in that the noise from the playground reminded her of the passing time and the need to complete her workload. At this stage it can be concluded that breaktime has an impact, both negative and positive, on the working life of the school.

Negative aspects seem to relate to the possible interruptions to formal work, the stress and tiredness reported by many staff who supervise playtime, the behaviour problems to be dealt with, and the difficulties presented by inclement weather. However, this is balanced by the seemingly positive

aspects of breaktime. These relate to views expressed by numerous staff that breaktime is 'very necessary' for both pupils and adults; that breaktime can be a period for recuperation and, importantly, that children need free time to socialise with peers. It appears, therefore, that any proposed innovations require 'a fundamental and systematic appraisal' of what is happening and why, and how things can be 'best done' (Dalton *et al* 2001b, p.143)

Brownlow junior school

Limited data were collected from the link junior school. The headteacher had placed the school in the 'an area for some improvement' category when responding to the questionnaire. This is probably unsurprising given that attempts for reform, as formerly explained, had generally failed to achieve the desired outcomes. Duty staff were observed in the playground. The opinions of a classroom assistant (who was also the senior midday supervisor) revolved around the pupils' behaviour and have already been discussed. An experienced teacher bemoaned the fact that duty staff were unable to have an alternative break. This informant also mirrored the views of contributors elsewhere and concluded that undertaking break duty resulted in a lack of time for 'planning activities'.

The remaining schools

In the questionnaires all seven headteachers in the remaining schools (Wells Green plus the six sample schools) assessed their morning/afternoon breaktime practice as being in the 'good' category. As noted, this was one reason for the inclusion of the six sample schools in the current study. Along with the headteacher, four duty staff were questioned in each school. As previously mentioned, apart from the headteacher no other staff were consulted during the one day visit to Wells Green. Given their lack of direct involvement, it is perhaps unsurprising that the seven headteachers made limited reference to morning and afternoon breaktimes during the course of the interviews. Instead, all headteachers tended to focus on issues and changes relating to midday practice.

A comparison of a number of attributes of relevance to breaktimes in the nine schools directly investigated is given in Table 7.7 (once more, questionnaire responses were verified by the observational and interview data). It was assumed that such features would form much of the backdrop to the emergence of staff opinions relating to breaktimes (for example, whether those staff in schools where there is a substitute break for duty personnel present a more favourable attitude than staff elsewhere). It was also reasoned that the behaviour of the children would exert an influence on staff judgements. The overall assessment regarding playground supervision in the six sample schools is displayed in Table 7.8. Contemporary accounts suggest there is an almost universal dislike of this task (Evans, 1994). Therefore, it is somewhat unremarkable that just three interviewees (of the 24 consulted in the six schools) show any constructive feelings towards playground surveillance (although it will be recalled that a higher percentage of the Brownlow infant staff, nine out of 24, indicated a liking for duty). Typical of more positive views was the Year 1 teacher at St. Mark's who announced, 'I enjoy it. It's an informal break from the normal routine.'

In complete contrast, five informants revealed an exceptionally strong disliking for the job. The sentiments of a reception teacher at Hallside infants aptly characterised these intense views when she divulged, 'I hate being on duty – I loathe it. I hate walking around and being a policeman [sic].' In spite of such disparaging remarks, the most commonly held attitude was merely one of resignation. Two thirds of those questioned were quick to show their forbearance. One example came from the Year 3 support teacher at Oatlands who stated, 'It's an expectation.' In a similar vein a Year 2 teacher at Gatward stressed, 'It's a necessity.' Nevertheless her judgement was that, 'it tends to be more sorting out the disruptive problems now.' Generally, staff in the six schools were inclined to display a greater proportion of neutral feelings towards break duty than staff at Brownlow infants. While it seems likely that the higher number of negative opinions at Brownlow stems from the perceptions of most staff regarding pupils' low level disruptive behaviour it is uncertain as to why so many staff there hold favourable opinions of breaktime

supervision. This is all the more surprising given the impact that performing this task seems to have on those concerned. It appears likely that opinions vary according to the disposition of the person involved rather than as a result of any prevailing circumstances within individual schools.

Table 7.7 Comparisons of various characteristics of playtimes in the nine schools directly studied

School	Has an afternoon break	Number of staff on duty	Number of duties per week	Staff have an alternative break when on duty	Categories of staff who do playground duty
Brownlow infant	No	3	1	briefly	T,NN,TA
Brownlow junior	Yes	3	2 (+after school)	No	T,TA
Hallside infant	Yes	3	1	Yes	T,NN,TA
Hallside junior	No	3	1(ish)	Yes	T,TA
Gatward primary	No	2 recept. 3 inf/jun	1	No	T,TA
Woodberry primary	Inf. Yes Jun. No	2 inf. 2 jun.	1	Yes for infant staff	T,NN,TA, Welfare Assistant
Oatlands primary	Yes	2 per playground	1	Yes	T,NN,TA
St. Mark's CE primary	Yes	1 per playtime	2	No	T,NN,TA Deputy
Wells Green primary	Yes	At least 3	2	Yes	T,NN,TA,

Note: T = Teachers, NN = Nursery nurses, TA = Teaching assistants (i.e. classroom or learning support assistants)

Table 7.8 Views of the 24 staff (12 infant and 12 junior) in the six sample schools regarding playground duty

<u>School</u>	<u>Opinion held</u>		
	Like duty	Resigned to duty	Dislike duty
Hallside infant	1	2	1
Hallside junior	1	2	1
Gatward primary	0	3	1
Woodberry primary	0	4	0
Oatlands primary	0	4	0
St. Mark's CE primary	1	1	2
Totals	<u>3</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>5</u>

Naturally, it could also be argued that staff in the six focus schools have formed their evaluations about undertaking break duty (and of course about all other aspects of playtime) in schools where practice may be judged to be above average. This fact alone, therefore, might account for the trend of few overtly unfavourable evaluations of playground duty. Curiously, however, those staff holding positive opinions and those indicating negative views are largely based in the same schools as Table 7.8 shows (Gatward being the exception). Again, this tends to lead to the notion that it could be the disposition of the individual concerned rather than the influence of a particular school's practice that is responsible for the attitudes which are formed. This

might suggest that whatever potential improvements to breaktime practice schools initiate, even if easing the burden on duty staff, those involved who hold negative views of playground surveillance will continue to retain those opinions.

More crucially, it was found that the majority of those interviewed (20 out of 24, 83.3 per cent) consider playground duty is a task which has repercussions on the rest of the individual's day. The reasons for this follow a similar pattern to those uncovered at Brownlow infants. For instance, two teachers at Hallside infant school noted a lack of opportunity 'to get things done in the classroom' (Year 2 teacher). This was coupled with the feelings of tiredness, which playtime supervision inevitably brought. Moreover, three teachers at Hallside junior school made an assessment that, 'There's more of a rush for the next lesson' (Year 4 teacher). Three teachers at Gatward also expressed opinions revolving around the notion that, 'Setting up the next lesson is difficult' (Year 4 teacher). Additionally, a Year 2 Gatward teacher felt there were extra time demands at the end of break when it became necessary to 'sort things out fairly' with those pupils who had complained about the misdeeds of others because children 'need to see justice done.' All four staff at Woodberry echoed the view that break supervision made preparation for the next lesson more difficult. A Year 5 teacher was especially forthcoming on the impact of break duty:

'Yes – big time. You don't get a break. When it's your turn for duty you also have to get them [pupils] in first thing in the morning and again at lunchtime. It's 8.50 to 12.15 with no break. There's no tea in the classroom and I certainly wouldn't want it in the playground. You've also got no time for photocopying etc.'

At Oatlands, too, all four interviewees were unanimous in their assertion that duty left its legacy. For example, a reception teacher alleged, 'I haven't got time to sort out my next activity.' Furthermore, it was stated that, 'It makes you tired because you've got no real break.' Oatlands staff do have a short break following duty but this presents its own problems. A Year 3 support teacher claimed, 'If someone's expecting me for a child I'm usually late.' All

four staff interviewed at St. Mark's experienced some side effects from completing playground supervision. Once more, these centred around an unpreparedness for the following lesson. A part-time support teacher in the junior department declared, 'Sometimes it's inconvenient when I'm trying to set up resources. Also, I can't talk to the children at the end of the lesson before play.'

In spite of these remarks, four of the twenty-four staff consulted considered there were no repercussions from break duty. This was plainly a minority view, although it is deserving of closer examination. Two of these staff were based at Hallside infant school. What is particularly significant is that both were non-teaching staff who appeared to have fewer demands made upon their time than did teachers (teachers, for example, having the additional task of overseeing the work of other staff). The learning support assistant, for instance, alleged there was absolutely 'no impact' at all in carrying out play area supervision. However, the classroom assistant was a little less adamant and felt there was 'not really' any impact on her day. Even so, she did acknowledge that when she (or her class teacher) was on duty she was prevented from discussing items for the succeeding lesson.

A reception teacher at Gatward also claimed playground duty did not exert any influence because 'we have full-time classroom assistants who can do things for us at playtimes.' It will be recalled, however, that there is a separate play area adjacent to the reception classrooms at Gatward and all reception staff complete their duties in this location. Therefore it would be relatively easy for those duty staff outside to consult with staff inside the classroom and to issue any requests/instructions while still supervising pupils. Somewhat intriguingly, a Year 5 teacher at Hallside junior school contended break duty had no adverse effect on her day and she firmly insisted, 'No - nothing.' Upon further reflection she suggested there were positive consequences from monitoring the play area. It was stated that being outside allowed her to talk informally with pupils about their out-of-school activities. This, it was reasoned, enabled her 'to bond' more easily with her class. This represents a uniquely interesting point of view as it was not one repeated by others. Time

constraints did not allow this aspect of staff/pupil relationships to be followed up but it is certainly a notion worthy of further consideration.

Hallside infant school

There was a consensus from the four interviewees that, in keeping with the headteacher's assessment, morning and afternoon breaktimes were 'quite good' (Learning support assistant). In addition, all participants agreed playtimes were very necessary for the children. The principal reason for this (mirrored at other schools) was to allow children the benefit of some fresh air and exercise. As previously noted, supervising staff here appeared to have fewer interactions with the children than at Brownlow. The role also seemed to be less that of an arbitrator in disputes and children appeared to show greater independence, although more research would be required. While one Year 2 teacher had been responsible for teaching traditional playground games (such as 'What's the time Mr. Wolf?'), and it was also firmly stated that adults needed to be involved in initiating these activities, no staff were observed participating in children's playtime pursuits.

The Hallside staff made few suggestions about further improvements to breaktimes. The most likely reason for this is that practice had already been developed and it was now judged to be commendable (see below). The playground provided variety and interest and children made full use of all that was on offer. All the same, one teacher (Year 2) argued that 'more constructive play would be better' and felt this should be 'reinforced at circle time'. As earlier stated, circle time is popular throughout the borough (82.6 per cent of schools) and is well-supported by a number of commentators (Mosley, 1993; Rigby, 1997). The three remaining interviewees were of the opinion that there was little scope for enhancement. These judgements were summarised by a reception teacher who concluded that, 'The way it's done here is as good as it's going to get'. It was also claimed that, 'They [pupils] get two playtimes [morning and afternoon] which they need.' Nevertheless, an afterthought came in the form of, 'but fields and green space would be nice.'

Hallside junior school

Staff spoken to were unanimous in their assertions that playtimes were a 'very necessary' part of school life (Year 6 teacher). Staff on duty patrol the play space and have few interactions with pupils. Potential improvements to current practice were deemed to be limited. The Year 4 teacher reasoned, 'I can't think of anything I'd like to change'. The three remaining staff proposed a brief selection of potential changes. For instance, the Year 3 teacher revealed, 'I'd like to see the children learn new games.' Once more a feeling here that children's play could be developed (Stafford and Stafford, 1995). The Year 6 teacher maintained 'football is dominating the central area here' and she suggested it needed to be restricted. While this is not an uncommon argument (Mosley, 1993) it is noted that this particular teacher had only recently joined the Hallside staff. Previously she had taught at Oatlands where football was banned. The Year 5 teacher made the noteworthy comment that she was very concerned about being alone in the playground and that two staff should be in each location 'for safety reasons' (three duty staff each patrol one play area). It is not known whether she felt unduly vulnerable or whether this was a more general concern among staff.

Gatward primary school

Supervising staff again police the play area. All those spoken to were adamant that playtimes were 'very necessary' (Year 2 teacher) but the Year 4 teacher claimed that, 'It's better when it's structured.' His view was that children should be playing games because 'it stops the seats being used for standing on.' As already discussed, it was quite common to see junior pupils walking over seats in the (supposedly) quiet region. It would certainly look as though some legitimate climbing apparatus would help to alleviate this problem. An interesting observation came from a Year 2 teacher with reference to the rapidly expanding school. It was concluded that, 'We'll probably have to stagger playtimes' due to an eventual lack of playground space. It was acknowledged, however, that this would cause problems with noise because the classrooms on one side of the building are adjacent to the

playground. This might well be a problem that other schools with two-tier playtimes experience but, again, it is not an issue that was explored. The Year 4 teacher additionally concluded that the school needed more loose equipment and further argued that there was a requirement for ‘a bit more shade and shelter so they [pupils] could go out if it’s raining.’ Gatward, it will be recalled, has a large play space which is mostly exposed to the weather so this is a particularly salient remark.

Woodberry primary school

Although none of the interviewees made any disparaging remarks regarding practice at the school, no staff member (other than the headteacher) made any suggestions that Woodberry displayed exceptionally good breaktime practice. Furthermore, all four informants had ideas for possible improvements. The Year 5 teacher considered ‘playground games’ were required. The Year 3 teacher felt ‘more markings in the playground’ were needed, together with ‘a large protected quiet area’ (it will be remembered that surface markings were scant and the junior pupils had no substantial designated seating area). The Year 2 teacher reasoned, ‘More apparatus and climbing frames would be useful’ (pupils again tended to climb illicitly in the infant seating region). The Year 1 teacher argued for ‘infant peer monitors like they have in the juniors’. While this seems a worthy notion it may not prove to be practical given the relatively young age of these pupils (i.e. infant children would be more likely to experience difficulty with the concept of peer mediation, which is what this teacher was advocating). Significantly, the Year 5 teacher maintained there should be ‘an outdoor area with a roof so that even if it’s pouring we could bring them [pupils] out.’ (A point made elsewhere.)

Woodberry is the only known school where a welfare assistant completes a daily playground duty (as opposed to the more customary procedure of remaining inside to attend to medical needs). When questioned, the welfare assistant concluded that, ‘It’s a better idea for me to come out because I have more contact with the children as they’re playing’. It was suggested that this had a number of very positive advantages such as being ‘“hands-on” if there’s

an accident.’ This member of staff also maintained that she enjoyed being outside. (It must be emphasised, however, that she was extremely enthusiastic about *all* aspects of her work and was conscientious in the manner in which she carried out her role in general.) Such practice also resulted in other staff performing fewer playground duties. This benefit did not go unnoticed by those concerned.

Oatlands primary school

At Oatlands, staff were of one voice that playtimes were ‘absolutely essential’ (Reception teacher). Unusually, mention was made that, ‘Teachers need a break too’ (Year 3 support teacher). This was not an issue much alluded to by participants in the current study as, overwhelmingly, breaktime was evaluated from the child’s perspective (i.e. the need for exercise and so on). The supervisory role involved the familiar patrolling of the play space. When questioned about possible improvements to playtimes one teacher could think of none. On the other hand, the Year 2 teacher wanted ‘more games’ as well as changes to the organisation of the afternoon breaktime so that all infant pupils could be outside together instead of in two separate (but consecutive) sessions. In this way there would be fewer afternoon playground duties to be completed by the infant staff. Inevitably, however, this would lead to less play space for the children (one of the main reasons for split playtimes). The remaining two interviewees simply accepted that the school was already ‘in the process of improving the playground’ (nursery nurse) and felt there was no need to comment further.

St. Mark’s C of E primary school

At St. Mark’s, three interviewees argued playtimes were ‘a necessary part of the school day because children need to get out of the classroom’ (Year 1 teacher). A fourth teacher considered that the St. Mark’s playtimes were ‘well organised’ (Senco). Supervising the playground mainly involved patrolling and policing. Adult initiated interactions were observed to be minimal. In general, staff communicated a feeling that playtimes were reasonably good. The changes which had already been completed were mentioned and these had

brought with them any desired improvements. The newly constructed quiet region was seen as a particularly valuable asset. However, it was suggested that 'it would be nice to have an under cover area where they [pupils] could get out of the rain' (Year 1 teacher). Of course, this is a recurring theme.

The opportunity presented itself for an additional brief consultation with a relief teacher who had a temporary contract at St. Mark's. His comments are especially noteworthy, partly because they reveal an 'outsider's' perspective of playtimes at the school, and partly because they provide comparisons with other schools with which he was familiar. St. Mark's breaktimes were summarised as, 'It's not a lot of hassle here ... it's good – well-managed.' In addition, his attitude towards playground duty at St. Mark's comprised: 'Well, it's only two mornings – that's great. I've worked in places where it's two days [i.e. four sessions each week].' As this investigation shows, four duties a week is something of a rarity.

What was of particular note, however, was this teacher's opinion that at St. Mark's, 'There's a lot of inconsistency in supervising the playground – in what they [pupils] can do. For example, I was told no running in the quiet area and so I stop them. I don't think all staff do that.' This insightful comment on lack of consistency in playground supervision (which can probably be applied to most schools) was not one raised elsewhere. This is very surprising given that a lack of consistency in approach even with written guidelines might be considered to be a major issue. Clearly, there can be problems of inconsistency between the breaktime and lunchtime sessions and also a lack of uniformity (as revealed above) between individual staff members themselves. In turn, this might lead to difficulties with having very clear boundaries and expectations for pupil's behaviour.

Wells Green primary school

Crucially, the observation of playtime at Wells Green showed adult/child interactions of an entirely different nature from those seen elsewhere. Staff

tended to remain in certain areas of the play space as distinct from patrolling (although, as previously noted, it is written policy that one member of staff must maintain 'overall vision of the children'). Each of the supervising staff (there were three) was actively involved in the children's playground games (Figure 4.18a). The supervisory role had thus become closer to that of play leader than policeperson.

Newly and recently qualified teachers

At all schools (where relevant) newly and recently qualified teachers were questioned about their first encounters with break duty (a total of eight teachers). All were found to have experienced difficulties with their initial playground experiences (Taylor, TES, 2000). No teacher had received specific instruction on playtime supervision. This is unsurprising given that Higher Education Institutions, and accredited training establishments and organisations, have numerous curriculum demands in respect of Initial Teacher Training programmes. Nevertheless, there was a distinct feeling that the interviewees would have found this beneficial.

At Hallside junior school one NQT (newly qualified teacher) explained that she had had the opportunity to shadow a class teacher whilst on school experience (as had most) but she felt this to be insufficient preparation for the realities of the task. The Gatward NQT concluded, 'I think we could have been told how to deal with things' because, 'It's a big responsibility.' There were general conclusions within this group that novice teachers already had a great number of new responsibilities to cope with and break duty was an added burden. One NQT who had subsequently arrived at Brownlow infant school and was just a few weeks into her first term spoke at length.

In a series of thought-provoking statements she claimed that she was 'unprepared' for playground supervision. There was a questioning of her exact role when she inquired, 'Am I supposed to go charging about?' adding,

'I would like some guidance on dealing with problems.' This interviewee appeared to be completely overwhelmed by the situation. She demanded, 'Am I meant to be proactive or should I wait for them [pupils] to come to me? Should I be circulating? Should I be standing at one point? I am besieged by children with complaints.' This in many ways reflects the perceptions of other Brownlow staff who see the playground in terms of the problems it brings. She concluded that, 'It's quite stressful – so many children running around. So many incidents – I feel rather helpless. I don't think children are behaving better because there's a teacher there ... I'm not sure if I'm giving them what they want.' These remarks are probably linked to the staffs' general assertions that children make a string of low level demands and complaints.

Discussion

Schools within the LEA vary greatly both in size and in the environmental facilities available. It is obviously only to be expected that there will be variations in the number of staff required to monitor breaktimes. Some schools may have large numbers of pupils in over-crowded areas. Naturally, this presents a far greater challenge where outside supervision is concerned. Pupils' safety remains paramount but it is left to individual schools to assess how many staff are required to supervise in order to ensure children's safekeeping. The evidence suggests this can be a single member of staff in the smallest schools to as many as four, or more, in others. Plainly, this in turn impacts upon the number of duties each week a member of staff must complete, which then has significant consequences for those involved.

What is of particular interest is the idea portrayed in a few schools that certain categories of staff should perform a higher number of playground supervisions than their colleagues. At Brownlow juniors, for instance, teachers undertake more weekly break duties than non-teaching staff. Elsewhere schools adopt the reverse position and expect non-teaching staff to carry out the greater number of supervisions (Table 7.2). At face value this appears to represent an

unfair demand on those concerned. It does lead to a consideration of the reasoning that underpins this discrimination. For example, it could be judged by these schools that non-teaching staff have a less exacting role generally and are therefore better equipped to spend time monitoring the playground. Ryall and Goddard (2003, p.75) make the further salient point that, 'As teachers find themselves less able to attend to pupils' personal concerns, the role and value of those interested adults [support staff] walking about the playground may provide a vital link in the pastoral care of the pupils'.

It is clear that playground duty has become a shared responsibility in the twenty-first century (previously, of course, only teachers were available to undertake break supervision). An escalation in the number of NTS in primary schools leads to a greater variety of adults who now perform this role. This is also likely to be one explanation for an increase in the number of adults who supervise each play area (no longer the lone teacher roaming the playground as in past decades). Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that perceptions of pupils' poor behaviour, coupled with safety/security concerns, will exert their own influence with regard to more stringent supervision and thus greater numbers of duty personnel.

As Table 7.3 shows, headteachers are not usually involved in break duty and deputies rarely so. What must be taken into account is that heads and deputies have a significant role to play in midday supervision (at least potentially). It might therefore be judged as being wholly unjustified to expect these senior staff to have the added burden of break supervision. In spite of this, it is equally necessary to bear in mind that other staff are frequently involved in some form of lunchtime activity in addition to carrying out morning (or afternoon) break duty (Table 7.12). Furthermore, small schools can easily place senior staff in a particularly difficult position. St. Mark's comes readily to mind in this context. The deputy headteacher not only has the demanding responsibilities of any class teacher but also completes both breaktime and lunchtime supervision. This is a heavy obligation.

Regrettably, it is only in a minority of schools that duty staff are allowed an alternative break. In the majority of schools within the LEA (almost 61 per cent) staff are not so fortunate and thus have no respite from the demands of pupils. As can easily be determined, this may well be a factor contributing to the substantial impact that playground supervision has on the individuals concerned. Even so, it still remains the case that those consulted hold a mixture of both negative and positive opinions about playtime duty. The key issue to keep in mind is that staff see playtimes as being very necessary. The overwhelming feeling among the interviewees is that break is essential. This takes precedence over any problems it may bring.

Whatever the difficulties associated with breaktime, staff in the six sample schools largely regard playtime as being well managed in their own institution (and pupils and parents are generally satisfied). This provides an endorsement of the headteachers' own evaluations in most cases. Whether this leads staff to develop more favourable opinions towards playground duty remains debatable. What is certain is that, in contrast to judgements in some contemporary accounts (Evans, 1994), staff questioned do not display a universal dislike of break supervision. On the contrary, some of those consulted hold favourable attitudes towards this task and may even see benefits in terms of enhanced relationships with pupils. This contributes to the idea that the removal of the afternoon break (thereby reducing the opportunity for staff to interact informally with pupils) might be having a detrimental influence on staff/pupil bonding.

Patently, not all interviewees see supervision in a favourable light. One of the more interesting revelations is that so many staff are simply resigned to the task regardless of considerations of personal cost or benefit. In this respect there is acceptance that break duty just comes with the job and must therefore be tolerated. In a very real sense 'duty' then becomes an apt description for this chore. All the same, some staff do see playground surveillance as one of the least attractive aspects of their role. A few informants communicated a very intense dislike of policing the play space but this was certainly not the sentiment of most.

Whatever the attitudes of staff, it is abundantly clear that duty has a substantial impact on individuals and hence on the smooth running of the school. Negative outcomes were wide ranging on both professional and personal levels. One major theme of huge significance was the resulting 'unpreparedness' for the succeeding lesson. This is a particular concern for class teachers for it is they who have the ultimate responsibility for pupils' learning. Sadly, little is said in the literature about the need for staff to have a break. Indeed, this seems to be a matter of secondary importance (Titman, 1992). However, Haigh (TES, 2004) takes the view that schools should ensure that 'people who can't come to the staffroom (those on duty for example) are always – but always – served with drinks.' Unfortunately, this is not happening in all schools.

Moreover, duty is associated with both stress and tiredness. According to Troman (2003, p.169) stress is a 'particular concern in the teaching profession'. Jepson and Forrest (2006, p.193) submit that, 'There is a clear need to establish environmental and intrinsic job factors so that interventions can be made to make the working environment and the profession as stress-free as possible'. Non-teaching staff (especially teaching assistants) seem to be less affected than teaching staff by any stress due to break duty. This is true at both Brownlow infants and also at the six sample schools where four of the 24 interviewees were NTS. Of these four, three stated break duty had no influence on them either personally or professionally. Nevertheless, as far as most staff are concerned there is cause for disquiet about playground supervision, especially as this is at least a weekly task and in some cases is carried out with far greater frequency. Of course, this leads to the view that the removal of afternoon break serves to lessen this burden, thus serving to make this a more positive change.

There are grounds for believing that newly qualified teachers are in an especially vulnerable position. All those consulted noted the lack of specific training for the playground role. The interviewees highlighted an absence of any initial understanding of how they might be expected to perform. Given

that the numerous problems encountered by more experienced colleagues are added to these difficulties it can be appreciated that new teachers are singularly susceptible to the pressures of break duty. Evans (1994, p.39) argues that there is a necessity to 'step up efforts to have play and playground responsibilities included as part of the course of study in all pre-service teacher education programmes.' While this is an attractive idea, it is vital to keep in mind that there are many demands already placed on Initial Teacher Training courses and therefore this might prove to be problematic.

In summary, it is noticeable that the role of the adult is largely one of policing the play space. Interactions are frequently concerned with trouble shooting, although this varies in degree between organisations and may well be linked with the culture, ethos and institutional bias of each school. At Wells Green, however, new methods have led to staff becoming directly involved in children's outdoor breaktime play at all times. The Wells Green staff intervene in, direct and structure pupils' breaktime activities. Opinions on the efficacy of such a strategy are polarised (Sluckin, 1987; O'Donnell, 1995; Sheridan, 1999; Tassoni and Hucker, 2000; Thomson, 2003).

Lunchtime supervision

As Docking (1996) points out, teachers are not contractually required to provide any form of supervision at lunchtime. Despite this, the current study reveals that many teachers show a willingness to oversee activities during the midday session. Even so, the lunchbreak is now widely supervised by ancillary staff. In itself, this frequently gives rise to difficulties. As noted, Blatchford (1998) contends that one factor contributing to teacher's poor perceptions of breaktimes is the quality of supervision provided at midday. Lunchtime supervision, however, is acknowledged to be a demanding job (Rose, TES, 1999, 2000) although it is claimed that, because of the inconvenient working hours, 'Good candidates are unlikely to be attracted' (Blatchford, 1989, p.70). It is additionally alleged that supervisory assistants 'have low expectations of receiving induction, feedback and training' (ibid).

In total, this leads to a less than desirable image of midday practice. Mosley (1993, p.21) further suggests there is a need to ascertain whether these support staff are 'generally happy with their roles'.

Across the LEA

Headteachers across the LEA largely report having sufficient numbers of midday supervisors, with 32 out of 46 (69.9 per cent) feeling a least reasonably satisfied (Table 7.10). However, the questionnaires did not explore this issue further by seeking information about the ratio of supervisory assistants to classes within the school. It is possible that some headteachers judge numbers to be adequate while others with comparable ratios do not. Additionally, supervisory assistants in some schools may well possess better coping strategies, thereby creating a more favourable impression, which in turn leads headteachers to assess numbers as being acceptable. Naturally, it would be expected that those schools indicating there are insufficient numbers of midday staff would be more likely to experience difficulties in the provision of satisfactory supervision (Blatchford, 1989). Table 7.9 gives questionnaire responses regarding the quality of lunchtime practice. The Brownlow infant headteacher additionally gave a verbal evaluation of 'good' practice for the midday session. Once again, there were no particular common features relating specifically to those schools identifying good practice (when compared with those identifying satisfactory or less than satisfactory practice).

**Table 7.9 Headteachers' assessments of lunchtime practice
in the 46 schools**

<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>An area for some improvement</u>	<u>Total</u>
10	23	13	46

Table 7.10 Headteachers' assessments of adequate numbers of midday supervisors in the 46 schools

<u>Do schools have sufficient numbers of SAs?</u>					
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Just!</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>No response</u>	<u>Total</u>
30	12	2	1	1	46

Note: The Wells Green headteacher gave a 'not applicable' response because the school has no supervisory assistants.

The questionnaires also probed for information regarding supervisory assistants' training (Table 7.11). It seems midday supervisors within the LEA generally have the advantage of experiencing training sessions (only three schools report no training for SAs). Furthermore, in the majority of schools either all (29 schools) or most (11 schools) supervisors have received some form of instruction. This suggests that, in line with recommendations in contemporary accounts, SAs are beginning to be recognised as having the same entitlement to staff development as other staff within the organisation (Whitaker, 1998; Rose, TES, 1999; Ryall and Goddard, 2003).

It appears, however, that training is largely in-house (39 out of 46 schools, 84.8 per cent); that is to say senior staff offer supervisors instruction and guidance. Occasionally there is training from an external consultant (25 out of 46 schools, 54.3 per cent). In addition, in a small number of schools (12, 26 per cent) the supervisors have attended external training sessions. Taken as a whole, therefore, the borough seems to have a good record for developing these ancillary staff. The LEA supplies a job description for midday supervisors and this can be found in Appendix 21 (including items such as 'control behaviour' and keeping 'children occupied when they have to stay indoors'), with further guidance shown in Appendix 22 ('be friendly' and having 'the same authority as a teacher' is noted) and the senior supervisory assistant's duties provided in Appendix 23 (where teamwork is mentioned

together with responsibilities for induction and development of other supervisors).

Information was sought regarding other staff who were involved in lunchtime activities. Table 7.12 reveals that in a substantial number of schools (26 out of 46, 56.5 per cent) staff make a contribution. Where the schools visited had staff involved in some form of lunchtime supervision (for example, in the provision of extra-curricular activities) the issues have already been discussed earlier. It is therefore sufficient to acknowledge at this juncture that many staff have taken on extra responsibilities during the midday session. Much of this additional workload is carried out on a purely voluntary basis. This is true of both teaching (for example, at Brownlow infants) and non-teaching staff (for instance, at Woodberry). Nevertheless, schools are currently employing extra support staff on the basis of providing additional supervision for lunchtime activities.

Table 7.11 Supervisory assistants' training

<u>Have SAs received training sessions?</u>						
	Yes	No	N.A.	Total		
Number of schools	42	3	1	46		
<u>How many SAs have received training?</u>						
	All	Majority	Minority	N.A.	N.R.	Total
Number of schools	29	11	1	1	4	46
<u>Types of training provided for SAs</u>						
	In-house	External visitor	External	Other (advisor)		
Number of schools	39	25	12	1		

Note: In some schools SAs had been provided with a variety of training

Table 7.12 Number of schools where staff are involved in midday supervision/activities

Are staff (other than heads/deputies) involved in lunchtime supervision or activities?		
Yes	No	Total
26	20	46

Brownlow infant school

All ten supervisory assistants (both full- and part-time) were interviewed at Brownlow infant school. Given a fairly extensive literature on the increasingly complex role of midday supervisors (Mosley, 1993; Blatchford, 1996; Rose, TES, 2000; Ryall and Goddard, 2003), coupled with the need for training and possible career development, a series of questions was devised to elicit information on various aspects of the job. Firstly, an attempt was made to ascertain why the informants had chosen to become midday supervisors. However, when posing this question it was readily accepted that, ‘Personal accounts about occupational choice involve people accounting for their decisions retrospectively’ (Watson, 1996, p.260) and it is possible that informants may have forgotten the prevailing influences on their original judgements. Furthermore, actually carrying out the role might have biased the interviewee’s perceptions with regard to their initial decisions.

The SAs gave a spectrum of personal reasons for taking the post. Four informants had already been helping in the school on a voluntary basis. For them, becoming a supervisory assistant was a natural next step. In some cases, teaching staff had been instrumental in encouraging an interviewee to apply for the job when a vacancy arose. Only one supervisor had no prior connection with the school (i.e. no children or grandchildren had attended Brownlow). Two interviewees mentioned financial considerations, thus a

need to earn some extra money was the motivating factor. Significantly, the social aspect (i.e. the opportunity for making friends) was highlighted by some SAs. For three informants not having to work during the school holidays was a relevant factor. The convenience of being at home with their own children and not having to find child care was therefore influential.

The post itself undeniably entails working very awkward hours (Blatchford, 1989). When questioned on this issue interviewees gave a selection of responses. For some SAs the hours did not present a problem. At the time of the interviews two supervisors had additional roles in the school (one as a classroom assistant and another as the acting welfare assistant) and so midday supervision slotted into the overall pattern of the working day. One supervisor found the job merged well with her other part-time employment. A fourth SA felt that the job hours blended in well with her domestic chores. On the other hand, two SAs found difficulty with the working hours as these impacted upon the rest of the day's activities and both expressed irritation at having to keep track of passing time.

When the midday supervisors were asked about both their current employment and any desire for career development there followed a selection of noteworthy perceptions about their role. For example, the senior SA remarked, 'I don't think of myself as *just* a dinner lady. Although we are dinner ladies we are actually staff.' One supervisor (3.5 years service) acknowledged that, 'Sometimes I wish I could help in the classrooms but I would not like to go back to college to get a qualification or anything like that.' One SA (1 year) argued that, 'It's everyone's sort of job if you've got children'. Again, this highlights the convenience of working only during term time. One SA (2 years) admitted that, 'It can be stressful. You have to make accurate judgements on the children – resolving disputes. I worry about it. It's a learning process with us every year – making decisions is not easy.'

This latter comment shows a clear identification of the many problems that accompany the work. Generally, the group felt any training and career structure would be useful. Intriguingly, it was judged that any step up the

career ladder would automatically lead to becoming a classroom assistant (i.e. this was seen as a normal progression from the role of midday supervisor). While further training was viewed as a link to career advancement it was also valued as a way of developing an understanding of the children's needs in order to more effectively carry out the current job.

In addition, the supervisory assistants were consulted about previous training sessions, which they had received via an external consultant (discussed earlier). Four SAs had been employed since this training had taken place and one further supervisor had just started the job at that time. The remaining five supervisors gave a mixture of responses as to the usefulness of these sessions. Some interviewees found such training helpful while others patently did not. One SA (2 years) concluded, 'I think it's excellent. For me - I took something from it.' However, another SA (2 years) maintained, 'Some things helped and some things didn't.' A third supervisor (3.5 years) stated, 'I was not keen. It wasn't as if she'd [the trainer] done the job. She needed to be out there and be involved in the problems not tell you about the problems.' Interestingly, the senior supervisor (4 years) acknowledged there had been many difficulties with the training sessions. These had involved the group as a whole because 'everyone wanted to talk at once.' This had resulted in her overall dissatisfaction with the meetings. (It will be recalled that the trainer had observed problems within the group.) It might well be, however, that this newly reformed group of supervisors would be better disposed towards further training opportunities, perhaps with a different consultant.

A substantial number of changes had already been made to lunchtime practice at the time of the supervisory assistant interviews (as previously discussed). The midday supervisors were questioned about the desirability of these innovations (the introduction of indoor activities and the increases in outdoor loose equipment). There was a general consensus among those who had been employed prior to these developments that the situation was now greatly improved. Those supervisors who had joined the team since these changes occurred were, nonetheless, very appreciative of the wide variety of provision available to the children. This, they felt, led to desirable behaviour.

Furthermore, it was concluded that there was now a far greater commitment to the needs of the pupils. One SA (2 years) explained that, 'It's much better now. We're more involved with the children – we play with them more ... The new SAs have more modern ideas and I think that helps.'

The importance of teamwork was an issue which emerged during the interviews. Seven of the ten supervisory assistants mentioned the relevance of working as a team and they appeared to display 'a sense of collective responsibility for their work' (Campbell and Southworth, 1992, p.68). One supervisor (2 years) declared, 'I think we're all really happy and we get on well as a team'. All supervisors were clear about their individual roles and how they should perform. 'We work as a team ... I'm happy here – it's a nice team' (SA 1 year). Teamwork is seen as vital in the workplace and McCallion (1998, p.119) argues that 'a team performance will give more scope for genuine improvement' although Vogt (2003, p.247) claims that it is difficult 'to determine what makes a really good team'. It is admitted though that not everyone is a good team player 'and unless encouraged and trained to work in that way they are unlikely to change' (McCallion, *ibid*). What came across strongly was an appreciation of the leader's role in orchestrating the team. One SA (2 years) explained, 'One improvement – due to [the senior SA] – we have a rota so we change what we're doing each week. It makes us all flexible.' Of course, this can also be seen as one form of staff development as it extends the skills of individual team members.

Five of the supervisors mentioned the senior SA (in post for six months at the time of the interviews). All references were highly supportive of the way in which she was performing her very exacting role. The job description for the senior supervisor (Appendix 23) does determine that it is part of the role to ensure that the supervisory team is working well together. Another issue revolves around responsibility for staff induction. Both aspects came to the fore during the course of the interviews. A second SA (2 years) made the following comments, which were representative of the group, '[The senior SA] has brought in some good ideas. She is making a very good team and she is very enthusiastic'.

One important aspect of the senior supervisor's role was referred to by another SA (2 terms) who stated, '[The senior SA] explains things very well and she takes time to explain again the next day.' This approach is, in part, attributable to the difficulties the senior SA had herself experienced when she had first started at the school. She was keen that her own experiences should not be repeated and disclosed, 'When I first came here I wasn't actually told things – I had to keep asking ... I was left to figure it all out for myself. You don't know whether it's right or wrong ... I put the new SAs with an experienced person and gradually explain bits and add bits on – you can't take it all in at once.' This is therefore likely to increase the efficiency of the team. Anderson (2003, p.21) claims that if an appropriate understanding is not available then 'adequate performance is not possible'.

On one occasion the senior midday supervisor was 'shadowed' from her arrival at the school (11.50) through to her departure at 1.35. This exercise produced some particularly instructive material. The overall impression was one of intense activity. Initially, the role consisted of briefing the supervisory team on their respective duties for the day, quickly followed by escorting and supervising children to, within and from the dining hall. The session culminated in the supervision of pupils at play inside and outside the building. Throughout this period of time it was necessary for her to continually check the work of the team, issue further instructions as task demands required and to organise, admonish, assist and comfort individual children as needs arose. Coupled with this there were numerous liaisons with other staff (the administrative assistant, head, deputy and kitchen staff). In short, the role was found to be one of profound complexity. The senior SA was able to multi-task with supreme skillfulness.

One especially noticeable characteristic of the supervisory team was a well-developed sense of humour. One SA (2 years) confirmed that, 'There's lots of jokes going on.' Humour thus provided a fun element to a very demanding job. It was manifest in numerous good natured practical jokes and witty exchanges. This was distinctly useful whenever situations became fraught or

stressful. Collinson (1996) claims jesting is a significant feature of the workplace. It is argued that 'humour tends to remain within and seeks to define the collective culture of the group' (Collinson, *op cit*, p.290). It may very well be that humour is one vital element contributing to the outstanding performance of this team (Whitaker, 1998), together with good interpersonal relationships.

In addition to their interactions with each other the midday supervisors were observed during their interchanges with pupils. Overall, adult/child exchanges at lunchtime were of a different character from those witnessed during morning break. While a similar pattern of low level complaining was still present this seemed far less common. One major difference was an obvious increase in the number of adult initiated interactions. This was, of course, partly due to supervisors issuing instructions relating to lunchtime procedures but many more conversations were linked either to the children's play activities or simply involved socialising with pupils. The interview data serve to highlight the supervisors' perceptions of their relationships with the children. Nine of the ten supervisory assistants mentioned the positive rapport they felt they had established with the pupils. Typical of these views was the opinion of one SA (3.5 years) who confirmed, 'I think we have quite a good relationship with the kids.' Another SA (2 years) remarked that, 'Because we all get on well together it's a happy atmosphere. It makes it a lot easier for the children.' This is a salient point and the observations appear to support this belief.

Some informants also gave their perceptions of other school staff. For example, the senior SA felt that, 'Some teachers undervalue supervisors' but then concluded that 'the majority are okay.' It is certainly true that the staff interviews contained a few negative comments concerning the midday supervisors and so there is some justification for this judgement. One teacher considered the SAs were not doing their jobs properly and one classroom assistant suggested the SAs were 'chatting' rather than tackling the job in hand. However, it should be stated that these are isolated comments and they were not substantiated by the observational evidence. In contrast to these

remarks, three staff were extremely appreciative of the midday supervisors' contributions to the school. In particular, references were made to the difficult role the SAs were required to fulfil. Unsurprisingly, there was further appreciation for the recently appointed senior supervisor.

The headteacher's assessment of lunchtimes ('good') mentioned earlier is no doubt attributable in no small part to the work of the supervisory team. Her general feeling was that they were a credit to the school and working practices were consequently evaluated as being excellent. Two of the supervisors spoke about their positive relationship with the headship team. One SA (3.5 years) declared that, 'Since [the head] took over it's improved so much – we're not treated as dinner ladies. If I've got a problem I could go to her. She values what we do.' This view was supported by a colleague (2 years at the school) who remarked, '[The head and deputy] are brilliant. They have good ideas. They're very approachable – listen to our ideas and opinions. It helps that we are appreciated by [the head and deputy]. It helps to make the job feel more enjoyable.' This is a very significant statement. Feeling personally valued is rated as a highly motivating factor and is possibly yet another reason for the outstanding level of performance of the supervisory team. According to Brighouse and Woods (1999, p.54), in any job there is a 'need to feel we are doing something worthwhile.' There was an impression that these supervisors certainly felt they were making a valuable difference and Ryall and Goddard (2003, p.73) maintain that 'Valuing staff as individuals ... can further enhance their contribution to the school'.

In contrast, the majority of midday supervisors considered they were viewed unfavourably by parents (six out of ten SAs, 60 per cent). Naturally, this reflects their own perception of how they judge parents see them in the role. As no one in the team had been a supervisor for more than four years (and most for considerably less time) it is possible that this assessment is also a reflection of their own attitudes prior to taking the job. On the other hand, it may merely represent a stereotypical perception of what they think parents' views are likely to be. Possibly it might reflect how parents normally discuss

the supervisors within the neighbourhood community and the SAs have become aware of this.

Whatever the reasoning behind this belief it is certainly true that the majority of parents felt it necessary to mention the supervisors during the course of the parental interviews (10 out of 18, 55 per cent). Of these parents, six made negative remarks. This lends some support to the supervisors' own perceptions. Adverse comments, however, ranged from the SAs' lack of involvement with the children and a suggestion that the SAs spent too much time 'chatting', to the notion that there were simply too few SAs to be able to do everything the job entailed. Of course, this gives rise to the idea that some of these remarks, in themselves, are representative of stereotypical views rather than opinions based on an assessment of the actual situation of which parents may, in reality, know very little.

In spite of their generally positive attitudes about current practice, the midday supervisors were also asked whether there were any further improvements to be made. Predictably, six SAs could think of no particular advancements. This was explained by one supervisor (2 years) as, 'I think it's right. I can't think how we can make it better'; but she did acknowledge, 'I don't think you can ever have a perfect situation.' Another supervisor (1 year) made the insightful remark that, 'There's always things you can look at to improve' but, 'personally, I'm happy with the way things are at the moment.' Of the remaining four SAs one suggested the gates to the main playground entrance could be improved for security reasons (new gates have now been installed) and another felt there should be a separate area for football. One SA mentioned problems with wet play (previously noted) and one supervisor (2 years) alluded to children's challenging behaviour. This SA felt additional adults were required and reasoned, 'We need a one-to-one with problem children.' As already noted, similar views were also expressed by the deputy headteacher (and it will be remembered that the primary headteacher quoted in regard to the questionnaire responses also expressed views relating to comparable difficulties).

Brownlow junior school

The headteacher evaluated lunchtime practice as being 'an area for some improvement' (in a similar vein to breaktime practice). It was also felt there were insufficient midday supervisors to adequately meet all needs (six for twelve classes). This was endorsed by the senior supervisory assistant who explained that the team's time was 'taken up with getting dinners and covering first aid. That leaves only one spare person to walk around the playground.' It will be recalled that some pupils also eat packed lunches in their classrooms. This procedure relies on the goodwill of teachers to voluntarily oversee the meal. Two teachers were questioned about this period of lunchtime supervision. Both were positive about the task. A newly qualified Year 6 teacher stated, 'I prefer it because it means they [pupils] are not late back from lunch'. A Year 5 teacher reasoned, 'Eating in the classroom is okay when I want to stay in myself – but only when it's convenient for me.' While these teachers were happy with this state of affairs it is recognised that such sentiments may not be representative of the feelings of other staff. As explained, there is a heavy reliance on teachers' willingness to supervise the proceedings and this could be problematic. While at other schools teachers sometimes choose to remain in their classrooms at lunchtime (as added support) this was not to oversee the eating of the midday meal.

The remaining schools

In the questionnaires the headteachers in the remaining seven schools gave the evaluations of lunchtime practice shown in Table 7.13. Additionally, Table 14 gives the headteachers' views in the six sample schools (no SAs at Wells Green) as to whether there is a sufficiency of midday supervisors.

Table 7.13 Headteachers' assessments of lunchtime practice at schools visited (other than Brownlow schools).

Lunchtime practice is:			
School	good	satisfactory	an area for some improvement
Hallside infant	✓		
Hallside junior	✓		
Gatward primary	✓		
Woodberry primary		✓	
Oatlands primary		✓	
St. Mark's CE primary	✓		
Wells Green primary	✓		

Table 7.14 Headteachers' opinions of adequate numbers of midday supervisors in the six sample schools

Adequate number of midday supervisors		
School	Yes	No
Hallside infant	✓	
Hallside junior	✓	
Gatward primary	✓	
Woodberry primary		✓
Oatlands primary		✓
St. Mark's CE primary	✓	

Supervisors in the remaining six schools in some ways followed a similar pattern for choice of occupation as those at Brownlow infants. For example, thirteen of the eighteen supervisors interviewed in these schools had had (or still had) their own children at the school where they were now working. Various reasons were given for starting the job. Nine stated that it was convenient while their children were young. Four supervisors had previously helped in the school and staff had recommended they apply for the post. Other explanations included the opportunity to make friends or simply being bored at home. Only one supervisor had taken the job primarily to earn extra money. It would seem, therefore, that financial reward is not generally a main motivating factor (as with the Brownlow infant supervisors). Given that monetary rewards are slim this is only to be expected although it may be that interviewees felt this to be too personal an issue to reveal.

In addition to the above, six supervisors stressed that they liked the idea of working with children (perhaps a socially desirable reason for doing the job). For instance, a supervisor at Hallside infants (5 years) revealed, 'I have three children. It's convenient for me. I like being with children.' Convenience also seems to be a more general reason for taking on the role. Even so, as previously noted, the actual hours worked are thought by some commentators to be very inconvenient (Blatchford, 1989). Interviewees were again questioned on this aspect. Just one SA felt it was a problem because, 'It breaks up the day' (Hallside infants, SA for three years). This is in line with opinions at Brownlow infants where only two SAs found the working hours difficult. It may be that the opportunity to socialise (discussed below) outweighs any feelings of inconvenience in respect of working hours.

Curiously, only ten of the eighteen interviewees acknowledged receiving any form of training. This is somewhat remarkable because the six headteachers concerned stated that all supervisors (apart from those recently appointed) had been involved in training sessions. The SAs' response therefore remains something of a mystery. It is possible these supervisors had been absent when training had taken place or it might be that the training sessions had not left any lasting impression. In spite of this, ten SAs were able to discuss their

training. Seven supervisors felt it was a positive experience. On the other hand, three SAs made adverse comments. Typical of the latter group was an assertion made by one supervisor at St. Mark's (15 years) who alleged, 'Nothing's exactly how they [trainers] say. You have to deal with it in your own way as best you can.' This links with the views of the Oatlands supervisor expressed below.

Those SAs who had found their training a more positive experience spoke in terms of 'useful' and 'quite helpful'. One supervisor at Gatward (6 years) felt that, 'It opened up areas. Sometimes supervisors get the impression they are way down on the list'. This statement highlights both the need for a forum to talk and also a perception that the perceived low status of supervisors makes them feel they are less valued and therefore not so likely to receive staff development (Rose, TES, 1999; 2000; Ryall and Goddard, 2003). As shown at Brownlow infants, feeling valued seems to be an essential ingredient for enhancing performance. In addition, the SAs were questioned about future training needs and also whether a career structure would be welcomed. Eight supervisors considered further training would be beneficial. Conversely, ten interviewees definitely did not want any form of extra tuition. One Oatlands SA (11 years) reasoned, 'Not really – you use your brain and you can deal with them [pupils].' This may relate to her years of experience within the job and feelings that she was already sufficiently competent.

Possibly it might be predicted that the more recently appointed supervisors would have a more favourable attitude towards training. Indeed, one Oatlands SA (two months) did conclude that, 'Training would be useful. It's the first time I'm doing this job' but she did not link training with any form of career development. In contrast to the Brownlow infant supervisors, where seven of the ten considered a career structure (probably leading to becoming a classroom assistant) would be a good idea, supervisors elsewhere were overwhelmingly opposed to this suggestion. Only one of the eighteen SAs said, 'Yes – I'd like to be a classroom assistant. I think they [pupils] respect you more than the dinner lady job' (SA Hallside junior school for six years). So again, a reflection of the low status of supervisors.

All interviewees personalised rather than generalised the career opportunity question. There were a variety of reasons (usually relating to age and personal aspirations) why the midday supervisors were not interested in the establishment of a career pathway. One SA at Hallside infant school (1 year) gave a typical response by declaring, 'No, not really. If I'd been young I would have gone on a course and been a classroom assistant.' It must be mentioned, however, that most of these interviewees had been midday supervisors for far longer than the Brownlow infant SAs. Eight of the eighteen supervisors had been working at their respective schools in excess of ten years (of these, two had more than twenty years service). This may have led some interviewees to feel that the time for career development was now past.

Midday supervisors in all schools gave the impression of having established good relationships with pupils. The midday supervisors' job description (Appendix 22) does recommend that the SAs 'be firm, but approachable' and the observations tend to endorse this statement. Despite a suggestion that children do not fully respect these ancillary staff (Ross and Ryan, 1990; Docking, 1996; Ryall and Goddard, 2003), in the main there was little evidence to confirm this from the direct observations completed at these schools. It is to the supervisors' credit that they approached the children calmly. Pupils were generally compliant, although it is accepted that an awareness of being observed may have influenced behaviour. In all schools the supervisory staff patrolled the play space and admonished any wrongdoers. Contrary to some opinions, there was seen to be no spare time for supervisors to stand 'chatting' in the playground. Generally, social groups of SAs formed immediately after the midday break, commonly just outside the school premises. This is likely to be an important feature of the job because socialising in the form of establishing friendships was cited by some SAs as the principal reason for wishing to become a supervisor. As explained, this is also one aspect which seems to enhance working relationships.

At most schools the midday staff arrived on site some five to ten minutes prior to the allocated lunchtime. Usually the supervisory team would then be briefed by the senior supervisor prior to the commencement of the meal break. Woodberry and St. Mark's were notable exceptions to this practice (discussed below). In most schools there was some informal socialising during this limited period. Following this, the supervisors dispersed to assume their positions in corridors, playgrounds and classrooms. In some schools supervisors organised the loose equipment. The midday staff were not directly involved in children's outside play activities (Wells Green CAs being the exception). One reason for this was the limited time available. All supervisors were fully occupied with other aspects of the job, although in some schools they were responsible for issuing and collecting equipment throughout the midday session, as at Hallside juniors.

Hallside infant school

At Hallside the midday supervisors work in their respective classrooms for one day each half term. The headteacher argued that this fosters a sense of inclusion. The SAs found it 'useful' because 'you get to know what's going on' (SA 5 years). This practice was unique among the study schools. It could increase the SAs' sense of feeling valued and probably strengthens relationships with other staff. While mainly positive about the ancillary team, the headteacher felt the senior supervisor 'lacked confidence' and it had been suggested that 'she might do an NVQ [National Vocational Qualification].' This notion had met with little enthusiasm. All the same, this remains a useful idea which others might copy. All three supervisors showed their appreciation of the headteacher and all assessed lunchtime practice as 'good'.

Hallside junior school

The acting headteacher had made substantial changes to midday practice in a comparatively short period of time. As previously discussed, these had not always been well received by the supervisory staff and the head felt the SAs were being 'overly sensitive'. It was claimed the supervisors needed constant reassurance and that the senior SA was 'a bit too authoritarian'. Despite this

assessment, the midday session conveyed a sense of being well organised. All supervisors questioned were clear about their roles and responsibilities. According to Docking (1996), this is vital. Ryall and Goddard (2003, p.73) maintain that, 'Staff who know their roles and have the skills to perform their designated tasks are more likely to contribute effectively to the aims of the organisation'. The supervisory assistants judged lunchtime practice to be generally good. The only area where there was felt to be room for improvement was that of the previously discussed wet weather lunchbreaks (although practice observed here was generally better than that seen elsewhere).

Gatward primary school

At Gatward the supervisors have the 'occasional' meeting with the headteacher as needs arise. The senior supervisor (6 years) performed her job efficiently and all colleagues appeared to accept her authority and guidance. An added role was to interview potential midday staff. One such occasion was observed. The candidate had recently completed a course at a local college with a view to becoming a classroom assistant. It was evident that she saw becoming a midday supervisor as a preliminary step to realising this ambition (having thus far failed to get the desired job). This again seems to reinforce the idea that there is a link between these two roles. The senior supervisor emphasised that, 'The job is hard – there's more to it than you think.' The applicant was not deterred and was accepted as a relief supervisor. The Gatward SAs have a particularly complex role as they also oversee the eating of packed lunches in individual classrooms making them 'very stretched' (senior SA). This assessment was borne out by the observational evidence and is in contrast to the headteacher's own assessment that there was a sufficient number of SAs (Table 7.14). The senior supervisor confirmed that there were 'only eleven SAs for sixteen classes' adding, 'One per class would be useful – we could do so much more.'

Woodberry primary school

The Woodberry headteacher argued that the midday supervisors were 'not proactive enough with the children'. As a consequence, a training session had been arranged with an external consultant, as formerly disclosed. Unique to Woodberry were the SAs' weekly meetings with the headteacher. As previously noted, this was in response to retaining the overall hours worked by the SAs when the lunchbreak had been reduced. The SAs had also evolved their own daily meetings some twenty minutes or so prior to the start of the lunchbreak. This was generally a time for socialising. The team was well-established and many SAs had been at the school for a number of years. The headteacher felt this meant they were not receptive to change and stated that 'the dynamics of the group is inward looking'. The head concluded, 'If I was starting from scratch I wouldn't have SAs – I'd have classroom assistants instead'. (This idea was shared by the Hallside headteacher.) The headteacher's opinion was that this would make lunchtimes easier to manage.

Additionally, the Woodberry head concluded (questionnaire and interview data) there were insufficient SAs to meet all needs. Both the observations and interviews with the supervisors serve to endorse this view. Uniquely amongst the schools directly observed the Woodberry supervisors were often invited to school assemblies and so there is clear evidence of some form of inclusion (Fell, 1994). In spite of this, there were a number of tensions between the headteacher and the supervisory team (as already explained) and this probably contributed to her assessment of lunchtime practice as being simply 'satisfactory' (Table 7.13). Nonetheless, the Woodberry SAs considered there was little scope for improvement.

Oatlands primary school

The Oatlands headteacher, too, judged lunchtimes to be 'satisfactory' (Table 7.13) but, as noted, the school was in a process of change. It was also felt there were not sufficient SAs to meet all needs (Table 7.14). Even so, Oatlands has a slightly more generous ratio of supervisors than either Woodberry, Gatward or St. Mark's in that there is one SA for each infant

class. The Oatlands head was the only headteacher not to mention the supervisory assistants during the course of the interview. The deputy head did, however, make some particularly revealing remarks. While patrolling corridors (which he did throughout each lunchbreak) he explained that, 'Some senior member of staff needs to be seen supporting [the SAs] because you can't leave everything to strangers'.

It seems clear from the deputy's comments that the supervisory team is not being seen as an integral part of the school. It is concluded, however, that these assertions may stem from the deputy's cultural background (New Zealand) where lunchtime monitoring is performed by teachers rather than by ancillary staff. For their part, the midday supervisors were extremely supportive of the headship team. One interviewee (11 years at Oatlands) insisted the lunchtime practice was praiseworthy and stated, 'The head has done a good job'. No further improvements were felt necessary. Nevertheless, it was claimed that the banned game of football should be reinstated because 'some [pupils] just don't want to play basketball' (SA 3 years). Two of the child interviewees (both boys) did request that football be re-established.

St. Mark's C of E primary school

Generally, all SAs consulted held positive views about lunchtime practice. As one SA (3 years) proclaimed, 'It seems to work quite well here' (thus supporting the headteacher's assessment). The supervisory group performed efficiently together as a team, although they did judge that practice would be improved with a greater number of supervisors (thereby echoing the Gatward supervisors). Unusually, St. Mark's has no senior supervisor. The position had been offered to one highly experienced SA (25 years) but she insisted that she 'didn't want the job' because she 'didn't feel it was necessary. The school is too small – we share things – who does what'. The St. Mark's team work on a slightly different basis from those elsewhere. For instance, there were no briefing sessions prior to the lunchbreak. However, duties were carried out competently and tasks were shared democratically. Three of the four SAs had

worked together for more than 15 years and so knew each other very well. It might also be reasoned that the St. Mark's unique practice was only successful precisely because the group is comparatively small and duties are more easily allocated.

Wells Green primary school

Methods at Wells Green offer an entirely different perspective on lunchtime supervision. It will be recalled that the headteacher does not employ supervisory assistants. This stems from her previous experiences of SAs as a headteacher elsewhere in the borough. Instead, she had chosen to engage classroom assistants on the basis that they would supervise lunchtimes in addition to their usual duties (they are paid at a slightly higher level for this additional responsibility). A rota system operates and each CA has a 45 minute break at midday. This represents an innovative approach to lunchtime supervision. It helps to provide continuity of care and enhanced consistency as the CAs also undertake breaktime supervision alongside teaching staff.

Dual roles

The idea that midday supervisors might have dual roles (supervisory assistant/teaching assistant) had not originally formed part of the investigation. Nevertheless, it became an increasingly important avenue of inquiry as the adoption of dual roles gained in prominence during the research period when increasing numbers of teaching assistants were being employed in schools. As previously stated, at the time of the initial interviews (2000) one SA at Brownlow infant school also had a second job as a classroom assistant (mornings only) and another SA had assumed the post of acting welfare assistant. No midday supervisors at either of the two Hallside schools, or at Gatward, had taken on an additional role within the school while still retaining their original position. The same was true at St. Mark's, although one supervisory assistant did disclose that she had previously been offered the post of classroom assistant.

The situation was different at Woodberry and this had led to a number of problems. The headteacher announced that, 'We had one classroom assistant who was a lunchtime supervisor as well. This did not go down well with the other SAs. Here it's "us" and "them" – it's difficult to be a CA and SA and have a foot in both camps'. In spite of this perception, and the fact that the original SA/CA had subsequently chosen to leave the school, a further two supervisory assistants had taken on a second role. One had become a CA and another was involved with learning support. The former, in contrast to the headteacher's assertions, had found no problems with being a CA/SA. She argued that, 'The children see me as a supervisory assistant at lunchtime and in a different role in school.' She therefore kept these two functions separate. However, a point of some interest was raised with her claim that, 'If I need to tell a child off in school they are more upset than if I tell them off in the playground as a lunchtime supervisor.' It was not possible to substantiate this statement but it again reflects the widely held notion that midday supervisors command less authority and respect than other school staff.

At Oatlands, one midday supervisor was additionally a classroom assistant. As she explained, 'I've been a CA for five years now – doing ten hours a week. I was doing the job anyway [volunteer parent helper] and I thought I might as well be paid for it'. (The headteacher alluded to the fact that those working voluntarily within the school were often subsequently employed in some capacity.) It was further maintained that 'it fits in well with being an SA. I wanted to keep this job because I like working outside in the fresh air' and she concluded, 'Both jobs go well together.' There was no suggestion of role conflict nor any mention that pupils saw her differently in each capacity.

A return to Brownlow infants at the end of 2001 found a further four SAs had become classroom or learning support assistants while retaining their original jobs. All were re-interviewed and all felt very positive about the situation. From a group who already felt valued by the headship team there was now a suggestion that they perceived themselves to be more appreciated by pupils and other staff. One SA announced, 'They [pupils] know who I am – not just

a woman who has suddenly appeared [at midday], which is nice'. Another declared, "I feel more a part of the school – I attend INSET days'. A third argued, 'You get to know the children more in the classroom. You get to know the staff – it's an advantage to get to know the staff more – you get more trust from them'. Teaching staff were not reinterviewed in respect of their perceptions of the dual role and so it is not possible to substantiate this statement but, again, it is an interesting aspect for future exploration.

Apart from the expressed feeling of 'inclusiveness' with mention of attendance at INSET days. All four interviewees believed they were now held in higher esteem by parents. One SA/CA proclaimed, 'With some parents you're only a dinner lady – it [dual role] might make parents see you in a better light.' Once more, time constraints prevented further investigation of this issue but it seems to be an important point to raise. As revealed earlier, however, by the end of 2002 three of these four SAs had relinquished their original roles as midday supervisors, finding it too demanding to sustain both jobs.

Discussion

The management of lunchtimes is plainly a very important feature of school life. What is difficult in an investigation of this kind is to separate the actual play period from other aspects of the midday session. For example, both the location of mealtime provision (dining hall, school hall, classrooms) and the time taken to eat lunch have consequences for the amount of supervision needed and accordingly the number of supervisors available to oversee the outside area. As such, no attempt has been made to divorce the midday meal entirely from this inquiry (although it is accepted that this is not the focus of attention). This has resulted in brief references to certain issues revolving around the eating of lunch where deemed relevant.

Lunchtime supervision involves an increasingly wide spectrum of employees (head, deputy, teachers, supervisory and teaching assistants) in a variety of ways. This brings to the fore the question of relationships. Not only the relationships between supervisors and pupils but also the relationships within the SA team and between the midday supervisors and other sectors of staff. As noted, this aspect was brought out during the interviews at Brownlow infant school. A second factor of major concern is the evolving role of the adult in respect of playtime supervision. Adult intervention in children's free time activities seems to have become far more prevalent at midday and has links with the behaviour issues previously discussed. As this study shows, a number of extra-curricular activities are also being supervised by teaching staff. Given the many demands on class teachers' time this may present difficulties.

Furthermore, in one school teachers are also supervising pupils eating their lunchtime meal in classrooms. This is undoubtedly cost effective for the school and those consulted did not raise any objections, but, again, it results in extra demands being made on class teachers' time. That teachers voluntarily relinquish part of their lunchbreak may be commendable but it remains a situation which requires further investigation before any firm conclusions can be made as to its desirability. It introduces issues related to potential feelings of 'obligation' (as, for instance, at Brownlow junior school) in a quite different manner from that of teaching staff volunteering to oversee other lunchtime activities which usually occur during only one lunchbreak each week.

However, the main responsibility for overseeing the lunchtime continues to be with those who are specifically employed for this purpose (still generally SAs although this is gradually changing). The midday supervisors have a particularly difficult job to do (Rose, TES, 1999). There is an underlying perception in some schools that the supervisory team lack the ability to do this job well. It appears that much depends upon the capabilities of individual supervisors. Some SAs undoubtedly have better coping strategies than others. It seems that finding the right person for the job is all important. This is reasoned to be a 'key task' for school management (Campbell and

Southworth, 1992, p.76). As shown by the Brownlow infant supervisory team this can make a substantial difference to the effectiveness of the supervision provided.

As stated, Mosley (1993), Docking (1996) and Ryall and Goddard (2003) stress the relatively low status of midday supervisors. This tends to correspond with the way in which some supervisors perceive themselves. More crucially, perhaps, is that some supervisors see relevant others (school staff, parents and pupils) as also judging them as having little real status. As the Brownlow infant supervisors indicate very clearly, feeling appreciated can help to make a substantial difference to job performance. In this study not all headteachers seem to have been successful in achieving this level of appreciation and this may have contributed to the difficulties arising.

In any job the establishment of good relationships is essential (West-Burnham, 1992) and the supervisors' role in particular involves this vital element. Dalton *et al* (2001b, p.245) maintain the development of strong personal relationships is 'the essential basis for any community'. It is to their credit that SAs in all schools studied have developed appropriate relationships with pupils. Shouting at children is a characteristic which was rarely observed. Instead, what was especially noticeable were the very positive relationships developed within each supervisory group. The social aspects of the job (often quoted by informants as being an important feature) are therefore judged to be a noteworthy attribute. It is necessary to stress, however, that socialising ('chatting') takes place in the supervisors' own time in these schools rather than in the playground as the stereotypical image suggests. The demands of the job make this an unrealistic option. Even so, good relationships within the team are likely to be an important factor in producing 'happy children' as the Brownlow infant supervisors readily acknowledge.

In contrast to ideas presented in contemporary sources (Rose, TES, 1999), what seems to be less relevant for many of the SAs consulted is the need for any form of career structure. (No SAs had received either appraisal or career development interviews.) In addition, ideas of further training were largely

rejected; although it has been proposed that training is highly desirable (Docking, 1996). One notable exception was the Brownlow infant supervisory team. This may well be as a result of all team members being comparatively new to the job (and usually in a younger age group than the more established teams found elsewhere). Intriguingly, in all locations career development was linked with the teaching assistant role (but possibly this might be viewed as a natural next step) rather than, for example, considering a course in some form of child care. A number of SAs had already relinquished their original jobs to work in school as teaching assistants. Others had chosen to continue as SAs while taking on a second job. In general, those with dual roles (SA/CA) spoke in terms of enhanced status and stronger relationships with pupils and other staff.

One additional benefit of this overlap between lunchtime and breaktime supervision is the potential for increased consistency in approach. Nevertheless, according to Mosley (1993, p.27), 'It is very important that all staff – teachers, supervisors, lunchtime supervisors and other staff draw upon the same range of incentives and sanctions and are visibly seen by the children to uphold and support each other's decisions'. A further feature of importance is the sheer complexity of the supervisory role. Increasingly, there is an expectation that supervisors will become involved in children's play activities. This can be viewed as problematic due to numerous other demands on supervisors' time. If this trend is to continue then additional numbers of supervisory staff are likely to be required.

Résumé

Chapter Seven has developed the central argument by closely examining the highly significant domain of playground supervision. The chapter began by looking at morning (and afternoon) breaktime practice. Initially, procedures across the borough came under the spotlight. The issue of whether or not duty staff receive an alternative break was brought to the fore. Findings indicate

that the majority of staff are not reimbursed for time spent outside monitoring the playground. This compounds any difficulties experienced by those performing playground duty. Most staff felt that undertaking playground supervision had substantial repercussions, including feelings of tiredness and increased stress, as well as an 'unpreparedness' for the following lesson. Those consulted expressed a mixture of attitudes towards break duty, which was frequently experienced as being merely obligatory. The playground role was largely one of 'policing' the play space. However, playtime was deemed to be very necessary as it was felt to be essential for children to have an outside break. In line with traditional opinions, staff nowadays often see breaktime as an opportunity for pupils to 'let off steam'.

Subsequently, the chapter provided a coherent analysis of lunchtime supervision. Practice across the LEA was fully investigated. The main findings suggest the majority of supervisory assistants now receive some form of 'on the job' training. Most headteachers judge supervisory assistant numbers to be adequate, although supervisors themselves might disagree. Various aspects of the midday supervisor's role were investigated. There was a general feeling amongst incumbents that the job was extremely complex (a feeling borne out by the observational evidence). Reasons for taking on the job varied considerably and for some these involved the opportunity to socialise. The majority of supervisors were found to have (or to have had) their own child(ren) at the school and thus convenience was a big factor.

Opinions were divided on the efficacy of having a career structure but any developments were seen by supervisors generally as leading to the job of teaching assistant. Teamwork was a prominent feature of the role. The leadership skills of the senior supervisory assistant were judged to be vital for orchestrating an effective team. Not all schools, however, were found to have a senior supervisor. Furthermore, an increasing number of midday staff now have dual roles (supervisory assistant / teaching assistant). Most of those in this position saw it as being advantageous and felt it enhanced their status. Surprisingly, the most recently opened school in the borough was discovered not to employ SAs but instead to have classroom assistants with the additional

responsibility of overseeing the lunchbreak. Other staff (both teachers and non-teaching staff) also supervise lunchtime activities in more than half of the schools surveyed. The following chapter now takes a detailed look at the process of change at Brownlow infant school.

Chapter Eight

The Process of Breaktime Change

Introduction

Chapter Eight now completes the data analysis and presentation by returning to the multiplicity of issues surrounding breaktime improvements. As previously explained, the current research shows that these generally fall into four broad categories: provision; organisation; socialisation (of the child); and supervision. Each of these has been explored in the preceding four chapters. The present chapter now draws these themes together and examines change through the realms of the management cycle, together with issues of participation, ownership and support, at the main focus school and reflects on the action taken.

Chapter Eight studies the quality of ideas for any proposed reforms and ways in which these have subsequently been implemented by the main case study school. There is a detailed examination of the diverse transformations carried out. Each initiative is reviewed in turn and developments and outcomes are thoroughly appraised. This provides an in-depth study of attempts at improvement at one institution and serves to complete the investigation at Brownlow infant school.

Managing change

The concluding stage of the current investigation brought with it a need to encourage further changes to existing practice. The final phase of the project (Appendix 8) saw the introduction of additional initiatives at the main case study school.

Brownlow infant school

It had not been possible to fully observe and monitor the initial changes at Brownlow infant school (outlined in Chapter Four) due to involvement in other research procedures. Stage four of the inquiry saw a return to the main focus school. In the first instance a meeting was arranged with the headteacher in early June 2001 (Appendix 11). Information relating to measures already taken to improve playtime practice at other schools visited was thereby relayed to the headteacher for possible inclusion in the process. Once underway this was to be systematically screened.

While it was fully accepted that innovations seen at other locations might require adaptation to suit the particular needs of Brownlow infant school, it was felt to be equally important to encourage the Brownlow staff to adopt any alternative initiatives which they judged to be relevant to their own unique circumstances (i.e. ideas for improvement coming from within). To this end, discussions ensued and eventually decisions were made by the headteacher and relevant staff groups regarding appropriate activities aimed at bringing about an improvement in practice. This involved active initiation and participation which should increase ownership. (Of the changes listed below, it will be recalled that some ideas link with suggestions previously made by various interviewees. For example, two pupils had mentioned football, eight staff had wanted more playground activities for the children and two parents had requested more shaded areas.) At interview in September 2001 the headteacher explained the courses of action which were going to be embarked upon including:

- the development of an early years outside play area;
- alterations to the reception children's admission procedures, coupled with innovations to the lunchtime practice (as witnessed at Hallside infants);
- improvements to the quadrangle to facilitate greater use;

- a member of the teaching staff being appointed as a lunchtime liaison co-ordinator (in a similar vein to the playtime co-ordinator at Oatlands and the playtime working party at Wells Green)
- a supervisory assistants' training session on developing children's skipping activities;
- introduction of a 'friendship bench' (as seen at Wells Green);
- provision of a small seating area adjacent to the main playground for which additional funding was required (similar to quiet areas observed at various schools);
- a training day for teachers and all ancillary staff relating to behaviour management and playground activities (as with the training session observed at Woodberry).

At a later date, following the appointment of the lunchtime coordinator it was also arranged for:

- football coaching sessions (over four lunchtimes) with an external trainer.

Reflections on action

Although a number of these initiatives occurred simultaneously, rather than in a linear fashion, for the sake of clarity the progression in each activity is presented separately. Where relevant, references are also made to any other changes to practice which were taking place at the same time. The discussion of each innovation follows a chronological order and each is examined within a generally historical structure. Throughout five terms Brownlow infant school was visited on an almost weekly basis to record progress. Each visit was of 90 minutes duration (i.e. covering the entire lunchbreak period). Close monitoring was important, although it was also considered to be vital to ensure that ownership of the action remained with the participants.

At first sight not all the proposed innovations appear to be of direct relevance to the focus of the present study, although some, such as the friendship bench, might be judged as totally appropriate. Nevertheless, as will be seen, all the intended initiatives impact to some extent on the overall breaktime situation. On this basis it is maintained that each can legitimately be taken into account. For example, changes to the quadrangle may seem to be generally unrelated to playtimes. However, the quad has been included for two main reasons. Firstly, it will be recalled that this facility has actually been used at breaktimes (for the special needs child) albeit on rare occasions. Secondly, two classrooms which were being used for additional activities during certain lunchtimes have direct access to this area. As such, this space could easily be utilised for an extension of the pastimes provided. In addition to the above, work on the seating area which had been planned for the playground could not be started until the quadrangle was completed. The quad therefore had a substantial impact on the development of the main play space during this phase of the research.

In a similar vein, the development of the reception play area (which was not going to be used at playtimes) could be judged as unrelated to the issues at hand. However, the completion of this region facilitated further changes to the reception children's admission procedures and so became of direct relevance to lunchtime practice. Furthermore, this location provides an additional outside play space with substantial potential for exploitation at playtimes. Additionally, it is possible that the use of this facility throughout the day lessens the demand for an afternoon breaktime for the youngest pupils. The construction of this area therefore has a number of highly significant links with the focus of the investigation. This is held to be justification enough for its inclusion in the final stage.

Reception Pupils' Outdoor Play Area

During the course of the inquiry the three reception classes were rehoused in classrooms close to the nursery (a move necessary to allow the temporary relocation of the nursery pupils to the largest of the original reception classrooms while building work was in progress to extend the nursery). Consequently, this provided a window of opportunity to establish an outdoor play space for these Foundation Stage pupils. There was a small grassed area between the nursery building and classrooms but without access for the reception pupils. Staff decided that an appropriate region would be created with admittance for the reception children (Figure 4.4a).

Relevant issues (such as the need for outdoor play and the potential to eventually link the nursery and proposed reception play areas) were discussed at whole-school staff meetings and the idea was welcomed by the early years team. It was agreed that much of this area would remain grassed (a decision taken mostly for financial reasons). There was some uncertainty, however, about this assessment. It was eventually decided that some form of (limited) hard surface would be incorporated. Each reception classroom would be given access. A permanent storage unit would also be purchased to house outside play equipment. The area in question was judged to be too small to allow the 90 reception pupils breaktime use. This is unfortunate given that it is a notion supported in some contemporary accounts (Hurst, 1994; Lindon, 2001a), as previously acknowledged.

Work was completed during the autumn term 2001 and was carried out in accordance with staff wishes. There were no particular problems. The subsequent use of the outside space was monitored through informal observations by the staff involved and was evaluated at early years team meetings. The newly constructed area was judged to have only limited success. One difficulty was that frequent inclement weather rendered the grass section completely unusable for much of the time. There was

insufficient room provided by the paved region to allow outdoor activities to continue when the grass area was out of use. In addition, staff revealed their disquiet that this location was drenched in sunlight when the weather was fine. Furthermore, there were security concerns caused by adults (mainly parents) gaining necessary access to the nursery.

This illustrates very well the need for modifications. High level staff analysis led to a number of decisions being taken. These included having the entire area paved, a security device fitted to the main entrance to the nursery campus (in place of the existing child-proof gate), and awnings attached to the outside of the classrooms. These refinements were heavily dependent upon extra funding being made available requiring management support. Following completion, the newly transformed location was monitored and assessed by the early years staff. The extended play surface was judged to be extremely successful, resulting in far greater exploitation of the overall space and much improved practice.

Moreover, the provision of the additional gateway security device allayed staff fears. Pupils were thus free to roam the play area in comparative safety. Furthermore, when the awnings were eventually erected (not until the spring term 2003 when funds allowed) staff considered these produced tangible benefits. Not only were pupils provided with suitable shade on sunny days but there was the added advantage of having shelter in inclement conditions. The immediate outside area had become an all weather feature. This was judged to be particularly fortuitous. No further action was planned because practice was now felt to be more than satisfactory but scope for improvement always exists and staff would continue to evaluate the situation.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

Throughout the whole of this period direct observations (15 minutes each week) were completed to record progress in the reception play area and the consequent changes in practice. A written account, coupled with photographic evidence shows this to be a lengthy process. This is not entirely unexpected

given that other changes involving different aspects of the school grounds were taking place simultaneously. In addition, unrelated initiatives were occurring elsewhere in the school. Obviously these, too, required staff time and commitment. As noted, Brighouse and Woods (1999) cogently point out multiple innovations can easily result in overload. It is therefore very much to the credit of those involved that the momentum of this particular development was sustained. Staff were able to retain their focus until the project reached a satisfactory conclusion, ultimately resulting in more effective practice.

Nonetheless, it is true to say that the original idea achieved only minimal success. As a result of the implementation process a number of problems were recognised and debated. Three significant issues came to the fore and these posed barriers to the desired outcomes, namely: restricted use of the grass area in wet weather (Hendricks, 2001); children's exposure to the sun's rays (Titman, 1999); and potential security risks. The DfES (3, 2004) maintains that children's safety needs to remain paramount and staff were quick to take this aspect on board. Possible solutions were aired and the early years team subsequently settled on what was judged to be the most appropriate course for further action. This became an important part of the learning process (Schon, 1983; Fullan, 2001b).

It could be argued that these difficulties might have been foreseen. It appears though that full recognition of any problems was only realised through evaluation of actual practice. In this way the monitoring process assumes a crucial importance and forms a fundamental part of the planning cycle. The awnings that were introduced as a result of the evaluation procedure had a serendipitous effect giving the opportunity to try out new ideas. Practice was thereby further improved. Staff considered this to be a particular bonus. In its final form the outdoor region became a custom-made area tailored to meet the needs of the children and the school. What had started life as a comparatively straightforward concept evolved to provide a versatile facility leading to further substantial developments in procedures. The original aims had not only been achieved but had been exceeded.

Reception Pupils' Lunchtimes

Staff generally became aware that, despite best efforts, the reception pupils were experiencing more difficulties than desirable when settling into school. In particular, many problems revolved around the lunchtime session. Children were finding it difficult to cope, even though a staggered admittance system was in place and reception staff remained close by throughout the children's initial encounters with mealtimes. One identified reason for these problems was that many of these young pupils had become accustomed to half-day sessions in the nursery (or at play groups). Full-time schooling was therefore proving to be traumatic for some. Decisions were taken to allow the newest pupils to attend part-time for their first few weeks at school, gradually adding the mealbreak to their morning or afternoon session prior to attending full-time schooling, a process already judged to be working well at Hallside infant school. Staggered entry would remain.

Staff monitored this process through informal observations and more formally during discussions at early years team meetings. The new methods did not run altogether smoothly. For example, minutes taken at one team meeting show staff were concerned that 'when the children were part-time the lunchtimes were very rushed'. It was assessed that there were difficulties with the 'cross over period' (i.e. when all reception children were present for a short time during the midday break). It was possible to modify practice the following year (September/October 2002) when the reception outside play area was fully operational and pupils were therefore able to leave (at lunchtime) and enter (at lunchtime) in this location rather than in the school playground. Screening of this procedure indicated this to be a far more efficient system of arrival and departure.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

Achieving overall success in improving the reception pupils' lunchtime admission systems was again a two-step process. This initiative was rather

different, however, in that it did not demand a continuous course of action. Monitoring during the September/October period 2001 (again in 2002) required close attention to methods and performance. Researcher monitoring involved not only direct observations (a total of four lunchtimes), consultations and informal discussions with practitioners, but also included attendance at an early years team evaluation meeting, coupled with scrutiny of the resulting documentation (i.e. the final report which was submitted to the Senior Management Team). This innovation culminated in a high level of activity taking place in a comparatively short period of time followed by a complete break. A review of practice occurring one year led to strategic modifications the following autumn.

The observations indicated that initial very complex organisational structures during the lunchtime period did little to alleviate any confusion arising at this time (2001). Some reception pupils were arriving for lunch (and playing in the playground prior to their meal) while others were simply arriving to attend the afternoon session. At the same time some pupils were departing at the end of the morning session while others were departing after the lunchbreak. Parents responsible for bringing and collecting these children were also occupying the playground, together with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils who were playing before and after their own lunch. A number of midday supervisors expressed their concerns about this situation as they, not unnaturally, found it difficult to 'keep track of things' (senior supervisor). Early years staff experienced similar problems. Of course, this also heightened awareness of possible safety/security issues.

In spite of these complications, this system was evaluated by staff as being a far superior method of integrating the reception pupils into school and playground. One nursery nurse claimed that, 'It's much better for the children because they don't have to cope with everything at once.' All the same, there were publicly aired concerns that, by remaining with the children, the early years staff were experiencing their own problems. As one nursery nurse explained, 'Staff only get a fifteen minute break at lunchtime.' This was giving rise to increased stress levels and prolonged tiredness (reported by both

teachers and non-teaching staff). Unfortunately, this seems to be an insoluble problem if staff are to retain a high profile.

The overall situation improved markedly once all reception pupils were having lunch at school. The observations record how quickly these children became integrated into playground life (in sharp contrast to observations chronicled in the autumn term 2000 when a number of children were visibly distressed as Appendix 14 shows). By mid-October (2001) staff had left the children in the sole care of the supervisory assistants. The initiative was formally evaluated before the end of the month. It was assessed to be largely successful. One reception teacher acknowledged that it 'worked well'. Nonetheless, important issues were raised, particularly with regard to misgivings about the arrivals and departures in the playground. In spite of this, the early years team unanimously decided that similar procedures would be adopted the following year, although there was an acknowledgement that some modifications would be needed.

By September 2002, exit doors from the reception classrooms, coupled with the hard surface outdoor area, enabled staff to make further adjustments. Parents and reception pupils were able to use this location (well away from the main playground) for arrivals and departures. Much of the previous year's confusion was thereby eliminated. Staff had quickly recognised this opportunity to adjust their practice. The early years team repeated their routine of remaining with the children throughout the lunchbreak until they had settled into the midday session. The headteacher made systematic observations of the new intake of pupils. Once more, all staff questioned felt the children benefited greatly from this gradual integration. One nursery nurse stated that, 'The children seem to have settled well under this system' and concluded that, 'It's much better with doors to the outside from the classrooms for the parents'.

As seen from the above account, a major change in routines requires a high level of commitment from all concerned. Although tiresome, the early difficulties did not detract from the general success of the initial attempts at

improving practice. Nor did staff allow these problems to over-shadow what had originally been achieved. The early years team were on a steep learning curve. The trying out of ideas resulted in the team gaining valuable insights into their own performance and organisational skills. Fullan (2001a, p.126) stresses that 'learning in the setting where you work, or learning in context, is the learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific (customized to the situation) and because it is social (involves the group)'. Moreover, as other staff eventually assume responsibility for the reception classes there remains the likelihood of systems being further reshaped by fresh ideas.

Changes to the Quadrangle

Staff comments revolved around the perception that the quadrangle was a greatly under-used resource. These ideas led easily to the need for change. A previous working party had been disbanded when the group leader (science co-ordinator) had left the school. It was decided that the quad was an area which could be of far greater benefit to all pupils throughout the school day. On rare occasions (as with the special needs pupil mentioned earlier) the quad had also proved to be a convenient location at breaktime. At a whole staff meeting the decision was taken to establish a new working party of suitably interested staff (those showing a willingness to become involved) to revamp the quad. To begin with the children were to be consulted and their ideas would be incorporated into the plans. Staff would informally monitor the ongoing procedures and modify accordingly. Upon completion the changes to practice and use of the quadrangle would be evaluated.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

Changes to the quadrangle were monitored through direct observations (briefly, throughout this period to survey work in progress) and a series of consultations with those personally involved (a classroom assistant, a teacher, and the site manager who was consulted on two separate occasions while work was in progress). In addition, a number of photographs were taken at varying

stages in the development of the area. The restructuring of the quad took far longer than originally anticipated. In turn, this delayed the starting date of work to establish a quiet area. It will be appreciated that the construction of both the reception outdoor play space and the refurbishment of the quad were taking place at the same time. Consequently, the headteacher felt it would be imprudent to begin a third project (the quiet area) until both original enterprises were completed.

This is entirely understandable and draws attention to the need for flexibility when innovations are planned, particularly where timing is concerned. It once more reflects the requirement to minimise change overload (a recurring theme). Inevitably, however, some frustration occurs among those awaiting a new development that is temporarily on hold (as was the situation here). Expectations and fears were expressed regarding the quad, which was taking an inordinately long period of time to complete. It is to the credit of those involved that energy levels were maintained. It would be all too easy in this kind of situation for staff to lose interest. Nevertheless, a greater momentum was needed. Following an assessment of appropriate courses of action it was decided that the solution would take the form of weekend working. It is commendable that all staff involved were willing to devote time outside the normal working week to the completion of the project (in most cases partners also became involved).

There was some structured decision-making in respect of suitable features to include in the quadrangle and how best to cultivate the available space to provide a location which would be totally geared to the children's needs. In this manner, a series of judgements was made and potential practice was thoroughly examined. It was decided that the area would be multi-purpose and would be used by all age groups. Interestingly, secret places (among various shrubs) were incorporated where children would be able to 'hide – away' from adults (Humphries and Rowe, 1994). In a number of meaningful ways this transformation has proved to be successful. The resulting outside space has quickly been exploited by the Year 1 teachers (these classes have direct access to this area). The Year 1 pupils have been able to use the hard

surface section (adjacent to their classrooms) for various activities throughout the day. This has meant substantial changes to practice for the Year 1 team. Other year groups have been accessing the quad and lessons involving the natural world (there is a pond, fruit trees, flower borders and so forth) have taken place (and so the outdoor area is being utilised as part of the formal curriculum in a similar vein to notions of outdoor education, as previously discussed).

The area itself is aesthetically pleasing (and seemingly reminiscent of Wilderspin's [1840] outside play area) and provides a calming environment centrally placed within the hubbub of a busy school (Figure 4.2). The enterprise was completed at minimum cost to the school (materials only) due to those who volunteered their services. Staff concerned felt the effort had been worthwhile as the end result had more than lived up to their expectations. In general terms, the refurbished quad has resulted in improved performance in relation to curriculum delivery. It also gives an additional area for utilisation at breaktimes as future needs arise. In spite of this, one problem remains. A Year 1 teacher (not a member of the group working on the quad) expressed her concerns about the large expanse of grass in the renovated quadrangle, making this region unusable in poor weather. Her overall appraisal was that there was insufficient hard surface play area to adequately cater for the requirements of the three Year 1 classes. This is a matter for staff to address.

The Lunchtime Co-ordinator

The Senior Management Team (SMT) discussed various issues relating to lunchtimes. Following an in-depth assessment of the situation a decision was taken to appoint a member of staff as both a PE (physical education) and lunchtime liaison co-ordinator. The previous PE post holder had already begun to forge links with the midday staff. However, she had left the school (in 2000) and had not yet been replaced. The appointment of a lunchtime co-ordinator was seen to further emphasise the importance the school placed on

the midday session, which was regarded as a valued part of the school day. It was also felt to provide a beneficial link between the teaching and ancillary staff. The SMT would observe and evaluate the ongoing situation.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

Monitoring the activities of the newly appointed lunchtime liaison co-ordinator took the form of direct observations (three sessions) coupled with consultations. Unfortunately, the monitoring process remained incomplete due to a sharp decline in activity as the express result of the post holder's departure from the school. In itself this is a significant issue as it serves to highlight difficulties resulting from the loss of a 'change leader'. It is particularly regrettable where the liaison co-ordinator was concerned because the observations show an impressive level of activity taking place, even if only for a comparatively brief period of time. This was entirely due to the skills, commitment and personal values of the post holder. It is probable that it is these very qualities which led to her appointment.

The co-ordinator's approach was praiseworthy. Firstly, she made a series of lunchtime observations and subsequently consulted widely with the midday supervisors. Following this, additional loose equipment was ordered for the children's midday use. A football coaching team was also contacted (see below) and a lunchtime 'sports club' was started during the summer term 2002 (Appendix 11). In addition, she planned to issue brief questionnaires to both staff and older pupils. However, this latter procedure did not take place (a new job as Early Years Co-ordinator in yet another infant school within the LEA was on the horizon). Nevertheless, she was instrumental in training a group of Year 2 pupils to assist the midday supervisors in setting out and packing away equipment used in the hall at lunchtimes. This was designed to give these children a sense of responsibility and was later praised by Ofsted.

It can easily be seen from the above account that the appointment of the liaison co-ordinator resulted in some noteworthy changes to practice in a remarkably short period of time. Noticeably, however, there was an obvious

personal cost to the post holder. On days when she was carrying out these various activities her own lunchbreak was considerably shortened. It is not known whether this was a factor which contributed to her seeking a position in a different capacity elsewhere. Clearly, any teacher required to undertake numerous additional tasks in this manner, during the midday session, is going to face problems with overload and time difficulties. When questioned on this aspect she did acknowledge that she had insufficient time either to eat her own lunch or to 'set up the classroom' in readiness for the afternoon's lessons. This is a major consideration for any teacher who accepts a post of responsibility which includes an obligation to lunchtime working.

Even so, the co-ordinator proved to be very accomplished at leading the sports activities. There was no shortage of Year 2 pupil volunteers throughout the summer term (2002). What must be recognised, however, is that the hall was not available for other activities during this period (sports pastimes were taking place twice weekly). This makes it questionable as to whether the sports club was truly worthwhile, given that it was reserved exclusively for Year 2 pupils, whereas other pursuits were available for all age groups. Of course, it is entirely possible that an evaluation of the situation might have led to the widening of participating age groups, although it is likely that this would result in increased co-ordinator input and this seems to be impractical.

Rope Skipping Activities

Comments from staff at all levels revolved around a recognised decline in rope skipping activities in the playground. This was despite the school's continued efforts to encourage pupils to bring skipping ropes to school (school policy dictates that normal PE equipment will not be used at breaktimes in case of damage or loss). The supervisory assistants felt that rope skipping activities should be targeted. One midday supervisor was aware that some very successful skipping workshops had taken place at other schools within the borough. Arrangements were made for a half-day training course (March

2002), which the SAs would attend. Non-teaching staff could also be present if they wished. Resulting changes to practice would be monitored by the headship team rather than by the SAs themselves.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

Skipping tuition (via an external instructor) was observed throughout the entire session when this activity was taking place. The instructor was also questioned. In addition, a small number of midday supervisors and non-teaching staff were consulted. Observations of the playground at lunchtime took place on a weekly basis over an extended time period (three terms) in order to record the continuance of rope skipping activities. Monitoring was undertaken for a brief period (two minutes) at 15-20 minute intervals throughout the lunchbreak. The supervisory assistants had requested this day of training and a number were fully committed to continuing with the skills demonstrated. There was evidence, however, that some members of the supervisory team were displaying a far greater level of personal involvement than others. This is probably only to be expected in an undertaking of this nature which results in individual participation in physical activities. Some SAs were more predisposed to join in themselves with these skipping games. They thus became good role models for the children.

The skipping day was well-handled and the trainer was skilful and professional. It was explained that he usually instructed pupils in the junior age-range and activities had consequently been simplified to meet the needs of the Year 2 children. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of the tasks these activities would not have been appropriate for the younger age groups (younger children would lack the necessary co-ordination skills). Despite a highly productive beginning, this initiative met with only limited success in the longer term. At first, substantial numbers of pupils were engaged in both individual (own ropes used) and group skipping games (the school had purchased two long ropes specifically for lunchtime use). At this moment in time the midday supervisors were heavily involved in all activities. However, there was a lack of monitoring of the situation by those directly involved. By

the autumn term (2002) there was a sharp reduction in these pursuits. During the spring term (2003) no skipping activities were recorded (and there was no evidence of skipping ropes being present in the playground).

One explanation for this downturn in rope games was the Year 2 pupils' move to the junior school. A second reason was that those supervisors who had shown the greatest level of initial interest were the same SAs who eventually became part-time and ultimately relinquished their midday jobs (having become teaching assistants). Moreover, according to Fullan (1992, p.126), with any innovation 'continuation depends on whether or not the change gets embedded' and this does not appear to have happened in this situation. After an early burst of enthusiasm group skipping games lessened. With this decline, fewer pupils were observed bringing their own ropes to school for individual activities. It is likely that without a continued high profile and necessary adult input to scaffold these activities there was a consequent decrease in the children's interest.

When the deputy head (as headteacher designate) was interviewed at the end of the spring term (2003) he was aware of the decline in rope skipping games. The deputy had continued to monitor the playground informally throughout this period. Concerns were therefore expressed that the school was effectively 'back to square one'. However, upon reflection he arrived at a series of salient conclusions about the situation. To begin with it was acknowledged that the skipping workshop had been highly successful in the short term. In particular, many children had developed their skills and derived enjoyment from this activity. Furthermore, a number of supervisors had learnt a great deal about teaching a wide variety of skipping games. This knowledge could be used during physical education lessons in the school. The deputy felt that it would be profitable to repeat the skipping training day now that there was a newly formed supervisory team. It was accepted that adults would need to maintain interest over time and that strategies might be required to ensure skipping remained high profile. One solution might be to involve the junior pupils. Simplified skipping games could also be taught to the Year 1 children.

Football Coaching

Following consultations with the midday supervisors, the newly appointed lunchtime liaison co-ordinator (see above) was especially keen to increase the selection of activities available to the oldest pupils. The Year 2 children had become the centre of attention partly because staff felt they presented the greatest challenge at playtime (behaviour-wise) and partly because it was judged they needed increasingly demanding pursuits. It was also considered that this age group would be able to cope with more complex games and activities. For a limited period only, the borough was funding football coaching during school lunchbreaks (money had become available due to an over-estimation of the cost of professional development courses). This shows a certain level of commitment from the LEA for the development of lunchtime activities. The training sessions were to be monitored and evaluated by the lunchtime liaison co-ordinator through direct observations of the proceedings and resulting changes to practice.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

Football coaching proved to be a highly successful initiative which fuelled much enthusiasm to develop the skills demonstrated. This eagerness was maintained throughout the summer term 2002. One of the three trainers was consulted and three of the four training sessions were directly observed. Observations (ten minutes) of the playground continued on a weekly basis. The coaching sessions were excellent and the Year 2 pupils derived great benefit from all activities on offer. A small number of Year 1 pupils were also included in the training. The midday supervisors continued to provide a small (zoned) area of the playground for those pupils wishing to practise their newly acquired skills. This provision was withdrawn, however, when the Year 2 pupils entered the junior school (this coincided with the advent of the newly formed supervisory team). Obviously, there was a consequential decrease in football activity.

It seems unlikely that football skills coaching would be repeated as funding was only provided for a brief period. It would probably be too expensive an enterprise for individual schools to support from their own budgets (although that possibility always exists). Given that the acquired skills were not continued with the small number of Year 1 pupils who had originally been involved, and nor were these passed on to peers, this particular initiative was subsequently lost. The supervisory assistants had no direct involvement with the football training (generally being fully occupied with other tasks) and so would not have been able to reintroduce these activities. The lunchtime liaison co-ordinator (who had attended the training sessions) left the school and therefore was not available to resurrect any of the skills which had been taught.

While it might be easy to dismiss this undertaking as generally unsuccessful this would be too hasty a judgement. It was a valuable endeavour which was well received at the time and which retained a high profile, if only in the short term. The child participants gained greatly and were able to carry with them to the junior school the skills they had acquired. Nevertheless, much can be learned about the lack of continuance in the infant school and staff would do well to take these lessons on board when considering future enterprises. For example, it might be useful to link lunchtime activities of this kind to the more formal school curriculum (such as extending these skills in PE sessions). The older pupils could also be encouraged to pass their skills on to the younger ones. The supervisory assistants could be encouraged to become more proactive and so maintain the momentum of any activities. Greater monitoring of the situation would also be required. (It is accepted, however, that the midday staff have limited time.)

The 'Friendship Bench'

There was concern among staff that some children were isolated and lacking friendship groups in the playground. A 'friendship seat' had been seen at Wells Green. This presented an attractive idea but, of course, there had been

no evaluation as to its suitability. Despite this, it was a concept which appealed to the headteacher and staff and was felt to offer a partial solution to problems of lonely children at playtime. A small group of Year 2 pupils were trained as 'befrienders'. All staff would observe and evaluate the situation and would report their findings at staff meetings.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

A series of observations (ten minutes each) took place throughout the summer and autumn terms 2002. During the Ofsted inspection (June 2002) the friendship bench received particular praise. It was assessed by inspectors (informal interviews) as being a valuable addition to the playground. However, monitoring indicates that rarely was a child observed sitting on the bench and seldom did another pupil arrive to befriend any youngster who was seated. It is accepted, however, that these monitorings were spasmodic and that observations would be required on a more regular basis for any firm conclusions to be made. Much of the evaluation of this particular innovation therefore rests on the assessments of staff (four teachers and one midday supervisor were consulted). It was reasoned that staff would have greater awareness of the overall state of affairs, even though little appraisal had occurred and then only on an informal, unsystematic basis (and no staff had been given the specific task of monitoring this innovation methodically).

One supervisory assistant (questioned soon after the arrival of the friendship bench) considered it to be 'useful' for those pupils in need of someone to play with. It was also claimed that she had witnessed a number of children befriending others. Two teachers used the term 'not sure'. For example, a Year 1 teacher stated, 'I'm not sure about the friendship seat. I have seen children sitting there and others coming up but I'm not sure whether these are buddies'. A third teacher (Year 1, SMT) suggested the pupils were too young (even at the end of Year 2) to fully appreciate the concept of befriending. At the same time, she accepted that pupils tried to fulfil the role but this was largely unsuccessful. In some cases the befrienders simply left the needy child alone following their initial contact. It was confirmed by the autumn term

2002 that no training had been given to a new set of befrienders because it was generally judged that, 'They don't have sufficient skills'.

It therefore became the responsibility of duty staff to deal with any child who was seen sitting on the friendship bench. Interestingly, it was felt that children probably only chose to occupy this seat because it was colourful (in contrast to plain wooden benches) and not because of any social need. A fourth teacher (reception) who was questioned at the beginning of the spring term 2003 was planning a school assembly around playground issues. The general theme was that all children should take responsibility for showing kindness and friendship to others. It is concluded that the friendship seat, worthy though this might seem to be in assisting solitary pupils, did not reach expectations. By Easter 2003 the school had no plans for re-instating the friendship squad. Staff, however, had learned much from this exercise not least that other ways were needed (as the above assembly shows) to encourage positive playground relationships.

The Quiet Area

Staff had long been concerned about a lack of shade in the main playground. Additionally, there was no 'quiet' place for children to sit should they wish to do so. Furthermore, parents arriving early to collect their children had no shaded/sheltered area in which to wait. A partial solution came in the form of an awning attached to the side of the school building (following the successful installation of awnings in the reception play area). However, it was decided that a small area of seating was also required. The use of this space would be monitored by staff through informal observations.

Researcher monitoring and interpretation

At half-term (autumn 2002) the site manager was questioned about the forthcoming quiet area. It was claimed that work was about to start on site clearance and that he was seeking a suitable 'free-standing framework with

shelter'. The site manager had a very definite idea of how the finished area would look and was able to give a graphic description. As noted, work had already been delayed due to the prolonged period of time required for completing the quadrangle. Site clearance (mainly the removal of shrubs) began and the shelter was subsequently erected during the second half of the spring term 2003 (Figure 4.4b).

It is difficult to fully evaluate the impact of the quiet area because completion came close to the end of the research period. Even so, staff spoken to were in total agreement that the children were making good use of this newly developed region. It is acknowledged, however, that some of this interest may have been as a result of the 'novelty value' of the location. Again, evaluations over a longer period of time would be needed before any firm conclusions could be reached. One member of the SMT alleged the shelter was being 'well-used' but added that it was still unfinished and the ground surrounding the structure was 'going to be grassed'. Based on experiences elsewhere in the school she was about to argue for 'paving so that it can be accessed in all weathers'.

Behaviour Management Training Day

Although originally planned for, no behaviour management training day had taken place before the end of the research period (Easter 2003). There was no particular reason for this. The incoming headteacher felt it would still materialise at a future date. It was stated that he was especially keen to develop the skills of the restructured lunchtime supervisory team and that some form of training would be highly appropriate.

A change of headteacher

To complete the present study the deputy headteacher was interviewed at length (Easter 2003) prior to assuming the headship of the school. The

interview took 60 minutes and was designed to be an exchange of information. The deputy had requested feedback from the current investigation, both in respect of Brownlow infant school and with regard to innovatory practice seen elsewhere in the borough. In this manner the research project once more became a source of ideas for breaktime innovation.

To begin with, however, the deputy was questioned about his own plans for future practice. These included the supervisory assistants, as previously discussed. In addition, it had been decided that all staff would now have an alternative break during morning assembly before completing playground duty. As an express result of the present inquiry, and providing funds allowed, it was also hoped to establish direct outside access to the pupils' toilets. As headteacher designate, the deputy's vision for breaktimes was to continue to build on current performance. Playtime would therefore maintain its importance within the school. However, the school was about to undergo an extended programme of major building works. This would undoubtedly overshadow any planned improvements to breaktime.

Discussion

The above represents work in progress at Brownlow infant school. There has been active initiation and participation from some groups (for instance, issues revolving around the early years staff) but less participation from other groups (for instance, issues revolving around the midday supervisory team). Fullan (2001a, p.91) has suggested that there needs to be both pressure and support for successful change to happen. This seems to have been variable in certain circumstances (for example, financial support has been forthcoming, but there has been little in the way of pressure to encourage continuation of rope skipping activities). There have been changes in behaviour and beliefs in some situations (for instance, the reception pupils' activities) and there have been some collaborative processes.

Further improvement at Brownlow infants has meant staff have made efforts to reveal the unknown and might sometimes have been working outside their comfort zone. While the situation may be better for pupils it may conversely be markedly less so for staff and could even be detrimental, as in the case of the reception lunchbreak procedures. Thus there is still scope to improve the situation for staff, although it is acknowledged that, as declared earlier, staff view breaktimes as primarily a time for pupils regardless of any cost to themselves. Nevertheless, if improving the situation for pupils leads to better behaviour from the children then this is likely to also benefit supervising staff.

Ouston (2003, p.260) maintains that all small scale innovations need to be reviewed and modified as it is necessary to 'plan it, do it, review and study it, and change it. Then do it again, and again'. It is suggested (*ibid*) that, 'The "study" phase is of critical importance as it is here that personal theory and understandings are developed'. Monitoring and evaluation processes have varied. These have involved formal and informal observations, and a number of staff have closely assessed ongoing situations. There has also been some kind of group evaluation, most usually during discussions and sometimes in written form. In many instances goals have been reached but not universally so and sometimes there have been some unexpected outcomes. Whatever the consequences it must be remembered that change has been a learning process for all. According to Fullan (2003, p.197), 'The idea is to be a critical consumer of external ideas while working from a base of understanding and altering local context', but it should be acknowledged that, 'There is no complete answer "out there"'.

Epilogue: Changes to the primary school workforce

Although Jefferies (2004, p.20) states that 'nursery nurses have been providing care and education for children in their early years since 1945', in recent years there has been a remodelling of the school workforce. The DfES (2003) suggests that the primary sector has led the way on workforce reform. Major

changes in the LEA under review came about in the mid-1980s. Until that time, nursery nurses (early years workers) were mainly employed in a school's nursery unit (3-4 year olds). A key development therefore was the introduction of nursery nurses into reception classes (during that period the researcher was working in one of the primary schools participating in the pilot scheme). All nursery nurses are trained to work with children up to the age of eight years. All have nationally recognised qualifications (for example, a Diploma or NVQ Level 3 in Child Care). As Jefferies (*op cit*, p.21) asserts, 'Appropriately trained and qualified practitioners are vital.' Both Sealey (1996a) and Moyles and Suschitzky (1994) have concluded that nursery nurses undertake similar roles to teachers. This, of course, includes morning/afternoon playground duty. Moreover, during the last decade, 'There has been a dramatic increase in the number of support staff' (Ryall and Goddard, 2003, p.72) who 'are involved with supporting learning, discipline and pastoral care' (*ibid*).

In 1998 the Government announced the planned recruitment of 20,000 new teaching assistants (TAs). By 2001, new induction materials were published for use by LEAs, advisers, and Sencos, in the four-day initial training of TAs. 'The notion of developing an overall training framework, based on National Vocational Qualifications was put forward and the induction course was promoted as being the first fruit of the initiative' (Ryall and Goddard, *op cit*, p.73). Subsequently, new national standards, qualifications, and pay scale were introduced for teaching assistants. By 2002, it was recognised that support staff were playing increasingly important roles in schools (Howson, TES, 2002). Numerous administrative tasks (for example, bulk photocopying) now passed from teachers to TAs. The DfES (2003, p.65), maintains that teachers should now be able to focus on 'the vital processes of teaching, planning and leading children's learning'. Furthermore, teaching assistants, like their nursery nurse counterparts, joined with teachers in the breaktime supervision of the playground.

In addition, the Government was planning a career structure for TAs (Dean and Slater, TES, 2002). Although teaching assistants were identified as

requiring no formal qualifications, Sealey (1996b, p.3) acknowledged that many had 'recognised childcare qualifications' (most usually at a lower level than those of nursery nurses). Senior assistants were generally expected to have A-levels, or the equivalent, or significant experience. A specialist/managing assistant required some training in teaching techniques and many had degrees (or the equivalent). Nonetheless, it has been reported (Whittaker, TES, 2004) that, 'The typical classroom assistant is a working-class woman in her forties who has not experienced higher education.' It was also concluded that 'very few see themselves as progressing towards teaching', but that those who subsequently qualify as teachers are consequently 'very well-trained' (*ibid*).

The Teacher Training Agency (recently renamed the Training and Development Agency) was given responsibility for training these support staff. The first training providers were duly announced and they offered courses for the assessment of higher level teaching assistants (HLTA). Whittaker (*op cit*) states that the 'HLTA is not a qualification, but a recognition that a teaching assistant is operating competently against a set of national standards defined by the agency.' Furthermore, a number of universities currently offer certificates or diplomas of higher education specifically for TAs. These are increasingly being incorporated into foundation degrees (new employment-related qualifications). It has been acknowledged that the scheme of employing teaching assistants 'is a key element in the Government's strategy to reduce teachers' workloads' (Evans, 2004, p.23).

Most notably, there has been a continuing debate concerning teachers' workload. According to Mansell (TES, 2005), 'Primary teaching hours are on the rise', mainly as a result of 'growing curriculum demands'. It is stated that, 'Infant teachers are teaching an average 22 hours a week compared to 21 in 2002-3; while junior teachers' burden has risen from 23 to 24 hours.' However, despite the expansion in teaching assistant recruitment schools have frequently been unable to implement recent agreements to reduce teachers' workload (Lee, TES, 2005), and there have been difficulties in releasing

teachers for PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time. Nevertheless, it was said that 'a 50,000-strong army of support staff ... [would] be recruited by 2006 to take a broader support role in and out of the classroom' (Thomson, 2002, p.10).

Furthermore, there seem to be a number of issues relating to behaviour management at midday and the need for teachers to assist at this time. 'In many schools the job falls to senior staff whose contracts are not subject to the 1,265 hours agreement' (Roberts, TES, 2005). As indicated by the study, schools increasingly expect staff (whether teachers or support staff) to become involved in lunchtime activities or some form of supervision. Non-teaching staff are usually paid for this support, which often forms an important part of their role. Teachers frequently supervise voluntarily (although this may be due to social pressure), or alternatively lunchtime working can constitute an established part of the (paid) coordinator role.

Résumé

This chapter has sought to illuminate the process of breaktime change. In this way concepts outlined in Chapter Two, and methodological considerations described in Chapter Three, coupled with the analysis started in Chapter Four, have been brought full circle. Chapter Eight centred on innovation at Brownlow infant school. This enabled the completion of an in-depth case study at this location. There has been a reflection of the issues involved and a systematic analysis of the change process. Of particular note is that there seems to have been a multi-level approach to problem solving.

According to Hargreaves and Hopkins (1993, p.237), 'Persistence is a critical attribute of successful change'. These authors feel change efforts can easily become 'short-lived' because 'early enthusiasm' is not sustained (p.235). This seems to be particularly relevant for the main case study school. It was

also shown that when action is taken additional difficulties can arise and new problems appear. These require appraisal before the next steps can be taken. Finally, an epilogue has been included to identify changes to the primary school workforce. The closing chapter accepts limitations to the study as well as drawing a number of conclusions and making recommendations for future practice and further study.

Chapter Nine

Concluding the Investigation

Introduction

With the data analysis and presentation now completed the final chapter draws the research together by providing a brief summary and conclusions relating to the evidence found. Also explained are some limitations to the study, followed by a number of recommendations for further research and future practice. To begin with, there is an overview of the outcomes of each of the preceding five chapters. This demonstrates the main findings resulting from numerous lines of inquiry leading to the production of innovative ideas and fresh knowledge within the parameters of the investigation. In order to facilitate clarity, the discussion follows the same sequence of delivery as that originally presented.

Subsequently, it is acknowledged that there are a number of limitations to the study. These are briefly explained and, to a certain extent, defended. Following on from this, attention turns to topics of relevance concerning further research and future practice. There is a comprehensive account of wide-ranging recommendations arising directly from the data analysis. These relate to the main strands of the investigation and encompass under-explored topics, such as the effects of the weather, and issues revolving around playground supervision. Also included are suggestions pertaining to the design of new school buildings. This chapter completes the inquiry.

Findings and Conclusions

From the outset it was clear that the present study would be a substantive multi-faceted investigation. Whilst fully appreciating that an outdoor

curriculum (as in Scandinavia) could be further developed, the present study has sought to focus on the current provision of recreational breaks in a formal education system. As shown, primary sector breaktimes necessarily involve a broad range of issues. Each avenue of the inquiry has generated a considerable amount of information which has necessitated very careful analysis and subsequent reduction prior to presentation. Nevertheless, multiple strands have been included in an attempt to provide as comprehensive an examination of the subject matter as possible, facilitating breadth of coverage.

Changes in primary sector breaktimes have plainly become a key feature of this study. As previously explained (and represented in Figure 1.1), change influences come from both within and outside the school. Change is continuous and should lead to better practice (although this is not universally the case). Where change is initiated in response to perceived needs this is considered to be complex, but Welton (2000, p.xii) argues that such change develops 'the school as a learning community'. As shown, change requires the trying out of new ideas as well as rethinking and modification. This necessitates working through any problems in anticipation of finding eventual solutions.

In order to facilitate effective change it first becomes necessary to develop a clear understanding of needs. It would appear that those schools directly studied have covered this aspect and the headteachers consulted have been able to articulate the decisions previously taken (although this inquiry has largely observed the outcomes of initiatives and not the steps involved). Moreover, it is widely accepted that a consensus, or majority view, is needed or proposed innovations may fail due to a lack of engagement. This can lead to passive resistance from some sectors.

Ownership is typically deemed to be fundamental to successful implementation. As noted, this may have been lacking in some situations. It is commonly felt that if those concerned see little benefit to themselves then a half-hearted response to the proposals will follow. There may be, for

example, disquiet over increased workloads and friction can then ensue. Therefore innovation needs to be seen as advantageous rather than as irksome. If the possible benefits can be made visible there is a greater likelihood that staff will concur with proposed initiatives.

Furthermore, as indicated, changes to breaktime practice do not always survive. Once more, this might be due to an absence of staff involvement leading to continuation being lost. Sometimes the unpredictable can happen, as when staff leave a school and there is no one readily available to proceed with the change process. In addition, not all change leads to improvement. Schools directly studied appear to have generally, but not always, reached the goals set. For the present purposes it has largely been left to practitioners to judge their own practice. Most seem to be happy with what each school has achieved but, of course, there are few quantifiable outcomes for playtime management. Witnessing their own success through the realisation of set objectives may help practitioners to focus on further improvements. Pupils (as end users) and parents have been consulted and again both groups are largely content with each school's performance (although, they might have had similar feelings prior to any recent initiatives).

Crucially, evaluations of performance in the present inquiry have mainly relied on the relevant literature to provide a benchmark for what constitutes desirable breaktime practice. All relevant issues are discussed in greater detail below.

1) What changes have schools within the borough recently been making to breaktime practice?

The picture presented is patently one of development. Schools within the LEA (and presumably elsewhere) appear to have become fully aware of the need for innovation and have acted accordingly. Initiatives have occurred in various spheres. Nonetheless, the change process has sometimes been found to be problematic and outcomes have varied between schools. O'Neill (1994) maintains tensions frequently arise when historical patterns are changed.

Certainly, micropolitical aspects have shown themselves in some institutions as can be seen at Hallside juniors and Woodberry. There seems to be scope for improved relationships between the midday supervisors and management teams.

Even so, many factors have been found to support developments. The LEA has been instrumental in this respect. Training courses have been provided, for example, for those schools wishing to introduce circle time. Furthermore, extra funding has sometimes been made available (as with the now defunct Behaviour Support Services) or lunchtime activities have been presented (as with the football coaching sessions). All such provision serves to heighten schools' awareness of the need for improvement. Importantly, it is strongly maintained that the current investigation has played its own part in the development process. Most obviously, there has been the prolonged involvement with Brownlow infant school. It is argued that this association has helped to sustain the momentum of change at this institution. In addition, as discussed, primary headteachers within the borough were consulted during the survey stage. An accompanying letter outlining recent breaktime innovations was issued with the questionnaires. Headteachers may therefore have been encouraged to crystallise their thoughts regarding potential refinements to their own practice.

2) With regard to the focus schools, how do campus facilities and the cultural context of the school impact on breaktime practice?

The complexities of the change process remain and the uniqueness of each institution is again emphasised. The institutional bias, culture and ethos of the school exert an influence. Playground behaviour has accordingly varied between schools. Some schools have a culture of strong discipline (for example, Oatlands) and expectations of compliance with codes of conduct are high. Other schools experience difficulties in retaining staff and this, too, is likely to impact on the culture of the playground with a possible lack of

consistency in approach to behaviour management. Furthermore, lack of space has been found to place substantial restrictions on both practice and the potential for improvement. Importantly, lack of facilities (such as separate dining halls) and location of amenities (positioning of the welfare room and pupils' toilets) control certain procedures. Frequently, these are linked with older school buildings (although, worryingly, new schools now display such features). However, contrary to popular views (Kelly, 1994; Hendricks, 2001), some school playgrounds in this study, far from being bleak and barren lands, have often evolved to become places of interest and variety.

Provision

3) What breaktime provision and resources are currently available?

The evidence presented leads to a number of significant conclusions. Many schools do not have shaded areas (Table 4.3) or sheltered regions. In particular, if this latter amenity was available pupils could still go outside in poor climatic conditions. The canopied terraces at newer schools (Wells Green and Kitts Mount) are restricted in scope and insufficient to allow outside play in wet weather (although they do provide some respite from the sun). Playing fields receive little use as they are frequently muddy. Zoned sections require further evaluation. For example, 'quiet areas' have been seen to be far from quiet and seldom used for the designated purpose. It should be questioned as to whether these are really meeting pupils' needs, or whether instead they represent adult interpretations of supposed needs. Fixed apparatus is in short supply particularly for the older primary pupils, although most schools now supply loose equipment, especially during the lunchbreak, and so provision is being increased, apparently to great effect.

This study highlights the particular health and safety problems faced by schools with playgrounds adjacent to roadways. Internal driveways also pose potential safety problems. Security issues are raised where the main gate to

the site leads directly into the playground. According to Kirkman (TES, 2000), schools are generally able to secure their buildings but the external environment can be far more vulnerable. Moreover, health concerns are spotlighted when there are inadequate drinking water fountains as was found in a substantial number of schools (21.7 per cent). It is accepted, however, that schools may encourage pupils to bring their own drinks to school (as at Hallside). Nevertheless, greater access to drinking water facilities should be a key issue for schools to address.

4) How do the focus schools finance changes to breaktime practice?

Whatever the difficulties posed by the outdoor environment, improvements can be difficult to achieve due to financial constraints. A number of schools have financed improvements solely from their own budgets (Gatward and Woodberry) while others have sought outside assistance (Oatlands). This serves to show a level of commitment to pursue chosen objectives. Parental help has been another popular method of overcoming financial limitations (St. Mark's and Hallside). This, however, is reliant on parental ability and willingness to make a contribution and may well vary from school to school. When providing additional resources (such as loose equipment) there may be further financial implications along the way when lost or damaged apparatus must be replaced. Staff training and development is mostly financed from the school budget.

Organisation

5) How are breaktimes currently structured?

Schools have generally reduced the amount of time pupils spend at break, especially so for the older children. This could be detrimental to pupils' social experiences. (However, this may be effective in providing more time for the formal curriculum and also in eliminating potential behaviour problems during breaktime.) Crucially, reductions in breaktime come at a time when there are

increasing concerns over children's lack of physical activity. A major worry must therefore be the frequent removal of the afternoon playtime (Tables 5.3 and 5.4). Interestingly, staff opinions were found to be fairly divided on this issue. Some staff saw advantages while others identified disadvantages and it would appear that further investigation of all points raised is now needed. In some schools two-tier (staggered) breaks were in operation (segregating the age groups) due to space restrictions. Given that pupils mainly report playing with peers of the same age (Table 6.8) this is unlikely to be damaging to their social encounters and the benefits of increased play space (noted as being important to some pupil interviewees) may outweigh any other considerations.

6) What policies do schools have relating to breaktimes?

Few schools have produced a separate playtime policy (Table 5.9). Docking (1996), however, maintains this is a necessity. Many schools mention playground issues in behaviour policies (Table 5.8). Those schools directly studied also make references to breaktimes in other documents (staff induction policies and information specifically for parents). Nonetheless, the absence of an express policy for the playground seems regrettable given the many aspects involved. There appears to still be a demand for such documentation. Clearly written guidelines would serve to consolidate thinking on various aspects of playground procedures and enable staff to reinforce the school's values in this area. It would also allow parents to gain a better understanding of a school's strategies for managing breaktimes. Even so, written policy is only likely to be effective if it translates into practice in the desired manner. This should lead to greater consistency from all staff concerned.

7) How is playground induction managed at the transition stages (pre-school to infant and infant to junior)?

The majority of very young pupils within the borough benefit from some form of induction into the playground (Tables 5.10 and 5.11). As shown by the evidence from Brownlow infant school, this is highly desirable because it can

be a traumatic experience for some of these youngest pupils. Few schools are able to provide specific play areas (such as those at Gatward and Oatlands) due to space restrictions. Fortunately, new schools, like Kitts Mount, are able to incorporate Early Years Units for the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) into their design and these have separate play spaces. For pupils without this facility, who have to deal with both school and playtime, a system of 'a little at a time' ('manageable chunks') appears to offer the best solution (as at Brownlow infants). While contemporary accounts stress the importance of induction for reception pupils less is said about other transition stages. Introduction into the junior playground in an appropriate manner may be highly favourable for some pupils. Few schools take this into account (Tables 5.12 and 5.13). It is recognised though that this may be unnecessary in some primary schools where all age groups share the same playtime facilities.

8) Do schools experience problems with indoor breaktimes?

Inside playtimes have been found to be an area of major concern and they have substantial repercussions on the working life of the school. Headteachers report inside lunchtimes to be especially problematic. Other staff see all indoor breaks as presenting problems. It is noted that there is perceived to be a tremendous impact on pupils' behaviour when they are unable to spend playtime outside. Some staff have suggested children could go out in wet weather. A wide variety of alternative activities was discovered to be in operation for indoor breaktimes. A number of schools provide exceptionally well for pupils on these occasions (Gatward and Hallside juniors in particular), while others have scant provision (Oatlands). One school (Hallside infants) was found to keep the children together for a story when the weather was inclement (excluding the reception pupils), although this may not be desirable. There appears to be no ideal solution and whatever the provision during indoor breaktime the resultant deteriorations in pupils' behaviour are reported to be the same. Some interviewees suggested there was a strong need for all-weather under-cover areas. All breaks could then be spent outside.

9) What are parental attitudes towards breaktimes in the focus schools?

From the evidence obtained at some schools it is determined that a number of parents may have limited knowledge of actual playground happenings as, most usually, only scant information is provided by schools in written communications. Parents sometimes base their opinions on their earlier childhood experiences. Where these were not positive, parents expressed concerns for their own child. Nevertheless, parents were generally very supportive of each school's endeavours and were inclined to value playtime for the opportunities it brought for children to socialise with friends. As one parent at Brownlow infants explained, playtimes are important in children's lives because the time is one for 'making memories'. (This has a ring of truth, of course, as parents often had clear recollections of their own breaktime encounters.) Where problems had occurred with their own child these had been dealt with satisfactorily by the school. In terms of further improvement little was mentioned although the need for some form of shade/shelter was occasionally noted (in keeping with suggestions by some staff). In addition, a few parents expressed their dislike of climbing apparatus (in contrast to children's desired wants). Some parents appreciated the increase in structured activities at lunchtimes. Others valued children's freedom of choice. (It is acknowledged, however, that greater samples of parents' would need to be consulted.)

Socialisation

10) In the focus schools, what are pupils' playground experiences and behaviour?

Blatchford (1998) suggests that not all pupils enjoy breaktime. However, in this study the overwhelming majority of children consulted were extremely

positive about playtimes. This may be as a result of recent improvements to practice. Breaktimes are frequently enjoyed as an escape from formal work and also as an opportunity to be with friends (Table 6.1). This is in keeping with previous accounts. It is acknowledged, too, that such a break may be all the more important and welcomed by pupils in times when there is a substantial emphasis on instruction and academic achievement. As indicated, there are some gender differences in respect of playground games. This may impact on provision. Equal opportunities is an important issue that could be catered for in a playground policy.

Pupils were generally found to choose play partners from a variety of cultural backgrounds in multi-racial settings in the focus schools. Racial harmony seems to be a strong feature in those schools with pupils from a wide diversity ethnic minority backgrounds. This may be attributable to the ethos of the school and integration, resulting in 'extended contact' (Cameron *et al*, 2006, p.1216) by children from various cultures. Few children were observed playing traditional games, although games of chase were frequently mentioned as a pastime. Pupils also stated they played a greater variety of games than the observational evidence denotes. No firm conclusions are therefore drawn from this particular data and Blatchford claims it is necessary 'to be cautious about the accuracy and validity of pupils' accounts' (1998, p.23).

Children's playground behaviour was generally found to be at an acceptable level. All the same, in some settings there was a great deal of what appeared to be low level complaining. This was most apparent at schools like Brownlow. As explained, social disadvantage is said to be associated with less desirable conduct. This seems one possible explanation for the differences observed as Haigh (TES, 2001) concludes home backgrounds contribute to playground behaviour (although greater provision of loose equipment may also be of value in this situation). The evidence in this study suggests schools located in higher socio-economic areas may have pupils who are less demanding of adult attention and who are far more inclined to play independently in the playground, perhaps related to up-bringing (Byrne,

2006). Nonetheless, this conclusion is based on a single researcher's impressions and more robust evidence is therefore required.

Playful fighting was observed at all locations. This was mainly, but not solely, confined to boys. The majority of incidents ended quickly and affably. In spite of this overall generally positive picture of playground life (the 'romantic' view, Blatchford, 1996), problems were observed, particularly as pupils with behavioural difficulties are now more prevalent in main stream schools (Blatchford, 1998). Entrancing and exiting the play space presents some schools with a dilemma. Much depends upon the location of the playground in relation to exits and the number of entrances available. Whether class lines are an appropriate mode of re-entry is open to debate. Clearly this system can work extremely well (Hallside and St. Mark's) or not (Brownlow). The most favoured system observed was at Wells Green where pupils were simply able to return directly through open classroom doors. The same was true of the infant children at Woodberry. Fortunately, the designers of new schools appear to have taken this into account (Figure 4.18b).

11) What social support systems are now provided in regard to the perceived breaktime needs of pupils?

Where buddies had been well trained in their roles 'friendship squads' worked extremely well (Hallside). Buddies were less successful where training was scant and pupils may have lacked the necessary skills to carry out the role successfully (Brownlow). Friendship seats (or stops) were not observed to be of any great benefit, but this conclusion is based on limited evidence and should be treated with caution. At some schools additional support through extra-curricular activities was the norm. This possibly contributed to the largely high levels of behaviour observed in the playgrounds visited. Social skills training (circle time) has also been adopted in the majority of the borough's schools (82.6 per cent). This, too, may well have contributed to little desultory behaviour being witnessed. In addition, it is accepted that pupils might have been presenting themselves in a better light when under observation.

12) In the focus schools, what are pupils' attitudes, perceptions and wants in relation to breaktimes?

As previously stated, pupils spoken to overwhelmingly enjoy breaktimes and seem to appreciate the freedom and time to spend with friends. Some pupils were totally happy with the status quo and wanted little else provided. Climbing apparatus and fixed and loose equipment were popular with many children. Surface markings were rarely used. Pupils spoken to expressed a liking for the variety of extra-curricular activities provided at lunchtime (especially at Gatward). So, although there are numerous arguments to suggest adults should not encroach on pupils' free time, the pupils themselves appear to welcome adult-directed activities. Children disliked breaktime for reasons centering on being physically hurt or emotionally wounded (falling out with friends). While it would appear to be largely unfounded, many pupils see the playground as being a place of much aggression. Children expressed a need (in contrast to parental opinions) for more fixed climbing apparatus, together with increased sundry items of loose equipment.

Supervision

13) How are breaktimes and lunchtime playtimes supervised and what is the supervisory role?

14) What are the attitudes, perceptions and needs of those who supervise both breaktimes and the midday session?

Morning / Afternoon Playtime

One of the most striking features of the current investigation is the finding that break duty has such a substantial impact on most of those involved. In keeping with many other aspects of playtimes, changes have been occurring in the domains of playground duty. Nowadays, with increasing numbers of non-

teaching staff in schools, monitoring the play space is no longer the sole province of teachers. Supervision most usually consists of 'policing' the play area, although there is some evidence of changes to this role with adults becoming play leaders instead (Wells Green). It is customary for two or three adults to be supervising morning/afternoon break. For the majority of staff, playground duty is undertaken on a once or twice weekly basis (Table 7.2). Headteachers are not generally involved and deputy headteachers rarely so, although they do have demands on their time during the lunchbreak.

Crucially, break duty has powerful consequences for the majority of adults concerned. There is some evidence to denote that the repercussions of completing this task are greater for teaching staff (due to reduction in lesson preparation time). Again, this conclusion must be treated with caution because of the relatively low number of non-teaching staff, in total, consulted in the focus schools. What is particularly revealing is the lack of any alternative break given to duty personnel (Table 7.4). This is judged to compound any problems encountered by those involved. It is especially noticeable that recently qualified teachers experience exceptional difficulties in fulfilling this role. There was a general consensus from this group that specific training for this task would have been useful. Other curriculum demands, however, might mean this would be difficult to achieve.

What is especially interesting is that there was no universal dislike of playground supervision, as some commentators have suggested (Evans, 1994). Intriguingly, those staff interviewed varied in their responses (Tables 7.5 and 7.8). For many, breaktime monitoring was simply seen as a 'duty' (just an expected part of the job, which, of course, it is). Furthermore, it was found that even when not supervising the playground many staff do not appear to encounter playtime as a pleasant social interlude in a very busy day. Instead, break is often a time to complete various aspects of the job. According to Haigh (TES, 2004), if break became 'a pleasurable experience for staff, the resulting morale boost would be out of all proportion to the effort involved'. Some staff saw further improvements in terms of 'more constructive play' which could be achieved through teaching games and reinforcement of more

desirable social attitudes underlined at circle time. As with some parents, a number of staff also saw the need for more shade/shelter in the playground. This seems to be an aspect of significance, not only for the previously mentioned opportunities for increased outdoor play but also with regard to health issues and sun protection.

Lunchtime

The data show lunchtime supervision to be an increasingly complex and sometimes thorny issue. The supervisory role appears to have taken on a new dimension and midday supervisors are gradually being required to become play leaders (alongside their usual duties). This can cause problems as shown at Brownlow infants and elsewhere. Furthermore, teaching assistants are currently being employed on the basis of also working alongside supervisory assistants during the lunchbreak in some schools. This would be expected to lead to greater consistency in playground monitoring. One school was discovered to employ only classroom assistants to cover the midday session. In addition, some midday supervisors have taken on second jobs as classroom assistants and now have dual roles. This may be beneficial and raise the SAs' status, although having both jobs was found to be too demanding for some.

Moreover, a number of other staff are now carrying out a wide variety of additional activities at lunchtimes. Regardless of whether these are paid, or unpaid, the DfEE reveals that, where teaching staff are concerned, 'they do not form part of a teacher's contracted 1265 hours' (NPQH, Unit 4.2, 2001, p.17). Where teachers are involved in the midday session it is likely there is a further reduction in valuable preparation time; but this is a conclusion which once more requires further investigation. Nevertheless, lunchbreak activities obviously result in an increased workload. As it happens, teachers' workload is an issue of much current debate (Timperley and Robinson, 2003). The trend towards some form of lunchtime supervision (found at Brownlow infants and elsewhere) might therefore be judged as particularly relevant to the workload

discourse. Added to this, there is also considerable dispute as to whether or not it is desirable for adults to control what should be pupils' free time.

The majority of midday supervisors within the LEA have now received some form of training (Table 7.11). This is in keeping with recommendations in contemporary accounts (Ross and Ryan, 1990; Titman, 1992; Blatchford, 1996; Rose, TES, 1999, 2000; Ryall and Goddard, 2003). However, opinions as to its usefulness were polarised. There were mixed responses, too, as to whether there should be further training, and also with regard to any form of career development. This may be linked to length of service with newer recruits feeling more positive towards these issues than longstanding employees. Supervisors, nevertheless, were generally found to be satisfied with their role, although there was an underlying feeling that this was a low status job.

One noteworthy aspect of lunchtime supervision was the manner in which SAs carried out their duties and the teamwork involved. Teamwork at Brownlow infant school appeared to lead to increased self-esteem and improved effectiveness. Humour was a vital ingredient, which seemed to define the group and contribute to improved commitment and higher energy levels. The leadership of the senior supervisor was another salient factor in the outstanding performance of this group. She was more than able to co-ordinate the work of the team, provide advice, and attend to numerous duties of her own. Supervisory teams at other schools, although working well, did not seem to aspire to the overall level of this group. Of importance, too, was the supervisory group's positive relationship with the headship team. Performance is doubtless enhanced when supervisors feel they are valued members of the school community. This was not apparent at all schools and some headteachers expressed distinct frustration with the ostensibly negative stance taken by some supervisory cohorts.

Further Research

15) How can breaktime practice be further improved?

During the past few years the popularity of playtime improvement seems to have increased dramatically. Effectively there appears to have been an explosion in breaktime reform. While some staff have been embracing these changes, others see them as both uncomfortable and threatening. At a time when a number of radical alternatives for breaktime management are being suggested, there may be a need for some staff to feel a greater sense of involvement and commitment to clear sets of goals in clear operating environments. This should help to accelerate the achievement of those goals. The concomitant of this argument is that collaboration can be an appropriate mode for sustaining improvement.

Change is a continuous process. Careful monitoring is required if initiatives are ultimately going to be successful. Blandford (2001, p.137) claims that, 'If plans are not monitored, it will not be possible to determine whether objectives have been achieved'. What seems to be evident from this inquiry is that, although the individuality of schools is acknowledged, there are likely to be many common problems where the management of breaktimes is concerned. Most notably, difficulties occur during the lunchbreak. Nonetheless, there is judged to be no single path to favourable improvement which would suit all schools. Each institution is likely to have to find its own road to effective practice. What is successful in one situation may not necessarily translate satisfactorily to another.

Furthermore, what is judged as effective practice by one school may not be judged as such by another. In this study, even schools identifying their practice as good still sometimes had issues that were problematic (for example, getting some sectors of staff to move forward). It is apparent, however, that not all schools involve pupils in the development process and this is likely to result in less successful conclusions. It is also strongly felt that schools can learn much from each other and that there are numerous shared

dilemmas. This might be achieved through joint INSET sessions whereby schools could collaborate to share their learning for the benefit of others in similar situations (Glatter *et al*, 1993). In this manner schools could build on each other's successes and aid continuation, thus leading to more effective outcomes.

Limitations to the Research

At the outset it was intended to provide a theoretically informed study with a thorough evidence-based evaluation of current procedures on which to base future practice. Whilst it is argued that this has largely been achieved the current investigation does accept certain limitations and thus potential for development. Firstly, the inquiry has been confined to one Local Education Authority. Augmenting this data with research obtained outside this region might give a broader picture of the situation. Secondly, although there are special schools catering for the primary age group within the LEA these have not been included. The evidence obtained has therefore been confined to mainstream schools.

In addition, while the rate of questionnaire returns is judged to be very acceptable (71.9 per cent) certain questions were not included. For example, the specific dimensions of the playground in relation to the number of pupils might have been of especial interest given that lack of space has been highlighted as a particular problem. Nevertheless, it was felt that questions needed to be kept to a minimum to allow speedy completion. The inclusion of more complex lines of inquiry may well have resulted in a smaller percentage of returned papers thus proving to be counter-productive. In view of this, the questionnaires, additionally, did not seek detailed knowledge regarding the actual process of change or any problems encountered, although this, too, would undoubtedly have reaped some useful data.

Furthermore, no questions were asked as to the exact timing of assembly. With hindsight this would have revealed those schools with assembly prior to morning breaktime. This is a significant issue because of the potential for schools to, comparatively easily, free staff for an alternative break. Another point of note is that headteachers' assessments of their own practice at both breaktimes and lunchtimes could have been placed on a more finely tuned scale. One difficulty with this, however, is that it was considered unlikely that respondents would acknowledge their practice to be in very low categories. A wider sample of follow up interviews with headteachers might also have been arranged to include those identifying less than satisfactory practice (only the Brownlow junior headteacher was consulted in this category). A richer seam of data would thereby have been obtained and a more balanced approach achieved, but time constraints made this problematic.

Direct observation of induction procedures for reception pupils at a number of schools would produce greater understanding of the issues involved in this important area. Again, time constraints made this impracticable for the current study. A wider sample of parents interviewed at the focus schools would also have led to better understanding of parental opinions. Moreover, the specific targeting of different categories of staff (teaching and non-teaching) is now called for to assess any contrasting attitudes between these groups. It is argued, however, that the present investigation provides a beneficial step towards an increasingly thorough review of contemporary practice in this field.

Implications and Additional Developments

It is concluded that constructive change in the management of primary sector breaktimes is taking place. The cultural context of each school can be viewed as a significant variable in the change process. Successful outcomes are sometimes difficult to achieve due to the individuality of schools and the raft

of variables unique to each setting. Accordingly, the development needs of each school tend to vary. Developments undertaken are largely in keeping with proposals for improvement located in the contemporary breaktime literature and this has been used as a frame of reference. A fully holistic approach has yet to be achieved in those schools studied. While recent notions of breaktime improvement may appeal to practitioners, in the real world implementation can prove to be problematic.

For goals to be reached there needs to be a willingness on the part of those involved to both implement and sustain developments. This does not appear to always be the case. Furthermore, unexpected events may hinder progress and result in a lack of attainment of desired objectives. Real and profound change may thus take time. What is judged as improvement seems to be context dependent and relates to the start and end points at each location, together with the subjective assessments of practitioners. Much progress appears to have been made within the domains of the study. Additional progress is possible. A framework of ideas for future development is therefore given below.

A number of recommendations are now presented to conclude the study. These stem directly from the evaluations of practice submitted in earlier chapters and the conclusions which have subsequently been made. To effect additional improvements it is therefore suggested that:

- Further thought should be given to the way in which breaktime is conceptualised; this will determine how it is to be managed (that is, whether it is seen simply as a break from formal work or whether, instead, it is viewed as a time for purposeful play and activity).
- School playing fields require further investigation. Evaluation is needed as to their overall benefit because these quite clearly appear to be an under-used resource.
- The development and effectiveness of 'quiet areas' in playgrounds requires careful attention and investigation in order to ascertain pupils' actual needs, as do friendship seats and friendship squads.

- Adventure play areas and fixed climbing apparatus (especially for the older pupils) are considered to be much needed additions to the school campus.
- Additional drinking water facilities are required in some playgrounds as these appear to be sadly lacking.
- Schools might evaluate the ease of access at playtimes of both the welfare and toilet facilities. Wherever practical, beneficial changes should be made (for instance, relocation of the medical room and direct outside access for the toilets).
- Where facilities and supervision allow, schools might consider an additional range of (indoor) free choice activities during the lunchbreak (as at Brownlow infants).
- Board games and similar pursuits could be provided for table-top use in areas of seating, thus assisting in the elimination of illicit climbing.
- Giving pupils greater responsibility for loose playground equipment (perhaps on a class basis) might lead to increased care and accountability resulting in a reduction of damage or loss.
- Budgetary decisions need to be evaluated. Knowledge gained could be shared with other schools in order that any expensive mistakes are not repeated.
- A separate policy document that integrates all playground issues would be advantageous. Items for consideration include:
 - Safety / Security / Health issues
 - Entrance / Exit procedures
 - Organisation of playground equipment and distribution
 - Playground games and activities
 - Training for playground monitors and buddies
 - Playground 'code of conduct'
 - Links with behaviour and anti-bullying policies
 - Links with social skills training (circle time)
 - Lines of communication for relaying playground matters to parents
 - Wet breaktime procedures
 - Wet lunchtime procedures

- Induction procedures for reception pupils and (where appropriate) Year 3 pupils
 - Induction procedures for new staff regarding playground supervision
 - An explanation of the supervisory role and expectations
 - Rewards and sanctions
 - Injured pupils and first aid procedures
 - Consistency of approach between breaktime and lunchtime supervision
- Careful attention should be given to the structure of the school day. In particular, further research is required into the effects on pupils of reductions in breaktime.
 - Further research is required into the efficacy of the removal of set playtimes.
 - The induction into the playground of the very youngest pupils requires close attention and investigation. The needs of Year 3 pupils also deserve due attention.
 - If pupils are to remain inside the building during inclement weather then suitable equipment is essential (i.e. 'wet play boxes'). If different activities are provided for each class these could be rotated across the year groups.
 - Schools should explore the possibility of providing an adequate covered area, which would enable pupils outside access in all weather conditions (even if this was only sufficiently spacious to permit pupils to have a 10 minute break on a rota basis). The effect on pupils of remaining inside the building needs urgent investigation as there appears to be a pressing demand to eradicate many of the problems associated with wet weather playtimes.
 - Parents should be given a 'voice' when decisions are being made about playground improvements. This does not happen in all schools.
 - Parents could easily be supplied with greater information than at present about playground happenings. This might take the form of regular additions to existing newsletters.

- Pupils should be included in decisions about breaktime matters. This is not in operation at all schools. Where pupils are involved successful outcomes are more likely to result.
- Allowing pupils freedom of choice to participate in any adult-directed activities is to be preferred. Nonetheless, pupils experiencing particular difficulties may require additional guidance. It is recommended that this be undertaken by *suitably trained staff*.
- Consistency of supervision between breaktimes and lunchtimes (and of course between supervising adults) should be promoted. This is more easily achieved when the same adults are involved in both. It is again an issue for further investigation.
- Given the substantial repercussions that undertaking break duty has on individual staff it is recommended that newly qualified teachers be relieved of all such duties during their induction year. This is a particularly vulnerable group.
- It is tentatively suggested, however, that, more generally, teaching staff could now be removed from the obligations of playground supervision. This would not only have the benefit of reducing their workload (of non-teaching tasks) but would serve to facilitate better teaching through enhanced lesson preparation and decreased stress levels. It is argued that this idea could be piloted, monitored and evaluated in a sample of schools; although it is accepted that this would need to be approached in an appropriate manner as it could be a source of controversy. Sassoon (TES, 2003) acknowledges that, 'If a school reduces the workload of one cadre of staff, the workload of another is bound to increase'.
- Playtime supervision at all times could (mainly) be provided by non-teaching staff.
- Any staff member supervising morning (or afternoon) breaktime should have access to an alternative break. This could be provided by cover from another staff member or by withdrawal from assembly.
- Whoever assumes responsibility for playground supervision would probably benefit from general guidance and therefore some form of training is recommended.

- The gradual phasing out of lunchtime supervisory assistants might be advantageous. Alternatively, a mixture of both midday supervisors and teaching assistants or SA/TAs (as seen at a number of schools) may be viewed as one way forward for playground monitoring.
- If midday supervisors (and others) are to receive appropriate training for the increasing complexities of this role the following areas (extending ideas presented by Rose, TES, 2000) can usefully be included:
 - First aid
 - Behaviour management
 - Dealing with bullying
 - Dealing with special needs pupils
 - How to make ‘informed and accurate distinctions between playful and real fighting’ (Schafer and Smith, 1996, p.180).
 - Encouraging equal opportunities
 - Developing positive relationships with pupils
 - Having authority without being authoritarian
 - Introducing playground games
 - Playleadership skills – encouraging play opportunities without taking over the play
 - Teamwork issues
 - Raising self-esteem
 - Indoor breaktime procedures.

It is strongly recommended that all training courses be accredited towards appropriate qualifications for *all* staff working with children.

- Recommendations regarding the design of new school buildings include:
 - Playground security
 - Location of the welfare room to facilitate easy outdoor access.
 - Pupils’ toilets having direct outdoor access (as well as inside access).

- There should be separate dining facilities. To plan otherwise (i.e. use of school hall) is felt to be a false economy.
- Covered areas are required to allow outside play in inclement weather conditions.
- It is desirable to have extra rooms for lunchtime activities. These could be put to very good use for small group activities throughout the day (but obviously require additional finance and so may be seen as a Utopian request).

Contribution

This thesis has adopted an adventurous approach by constructing a fully comprehensive investigation into a multiplicity of disparate themes relevant to primary school breaktimes. It has pioneered the integration, as an analysis tool, of concepts from management literature applicable to educational institutions. There has been a focus on change in the domains of the study thereby affording a new synthesis of the various elements involved. In turn, this has engendered the identification of fresh concerns relating to contemporary topics, together with aspects absent from previous studies. Overall these have included: the impact of campus facilities on breaktimes; the appraisal of recent innovations such as zoned playground regions and pupils' social support systems; difficulties arising from climatic conditions; playtime induction; and human resource management in respect of breaktime supervision, together with significant changes to the supervisory role. In total, this has resulted in an exhaustive inquiry which has taken into account a number of under-explored strands in this particular field, leading to recommendations for both improved and original practice.

This study has therefore advanced knowledge by:

- Establishing a more comprehensive synthesis than is generally found in literature in this domain. Primary research quickly confirmed that

there were a number of diverse strands involved in the management of breaktimes. It was decided that clarity could best be served by grouping the various elements into four categories: provision; organisation; socialisation and supervision. These are expanded upon in Figure 1.3.

- Developing a thorough analysis via literature on breaktimes and related issues and where relevant on the management of educational change. The breaktime literature has been used as a frame of reference for what might arguably be termed 'best practice'. Importantly, the initial data revealed a need to adopt a second literature to fully reflect the findings. These two elements have therefore been combined to facilitate an original interpretation of the data obtained.
- Accounting for the culture, ethos, institutional bias and individuality of the schools studied. Individuality (incorporating culture, ethos and institutional bias) emerged as a salient feature of the study. This was reflected in the character of the playground, the challenges faced by each institution and how well these were being met, together with the resulting levels of performance.
- Investigating the restrictions imposed by campus facilities such as the location of entrances/exits, dining amenities, pupils' lavatories and welfare (medical) arrangements. This is a significant area for research and development. It soon became apparent from the observations that campus facilities were having noteworthy consequences for breaktime practice. Individual schools differed in the manner in which the inevitable pre-set boundaries of the campus buildings were impacting upon procedures. There were resultant repercussions on pupils' behaviour in a number of instances, although difficulties were overcome by some schools through innovative ideas, particularly in the case of medical arrangements.
- Evaluating recent changes to playground induction systems with special reference to the youngest pupils. Research in the main focus school established induction arrangements as a prime area of concern. Even with high levels of adult support, some children find their initial

encounters with playground life difficult. Additional investigation is urgently required.

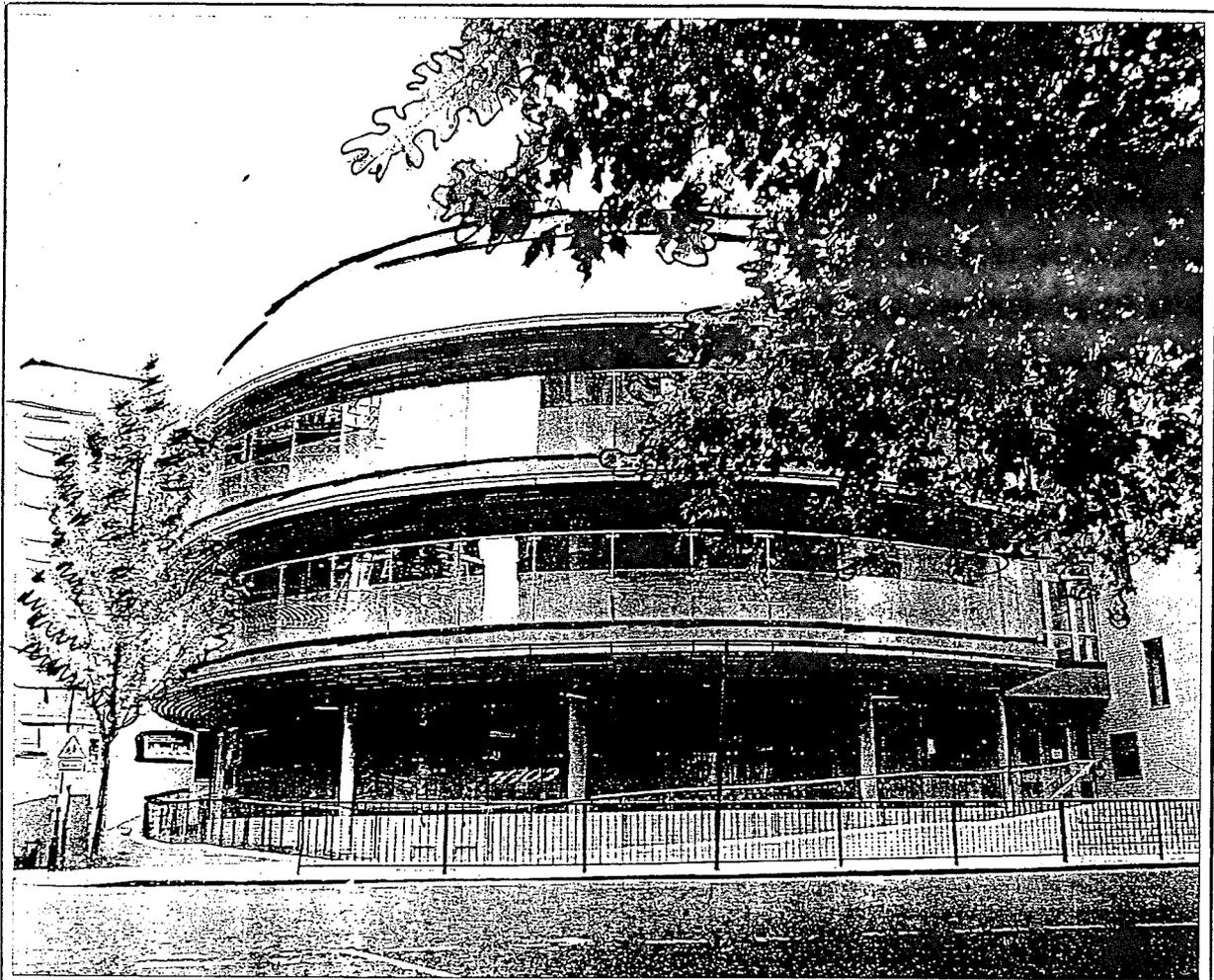
- Assessing repercussions arising from indoor breaktimes. It has been shown by this study that all schools investigated report detrimental changes in pupils' behaviour when breaktimes are taken inside the building. It is therefore deduced that this has serious consequences for the formal learning situation. Although more research is required, it is concluded that the best solution may be for pupils to be outside for all playtimes (with suitable shelter).
- Appraising recent innovations such as quiet areas of seating, 'friendship squads', peer mentoring, 'friendship seats' and extra-curricular lunchtime activities. It was discovered that recent innovations (quiet areas, friendship squads, peer mentoring, friendship seats) do not always live up to expectations (although training and approach of befrienders and mentors is likely to be crucial). Extra-curricular lunchtime activities appear to be popular with pupils but the dilemma of adult-directed activities encroaching on children's free time remains.
- Analysing the impact of morning/afternoon break duty on supervising staff, including newly qualified teachers. These were found to be issues for especial concern, requiring much greater thought. The outcomes of undertaking break duty, related to added stress and restricted professional performance, can easily impact on pupils' learning. This is a serious matter which is in need of further attention (possibly by greater use of support and ancillary staff).
- Providing an evaluation of the effectiveness of midday supervisory teams and the senior supervisory assistant. A neglected area of research is the teamwork of the supervisory assistants, coupled with the role and leadership skills of the senior midday assistant. The findings indicate that senior supervisors are required to multi-task to a great extent if they are to be effective team leaders. Furthermore, relationships within the supervisory group are found to be of crucial importance for maximising performance and for job satisfaction.

- Assessing the training needs of midday supervisory assistants and any potential career development. The research reveals that training is now widespread but also that there is a variable response from supervisors as to its usefulness. Further investigation might lead to notions as to what type of training would be better suited to meet the needs of those concerned. Career development was not shown to be a salient issue for many supervisors, but it may well be that this is a job that attracts candidates for its convenience value (for example, having own child at the school) rather than appealing to those who are ambitious career-wise.
- Analysing the changing role of midday supervisors and the creation of new posts, together with an investigation into the greater variety of staff performing lunchtime supervision. The observational evidence shows that new roles for supervisory assistants are being developed but that these can be problematic. Supervisory assistants are often resistant to the greater demands being placed upon them. There is likely to be some justification for this as there are already numerous demands being made upon their time. Nonetheless, dual roles (supervisory/teaching assistant) are becoming more popular. Greater consistency in playground supervision may result. Teachers also participate in various lunchtime activities, although it is deduced that this could be increasing workload pressures.
- Providing a fresh evaluation of change and the effectiveness of outcomes. It can certainly be a productive learning curve for staff to develop practice in breaktime related areas (as witnessed at the main focus school). Nevertheless, there seems to be little point in working hard to identify winning themes in the breaktime domain if this does not result in the implementation and continuation of ideas. As such, there can be sharply diverging fortunes with regard to individual schools reaching effective conclusions. Furthermore, ideas of good practice are likely to vary between schools depending upon the subjective judgements of those involved, the problems faced, and the remaining difficulties.
- Providing a substantive update on contemporary breaktime practice.

The study has concluded by providing numerous proposals for future development, as well as identifying areas requiring additional research.

In conclusion, a recently opened school in Westminster, central London, shows one way of solving the problems of outside play in poor weather. According to Bloom (TES, 2002), Hampden Gurney primary school (not a pseudonym) sets a trend in new school design (Figure 9.1). Importantly, 'the play area for the new school is contained within the building itself: a series of semi-circular playgrounds dominate its south side, stacked on top of each other. Each is protected by a 1.9 metre-high barrier of laminated, stadium-strength glass'. This is a particularly interesting development in the light of findings from the current study although Grenier (2003, p.10) maintains the rubber-surfaced playdecks lead to a 'dramatic reduction in children's freedom of movement' and there is nowhere to play football. It is not suggested that all schools should be constructed in this manner (without green areas) but simply that more imaginative thinking is required by those responsible for designing modern school buildings.

Figure 9.1 Hampden Gurney primary school



All-weather play: behind the facade Hampden Gurney primary in London contains a stacked system of ventilated recreational areas

Résumé

Chapter Nine has served to complete the investigation. The chapter provided a summary and conclusions evolving from data analysed and presented in previous chapters. In addition, limitations to the research have been discussed and recommendations have been made for further inquiry and future practice. Initially, a synopsis of evidence provided by preceding chapters led to a number of relevant conclusions being formed. It was maintained that the complexities of change make this an individual process with variable outcomes. Site conditions impose restrictions on both practice and the possibilities for development. The weather was found to be an aspect of importance and issues revolving around playground supervision are a matter of significance.

New ideas, however, do not always live up to initial expectations. This was found to be the situation with certain 'quiet areas' and measures introduced to help isolated pupils. Nonetheless, schools have made progress in a number of areas, including induction for the youngest pupils and the advent of more interesting play spaces. Even so, few schools were found to have evolved a specific policy for playtimes, although this was judged to be a useful document for collating the multiplicity of strands relevant to playground practice. It was also strongly maintained that clusters of schools could collaborate and share their ideas.

While it was determined that the current study has played a significant part in encouraging change it was additionally accepted that the inquiry had a number of limitations. Most notably, these concerned questions that were not asked during the course of the investigation. However, substantial recommendations were made for further research and also to enhance future practice. These included some innovatory ideas regarding playground supervision, wet weather procedures, and the design of new school buildings. Change, as has been stated, is a continuous process. Recognising the importance of monitoring and evaluating any changes once they have been implemented is a

necessary requirement in this process. Schools are exhibiting a greater awareness of the needs of pupils at breaktime but, as the DfEE argues, 'Change is continual and what is successful today may not work for very long' (NPQH, Unit 3.2, 2001, p.24).

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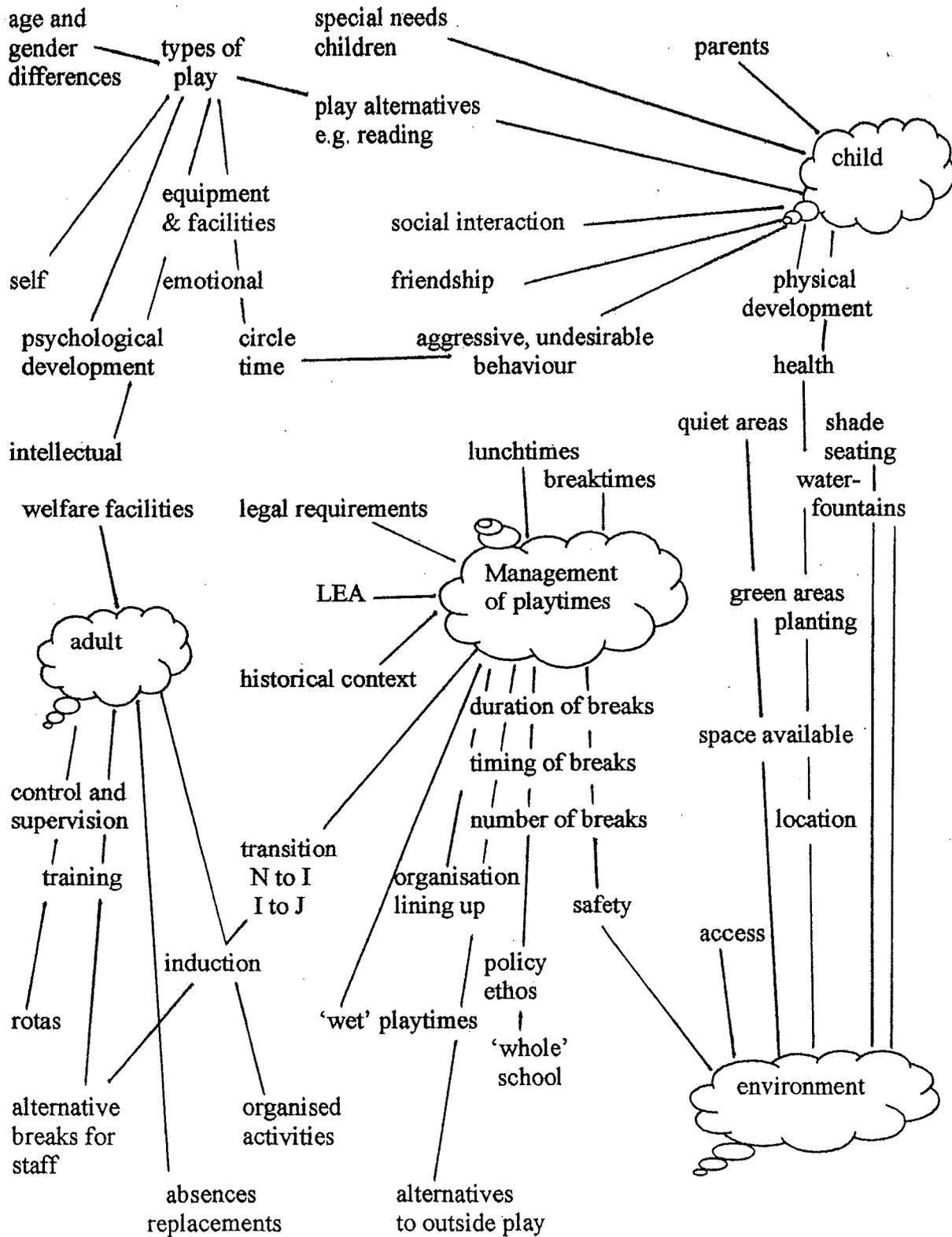
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APPENDIX 1 Mind mapping breaktime issues



APPENDIX 2

Games and playground activities from the past and present

From Wilderspin (1840) cited in Raymont (1937): An early playground

It was judged that 200 infant pupils should have a playground of at least 80ft by 60 ft. According to Wilderspin, the playground should be 'well regulated' that is to say that two 'rotatory swings' ought to be provided – one for the girls and the other for the boys. However, the choice of activity was to be left to the children themselves. It is noted that 'Samuel Wilderspin thought he was making a generous concession when he wrote that it must not be accounted a sin for a lively girl to laugh in the playground' (Raymont, 1937, p.301).

Playground games from the early twentieth century (Walker, 1989)

Keep the pot-a-boiling – slides on the ice in the school playground.

Follow my leader – a crocodile of children would follow a selected leader and copy his/her actions.

Release - Two teams were picked. The pursuers chased the releasers and each 'prisoner' was returned to a 'den'. Those not caught were expected to release the prisoners (unobserved) while shouting 'release'.

Cigarette cards - used for a variety of games such as 'pitching' (lapping one card on another), 'knocking down' (pitching a card to knock down another which was placed upright against a wall) and 'dropsy' (touching the edge of a wall with a card).

Cherry Oggs - cherry stones were collected and used for a game similar to marbles.

Green Man, Green Man Riser - a game of hide and seek.

Five Ten - a chip of slate was placed on the ground in front of a wall. A ball was aimed at the slate.

Games from the mid-twentieth century (Opie and Opie, 1969)

Fox and chickens - the chaser has to hop while the remaining players can run.

Gee - when seen the hidiers chase the seekers.

Prisoners' base - players from opposing teams try to intercept opponents before they catch or release other players.

Come to Coventry - hidiers are made captive simply by being seen, but can be freed merely by the sight of the rescuer.

May I? - competitors have to obey the commands of a third party.

Peep behind the curtain - progress dependent on not being seen to move.

Games of the present day (as reported by the child interviewees)

Royal Rumble – a circle game.

Duck, Duck, Goose – chasing around a circle.

Black shoe, black shoe – action song.

Men in Black – ‘police’ shooting tigers.

Hot wheels – chasing a ‘burglar’.

Batman, Spider man, James Bond – imaginative play games (boys).

Monsters – imaginative play (boys).

Witches and fairies – girls’ imaginative play.

APPENDIX 3 Numbers of Interviewees

Questionnaires Distributed 64	Questionnaires Returned 46 (71.9%)
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Number of Interviewees

School	Staff (Teachers, TAs & NNs)	SAs	Newly/ recently qualified teachers	Children	Parents
Brownlow infant school (main case study)	24	10	3	36	18
Hallside infant school	4	3	0	6	{10 (group)}
Hallside junior school	4	3	1	8	
Gatward primary school	4	3	1	14	1
Woodberry primary school	4	3	1	14	1
Oatlands primary school	4	3	1	14	1
St. Mark's C of E primary school	4	3	1	14	2
TOTALS	48	28	8	106	33

All headteachers of the above schools were interviewed.

At Brownlow infant school in addition to the above, the deputy headteacher, welfare assistant, administrative assistant and site manager were also interviewed.

At Brownlow junior school the headteacher, senior supervisory assistant / classroom assistant and three teachers were consulted about practice at the school. In addition, a small group of Year 6 volunteers interviewed 16 of their peers.

APPENDIX 4

Interview schedules: staff and supervisory assistants

Interview schedule: teachers and non-teaching staff

- 1) What are your views about playtimes?
- 2) What are your views about playground duty?
- 3) Does doing duty impact on your day in any way?
- 4) What do you feel about not having an afternoon playtime (where relevant)?
- 5) What are your views about 'wet' playtimes?
- 6) Are there any changes you would like to see?

Interview schedule: supervisory assistants

- 1) Do you have children at this school?
- 2) How long have you been doing this job?
- 3) Why did you choose to do this job?
- 4) What are your views about SA training sessions?
- 5) Would you like to see a career structure?
- 6) Are there any changes you would like to see to lunchtimes?

Note: Headteachers were asked follow up questions to questionnaire responses.

APPENDIX 5

Interview schedules: pupils and parents

Interview schedule: pupils

- 1) Do you enjoy playtimes?
- 2) What do you do in the playground?
- 3) Who do you play with?
- 4) What are the best things about playtimes?
- 5) What are the worst things about playtimes?
- 6) Is there anything you would like to do at playtime that you can't do now?

Interview schedule: parents

- 1) What children do you have at this school?
- 2) Do you know what happens at morning (and afternoon) playtime?
- 3) Do you know what happens during lunchtime playtime?
- 4) Is there anything you would like to see happening in the playground?

APPENDIX 6

Observation of a special needs child at Brownlow infant school

This observation was undertaken at the beginning of the autumn term (3.10.00) when the child in question was in Year 2. It was a cloudy, dry day with little wind.

- 10.35 The children are in the toilets en route to the playground. There are reports from the other boys that D. is misbehaving and the Classroom Assistant goes into the toilet to sort out the problem.
- 10.36 D comes out of the cloakroom wearing his coat, goes straight to M (boy in same class) and throws his arms around this boy's throat causing him to cry in anguish. This behaviour is challenged and D runs out of the building to the far side of the playground.
- 10.37 D leaps on J (girl in same class) and swiftly runs across the playground (unseen by the duty staff).
- 10.38 D takes off his shoe and throws it forcibly across the playground. Wearing only one shoe he chases J.
- 10.39 D takes off his coat and throws it across the playground (still unobserved by the duty staff who are dealing with a constant stream of children with complaints).
- 10.40 D is lost from the sight of the researcher (he moves extremely rapidly in the playground).
- 10.42 D is throwing bark (from the adventure play area) across the playground (he is still without his coat which is on the ground some way away). One duty supervisor sees what is happening and calls for him to stop.
- 10.43 D runs rapidly across the playground and chases J again.
- 10.44 D has been checked and is holding the hand of a duty supervisor and carrying his coat over his shoulder.
- 10.46 D leaves the duty supervisor concerned (who now has his coat) and runs rapidly to the other side of the playground
- 10.47 D looks towards a second duty supervisor (who is dealing with another child) and goes inside the building at great speed. He is observed by the second duty supervisor who collects his coat and goes after him. He puts his coat on and is quickly escorted back into the playground.
- 10.48 D appears to be distressed and is comforted by another boy in the same class
- 10.49 D goes towards the building and meets M en route. D jumps on M and then chases J. D returns to the door of the building and is called by the second duty supervisor. D runs away and goes behind a tree. D runs into building once more.
- 10.50 D is brought out into the playground by the third duty supervisor who says D was swinging his coat around his head and hitting children who were waiting inside for medical attention.

The whistle signals the end of break. D continues to swing his coat at other children and blocks the path of those returning inside. His own teacher escorts him back into school.

PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION

7) How many staff are outside supervising each breaktime/playground?

8) Which staff do playground duty?

Teachers Nursery nurses Teaching assistants

Other (*please state*) _____

9) How many playground duties per week do individual members of staff do?

10) Do duty staff have an alternative break? Yes No

11) Do you consider you have an adequate number of lunchtime supervisory assistants? Yes No

12) Have the supervisory assistants (SAs) received any training sessions?
(*Please tick all that apply*) Yes No

If yes, is this

all SAs a majority a minority

in-house training by school staff

external trainer visiting the school

external training sessions

other (*please state*) _____

13) Apart from the head and deputy are any teaching/non-teaching staff involved in any lunchtime supervision/activities?

Yes No

If yes, please give brief details.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

14) Do you have the following?

Infant playground Yes No

Junior playground Yes No

Shared infant/junior playground Yes No

Please specify any alternative playground arrangements _____

A sheltered outside play area Yes No

A shaded outside play area Yes No

Zoned play areas Yes No

Outside seating/quiet area Yes No

Field/green space Yes No

Planted areas Yes No

Loose play equipment (e.g. bats/balls) for use at
breaktimes Yes No

lunchtimes Yes No

Adequate outside drinking water fountains Yes No

15) If you have any playtime facilities (or difficulties) not mentioned above would you please specify

OTHER ISSUES

16) Have you made any changes/innovations in respect of playtimes (either breaktime or lunchtime)?

Yes No

If yes, please specify

If yes, who was involved in planning these changes?

17) Do you consider lunchtime playtimes at your school are generally
good satisfactory an area for some improvement

18) Do you consider morning/afternoon breaktimes at your school are generally

good satisfactory an area for some improvement

19) Do you have a playground 'buddy' system? Yes No

20) Do you have special playtime arrangements for transition from pre-school to reception? Yes No

If yes, please specify

21) Do you have special playtime arrangements for transition from infant (Yr 2) to junior (Yr 3)? Yes No

If yes, please specify

22) Do you have Circle Time (for improving children's social skills) at your school?

Yes No

Please use the space below to add any further views you may have concerning playtimes.

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE**

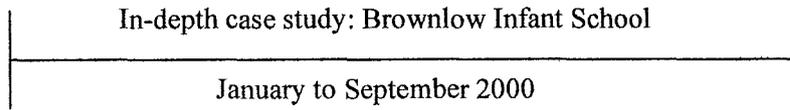
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WEDNESDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2000

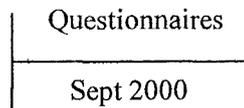
APPENDIX 8 The Research Stages

Preliminary Stage (Initial visits to Brownlow Infant School, Oct 1998 through to Dec1999)

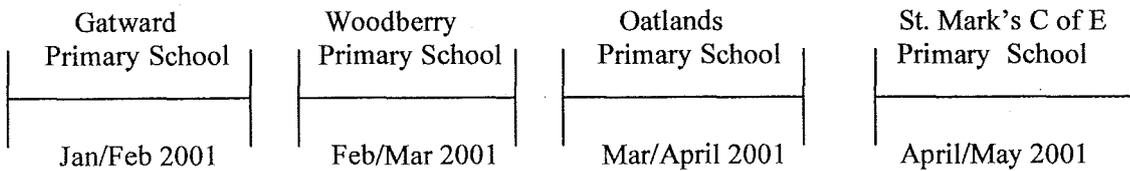
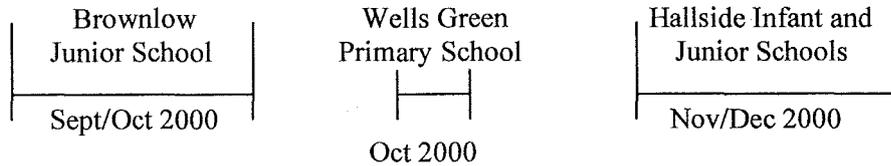
Stage 1



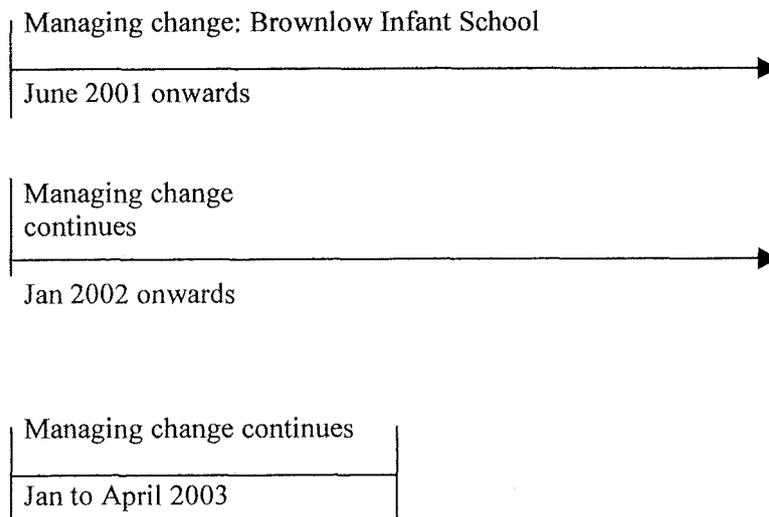
Stage 2



Stage 3



Stage 4



APPENDIX 9 Example of a matrix

Brownlow infants Teachers	Attitude towards break duty	Reason for attitude	Professional consequences of duty	Personal consequences of duty
C	I hate it – especially when it's cold D	The children are moaning and whingeing all the time	There are things I can't do	Y Mine's on a Friday I'm more tired
J	It's just one of those things that has to be done R	It's an informal way to get to know the children	I have a CA to get things out	N It's a Monday so I get it out of the way and forget it
B	I hate playground duty D	Constant stream of problems and petty whingeing	You're not organised when you come back	Y You come back very stressed
S	It's a nightmare D	There's lots of moans and groans	You're rushing out – not properly organised	Y It always slips your mind - I get tired
A	I don't like it D	I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing	It doesn't give me breathing space to sort things out	Y It makes me feel more stressed
K	It's a nightmare D	We're just police officers	It's difficult preparing things	Y It exhausts you – it's a shock
W	It's tedious D	I'm just a referee	It affects the next lesson	Y I get the grumps
M	I don't mind – it has to be done R	But there are petty squabbles and whinges	I'm rushing around afterwards	Y It's tiring
I	I quite like it L	It gives you time to chat to the children	Sometimes it can be difficult getting ready but not always	M I just try to leave it all behind so it doesn't affect me
N	I quite enjoy it – not a problem L	I get to know the other children	I'm delayed starting the next lesson	Y If the children are silly it can be stressful
G	Duty is a pain in the bum D	It's sorting out problems, complaints and whinges	It's difficult being prepared	Y I'm much more tired and bad tempered

L = Like
R = Resigned
D = Dislike

}
Consequences

Y = Yes
N = No
M = Mixed

APPENDIX 10

Excerpt from research diary June 15th 2000

The lunchtime observation of the Brownlow infant SAs was interesting, illuminating and very amusing! Lots of joking and teasing within the group - but in a pleasant, friendly manner. This forges links with social psychology and the culture of the group. In general, they appear to be a very friendly team with much witty repartee. This is something of a surprise but the impression gained is that this is a very positive aspect of their work. The light-hearted banter is continuous. All SAs work very hard - never idle - every moment is occupied - I don't think this is as a result of being watched - I don't think they are particularly concerned about me!

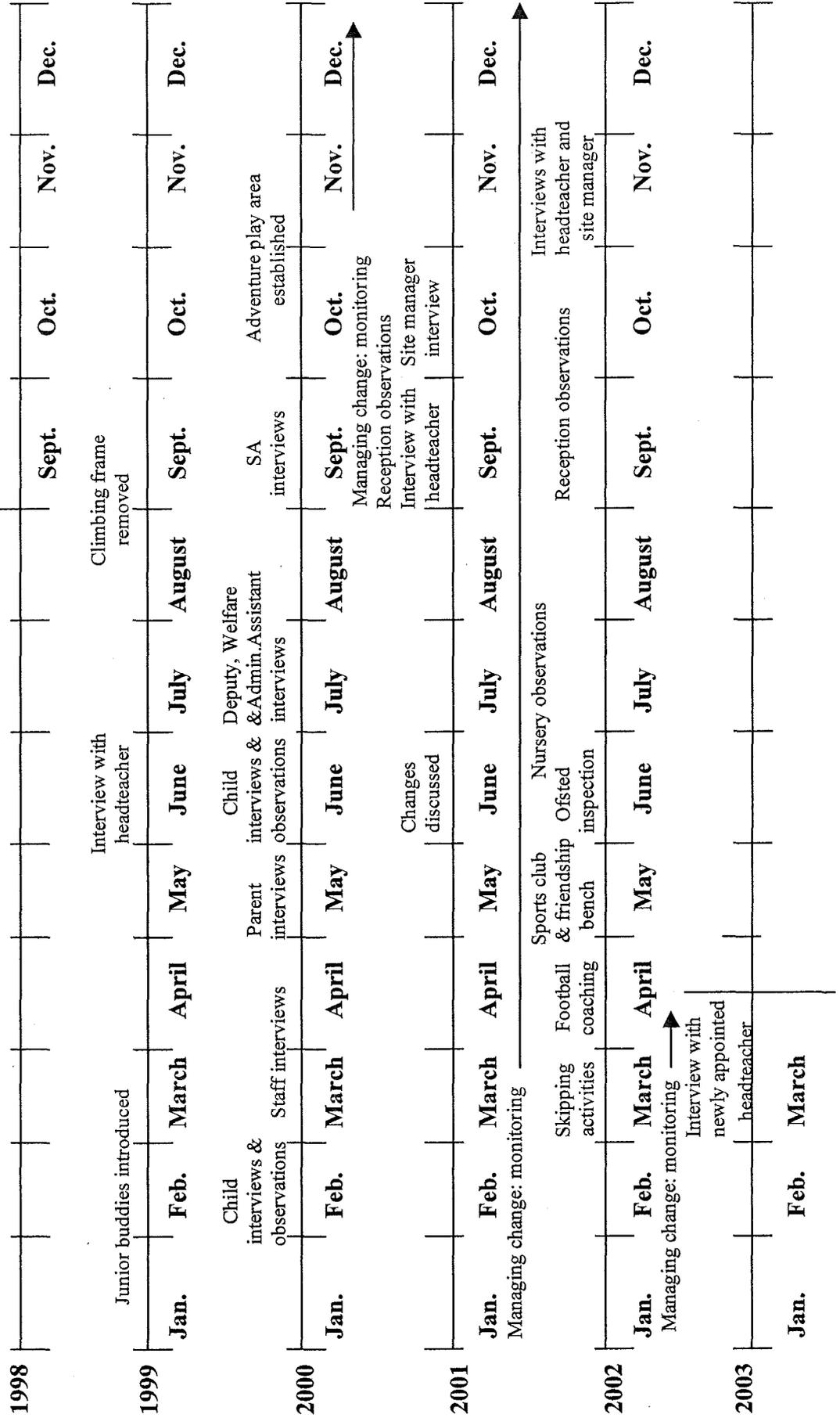
More importantly they work extremely well as a cohesive team - working around one another, continuing with each other's tasks, taking over jobs started by someone else etc. Again, this seems to be an important aspect. It appears to be very natural and mostly automatic. A very impressive team!

What is noticeable, however, is the changing atmosphere in the hall when different SAs are taking turns to supervise. Today [the senior SA] has been in charge. This has produced a much quieter, calmer atmosphere - less noisy than previous observations. Why is this? She positioned herself right in the middle of the hall - gave herself an overview of all that was happening - the children were very aware of her presence. Other SAs tend to work with groups of

children at the side of the hall - not so noticeable. Children don't misbehave but they do make more noise. Also, I think they are aware [the senior SA] is 'in charge' and has greater authority.

I spoke briefly to [the headteacher] in passing. Her verdict on the SAs was 'they're great!' She told me about a couple of jokes they'd played on her - obviously a sign of a good relationship there! The head says [the senior SA] is 'fantastic' and things have improved so much in the past few months. She also said some SAs continue to volunteer their services in school, particularly if there's a staffing problem. It seems that a good relationship with the head leads to a willingness to give a bit extra. I think it would be helpful to 'shadow' [the senior SA] one lunchtime to get a better understanding of her role.

APPENDIX 11 Brownlow infant school: research time line



APPENDIX 12 Structure of the school day

	Brownlow junior school	Hallside infant school	Hallside junior school	Gatward primary school	Woodberry primary school	Oalands primary school	St. Mark's C of E primary school	Wells Green primary school
Assembly	variable	10.10	10.25	9.00	10.10	Infants 9.00 Juniors 10.30 – 10.45	9.00	10.00
Morning break	10.35 – 10.50	10.25 – 10.40	10.45 – 11.05	10.40 – 10.55	10.30 – 10.45	Infants 10.45 – 11.05 Juniors 10.50 – 11.10	Infants 10.40 – 10.55 Juniors 11.00 – 11.15	10.25 – 10.40
Lunchtime	12.00 – 1.00	12.00 – 1.15	12.15 – 1.15	Infants 12.00 – 1.30 Juniors 12.20 – 1.30	Infants 12.00 – 1.15 Juniors 12.15 – 1.15	Infants 12.00 – 1.15 Juniors 12.15 – 1.15	Infants 12.00 – 1.25 Juniors 12.15 – 1.15	12.00 – 1.15
Afternoon break	2.00 – 2.15	2.30 – 2.45	—	—	Infants only 2.30 – 2.45	Year 2 and Juniors 2.15 – 2.35 Reception and Year 1 2.35 – 2.55	Infants 2.25 – 2.40 Juniors 2.45 – 3.00	2.30 – 2.45

APPENDIX 13

Brownlow infant school: nursery visit to the main playground

In the summer term prior to school entry the nursery children have a number of visits to the infant playground. They are accompanied by the nursery staff who remain with the children throughout. Pupils are well prepared for their first outing. The nursery teacher was seen to discuss this event, covering such issues as correct behaviour and what to do when the whistle blew to signal the end of playtime. As might be expected, upon arrival in the playground the more confident children were observed joining in happily with the other pupils' activities. A number of less sure nursery children tended to remain in close proximity to adults. Others held hands and roamed the playground in small groups. One boy was seen to be running repeatedly across the expanse of the play area with apparent enjoyment. The infant pupils showed their concern (and probably their curiosity) for any nursery child who was standing observing the scene.

When at last the whistle blew the majority of these very young children continued to wander, seemingly having forgotten that this was the sign to remain still. Eventually, the nursery staff gathered the children around them and the group returned en masse to the sanctuary of the nursery building. Once inside, the nursery teacher praised them for their efforts. This was followed by a brief discussion of the more positive aspects of playground life. For example, a number of children had seen their older siblings. Children were also questioned about any games they had played (although these were few). Additionally, there was a review of the most enjoyable characteristics of playtimes. Further visits were to follow before the end of the summer term.

APPENDIX 14

Brownlow infant school: the reception children in the playground

A series of observations of the reception pupils' first experiences of both morning playtimes and lunchtime breaktimes was conducted during the autumn term. The reception staff were seen to remain outside in the playground and stayed with the children for several sessions (in addition to the normal duty staff). Less bold individuals stayed close to adults while the more confident children explored the play space. One or two children showed signs of distress (tears) and one child had already started crying before the start of the morning playtime (and was comforted by the class teacher).

When the reception children had sufficiently settled (as assessed by the class teacher) small groups began to remain at school for the lunchbreak (prior to which parents were required to take them home). The reception staff remained with the children throughout this period (although each member of staff was able to have a 15 minute break). Even so, a substantial number of children were visibly distressed (crying). These were duly comforted by teachers and ancillary staff. The observations provide clear evidence that the eating of the lunchtime meal (starting early at 11.50) did not finish until 12.50. Following this all reception pupils staying at lunchtime went out into the playground. Children still going home to lunch at this time returned at 1.20. Amidst the tears a whistle signaled the end of the lunchbreak at 1.30. Eventually (approximately two weeks later) all reception pupils were staying for lunch. A couple of children were still showing signs of acute distress but the majority had settled well during this period. Children gradually moved away from adults in the playground, although integration was a slow process for many children. Subsequently, the reception staff left their pupils in the charge of the midday supervisors and a normal lunchtime routine began. The initial tears gradually abated.

APPENDIX 15

Brownlow infant school: activities during inside ('wet') morning breaktimes

Observation 1

The three Year 2 classes

- a) Activities in the school hall
- b) 'Wet play box' activities in the classroom
- c) Outside play (in the rain) supervised by the class teacher

The three Year 1 classes

- a) Classroom assistant reads a story
- b) Class teacher plays a music tape
- c) Language support teacher leads a discussion

The three reception classes

- a) Class teacher reads a story
- b) Milk time supervised by a nursery nurse
- c) Normal class activities with the class teacher

Observation 2

The three Year 2 classes

- a) A relief teacher continues with formal activities
- b) Class teacher continues with written work
- c) Playing desktop games

The three Year 1 classes

- a) Listening to a story
- b) Playing games
- c) Continuing with formal written work

The three reception classes

- a) Listening to a story
- b) Playing games
- c) Drinking milk and continuing with activities

APPENDIX 16 Wet play activities at the six sample schools

Hallside infant school	<p><i>Breaktimes:</i> Years 1 and 2 together in the hall for a story. Reception children play with usual apparatus in their classrooms.</p> <p><i>Lunchtimes:</i> Classes vary. Some play with usual classroom apparatus at class teacher's discretion. Other classes do drawing or listen to a story.</p> <p><i>Breaktimes:</i> Desktop games such as chess, ludo, dominoes. Drawing and word games.</p> <p><i>Lunchtimes:</i> as above</p> <p><i>Breaktimes:</i> Reception continue with usual activities. Remaining classes have 'wet play' boxes with desktop activities such as Lego, Connect 4, Guess Who?</p> <p><i>Lunchtimes:</i> Reception usual classroom activities. Remaining classes as above.</p> <p><i>Breaktimes:</i> All year groups have 'wet play' boxes with a good selection of desktop games such as dominoes, chess, word games and language games.</p> <p><i>Lunchtimes:</i> as above</p> <p><i>Breaktimes:</i> Reception together for milk and a story. Remaining classes do drawing, reading, continue working.</p> <p><i>Lunchtimes:</i> Infant classes listen to a story. Junior classes drawing, reading or chatting to friends.</p> <p><i>Breaktimes:</i> Infants are drawing or listening to a story. Junior classes have 'wet play' boxes with desktop activities such as chess, draughts and Monopoly.</p> <p><i>Lunchtimes:</i> as above</p>
Hallside junior school	
Garward primary school	
Woodberry primary school	
Oatlands primary school	
St. Marks' C of E primary school	

APPENDIX 17

Brownlow infant school: play fighting

The following incident was recorded on a warm sunny day (15.6.00) in the playground.

12.45 Three Year 2 boys are engaged in very boisterous play fighting (all three are noted as presenting challenging behaviour in the classroom)

12.50 The play fighting continues and becomes more and more boisterous with lots of 'pretend' kicking (i.e. kicking legs but narrowly missing actual physical contact). The group runs to the other side of the playground and play fighting continues.

12.53 There are now four Year 2 boys and the boisterous activity continues with one child rolling on the ground. The activity is observed by a midday supervisor who speaks to the group. Each boy is observed pointing at another group member. The supervisor walks away. The boys disband but the group reforms in another area and the play fighting resumes. It becomes increasingly more physical with chasing and pulling of jumpers. The boys start to push each other. One falls down but appears to be unhurt and all sit down with him. They are joined by a fifth boy (again Year 2 and also with similar behaviour problems in the classroom). There is further pulling of jumpers and the group are rolling on top of one another. The fifth member goes to sit on a nearby seat. The four remaining boys gradually follow. Two of the original group continue with the play fighting close to three who are sitting on the seat. These three boys get up and join in with the play fighting. They are generally pulling each other about and legs are kicked up into the air.

1.00 The group are continuing with the pulling and pushing activities. Two boys are circling each other.

1.05 The group continue with the play fighting activities. Another SA comes to end this bout and the group disband.

The boys were asked about this incident and informed the researcher that it was a game whereby they had to fight the evil dragon.

APPENDIX 18

The morning breaktime experiences of a Year 2 boy at Brownlow infant school.

For comparison purposes the morning playtime of another boy in D's class was observed. This child was chosen simply because he was rather tall for his age and therefore more easily identifiable in the playground. The observation can be seen below.

- 10.10.00 A sunny but windy day
- 10.35 E enters the playground and immediately complains about the behaviour of J (girl, Year 1)
- 10.37 J and E are playing a game of chase. E complains about J to a duty supervisor.
- 10.38 E takes J to a second duty supervisor and then runs around.
- 10.39 E asks if he can play in the adventure play area. He then runs to join a group of boys to play a game of chase.
- 10.40 E plays chase with the group (boys from his own class)
- 10.41 One boy from the group complains to a duty supervisor that E is pushing. The supervisor admonishes E.
- 10.42 E leaves the group and walks about the playground with some younger boys.
- 10.43 E runs about and plays a chasing game with a girl from his own class. E stops to chat with two more Year 2 girls and the game of chase continues.
- 10.44 E goes to a group of boys and they stand and chat.
- 10.45 E takes a younger boy (who is showing signs of distress) to a duty supervisor.
- 10.46 E runs across the playground and approaches a group of Year 1 boys. They stand and talk.
- 10.47 E runs across the playground and stops to talk to a group of children who are seated.
- 10.48 E calls to one of the group to look at something he can see in the adventure play area.
- 10.49 E goes to sit down.
- 10.50 The whistle is blown. E stands up and stands still but chats to the group and points again at the adventure play area.

APPENDIX 19 Boys' self-chosen playground activities

School	Roaming, walking, standing, running and watching	Talking in social groups	Use of surface markings	Circle, singing and clapping games	Pretend and imaginative play	Use of apparatus and equipment	Sitting (on seats or ground)	Chasing games	Eating and drinking
Hallside infant	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hallside junior	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Gatward primary	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Woodberry primary	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Oatlands primary	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
St. Mark's CE primary	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Wells Green primary	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	

APPENDIX 20 Girls' self-chosen playground activities

School	Roaming, walking, standing, running and watching	Talking in social groups	Use of surface markings	Circle, singing and clapping games	Pretend and imaginative play	Use of apparatus and equipment	Sitting (on seats or ground)	Chasing games	Eating and drinking
Hallside infant	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hallside junior	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Garward primary	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Woodberry primary	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Oatlands primary	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
St. Mark's CE primary	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Wells Green primary	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			

APPENDIX 21

LEA Supervisory assistants' job description

POST TITLE: Supervisory Assistant

PURPOSE

1. To supervise pupils during the school lunch break
2. To ensure the safety and well-being of pupils
3. To make sure that school rules which apply to the lunch time period are followed

DUTIES

1. Control the dinner queue ensuring that pupils queue in an orderly manner.
2. Collect meal tickets if appropriate.
3. Supervise pupils eating their meals.
4. Prevent pupils from taking food outside the dining hall.
5. Control behaviour of pupils eating their meals.
6. Keep pupils out of corridors and classrooms when they should be outside.
7. Control behaviour of pupils in the playground, with particular regard to safety and school rules.
8. Deal with minor accidents in the dining hall and playground, reporting more serious incidents to the Headteacher or other senior member of staff.
9. Keep young children occupied when they have to stay indoors.
10. Ensure that pupils do not leave the premises unless authorized to do so by a senior member of staff.
11. Any other duties which may be requested by the Headteacher.

APPENDIX 22

LEA guidance for supervisory assistants

1. Duties

Supervisory Assistants are responsible for the safety and welfare of the pupils during the school lunch break and your duties are defined in your job description.

2. Management

The Headteacher is in charge of the day to day running of the school. In large schools the Headteacher may have delegated responsibility for the lunch time arrangements to a senior member of staff. You should find out who this is.

3. Rules and Behaviour Policy

Each school will have its own Behaviour Policy and rules concerning pupil behaviour and areas which are out of bounds to pupils during the lunch break. Find out what rules apply at your school.

4. Confidentiality

You may, while on duty, hear from other members of staff personal details about some of the pupils. This information is confidential and should not be discussed away from the school.

5. Lunch Time Arrangements

Find out the arrangements for meal sittings. Where should the pupils queue. Who is responsible for supervising the queue. What should they do with their used crockery etc.

6. Your Authority

Consider what is the best approach to use with the pupils. You have, while on duty, the same authority as teacher, but in order to get the right response from the children you need to earn their respect. You will need to be firm, but approachable.

You can be friendly but within limits. Do not discuss personal details about yourself or the teachers. Encourage them to spend time with the other children and not cling to you.

7. Standards

Children will often try to play one off against the other. Discuss with your colleagues what behaviour is acceptable and what is not, so that there is consistency.

APPENDIX 23

Job Description – Senior Supervisory Assistants (Lunchtime) SSA (Brownlow infant school)

In addition to the duties of an SA the SSA is expected to:

1. Take instructions from the Headteacher and pass this information to your team.
2. Supervise the team and organise cover for absences when necessary.
3. Be responsible for checking attendance and time keeping of the supervisory team and report problems to the Headteacher.
4. Be responsible for the induction of new staff and especially relief personnel.
5. Ensure that the team is working together, also monitor individual performance in compliance with listed duties.
6. In consultation with colleagues ensure that there is a consistent approach in dealing with unacceptable levels of behaviour in line with the school Positive Behaviour Management Policy
7. Keep up to date with current changes by reading and passing on relevant information to the supervisory team.
8. Complete relevant VIDEPAY and staff forms and pass them on to the office.
9. Liaise and consult with the Headteacher at least once a week and implement any other instructions given by the Headteacher.
10. Be responsible for the developmental needs of individual members of the team and indicate this awareness to the Headteacher.
11. Deal with minor accidents and report any serious incidents to the Headship team immediately.
12. Liaise with other school staff in developing the quality of lunchtime provision for the children.