

1994

# THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK OF PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

REVELL, ROGER JAMES

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/2107>

---

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/1454>

University of Plymouth

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*

**VOLUME 2: ANCILLARY TEXT:**

**TITLE:** The Day-To-Day Work of Primary  
Headteachers: an ethnographic study.

**AUTHOR:** Roger James Revell

University of Plymouth Library	
Item No	9001705991
Shelfmark Thesis	371.2012 REV

## LIST OF CONTENTS

## PAGES

### EXTRACTS FROM RESEARCH DIARY:

Fieldnotes of visit to Whitehall J.M. School	1
Preliminary analysis of interview with head of Whitehall J.M. School	3
Analysis of interview with head of Whitehall J.M. School	7
Reflective memo on analysis of interview with head of Whitehall J.M. School	15

### EXTRACTS FROM ONE-YEAR JOURNAL OF HEADSHIP:

Journal entry, 15/9/89 (Ref.890915 F10)	17
Journal entry, 29/9/89 (Ref.890929 F20)	19
Journal entry, 13/10/89 (Ref.891013 F30)	21
Journal entry, 3/11/89 (Ref.891103 F40)	23
Journal entry, 17/11/89 (Ref.891117 F50)	24
Journal entry, 5/12/89 (Ref.891205 F60)	26
Journal entry, 19/12/89 (Ref.891219 F70)	28
Journal entry, 15/1/90 (Ref.900115 F80)	29
Journal entry, 29/1/90 (Ref.900129 F90)	30
Journal entry, 12/2/90 (Ref.900212 F100)	31
Journal entry, 5/3/90 (Ref.900305 F110)	32
Journal entry, 19/3/90 (Ref.900319 F120)	34
Journal entry, 2/4/90 (Ref.900402 F130)	37
Journal entry, 1/5/90 (Ref.900501 F140)	38
Journal entry, 17/5/90 (Ref.900517 F150)	39
Journal entry, 7/6/90 (Ref.900607 F160)	40
Journal entry, 28/6/90 (Ref.900628 F170)	41
Journal entry, 12/7/90 (Ref.900712 F180)	43

**SELECTION OF TRANSCRIPTED INTERVIEWS WITH HEADTEACHERS:**

Transcript of interview with head of Whitehall JM School (Transcript 13)	44
Transcript of interview with head of Patten Infant School (Transcript 30)	59
Transcript of follow-up interview with head of Patten Infant School (Transcript 31)	66
Transcript of interview with head of Baker JM School (Transcript 32)	73
Transcript of follow-up interview with head of Baker JM School (Transcript 34)	82
Transcript of interview with head of Clarke JMI School (Transcript 33)	88
Transcript of follow-up interview with head of Clarke JMI School (Transcript 35)	95
Transcript of interview with head of Thatcher JMI School (Transcript 36)	102
Transcript of follow-up interview with head of Thatcher JMI School (Transcript 37)	110
Transcript of interview with head of Joseph Infant School (Transcript 38)	119
Transcript of follow-up interview with head of Joseph Infant (Transcript 39)	124

Reference 881123 TL1  
23/11/88

FIELDNOTES OF VISIT TO WHITEHALL J.M. SCHOOL  
ON 23/11/88 FOR INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD

Visited Whitehall J.M. School on Wednesday, 23rd November 1988 at 10a.m. The school was located in Whitehall Way in what seemed to be an area of predominantly council housing. There was graffiti on the entrance to the school, and on the school sign. The school was a one-storey building, chiefly of glass and concrete, built on a late 1950's design commonly found in the town. Parking was congested.

The administration area was sited in a long corridor which contained displays of children's work and other displays. A computer station was positioned in the corridor, although this was not being used at the time of the visit. Initial contact with the headteacher was friendly and the interview was held in the headteacher's office. The room seemed a somewhat cluttered one. Several trophies were displayed on some shelving and the desk was covered with papers, booklets and exercise books. Football boots, a tracksuit and some footballs were strewn on the floor. There were infrequent interruptions during the interview, mostly by telephone. An older boy asked if there was going to be a football lesson and was told: "No football today, lads".

The questions I asked appeared to provoke long and, at times, rather involved answers. It was difficult on occasions to keep track of all the ideas expressed and I was not certain that my questions fitted in naturally with the answers being given. Some ideas seemed to be left 'in the air' by the headteacher and returned to at subsequent points in the interview. The responses seemed honest and even bluntly expressed. There was an occasional use of the vernacular to express an idea or sentiment - one of the staff being referred to as "this guy" at different points in the interview. There seemed to be no question as to who 'led' the school and I felt that the head 'knew his patch', both in terms of what was happening within the school and in terms of the school's socio-geographical area. I was mildly surprised by a number of candid remarks made by the head concerning the effects of his separation from his wife. I will need to contact the head after I have completed transcription to see whether this section of the tape-recording should be included.

The visit included a tour of the school. There seemed to be isolated 'pockets' where changes had taken place either in the physical setting or in the activities taking place there. The head pointed these out as being 'targeted areas'. The overall impression was of a busy, but cluttered school. The hall, for example, included areas divided between the storage of musical instruments, a reading corner, the storage of P.E. apparatus, a temporary stage, and so on. This seemed to have the effect of considerably reducing the amount of free space available. A rehearsal was in progress for the Christmas concert. The tour was conducted at a brisk pace with the head evaluating the work of individual teachers as we progressed. Some areas seemed to be selectively avoided for particular reasons but, in other rooms, I was introduced to teachers. I was not invited to see the work of the Unit or to look at the work of any of the children. The atmosphere of the classrooms seemed to vary a great deal - several classes working silently and a few engaged in less formal activities. There was the general impression, however, of formality and teacher-dominated activities. The headteacher conducted the tour briskly and seemed to project a forthright, out-going and dominant personality towards adults and children that we met. I gained the impression that the headteacher did not 'suffer fools gladly'. The majority of the children seemed to be 'working-class' in their speech and dress, and there was a small number of multi-ethnic pupils.

Biographical and other information was provided by the headteacher at various points during the visit. This confirmed that the school was a non-denominational County Junior school with two hundred and forty three pupils on roll. There were nine full-time teachers, including the headteacher. A specialist unit for children with learning and emotional difficulties had been established at the school but was due to close shortly. The headteacher was forty four years old and had been teaching for twenty three years. He had been headteacher of the school for six years and had held a previous headship for three years.

He had strong footballing interests and was separated from his wife. The school was not participating in the L.E.A.'s 'Review and Development Scheme'. The visit was concluded at 12 noon. These notes were compiled on the evening of the visit.

END OF FIELDNOTES

Reference 881125 TL2  
25/11/88

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW HELD ON  
23/11/88 WITH HEAD OF WHITEHALL J.M. SCHOOL

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 003) Initial comments point to a general perception that an innovative climate is necessary for 'change' to occur. A specific example is given of this ('school uniforms') - although the example given may simply indicate that the head delayed his decision until he was more sure of parental opinion - rather than actively changed the 'climate' in some way. The remainder of the section suggests that a process of prioritising 'change' was undertaken by the head when newly appointed. Active support for 'good' practice is seen as a method of maintaining 'standards' - a process apparently used as a means of gaining the support of selected members of staff for future 'directed' change by the head. New staff are seen as a fortuitous means of initiating curriculum changes and reasons are put forward why a particular person was appointed as deputy headteacher - 'shared philosophy', 'curriculum balance', and 'personal qualities'. New appointments appear to be an important route whereby the head is able to initiate his own previously-decided 'changes'.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 005) The idea of prioritising is again expressed. The importance of financial support for new 'changes' is stated, as well as the value of informal parental consultation as a means of 'preparing the ground' for the head's initiatives. Parents appear to have been given a more active role within classrooms - although this appears to be related in the mind of the head to a "system of rewards" for both the children and staff (Can that be right?). Involvement by staff in in-service courses is seen as being important - but the reasons are not stated. A number of the head's initial 'changes' seem to involve physical or environmental alterations of various kinds - including the destruction of old textbooks, equipment, and so on. The appointment of a new caretaker is seen as a means of achieving some of these changes (".....and then we did some painting"). A brief description is given of the physical environment of the school before these changes were initiated (Are such 'physical' changes important for a new head because they represent prompt and tangible proof that he is now territorially installed?)



(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 007)      Reasons are given for an early curriculum emphasis on Sport.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 009)      The head examines the concept of 'change' in the light of a metaphor suggested to him by the interviewer ("Early American pioneer"). Modifying the analogy, the head suggests that a method of promoting ideas has been to support and foster 'good' practice (the "lawn" and "shrubs" of his analogy).

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 011)      The idea is repeated that it is important to appoint the 'right' person. In this particular instance, the appointment appears to meet a specific curriculum need and also promotes the 'image' of the school. Other comments in this section may suggest a degree of cynicism and alienation towards the 'Office', as well as a degree of 'territorial possessiveness' towards numbers on roll.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 013)      Using the analogy of plates spinning on rods, the head perceives his role as being a constantly active one within the processes of 'change'.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 015)      Appropriate levels of staffing - including sufficient incentive allowances - and adequate financial support are viewed as an important means of facilitating 'change'. The head outlines the distribution of incentive posts within the school, and stresses the advantages of having the right 'team' of staff (Although tenuous perhaps, there may be an intriguing causal link here with the head's own interests in team sports - particularly in football?). The need to have the right 'team' appears to be of such cruciality that the head has taught during two successive Summer Terms - rather than appoint applicants whom he is "not happy with".

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, sections 017 and 019)      The importance of having the right 'team' is again emphasized, linked to the need to keep a sense of 'balance' in staffing - in this case, the need to appoint a man to the staff. The appointment of an Indian lady to the staff is viewed as a means of promoting a sense of enhanced multi-ethnic awareness in the school.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 023)      The theme of the

'team' is continued and the authority of the head is seen - in some ways - as allowing the 'team' to have something "...other than the system to kick against" (p.7, 023). The role of the deputy head is seen to be that of a 'joint team-leader' - who is able to undertake particular responsibilities, but who is subordinate to the head over some decisions.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 029) The principal obstacles to 'change' are seen to be the 'health' of the staff and - potentially - the lack of a good 'team'. It is not entirely clear from the interview whether 'health' refers to the headteacher, in addition to other members of staff. The L.E.A. is also regarded as a possible hindrance to 'change' by withholding resources. The section also includes a description of the headteacher's commitment towards traditional 'standards' - a philosophy that he feels is echoed by parents. He considers that he has a 'shared role' with parents towards their children but he also expresses reservations whether this viewpoint is shared - or could be shared - by younger members of staff.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 031) The head introduces the idea that his own attitudes have been changed by particular circumstances - in this case, the rapid increase in numbers on roll has provided a "position of strength" in dealing with any 'difficult' parents. The school governors are seen to be a potential threat to his power to decide curriculum matters, but - in practice - his own governors have delegated curriculum and financial decisions to him.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 033) The headteacher assesses the school as having 'a very solid base' - ready for any improvements that might be undertaken by a newly-appointed headteacher. Future priorities are seen to be in the area of 'community education' and in specific areas of the curriculum. Adequate resourcing and financing are again seen as important adjuncts to the implementation of change.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 035 and 037) Demographic and social trends are described in some detail (This seems to be a part of a 'whole view' held by some or all headteachers?).

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 039) The head refers

to some written notes. 'Presentation of the School', 'Out-of-school activities' and 'Getting Your Name in the Papers' are all considered to be important for the school - although they are not linked directly to the processes of 'change' by the head (Do they represent the reasons why particular changes are undertaken?). The head then describes the informal framework he uses to monitor the process of 'change' within the school - 'identification', 'implementation', and then 'evaluation' in a "never-ending circle". This process is seen as operating on an informal rather than a formal basis.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, section 043) The section describes the allocation of the headteacher's teaching time in particular classes, and the importance of a headteacher knowing all of the children in a school. The head describes himself as rather aggressive on occasions but always 'approachable' by staff and parents.

(Transcript 13, 23/11/88, sections 045 - 055) Details are provided about the school. The staffing quota is 8.5 teachers plus headteacher and Unit teacher, with 243 children on roll. The head was a Deputy Head for six and a half years, and has been a headteacher for nine years, of which six have been in his current school. There is only a restricted involvement in any INSET work, mainly due to personal and family problems. There is a keen interest in managing and coaching football with under-15 year olds.

END OF PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS.

Reference 890128 TL3  
28/1/89

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW HELD ON 23/11/88  
WITH HEAD OF WHITEHALL J.M.SCHOOL

A preliminary analysis of this interview was made on 25/11/88, a few days after the recorded discussion with the headteacher (Research Diary entry for 25/11/88). Subjective impressions of the physical environment of the school and of a tour of the classrooms were also noted at that time (Research Diary entry for 23/11/88). This initial analysis was made at a time when impressions of the visit, and the transcribing of the interview material, were still very recent. It was acknowledged that further time would be necessary to allow more reflective comments to be made. The main purpose of the initial analysis was to summarise the interview in a sequential manner, and to record my initial responses to it. The evidence of the transcript is now examined from a more thematic stance. In each case, references made are to statements contained in Transcript 13.

In terms of the research aims, several comments are made that appear to relate very directly to the ways in which headteachers perceive the nature of 'change'. From the head's viewpoint, 'change' is related to its propitiousness and to the acquiescence of parents and staff (p.1, 003). It is seen as something that is constant (p.5, 013) - in the same way that the head's informal management of 'directed change' is viewed as part of a constant cycle of events (p.12, 039). There are similarities here to the headteacher's description of the kinds of social (p.12, 037), geographical (p.11, 035) and demographic (p.12, 035) trends within his catchment area. Each appears to be part of a constantly evolving pattern of 'change' - both internal and external to the school. The existence of this kind of perceptual framework is further evidenced by the headteacher's assessment of future directions for the school, following the imaginary appointment of any new headteacher (p.10, 033). The head's comments at this juncture may simply be a means of clarifying his views on current and future curriculum needs within the school. And yet, they also seem to indicate some perceptual awareness on the part of the head that 'change' is an enduring phenomenon within his school - outlasting his departure. This kind of philosophical stance appears to form part of a kind of 'whole view' of the school and the neighbourhood that is held by the head.

It is not completely clear whether this kind of holistic perspective is either a valid or a significant one for the purposes of the research. For the moment, I intend to link together any such general statements relating to demographic patterns (p.11, 035), societal trends (p.12, 037), philosophical perspectives (p.10, 033), and educational approaches (such as the idea of 'traditional standards' p.9, 029) and so on) - and together describe them as part of the general 'WHOLE VIEW' of the headteacher.

In the same way, many of the statements seem to say something about the personality and beliefs of the head. These may include comments on 'likes' (p.10, 031) or 'dislikes' (p.13, 043), as well as judgements made about the policies of the 'Office' (p.9, 029) or opinions expressed about 'traditional standards' (p.9, 029), or a sense of commitment towards a 'shared role' with the parents (p.9, 029), or views on improving the external image of the school ('uniforms' p.1, 003; 'visits' p.12, 039; 'assemblies' p.12, 039). Some provide information on particular hobbies and the personal interests of the headteacher, such as sport (p.3, 007) - particularly football (p.15, 051). Other statements seem to indicate beliefs that are relatively longstanding and deeply-held. Comments on the value of sport (p.3, 007), or upon the 'commitment' of children (p.9, 029), for example, may reflect beliefs which are relatively enduring opinions. Others appear to have been formed by exposure to particular models of headship practice (as in the "divide and rule" comments, p.7, 023; or the advice on making 'good' appointments, p.6, 015). All of these statements seem to express something about the beliefs held by the headteacher. They may also provide important clues concerning the 'What?' and 'Why?' of changes taking place within the school, so far as they arise from initiatives undertaken by the head. It can be surmised, for example, that the affinities expressed by the headteacher towards 'single-parent' families (p.6, 017), or towards the psychological needs of such children (p.9, 029), may emanate from his own beliefs and experiences as a separated husband and father. The new policy of welcoming parents into a closer relationship with the school (p.3, 005) and the need to appoint a male teacher - by inference - as a kind of father-figure for particular children (p.6, 017) may also have roots in the head's own sense of empathy as a single-parent. For the purposes of this analysis, I will group together these kinds of personal or qualitative statements - and describe them as part of the "PERSONALITY AND BELIEFS" of the headteacher. These elements may reflect aspects of both the cognitive and affective perceptions of

the headteacher. Their existence may be helpful in understanding 'What?' and 'Why?' particular changes are initiated by a headteacher - or even to explain why they are not attempted.

Thirdly, there appears to be a general clustering of comments which refer to the headteacher's perceptions of the internal structure and organisation of the school. This seems to include such statements as the need to maintain an adequate 'balance' of staff (p.4, 011), the role of the head in relation to the staff (p.7, 023; p.6, 015; p.6, 017), the role of the deputy head (p.8, 023) and the 'control' of the curriculum in relation to school governors (p.10, 031). The theme of the staff as a 'team' is a recurring one within the interview (p.6, 015; p.7, 023; p.8, 029). It appears to be of such cruciality that the head teaches the fourth year classes in two successive Summer terms - rather than make an appointment that might prove detrimental to the balance of the 'team' (p.5, 015). These perceptions of a headteacher towards the school's internal organisation and staffing may provide a helpful means of exploring the internal mechanisms through which particular 'changes' are seen to be filtered. For the present, I am describing these aspects of the headteacher's comments as referring to the 'SCHOOL INFRA-STRUCTURE' - since they appear to say something important about the internal arrangements of the school or, more importantly, the head's perception of those arrangements.

An understanding of the 'school infra-structure', particularly the head's perception of the staff as a 'team', can be gained - as above - through the collation of explicit statements made by the headteacher. At a less superficial level, further insights into the perceptual understandings of the headteacher may be possible by examining aspects of his implicit language. An analysis of the head's use of the possessive pronoun, for example, seems to offer an intriguing means of understanding the head's perception of this internal structure. This approach was first prompted for me by the apology made by the headteacher for using the possessive 'my', rather than 'our', when describing the school (p.10, 031). A subsequent examination of the transcript shows that the school was described as "my school" on one other occasion (p.3, 007) and "our school" on two others (p.2, 005; p.5, 015). Both the 'staffroom' and 'problems' are described as "our" (p.5, 011 and p.5, 015), whereas the 'office' and the 'governors' are all described with the singular "my" (p.13, 043 and p.10, 031). 'Parents' (p.9, 029; p.13, 043), 'families' (p.12, 037), 'mums' (p.6, 017) and 'parent-governors' (p.1, 003; p.2, 005) are all

described interchangeably as "my" or "our". Significantly perhaps, the 'staff' (p.2, 005; p.7, 017; p.7, *ibid*; p.7, 023) and the 'deputy headteacher' (p.1, 003; p.8, 023) are referred to in every case with the possessive "my". An analysis of the head's use of the pronouns "I" and "We" might also prove to be helpful, although the process would be lengthy and complex - as illustrated by the extract:

".....any member of my staff who wants to go on a course.....I have not yet said 'no'.... I would always take their part and encourage them to go on courses.....I think when heads turn round and say I'm sorry I can't let you go on that course..I think that's very, very sad..Then we were looking at where we wanted to change things...and I had four classrooms in the school which were absolute 'tips'..."

(p.3, 005)

As a general principle, however, in contexts where the use of the pronouns is a potentially interchangeable one, the pronoun 'I' frequently denotes thoughts, feelings and actions, whereas 'We' is used to describe collective decisions, justifications and responsibilities for their implementation. The analysis is a cursory one but it seems to confirm that an examination of implicit language might be a useful and productive technique to apply. At a simple level, this is again demonstrated in the sense of alienation felt by the head towards the Area Education Office - as evidenced by the exclusive use of 'them' and 'they' in references to it (p.9, 029; p.5, 011; p.2, 005). Rather surprisingly in view of the head's statements on his affinities with the children (p.9, 029; p.13, 043), the possessive 'their' is the only pronoun used to describe children in the school - and not the anticipated and more familiar 'my' or 'our' (p.9, 029; p.9, 031; p.12, 039). This examination of contextual language may therefore prove to be a helpful analytical technique. Although its identification within the present analysis is not related directly to a study of thematic content, it may nevertheless provide a useful strategy for gaining further insights into the perceptual world of headteachers. For the present, I shall describe this particular aspect as the 'LANGUAGE OF POSSESSION'.

Closely related to this is the headteacher's implicit and explicit use of images and metaphors to denote meaning or to clarify ideas. He modifies the suggested analogy of the 'Early West pioneer' and elaborates instead on the idea of the school having been an unkempt garden (p.4, 008-011).

This metaphor appears to act at a relatively explicit level, since it is used by the head to clarify and to extend his perception of his role as a promoter of necessary 'change'. At another level, the head uses a number of 'footballing' images (see diary entry, 23/11/88, p.1, para.2, describing my impressions of the physical appearance of the head's office). From a "position of strength" arising from increasing numbers on role, the head illustrates this by saying that he would offer a "free transfer" to any non-conforming child (p.9, 031). This seems to suggest that conformity to the internal rules of the team - and to the referee's decisions perhaps - may be an important aspect of the head's perceptions of the school's disciplinary codes. In the same way, the staff is frequently referred to as the 'team' (p.1, 003; p.4, 011; p.7, 023; p.8, 029), and - whilst there are dangers in assigning dogmatic meanings where they do not exist - there seems the implication at least that the head's perception of his role is partly one of 'team manager' (see also the head's description of his managing the County's Under-15 football team, p.15, 051). The implicit and explicit use of connotational language and associative images both appear to offer an additional means of gaining deeper insights into the headteacher's perceptual world. At the present time, I shall refer to this aspect as the use of 'METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE'.

In terms of 'changes' occurring within the school, the headteacher describes the introduction of a school uniform (p.1, 003), new staffing appointments (p.2, 003; p.4, 011; p.6, 017), team-teaching approaches (p.2, 005), as well as changes to the physical environment (p.3, 005), increased parental involvement (p.3, 005), the role of governors under the Education Act 1986 (p.10, 031), curriculum changes in the areas of Art and Craft (p.2, 005), Sport (p.3, 007), Mathematics (p.11, 033); and the setting up of a 'Friends of the School Association' (p.12, 039). All these are in the nature of explicitly stated 'changes' for the school. Collectively, they might be termed as examples of 'MANIFEST CHANGE' since they probably exist as fairly tangible and externally visible signs of 'change' within the school. As such, they may provide only limited information on the processes of change and - from a research viewpoint - only limited evidence of a headteacher's perceptions of change. The significance of these examples of 'manifest change' is that they may also represent those 'changes' that the head has consciously chosen to convey to me in interview, rather than any other 'inventory' of change. The headteacher's selection may therefore be of greater significance than any individually specified area of 'change'. From this point of view, the kinds of innovation 'selected' by the headteacher seem to be those predominantly initiated by him



during the first year of his appointment. An examination of these 'manifest changes' shows that only the setting up of the 'Friends of the School Association' (p.12, 039) is a current 'change', whereas all others were implemented in some form during the initial few years of his appointment. Another significant point is that many of these early 'changes' involved physical alterations of one kind or another - the introduction of school uniforms (p.1, 003), the removal of "twenty black sacks of old textbooks" (p.3, 005), the renovating of the "four classrooms in the school which were absolute 'tips'" (p.3, 005), the removal of the 'modern art' (p.3, 005) and the re-painting of particular areas, jointly with the caretaker (p.3, 005). These aspects of the head's 'selection' seem to indicate that earlier innovations are felt to be of greater significance for the headteacher - and that many of these initial changes were to the physical environment of the school. It is not entirely clear what significance these aspects may have - either as a reality or as part of the headteacher's perceptual framework - although it appears necessary at this point to record their existence.

Finally, a range of relatively explicit information is provided by the headteacher on the ways in which he perceives 'change' as being initiated and implemented within the school. These comments might collectively be described as 'STRATEGIES OF CHANGE' since they seem to refer in particular to the "How?", rather than the "What?" or "Why?" of change. It seems apparent that some form of 'prioritising' is an important feature of the head's strategies for initiating 'change'. The headteacher spends ".....two terms in weighing up where we wanted to target change and also.....if you like.....drawing up our troops.....because it's just like a battle.....you can't go off at half-cock....." (p.2, 005). Similarly, the head describes his priorities in the distribution of 'incentive posts' as a means of 'targeting' change (p.5, 015), in the same way that he has decided that the elimination of "poor standards" is an early priority (p.1, 003). Related to this is a perceived need to remove or to discourage 'poor' practices within the school (p.4, 009), whilst at the same time promoting the "....one or two good things that were going on....." (p.1, 003). The encouragement of the staff to attend in-service courses of their own choosing may be a part of the head's overall strategy to promote change, although this also appears to be linked to a 'reward-system' for good practice (p.3, 005). There is evidence that an awareness of - and the encouragement of - the right kind of innovative 'climate' is perceived to be an important aspect of the head's ability to create change. The head describes his use of parent-governors (p.1, 003; p.2, 005)

and the "Mothers' Club" (p.2, 005) as an early method of gauging the propitiousness of particular changes and as a means of justifying changes to parents (p.14, 043).

Many of the head's statements refer to his initial strategies when first appointed to the school, and includes the perceived need to gain support for future changes by encouraging the 'good' practices of specific members of the staff (p.1, 003). The appointment of new staff appears to be an important means by which the headteacher, both initially and currently, is able to initiate change. This process is described at length in the appointment of the new deputy head (p.2, 003) - following the "fortunate" retirement of the predecessor. The criteria used by the head in making the new appointment include the need for curriculum skills that do not "mirror" his own, a belief by the candidate in "the same philosophy", and the possession of specific qualities in "diplomacy" and "non-emotionality". In response to the question on the significance of that appointment (p.2, 004), the head confirms that ".....her appointment was very important.....because I needed someone to go along with me...and to turn to.....and who could sell it with me in the staff-room....." (p.2, 015). The importance of new appointments is reiterated by the comments made about the new caretaker who seems to take an active role in implementing many of the physical changes that the head is initiating (p.3, 015). In the same way, the appointment of the 'Indian' teacher presents the head with opportunities to enhance a greater multi-ethnic awareness amongst children and staff (p.6, 017), just as the appointment of Mrs.H. creates the opportunity to improve the external image of the school through musical productions at the local theatre (p.5, 011).

Closely related, in thematic terms, to these kinds of strategies are those factors which the headteacher feels can hinder his ability to initiate 'change' successfully. These are discussed at fairly explicit levels during the interview, and there are three questions asked by me that relate directly to it (p.5, 012; p.7, 020; p.8, 028). Lack of finance (p.5, 015; p.11, 033), insufficient time (p.14, 051), and inadequate staffing levels (p.5, 015) are all considered by the head as hindering his ability to initiate 'change' - although these seem to be inferred as much as stated. Explicitly, the head cites 'health' (p.8, 029) and the lack of a 'balanced team' (p.8, 029) as "obvious" hindrances to 'change'.

In summary, the analysis has provided the following insights into a headteacher's perception of 'change':

- (1) There is evidence of a 'whole view' held by the headteacher in which are also located generalised perspectives on the nature of 'change'.
- (2) There are comments that appear to reflect the beliefs and personality of the headteacher, which in turn may have influence on the 'What?' and 'Why?' of changes initiated by him.
- (3) The headteacher has perspectives on the 'school infrastructure' - including specific views on the staff as a 'team'. This internal structure and organisation may present a mechanism by which change is filtered.
- (4) An examination of the headteacher's use of language - particularly the use of the reflective pronoun - may provide a range of insights into the perceptual world of the headteacher, including that of 'change'. This aspect is described as the 'language of possession'.
- (5) The study of the implicit and explicit use of 'metaphorical language' may also provide information on the perceptions of the headteacher, including aspects of 'change'.
- (6) The headteacher has provided examples of 'manifest change', many of which refer to changes initiated when first appointed - often to the physical environment of the school.
- (7) Innovations may be initiated and implemented by the headteacher through various 'strategies of change', including 'prioritising' and the appointment of new staff.
- (8) The headteacher perceives the lack of a balanced team of staff and 'health' to be actual or potential hindrances to 'change'.

END OF ANALYSIS

Reference 890204 TL5  
4/2/89

REFLECTIVE MEMO FOLLOWING ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW  
HELD ON 23/11/88 WITH HEAD OF WHITEHALL J.M.SCHOOL.

A preliminary analysis of this interview was made on 25/11/88 (see Diary Entry for 25/11/88, reference 881125 TL2) and an analysis was completed on 28/1/89 (Diary Entry for 28/1/89, reference 880128). In the light of this later analysis, it now seems appropriate to reflect upon some of its findings and to consider their general implications for future directions in the research:

(1) The analysis does not seem to indicate a preoccupation by the headteacher with 'changes' emanating from the Education Act of 1988. Reference is made only to the increased powers of governors, following the implementation of the Education (No.2) Act in September 1988. There seems little evidence directly relevant to one of the original research objectives of examining "...the ways in which...headteachers...respond to...'change'". There appears to be more substantial and direct evidence relating to the experience, initiation and perception of the phenomenon of 'change' - than relates to the headteacher's response towards externally imposed change of any kind.

(2) Evidence of aspects of personality, or personal beliefs or a philosophical 'whole view' is scarcely a contentious finding, although the ways in which they are related to 'change' - especially the 'What?' and 'Why?' of change - will need to be re-examined more closely in the light of comparative data. If a relationship is established between these aspects and 'manifest change' then it might be hypothesised - for example - that a headteacher creates specific 'changes' in a school as a means of reflecting his personality and beliefs. The former seems to have intriguing aspects to it.....!

(3) The headteacher's perspectives on the "school's infrastructure" raises particular questions on how this aspect can best be analysed in relation to 'change'. It may be that concepts such as 'power', 'control' and 'authority'

could have been usefully applied at some point in the analysis. These may be particularly helpful in examining the kinds of tensions and dilemmas arising within a school in response to particular strategies for change. However, I feel that their use would have been premature and inappropriate at this stage, since I am not in a position to examine these aspects of 'school infrastructure' - other than through the perceptual viewpoint of the headteacher. This may need to be re-examined in the light of comparative data.

(4) The examination of implicitly held beliefs and attitudes, through the analysis of possessive language and symbolism, seems to offer a promising means of penetrating beneath the explicit levels of perception. There will be a need to refer to the work of other researchers in this area.

(5) The examples of 'manifest change' given by the head seem to prompt a range of further questions. Do other heads see 'change' in terms of what was initiated by themselves in their first few years of appointment? What is the significance of the apparent preoccupation with changing the physical appearance of the school? Does this have some 'territorial' significance? How does this relate to the personal beliefs that a headteacher brings to his new appointment? What inter-active process occurs when a newly appointed headteacher comes to a school with a particular 'luggage' of personal beliefs and philosophies and encounters the existing infra-structure? This suggests a need to make further comparative studies and a need to 'target' a few newly-appointed headteachers.

(6) There appeared to be useful information on the strategies used by a headteacher to implement 'change'. It will be interesting to compare the approaches adopted by other headteachers and to make comparisons between them. The explicit statements by heads on 'hindrances to change' may be helpful in providing additional perspectives on these strategies.

END OF REFLECTIVE COMMENTS

Reference 890915 F10  
15/9/89

## JOURNAL

8.50 a.m. Told staff all children to swim now that we are asking for contributions and not payments. Insisted B.B. should go with boys to Pool otherwise they would be unsupervised. S.L. doubtful (it means she can't go to Pool each week) - felt justified in sticking to guns on this - suggested she alternates with K.F. each week as a compromise. Both of these were 'on fingers' tasks that needed sorting at start of day.

Sorted 'Edward hit me' and 'Barry threw apple' incidents in playground before bell.

Arranged piles of files and papers on desk. Told sec'y about developments on word-processing in Office. She asked where the machine would go (practical response). Wrote personal diary. Looked at a newly created 'Today' list of jobs (drawn up yesterday evening) - tasks needing completion today (few aspirations still included).

Talked with 1st year Mum who wants to help out in class (suggested direct contact but I'll try to see class teacher, M.E.). Asked her about National Curriculum. She doesn't really understand it (nor do I but didn't let on - said it was in operation in the school).

Nibbled at stockroom (cleared one shelf of rubbish)

10.30 Banter with staff at breaktime. Two incidents to sort out at end of playtime - Edward in a minor upset as well as two footballers (one hit the other in anticipation of the other hitting him).

Wrote to Swimming Tutors changing payment arrangements.

C.P. talked about Special Needs children in informal chat - thinks there's a lot needs to be done. No wages envelope - it's disrupting the sequence of the day - I'll have to go to bank after dinner.

Reactive - relayed phone message to 1st year about end of school.

Sorting out parents' appointments with sec'y (overheard what seemed like a grumble about doing it).

Mail arrived - K.F. applied for another job (damn!) - someone wants reference.

Centralising parents' appointments is boomeranging - staff may prefer to do it themselves and sec'y is happy with that - I've managed to cut right across a decision made by staff last year when I was on secondment. No-one told me (including K.F. when I said it would relieve staff of the burden) and I'm not sure there's time to 'unwind' the decision. Said to sec'y we'd carry on with centralising and we'd sort it at staff meeting on Monday (made note in desk diary) - made apologies to her. Found we'd made a few mistakes as we allocated times to parents - there seem too many variables in this (sibling connection, Tuesday or Wednesday, late or early) - also just realised from sec'y and on checking diary that parents' evenings is more than week away not next week as I'd thought. Left her to go and do dinner duty - agreed that we could leave appointments till more slips returned on Monday.

Sat with Edward for dinner (persuaded him to collect litter as a useful job). Talked to 1st year about not saying please and thankyou to cook. She says he's been giggly and cheeky. Explained why I thought he was doing it - sent for W.H. and talked to him in front of cook. Dinner ladies say 1st years going into Black Alley in groups to collect lost balls, not in ones (said I'd tell children in assembly). Added both things to assembly notes.

Went to bank, after word with children going to Pool.

Message to S.L. (Cl.4 teacher) re. wasps' nest at home. Has to be 'on fingers' task. Gave mail to staff.

Nicotine and coffee as 'punctuators' (?) during day.

Assembly - messages were 'Black Alley', 'Treat all adults as teachers', 'Bring slips back', 'Manulife/Confederation Life', 'National Curriculum' and 'All children swim'.

COMMENTS: These fieldnotes have again been copied verbatim from the day's notes. I think I will have to look at format of these notes - adding times may be helpful. The other need to look at what I am recording seems as paramount as ever. I am not in a state of anxiety about this but I clearly cannot continue to generate data without beginning to look more closely at the style and content of the fieldnotes. There are also other steps I need to take to interview head respondents

Reference 890929 F20  
29/9/89

## JOURNAL

Sec'y back but Welfare to be absent for further week. Lot of mail - began sorting. Asked sec'y to try and get Mrs.O. to cover (she can, each p.m. next week). Finished with mail by 10.45 a.m. - kept only factsheet on fireworks (for a future assembly) and other bits (job vacancies and a magazine) into staffroom. Cleaner's husband phoned in to say she's unwell. Several interruptions from ch'n wanting equipment. An area building surveyor ('clerk of works') and Dave (Co.Hall) checked plumbing work by G&M - looks as though some pipework is being replaced.

Thought: haven't taught this term, not even to read a story.

Sorted files into piles. Circled what I felt to be the most necessary tasks on 'Now' list - 'Maths Carpets', 'Paul Cotton', 'Cleaner absent' (added to list), 'Batteries' (brought 2 from home but need fitting), 'Library' (not crucial although I'd like to do a bit more on it).

Banking.

Lunchtime - talked with caretaker about progress on 'Plumbing' - deleted several items, I'm now left with about 3. Sorted 2nd post delivery - a few Inset courses to talk to staff about - sent details of one to s.m. who may be back from maternity leave next term and said she wanted to keep in touch with N.C. developments. Mentioned 'Paul Cotton' to S.L. - she said she'd see me about it. Wandered out to playground and chatted with MSA's - everything seems O.K. Written note from B.B. to say there was a phone message from Advisory English teacher (P.M.) to say she'd had a request from S.L. about Language but wanted to talk first to me. Saw S.L. and said might be best not to involve me if she was Language Co-ordinator. Phone call from P.M. - said a meeting would be fine with S.L. and was in-line with my role as I saw it. Chatted with P.S. about Dance work in assembly on most weeks (said it was excellent although I was also trying to encourage other work from class; suggested that her time on Fridays (untimetabled with a class) cld. be used to give a little support to M.E. (1st yr. teacher) - P.S. said this was a good idea (How does head know if this is so?).

Did end of month forms with sec'y. Gave out rest of salary slips to staff. 1st yr at door to say she was unwell - I



said she wasn't really (felt I had good reasons for this, but the whole thing a little irritating because I think the child is asking for something else (perhaps care and perhaps time) and I'm not offering that and think I should. Paid caretaker for new clock batteries - gave them to staff.

Feel having sec'y has helped the day - several things I have been able to shift across to her and these have been done promptly (phone calls, getting right forms, collecting monies from parents and children, etc).

Assembly fine I felt - interesting to hear the children say in assembly how they would deal with a young toddler having a tantrum. End of school - mum (also MSA in school) paid trip money - she hinted that all was not resolved with MSA problem. Went to see cook who said things had been festering for a while but they were going to give it a try to ½-term. Said I'd keep closely in touch with her but I'd have to have a meeting with them all if things didn't improve. Note from caretaker - class 1 toilets not flushing properly. Went up to check them - thought ball valve scaled up - found Mrs.M. (cleaner) was having a long chat with another cleaner who was mopping tiled area. Dropped a hint after a while about not keeping her from her work. Leaving school feeling slightly lower than how I felt at - say - end of school when it had seemed a positive day and the end of a good week.

Reference 891013 F30  
13/10/89

## JOURNAL

Signs seem good in school - relaxed staffroom atmosphere, no parents waiting to see me, playground calm and there's little mail. G & M plumbers came in, said they'd replaced couple of cork tiles but couldn't do much else for the moment. Did some clearing out in stock cupboard - shifting some old shelving units - spent ½-hour there.

Wet playtime for first time this term - checked round the classes - level of supervision seems fine (2 Welfares and a teacher) and children all getting on with something - the arrangements look to be working well.

Banking - thought occurred to me on return journey that teachers tend to 'sit in on' P.S.'s dance lessons without being involved much in the lesson - marking books and so on - might be better to let staff go off and spend time on record-keeping or observational work - wrote idea for me to raise at Monday's staff meeting. Relaxed chat in staffroom at lunchtime - entirely social rather than 'school' chat.

Dismantled a fitted cupboard in library - another 7 to go (think I need the caretaker to do this). Tried removing some shelving in stockroom - hadn't got a decent screwdriver. Got sec'y to clear out and dump old financial records in library cupboard - she is spending all afternoon at it. Chatted with caretaker - suggested either of us had a go at library units when we had time. Shifted badges and awards onto a newly-cleared shelf in stockroom.

Assembly - did Scheherezade story - found none of teachers had organised children to show work in assembly (feel as though I've been hoisted a bit on my own petard, having 'discouraged P.S. from overdoing the dance work). Caretaker cleared most of units during assembly - thanked him.

Talked with B.B. for a while at the end of school. We looked at library and reading room and discussed a few ideas about shelving, storage and so on.

COMMENTS: This seemed a smooth-running and uncluttered day, with few pressures on me. There seemed a clear predominance of positive things at different points during the day - nice staffroom atmosphere, playground quiet, well-behaved children in assembly, caretaker and secretary all helping

towards a 'grand clear-out', and so on - as well as a lack of negative aspects - parents complaining, discipline problems to sort out, unwieldy mail, plumbing leaks or whatever. Judge this to be one of the 'best' days this term (may need to examine why I'm saying this).

Reference 891103 F40  
3/11/89

### JOURNAL

Played through Vivaldi record - I'll need to make comments on it in assembly. Suggested a few minor changes to lib. furniture to B.B. and this was agreed. Appointment with Boro' Council people about the play scheme hut - fairly amicable - extra gate being installed - this should help the problem of access/security. Sorted mail - lots about the LMS scheme, govs' insurance, financial arrangements, and so on. More re-arranging in lib. - I think the room looks fine as an area for the ch'n to use.

Banking in town centre.

Lunchtime - several calls about the flea market. Welfares giving out spare swimming kit to ch'n who've forgotten them - said that I didn't think school should take on that role. Blocked toilet - managed to clear it - told caretaker about pool of water still there. Thanked him for mopping up. More work in lib. S.L. sent down a few ch'n to show mw their work. Rehearsed what I was going to do in assembly.

Assembly went well enough - I was pleased that 2nd yrs were showing some science work that they had been doing. Talked with S.L. at end of day - not by design - got on to the way in which space was used in the classroom - felt that we were making significant progress judging by her comments.

COMMENTS: The informal chat with S.L. seemed a very encouraging end to the day since it may give me something to build on during the three Inset days. I think we will need to look at 'Resources' as an important theme during the training days and I would like it to be the focus for the Review and Development work. We shall see.

Reference 891117 F50  
17/11/89

## JOURNAL

Sec'y not in again - phone keeps ringing but sometimes letting it ring if I'm doing something - answered a few calls - turned out to be parents with messages for class teachers. One from health visitor about hearing tests. Phoned P.T. (Boro' Council) to ask if contractors' debris can be moved from playground - he said more contractors had still to work on the site. Inf. sec'y came across with two telephone messages from people who said they couldn't get through on Junior School phone. B.B. took phone message when I was delivering one to teacher - from someone wanting travel directions for next week's flea market. Sorted mail - only 5 letters, of which two look to be bookings for flea market - left them for sec'y to deal with on Monday. Caretaker and Welfare (S.B.) both take phone calls and refer both to me. One from another Boro' Council man who wants hut used before fencing and gates are put in - told him I wasn't happy with this. Child (A.B. in 1st yr) arrives with fractured foot to take part in a music rehearsal (I'd told mum yesterday that it wouldn't be nec'y at all but mum says her daughter would be disappointed otherwise - feel a little 'over-ruled' by mum's actions. 2 interruptions from ch'n - one wanting pencil sharpeners and the other to say he was ill last night and was late arriving. Checked assembly notes ready for p.m. - added message about Flea Market - asking for old toys and games to sell. Phone call from publishing rep. - told her we had no money. Many of these tasks have overlapped rather than occurred in consecutive fashion i.e. the phone rings at same time as there is a knock at door, or I try and jot something down from something that has just happened but I'm interrupted by someone else. Not sure of the usefulness of all this, I only seem to make notes about one sort of headship.

Playtime - talked to B.B. about E.L.'s behaviour - asked if it was worth talking through with class as a whole. Banking. Taping of music by advisory teacher runs over into lunchtime - she needs silence in hall for recording ½-doz. ch'n and I need to bring 100+ ch'n into hall ready for dinner - bided time. Sat in staffroom - chat mostly on 1st aid and ch'n's work in assembly. Parent phoned to ask if school was closed next week for Inset days. Noticed kestrel perched on roof - told P.B.(4th yr) to tell his dad about the sighting and he could tell falconer (who lost the bird). Phone call from local paper about Gerry the Giraffe - passed

call onto school cook. Cook came across - I suggested it was a 'small' presentation only - she agreed to this - mapped out how we'd arrange this. Rehearsed assembly. Cook came to say Area Meals Adviser wants a 'bigger' presentation with reporter there - I said it would be 5 min. presentation at end of a.m. and we'd have the photographer if she wanted. Let phone ring because ch'n coming down to assembly. The assembly not bad - should have kept off the politics. Chat with P.S. at end of school to thank her for helping the puppet-makers and to see if there was still any friction left between her and K.F. - didn't seem to be any.

COMMENTS: Seemed to be several instances during the day when I felt a little thwarted over something or other. This is not a strong impression at the end of the day but I noticed several incidents where this seemed to happen, coincidentally perhaps. Not sure of the significance and I suspect that this aspect of headship is present in some degree anyway.

Reference 891205 F60  
5/12/89

## JOURNAL

Phone message from sec's daughter to say her mother was too ill to come to school but would probably be in tomorrow (Feeling irritated by all this because it's the 6th series of absences this term). E.L.'s father came into school before 9a.m. to talk about his son's behaviour - don't think he was too impressed by the non-aggression stickers I'm using but the contact seemed more important at present - dad seems to believe strongly in using corporal punishment. Gave caretaker details in mail of a N.U.P.E. meeting next week. Long meeting with A.L. (Chairman), J.M. (Infant Head) and P.W. (Vice-Chairman) about L.M.S. (decided we can't do much until we have more definite figures) and about use of premises for child-minding (decided the Play Centre next door would be more appropriate than either of the two schools). The question of amalgamation arose at several points - I felt that Chairman wanted my reaction before deciding, but his own decision would probably be to amalgamate - and that J.M. thought the opposite. My own stance was that there would need to be better physical links between the schools (other than the kitchen) and that there would need to be a new 'neutral' staffroom. I said there were also administrative benefits and possibly some financial ones in amalgamating. Probably, my lack of clear optimism said more. Several interruptions by ch'n during the meeting. After meeting, found myself pruning papers on bookshelves in office - threw out old research magazines from 1960's and 1970's.

Lunchtime - message that E.L. had been passing sexually explicit messages to some 4th yr girls - talked to the girls and found that they had been instigating all this - spent about ½-hour with them - root of problem seemed to be that 2 of them had fallen out with each other and E.L. was 'fall guy'. Wrote short list and took it to S.L. - invites to govs, Xmas anecdotes from ch'n and need for cast list for programmes. 2 ex-pupils arrived and said there was no heating in their school - they wanted to stay and see teachers but got rid of them after 5 min. chat about how they were getting on. M.B. said she'd heard members of Golden Age Club talking about next week's Concert - she said I needed to tell them we weren't inviting them to matinee as usual. Electricity man wanted access to meters - eventually found that key is kept in kitchen. Grounds maintenance man wanted key to gates at bottom of key - he wanted spare one

but I said we didn't have one. Told the pensioners about Concert and said they were welcome to come to one of evening performances - several said it was too dark in evenings (felt I was probably being a little uncharitable but still sure I was making the right decision). Tidied in stockrm. P.S. came and said paper had jammed in dry copier - used manual to find out how to unjam machine - found that P.S. had wanted to stop the machine and switched off at mains - wondered why she said she'd been too nervous to tell me that first of all. Caretaker said there was an awful smell in Ladies toilet each evening - cleaner who joined in the discussion agreed; asked P.S. who said she hadn't smelt anything - caretaker said Building Surveyor was getting Health & Safety person to check - decided not to do anything. Mother of M.K. (1st yr) came in to complain that M.E. had sworn at her daughter. Asked if she'd talked to M.E. and, because she hadn't, sent her to M.E. Went upstairs after a few minutes (to sort it out if mother and class teacher hadn't done so) - found it was largely resolved.

COMMENTS: This seemed a fairly busy day in which some important decisions were probably being shaped (on amalgamation). It seems interesting to me that I am tending to arrive at school with a 'tabula rasa' but each day seems to bring a quite different crop of happenings and tasks to be sorted out. The number of occasions when I have temporarily cleared the decks seems very small although two such occasions have occurred recently. Each time I have felt able to decide on the task I wanted to do - and each time I seem to have got on with tidying in stockroom. Earlier this term, I suspect that the carpet-laying was the task I wanted to do most. This seems different from the vast majority of days when I seem to be reacting to problems, issues or tasks being created by others.



Reference 891219 F70  
19/12/89

## JOURNAL

Playground quiet; no sec'y or S.L. - no message from either - arranged for C.P. to take 4th yrs - need to juggle staffing returns tomorrow - not sure the school is able to have two ½-day relief cover arranged by me this month; I'll look at it tomorrow. Tidied in stockroom - getting towards the end of it. Answered several routine phone calls and sorted dinner money with dad of a 1st yr. child. Music centre phoned to arrange for piano-tuner to visit next term. B.B. shifting 'stage' back into Nature Room - seemed badly organised with a lot of ch'n being noisy - wonder whether 'Newspaper' shed would be a better site for dismantled stage. Floated idea about stage to K.F. and C.P. at playtime. Sec'y's husband came with doctor's certificate for his wife. Prepared assembly on 'St.Nicholas' - also want to include something about the Nativity in order to get Christmas message across to the ch'n. Organiser of Golden Age Club came - she said she was a little embarrassed about the comments made by one member to me and the ch'n - told her not to worry - she also gave cheque for £20 to the school. Started to sort pile of papers on sec'y's desk - some are straightforward but others I don't know how to deal with. Ex-sec'y from Infant school came across and gave some help with couple of forms (bill for turkey and monthly milk return) - dealt with about ¾ of the pile by end of the day - finished about an hour after the end of school. Suffering a little from effects of a cold.

COMMENTS: I feel that the school is 'limping along' at present because of the stage of the term and the number of staff absences. It does not seem the time to initiate anything new at all but simply to survive the last few days of the term.

Reference 900115 F80  
15/1/90

## JOURNAL

Sorted mail in staffroom; no sec'y; chat with E.L. (3rd yr) in playground. Mother of R.L. (3rd yr) said A.B. in his class had been grabbing him round the neck - said I'd see both of them when R.L. was back in school. (Thought: time-markers seem important in the way in which I think about things - Mondays are days when I may think initiating new ideas whereas Fridays are not. At 9.30 a.m. I am probably thinking more positively than at 3 p.m. At the end of term I feel that things need to wind down.... and so on. Not sure if this is born out by the fieldnotes but I feel I should make some reference to these 'markers'). S.B. and M.B. helping to sort out dinner money. Relayed message to S.L. about a committee meeting. Wrote rough drafted notes on a C.I.E. assignment. Arranged with caretaker to do tour of school to check its condition prior to LMS in April (seems sensible to do this). Playtime - dealt with query from K.F. about the policy about verrucae and swimming - found reference to it in a 1987 letter from Area Health Authority which explained 'the policy'. Asst. DBS came to measure up sidepath for putting on an aggregate surface to prevent muddiness. Lunchtime - talked for few moments with new relief MSA - said "Did you bring your shinpads". Cook seemed a little upset because she thought sec'y had said to her she would be back in school today but wasn't - think she may have misheard. Some ch'n said there was a bike dumped at bottom of field - told caretaker and asked him to contact the police - he said he take it to police station. Staff meeting at end of school - decided to ask staff about the amalgamation idea - there seemed to be K.F. & S.M. in favour and B.B., S.L., C.P. and P.S. against the proposal. Missed DEO's meeting for heads because the discussion seemed fairly productive.

COMMENTS: Although I had intended to go to DEO's meeting, it seemed more important to allow the staff discussion to continue. This seems to indicate that there is a fairly clear sense of priorities on my part (whether misplaced or not).

Reference 900129 F90  
29/1/90

## JOURNAL

Sorted mail in staffrm. Checked playground - seemed quiet. Educational Psychologist (A.S.) arrived for meeting with parents of G.P. (2nd yr) - had to move S.B. and small group of ch'n from Reading Room so that A.S. could talk with parents there. Took new carpet thro' to Nature Room. - managed to break plastic cover on strip lighting in process and generally disturb M.S.'s teaching of group of ch'n. Electrician arrived and fitted double power socket in staffrm. - pleased that request to County electrician last week has borne fruit so quickly. Tried to swap old trays in the Maths storage units - found they were the wrong size. Chat in staffrm at playtime was about hair styles. Banking in town centre. A.S. gave brief feedback on her meeting with G.P.'s parents - she said she'd write to confirm decisions made. Lunchtime - feeling 'unenthusiastic' but not able to give reason. S.M. asks that 'something is done' about progress of C.L. (1st yr) in her class - asked her to make an assessment and put it in Internal Record. Spent p.m. in writing a summary of on-going Special Needs stages with each child - made back-up copy - fairly sustained piece of work on my part taking over an hour on it. Rush of requests at end of school - two children who have lost something or other, two parents wanting disco tickets for their ch'n and mother of G.B. (3rd yr) demanding change due from dinner money. Staff met to discuss 'English and the National Curriculum' - the second meeting by S.L. as Language Co-ordinator - didn't stay for the meeting as before - went to C.I.E. for supervision work.

COMMENTS: This was a wet and cold day which seemed to set the whole tone of the day for me.

Reference 900212 F100  
12/2/90

### JOURNAL

Cleared mail; checked playground - noticed drain blocked next to Play Centre hut; talked to caretaker about decision made on timesheet sent to County - showed him 'Resources' list on staffroom n/board. M.B.(Welfare Asst) arrived late - sister's car broken into. Looked through 'Pending' file. Banking.

Lunchtime - P.S. said she was taking ch'n to see Dance display at local Secondary school. Phoned Finance Department at County Hall about the 'timesheet' problem - talked with someone who went to check something and didn't return! Call from father of G.R.(1st yr) asking why he'd been accused of cheating by his teacher - thought it best to get S.M. to phone person-to-person

Caretaker reported leak in Reading Room - went to check and found it was coming from overflow pipe - wrote out a repair form. Sorting out 'Pending' file and filleting several sections in the filing cabinet. Looked at form needed for return to Divisional Office on multi-cultural provision - in connection with teacher based in the school each a.m. until ½-term - found it almost incomprehensible. Noticed state of formica tops in dining room at end of the day.

COMMENTS: The fieldnotes appear to be more sparse although this seems to reflect the nature of the day - I felt that I was tending to 'drift' through the day. The two items preoccupying me are those involving K.F. and the 'timesheet' problem. It occurs to me that I may have subconsciously shifted the gear lever into a neutral position until things are resolved.

Reference 900305 F110  
5/3/90

# FIELDNOTES

Went to school after a weekend of thought on Friday's events. Wondered quite what the day is likely to bring. School seems a more threatening environment to me. S.L. reported back on her meeting with mother of K.S (4th yr) on Friday - apparently not a very successful meeting because she felt mother remained unconvinced. Phone call from school in Lancashire confirming that the D'A. twins would not be transferring after all. Paid money to S.M. for some Maths bits she'd bought for class. Message from sec'y that parents of G.E-R. (1st yr) had split up over the weekend and we were asked to keep an eye on things - went and told M.B.(Welfare). Phone call from I.D. at Education Office to ask whether we had places available - explained that we had but gave reasons why I'd delayed making an immediate offer of a place to Z.D'A. Phone call from the father to ask what the position was - suggested he came in with Z. so that we could sort things out. Another call from I.D. saying EWO had been in contact with Z's previous school and had all kinds of background information for us. Met mother and 'father' of Z.D'A. Talked to them - judged that the father was intelligent, articulate but not very 'open' - both were saying there were no problems with Z. which seemed to contradict the kinds of information I had been picking up in last couple of days - although the meeting itself was friendly enough. Offered a place and got agreement of parents to come in again, depending on reports from present school. Banking in town centre. Noticed G.E-R sent out of dinner line by an MSA - had a quiet word with him after a few minutes. E.L.(3rd yr) and T.V.(3rd yr) in a tussle but saw that B.B. was dealing with it. Language teacher phoned to make an appt. for evaluation of M.S's work as multi-ethnic support teacher. 2nd delivery of mail - dumped it all. Told caretaker about lack of response from Finance Dept. about Mrs.M. - said to him we'd probably done enough. Several phone calls at lunchtime - mostly for staff. Talked with both Welfares at end of lunchtime about Z.D'A. and family background. Wrote out a summary of what I knew of family background using rough notes I'd scribbled at the time - made a copy for B.B. Re-wrote some notes for the staff meeting - including a note on Z.A's transfer, diary dates, mention about cooker not being used in Reading Room. Sec'y asked for help in putting 'Tabs' onto some PCW work - wasn't much help. Phoned E.W.O. to find out what she'd gleaned from her contact with Z's previous school. Mother of K.S. (1st yr) came in to tell me about K's nose-bleed

problems. Staff meeting seemed to go well enough - managed to get some way through a review of school's special needs document - got the right reaction that the statement was generally too verbose - it means I probably have the go-ahead to prune it and simplify it.

COMMENTS: The day seemed a busy one with much time taken up with the transfer of girl from Norwich - the apprehensions of the week-end seemed very slowly to evaporate by the end of the day and things now appear more in perspective than they did.

Reference 900319 F120  
19/3/90

## JOURNAL

Wet weather so brought ch'n into school as they arrived - spent a few moments in staffroom then wandered from class to class until bell was rung. Phone call from heating engineer to ask what make of immersion heater was reported as faulty by the caretaker last week. Began sorting a fairly large pile of mail [Thought: it might be helpful to give a few more details of this daily routine]. The items of mail are listed in the order in which I am opening them:

British Federation of Young Choirs want information for national survey on choir-singing in schools (dumped)

Divisional Education Office mailing enclosing list of ancillary vacancies (dumped), a confirmation that Mrs.H. re-appt. as head of amalgamated local school (dumped) and additional name to add to list of supply teachers (dumped).

Stevenage & N.Herts. Development Education Centre - advertising talk by Bishop in Herts. on 'Agenda for Central America' and a copy of a news magazine (dumped because it looks politically motivated - 'anti-apartheid' and so on)

Stevenage Council of Christian Churches - giving notice of an ecumenical teachers' communion service (dumped).

University of Nottingham Institute of Management Studies - sending a questionnaire on the training that heads think they need at present (dumped because some of the questions - such as "what amount do you think that you would pay to attend the type of course indicated if you were funding yourself?" - suggest to me that the survey is really a piece of market research designed for the University's benefit)

Longman's Logotron - advertising (dumped)

Folen's Copy Master - sheets for duplicating on 'creative' themes (dumped because it seems a contradiction)

Peak Plus - mathematics scheme advert (dumped).

Blackwell's 'Project English' - advertising leaflet (dumped)

Trylon Ltd. - advertising for constructional kits - thought the prices for wheels looked very reasonable and they would be useful for technology or science work (asked sec'y to

order about £12 worth)

Teachers' Weekly - magazine - put into staffrm.

L.E.A's forms for annual financial returns - gave to sec'y

'Dealing with Child Abuse' by Michelle Elliott - book ordered previously - put into staffrm.

Sportsco catalogue (dumped)

Windsor Safari Park - advertisement (dumped)

Mary Glasgow Pub'ns - leaflet (filed because books advertised on 'Topics and Science' and 'Teacher Appraisal' might be useful later)

'Education World' magazine - advertising for litter bins and seats (filed in case it we needed to replace bins near playground).

Maecher Pictureproducts Ltd. - advert for fund-raising products - designs printed onto plates (dumped)

Walkern Cricket Club - posters and letters for the ch'n about joining the colts team (dumped)

Chessington Zoo - advertising (dumped)

Father of G.P.(2nd yr) came to demand what mother of S.B.(1st yr) had been saying to me last week and why I had seen G.P. and others on Friday. Seems that the two families having been 'feuding' for many years and father has told his son to hit S.B. if there's any trouble in school - said he lived in the 'real' world and not in school - think I persuaded him that I was not going to take any sides and that I would treat the children as I found them in school - or something on those lines. Prepared for staff meeting at end of school - planned agenda of 'events', 'student evaluation', 'friezes', 'PCW update', 'special needs review' and 'use of rooms'. Phone call from mother of P.S.(2nd yr) about his adenoid problem. Sold apples at playtime. Wet playtime so supervised for much of the time - thought it was a real hurly-burly everywhere - noisy games predominating. Banking. Lunchtime - noticed E.L. (3rd yr) being told off by MSA for kicking someone under the table - checked through classrooms - main impression was of argumentative games of marbles - seems compelling that I continue to supervise - probably because I don't think MSA's cope very well and S.L. and B.B. are not doing their SSA role very fully - perhaps none of them quite pick up the same danger signals about safety, discipline, etc. - came across massive spillage of



powder paint in 4th yr. class - C.L. was pretending to 'feed' A.S. with it and knocked over a whole tub full - had a fairly 'sharp' talk to all the 4th yrs. about their general behaviour at lunchtimes - had a word with caretaker about the mess - asked him if he could mop it rather than have the children try to clear it all. M.W.(2nd yr) arrived back at school at end of lunchtime after 6 weeks absence - mother says her daughter is self-conscious about veins on her legs and has a 'waterworks' problem - reassured mother about both problems and M.B. took M.W. to class. D.B.(3rd yr) asked for a pencil - checked with B.B. who said D.B. had made it all up. Sec'y said that posters and a letter were needed for parents about the flea market - re-drafted both using old poster and letter. Feel that school is enclosed and noisy today - probably because it's been raining all the time - rather like a time-bomb about to explode. Walked round each class to see what was actually happening - thought the art room was noisy and very messy but I felt that 1st yrs were well-organised. Men arrived to put up some scaffolding for roof repairs - thought this had been done already. Updated index on PCW. Checked on ch'n to see they left quietly at end of school - show of bonhomie for group of mums outside main door. Staff meeting went quite well - finished the Special Needs review.

COMMENTS: This seemed a messy and oppressive day in school probably because of the wet weather.

Reference 900402 F130  
2/4/90

## JOURNAL

Sorted mail - went to staffroom - looked at K.F's wedding photographs - checked playground - Z'A began talking about 'Uncle Colin's' phone call last week but didn't really encourage the conversation - told B.B. about suicide attempt of D.N's father - checked desk diary - went through 'Pending' list: have only 'PCW training', 'Inset procedures', 'P.M's review', '39 pupils', 'Coconut mats', 'Sort filing cabinet' and 'Relief Sec'y' as items - transferred 'PCW training' to an entry in desk diary for beginning of next term. B.B. came to say Z.D'A. had stolen pair of shoes from L.S. in her class - made note - tried without success to get in contact with Mrs.D'A. S.M. mentioned that she was a member of the N.A.S./U.W.T. and had a letter telling her she should be on strike on Wednesday - hadn't thought to check as I'd believed staff either belonged to no union or to AMMA - decided to wait and see what S.M. decides to do. Banking.

Lunchtime - C.P. arrived to say staff were doing 'keep fit' exercises in S.M's classroom - worked on Special Needs re-drafting. Checked with S.B. how D.N. was coping in class. Mother of child at nearby school arrived by appointment and wanting to transfer her 1st year girl - liked the look of the mother who said she'd been persuaded by talking to neighbours with children at this school - gave her a 'friendly' tour around and arranged to see her daughter on the following day. Worked on Special Needs document again. Met Mrs. D'A. at end of school - felt that she was dismissive about the whole incident - told B.B. who seemed mildly disappointed at the outcome. Staff meeting on 'Science' led by S.M. - looked at flow chart which S.M. had prepared to show how science could be incorporated into a project - felt that attainment targets needed to be specified in the flow chart and made several points about 'making more public' what we were teaching in class - said we'd need to come back to this at beginning of next term - suggested to staff that record-keeping would probably have to be a fairly high priority.

COMMENTS: This seemed a continuation of last week with a fairly relaxed atmosphere everywhere. Mostly preoccupied perhaps with the D'A. family rather than with the National Curriculum discussions.

Reference 900501 F140  
1/5/90

## JOURNAL

Went to staffroom - noted rather friendly but barbed comments by C.P. to M.B. about her getting a pay rise; checked playground - had a word with M.R.(2nd yr) to see if there had been any more 'bullying' incidents at end of school with older ch'n - he said there hadn't been so I can now take this off 'Now' list. Someone from council phoned to say the two boys I'd nominated for a holiday scheme had been accepted. Sorted mail. Tried to get an appointment with D.E.O. to talk about staffing for next term but he said it would be better to wait until the ancillary hours had been received. Transferred the few items still left on 'Now' list ('staffing' and 'Govs' A.G.M.') to the 'Pending' list. Sorted out two stopwatches for several 4th years - showed them how to use them. Began re-organising files on PCW - spent ¾-hr on it. Heard from S.L. that B.H.(4th yr) had been 'exposing' himself - went and talked to him - decided it was probably the hot weather and bravado rather than any deeper reasons. Playground atmosphere seemed quite lively in general. Helped sec'y find right packaging for bundle of letters being sent off by 3rd yrs. - eventually found a large enough envelope for them all. Acting Head of Infs. came to say there might be a little money available from Building Surveyor for internal decoration - told her I'd make contact and find out. Phone call from a child-minder for S.M. to say her son had a bad gash on the head - carried on with P.E. lesson in playground with her class so that S.M. could find out a bit more - she decided it wasn't bad enough for her to go home to him. Worked on re-organising PCW files for ¾-hour or so. Problem at end of school between cleaners and caretaker - the cleaners are still without any equipment or materials to use and caretaker is saying it's not his job to give them anything. The cleaners seem increasingly 'on edge' because of what they see as the poor management by the D.S.O. and the caretaker seems more entrenched in not helping or sympathising with them - feel that I'm on the cleaners side in this but convincing the caretaker won't be easy.

COMMENTS: Fairly straightforward day which enabled me to set my own agenda for much of the time.

Reference 900517 F150  
17/5/90

# JOURNAL

Chatted with staff about K.S.(4th yr) and her sister C.S. (3rd yr) to get fuller picture because the father coming on Friday. Saw ch'n in from playground. Father of J.R.(1st yr) asked if special eye could be kept on his daughter because of bereavement of grandmother - told M.B. to do that. Sorted mail - nothing kept. Made 'Now' list of 'ancillary', 'PCW back-up' and 'K.S.' Relayed message to K.F. from her husband. Made PCW back-ups to keep at home. Drafted letter to father of K.S. offering appt. on Friday. Went to see K.S. in class who burst into tears when I mentioned her father was coming to school - spent time in the cloakroom with her - she said she hated her father - took her to library and talked with her for about ½-hour - looked as though she doesn't get on with her (step) father. Talked to S.L. at playtime about K.S.'s reaction. Saw K.S. again with her exercise books - made a few notes ready for meeting with father - think we'll probably have different views about his daughter. Supervised at lunchtime - felt sense of bonhomie towards the ch'n and spent a lot of time chatting and joking with several. Worked in staffrm. at lunchtime on the calculations for ancillary hours - decided there is a straight choice between having a secretary or a welfare assistant - didn't like implications of the figures when I finally looked at probable staffing for September - staffing as a whole now seems a real mess and I can't see how to proceed on this - we look likely to be losing several staff. Conclude that problem is because of the extra ch'n who have now been allocated a place at the school - this gives an intake of 43 but I don't have the staffing to split them into 2 classes - neither do I know about the special needs provision yet I have to decide by next Thursday how to use the ancillary allocation. Someone came to check the cleaning work in the school and said they were not at all happy about it - they said the D.S.O. would be contacted - involved the caretaker in the discussions because I knew he had several 'gripes'. Talked to B.B. at end of school about the staffing problem for September.

COMMENTS: The budgetary provision now seems to be the major pre-occupation - both in and out of school.

Reference 900607 F160  
7/6/90

## JOURNAL

Staffroom chat mostly on new kettle bought with combined petrol vouchers; mentioned to S.M. about result of visit by Equipment Officer; school nurse arrived for re-inspections - sorted out rm for her; G.C.(1st yr) arrived late again - had words with him so that sch. nurse could 'listen in'. No doctor still but parents arriving for their appointments. Wrote note to Newcastle teacher who'd sent c.v. for 1-term appt. Sch. nurse found that there had been a mix-up over doctor's schedule - pleased she was making the effort to apologise to parents or contact those not yet arrived. Phone call to say I'd been accepted on 3-day residential conference at Windsor. Wrote up the list of 'changes' (National Curriculum, etc.) in pipeline and made copy for staff n/board - involved C.P. by asking her if she thought it would be a good idea - she said yes, which could mean anything but it means I'm not being totally arbitrary or unilateral in this; Chairman arrived because he'd found sheets were missing from the mailing we'd sent out - told him about the staffing decisions and the way I wanted to re-organise classrooms in September - mapped out a few things with him that needed to come up at govs' meeting; phoned C.I.E. Diploma students to change supervision date (because of conference); gave £10 to sec'y who needed it for postage stamps; arranged with P.S. that she came into school ('illegally' as it were!) on the three mornings during my absence at the Conference (probably started conversation as way of telling staff as a whole about the Conference); sounded out staff about the problem about shelving for new reading rm. - looks as though simple contiboard shelving may be O.K. Dumped contents of 'Research' file - full of out-of-date N.F.E.R. bulletins, Educ'l Research Reviews and D.E.S. Reports on Educ'n. Started sorting through several bulging files on Governors' meetings - pruned severely - split files into 'Elections', 'Training', 'Conduct of Meetings' and 'Articles of Government'. Dumped back-up copy of current 'School Management File'. Plumber arrived - adjusted tap in gents' cloakroom - took him less than a minute. Saw caretaker to alert him about the re-organisation of rooms before September. Saw B.B. at end of school to sort out events in school during my 3-day absence.

COMMENTS: Seemed a fairly straightforward day with a lot of time spent in organising different things.

Reference 900628 F170  
28/6/90

## JOURNAL

[This is probably the first occasion where the writing of notes has been problematic. The notes at this point are being written on the evening of the 28th June. The first point to be made is that I was absent from school on the 21st and 22nd June (Thursday and Friday) due to an abscessed tooth. There are no notes as such for these two days. Between 25th and 27th June I was again absent from school attending a 3-day residential conference on Primary Education at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor. I do not feel it is sufficient to merely record my attendance at that conference - perhaps on the grounds that it does not relate directly to the school or to my daily activities there. It seems to me that subsequent notes will not be fully understood unless there is also an understanding of the processes involved in attending that particular conference. In other words, my activities at school today seem 'coloured' by my thoughts during the 3-day conference. My intention is to incorporate some retrospective impressions on the three days based on notes made at the time and to include them as a postscript to today's notes [NOTE - These notes were written in draft form on 4th July and will probably form an appendix to the paper being written for a supervision on 13th July].

The second problem has been that today's notes do not seem to have captured what has been a very 'hectic' return to school in which I have scarcely had time to record everything that has occurred. The writing of those notes now follow:

"Pleasant return - nice feeling to have staff seeming pleased to see me and gathering round in staffrm; feel inspirational and in elated mood; long written list from B.B. on events during my absence - he talked me through it; several requests or bits of information from different staff - remembered on fingers - started several 'Now' lists wherever I happened to be, either in staffrm. or in office. Felt rather inspirational (compassionate?) - re-looking at things; keeping several tasks on fingers; Water Board men came about turning water off at mains - phoned their supervisor who agreed it could be tomorrow when I'd warned everyone; went to see Inf.Hd. about it - she asked for update on Mrs.H.(or Mrs.D'A to us). Many phone calls - too busy to list any. List of things from sec'y. Still listing

everything - can't remember all of them - listed most of them somewhere. Spent long time (½-hour) with B.H.(4th yr) who'd been 'bullying' 1st years - looked as though he felt he should relate to younger ch'n through rough games (self-image?). Told sec'y she'd really done well to compile a summary of what had been arranged for travellers' children who'd arrived last week. Still trying to clarify events when two ch'n (A.D'A and S.D'A) were abandoned by mother at school last week. M.B. claimed sponsor money from me - pleased she'd had a 'go' along with the ch'n. Long talk to caretaker about situation with cleaners - he had a list of complaints. Men came to fit a toilet seat - showed them where. Took lunchbox to G.P.(2nd yr) brought in as usual each day by his dad (G.P. only likes fresh cakes). O.K'd trip by 4th yrs to see 'Bugsy Malone' performance at Theatre - when S.L. asked. Spent time with the two travellers' children at lunchtime. Talked again to B.H. (4th yr) - he'd been told to be 'bored' by B.B. - didn't feel happy about the punishment but didn't intervene. Feel slightly uncomfortable that I've still not got everything under control - not everything is even on a list - but don't feel pressurised or anxious about it. [Thought: feel I'm a better head because of research diary I'm keeping]. I'm working in different kind of way today - more intense - more interaction, charm, bonhomie, influencing, creating caring atmosphere - hard to explain. Started to sort supply teaching forms. E.L.(3rd yr) sent in for grabbing L.J.(4th yr) by 'boobs' (her word). Sent him to class - said I'd see him later (chance to think it through for me?). Went to Co. Supplies in Hatfield as previously arranged - took sec'y as an 'outing' for her - perhaps I needed company. Saw E.L. - seems usual story for him - made detailed notes - saw W.M. (2nd yr) who was involved and heard his version - saw L.J. - saw E.L. again - decided he'd been very much to blame and had a 'go' at him (verbal - didn't raise voice - the 'telling-off' as much for reassurance for 'victim' as for E.L.'s sake. Had overall picture of E.L. as a bully but without friends (or ability to make any) - concerned though about message that L.J. goes home with (mother was banned from school for 'over-reacting'....and police eventually involved). Sorted dinner money change for a parent; made copy of sponsor form for D.S.(4th yr); S.M. asked for update on the D'A twins and mother; phone call from a sec'y teacher - all simultaneously. Chat with B.B. about D'A twins. Left school but returned later for Parents' Evening - saw very few - helped sec'y with her own PCW that she'd bought."

COMMENTS: Feel fairly sure that I didn't capture everything today.

Reference 900712 F180  
12/7/90

# JOURNAL

Staffrm. atmosphere fine but staff looking tired; brought ch'n in from playground; C.P. said she'd had phone call from parents of Pakistani boy who'd moved to another school last term - and agreed that he could come to school for an hour to meet his friends again - apparently hasn't settled well at all in his new school; talked to Mr.S.(D.S.O.) who was in school to help out with the cleaning (no cleaners at present) - wrote down priorities for holiday cleaning with caretaker. Sorted mail. K.D.(ex-pupil) arrived with his parents - made them welcome - seemed to be a kind of 'friend-sickness'. Phoned Equipment Officer as arranged to book a skip for Monday. Welfares working in Reading Room to clear some bits ready for next week - went in and made lots of 'small decisions' about what furniture to keep or dump - and location for it all - saw caretaker, said I'd label furniture to be dumped. Someone or other from County Hall enquiring about traveller ch'n - said they'd moved to York. Lunchtime - B.B. talking to staff about organisation of Sports Day - he was getting quite 'sharp' at the questions being asked and there were signs that staff felt 'out of the picture' about what was happening - thought it was good experience for B.B. who seemed to have organised things quite well but not involved people early enough in what he was doing. Talk with Vice-Ch'n - mostly on Summer Fair - told her I wasn't getting much support from staff because they were tired at end of the term. Sports afternoon - acted as timekeeper - stopwatch didn't work so guessed the times - thought it made a nonsense (thank goodness) of the bias B.B. had put into the format of skills-based games where accurate timekeeping was necessary to measure performances (think I would much rather have Sports Day as a 'fun' afternoon) - gave out some certificates that B.B. had given me but kept it very brief - ignored points scores for teams and who'd actually won. Talked to 5 or 6 parents at the end of the afternoon - social chat about the hot weather. Talked to Mrs.K. (cleaner) but she seemed fairly miserable still. Thanked one or two staff. Sorted out boot fair booking. Thanked B.B. Talked to contractor who was estimating for decoration work.

COMMENTS: Fairly busy day and pleased to see another end of term event safely out of the way.



TRANSCRIPT 13

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF WHITEHALL JM  
SCHOOL ON 23rd NOVEMBER, 1988.

L.T.(001) I guess the most important thing about change is probably the time input.....

INT.(002) What sort of problems are there with time then.....do you think?

L.T.(003) Well.....it's like analogies about whether you should put old wine in new barrels....or vice versa....people have got to be ready for change.....the school has got to be ready for change.....and willing for change. For example, we introduced something here.....we introduced a non-compulsory school uniform....and that was a directed change that I didn't really.... when I came here at Christmas....feel was important.....I waited until the following September....and I also used my parent-governors at the time.....to find out what the feeling of parents was towards that.....It's something that I've always felt that parents would like to have the option of....because a lot of parents find a school uniform cheaper in the long term.....and so we introduced a non-compulsory school uniform and we targeted at the first year intake.....so it was something we could put in our brochure.....It doesn't make any difference to me whether children wear school uniform or they don't....but we gave the parents another choice.....So, if you like, the only things that I felt positively that we had to do here..... was to decide what we wanted to promote.....rather than looking at arresting....sort of.....poor standards.....I thought that we could arrest poor standards by looking at what was going on in the school that was good.....and giving an impetus to that.....because I thought that if we promote one or two good things that were going on and.....in subsequence ...gain support from those teachers to changes that I perceived as being helpful.....I would need their support....and I also was fortunate here in that....I again delayed a lot of curriculum change until the September.....because I came in in the middle of the year as I say....and my deputy head was taking early retirement.....so I was fortunate to introduce.....if you like....a new team and a new deputy head who was going to be supportive of 'change'.....and therefore on interviews we positively looked for someone..... who would give us the impetus in certain areas of the school where we were sadly lacking.....And we didn't want someone to mirror my

skills.....we wanted somebody who had skills in areas that I perhaps didn't....that had the same philosophy as me....and therefore I made an appointment of S.M. who was a very good, excellently loyal deputy head....also who knew where she was going....non-emotional....that was very important.....but a very good, diplomatic person with parents and staff.....and good in curriculum areas.....particularly in art and craft...which this school was very bland and very sterile in....in many ways....I felt that I give an impetus in Science and Maths.....English was going fairly well....a lack of resources of course....because all that was still needed.....but in Art and Craft we wanted somebody to put some spark in..... and to bring in new materials.....and she also came.....and this was important....she came from a different teaching style.....she came from a team-teaching situation at W.....and I felt that as we were looking at the time at shared classes with 1st's and 2nd's....3rd's and 4th's....I was going to put in a large proportion of my time into the curriculum.....so I was if you like one of the team-teaching teachers....and she was as well.....

INT.(004)            So.....would you say that was the most significant route for you to create 'change'.....was through her appointment.....?

L.T.(005)            I think I spent two terms deciding what.....First of all I started to do some P.R. work on what was already good in the school.....and I spent two terms weighing up where we wanted to target change and also.....if you like.....drawing up our troops.....because it's just like a battle.....You can't go off at half-cock.....you've got to enlist the support of advisers.....and so for the first term here there was a succession of people sitting where you're sitting now..... listening to my hard-luck tale of how I had just twelve pounds in the school kitty and things like that....and I was conscious that April was coming along which was the time when they would have money.....and as a new head it was important that I pull on their purse-string....so, yes...her appointment was very important to me because I needed someone to go along with me....and to turn to....and who could sell it with me in the staffroom....Sometimes she would do the selling and sometimes I would.....but there was another important person and that was P.S. who was our parent-governor...there was a mothers' club....which had deteriorated....and in fact was on its last legs anyway....and which in the end I couldn't see the point in having.....but for the two terms that we had it.....the

mums who came in.....I chatted with them about the problems that they saw in the school.....or the reasons why they had chosen our school.....and we got them involved in things.....and instead of having them coming in and having a coffee on a Thursday afternoon....we then got them coming into the classes and working alongside class teachers.....making things.....You see, to start with they just sat around and had coffee and I got them working.....I felt, you see, on the one side we want to give an impetus to what is good....and give a system of rewards not only to children but also to staff.....For example.....any member of my staff who wants to go on a course.....I have not yet said no.....I would always take their part and encourage them to go on courses.....I think when heads turn round and say I'm sorry I can't let you go on that course.....I think that's very, very sad.....Then we were looking at where we wanted to change things.....and I had four classrooms in the school which were absolute 'tips'.....there was just old furniture.....old books.....no kids in them....broken musical instruments.....that sort of thing....so again that was another area that we had to change...and the appointment of a new caretaker.....and again that was by chance.....the old caretaker was a good caretaker but he had really had too much to do.....and there was a lot of vandalism going around....and we appointed a new caretaker who was a handyman.....and we both put on white coats and we spent nearly a term in throwing out rubbish.....burning old books and things like that....we've still got some old books in the school that are okay....but I emptied twenty black sacks of old textbooks that had been here for years and years which were never looked at.....and then we did some painting and things like that....we didn't have any display books at all along the corridors.....all we had were modern art pictures which weren't even by children.....so we got rid of all of those.....and we borrowed examples of children's work from loans and exhibitions to start with.....and then replaced them by our own children's work.....as soon as we got good work in the class.....You've got some very good work up in the Divisional Education Office I remember.....

INT.(006) It's been up there for too many years now.....

L.T.(007) Right!.....but that sort of quality work that your school could put there.....if I saw anything like that I didn't let it go out to anybody.....I had it and I kept it in my school.....and only then sent it to the Teachers' Centre.....and....if you like.....we had an open door policy as well.....and the other thing that we emphasized to start with.....we started to have a go at sport.....we had some very, very naughty boys in our 4th year.....and we had to

crack down on discipline.....I thought that the best way was to put on them a pair of football boots and have them playing football.....and to get their energies channelled.....

INT.(008)        The picture I've got now is of you as a kind of early American pioneer going into uncleared forest .....clearing a space.....ploughing the ground and preparing the soil.....

L.T.(009)        As soon as you said that.....I thought it was really a little bit like.....because I'm an awful gardener.....I could see that it was like an over-grown garden.....and what I should really be doing at home.....with my own overgrown garden....is seeing if there was anything which was saveable....that was what I actually did with my garden.....there were areas in my garden that were saveable like the lawn.....which needed a bit of mowing.....it was okay.....and there were a few nice shrubs growing in one area.....but the rest was rough.....but just like my garden it wasn't worth taking things out if you couldn't put anything in there.....they'd only just get overgrown again.....so it was a question of marshalling the resources and just like my garden would still have overgrown areas.....we've still got over-grown areas here.....or we've got areas which we've planted and which have become overgrown.....which means that we now ....(INTERRUPTION).....

INT.(010)        We were talking about areas which still need pruning or improving.....Is that a reasonable metaphor that we're using.....do you feel it describes.....

L.T.(011)        Well.....as I said before..... I'm not an intellectual.....I mean, one of the areas where last term it became overgrown if you like.....or, I suppose, using the parable of the sower.....it was rocky ground.....and we were a bit shrivelled up with music.....and a local teacher Mrs.H.....who's a little bit old fashioned.....wanted a move.....(TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION).....and H. was appointed to improve our music.....and although she's a little bit old-fashioned.....what she does goes down very well with the parents...(NOT TRANSCRIBABLE)....goes down very well with the staff.....we did have a music teacher last year.....and had a good team.....we did even have someone to play the piano for half of the year.....and it means that she will go and take someone's music for them.....and she's just had the children at the Gordon

Craig for a week.....in 'Joseph and the Multi-Coloured Dream Coat'.....so that went down very well with the parents.....so perhaps the analogy about being pruned isn't necessarily true.....but at the end of the day.....as artisans.....and I see us as being artisans.....we know what needs to be done.....Occasionally, it's nice to have advisers to come in and give us some sort of content.....although I still remain a cynic in that one of the areas of the school where we really need some help is in our staffroom....but the Office won't give us any staffing because they think they've given us too many kids anyway....and we've got to try and lose a few children to help other schools in the area.....and my answer to other schools is "We're doing quite well, thank you very much".....but they encourage people.....One of the other things was when they thought about making this a JMI school.....(TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION).....Where are we?....

INT.(012) Do you feel at the present time that the school is now ready for change?

L.T.(013) I think that the school is always ready for change.....or should always be ready for a new input and a new impetus into new areas of the curriculum.....because we live a little bit like these conjurors who keep plates spinning and occasionally the plates slow down and they may fall off.....

INT.(014) Another Head I was talking to recently was using exactly the same kind of comparison as that.....

L.T.(015) Well.....he was probably at the same meeting as I went to then.....(LAUGHTER).....I'm not an intellectual you see.....I just shelve things..... but in our school there are areas where I might think....yes.....we would like to appoint a member of staff to do this.....a lot of it though is down to money....I'll show you round later..... and I will show you differences between where we've been able to target money into classrooms.....and where we would like to target further money into classrooms....One of our problems is that I would like to have more incentive posts available to keep or to attract staff.....I've only got two at present...one I use for Lower School Co-ordination and English.....and the other I use for Science and CDT....I would like to keep something by for the music....or even into computers and information technology.....and we need the maths but we can't.....now that's sad in that the good teachers that I appoint will.....if they're worth their

salt.....be moving on to something else within a few years.....but I've always had an accent that we do not appoint anybody that I am not happy with.....so, twice in the last two years we've had interviews for a Summer term appointment..... and I've not appointed and I've taken them myself.....now whether or not that's been a good or a bad thing for the school I don't know.....it could be argued that they would have been better than me.....but they've both been with fourth year classes.....and I think that a fourth year class in the Summer term can upset a lot..... particularly, can inhibit the new intake on a site.....and with the first years can make them very apprehensive or more apprehensive about coming.....because I think they already are.....so I take them rather than appoint...because.....I'll tell you something else I was told by an old head of mine.....that if you appoint a good teacher you're not sure of keeping them.....but if you appoint a bad teacher you be sure you'll probably have them for ever.....So.....where am I?...

INT.(016)            So it's important for you to make the right appointments.....both for you and for the school.....

L.T.(017)            .....and occasionally, you see....I have made positive appointments.....I mean, last year I appointed a guy called A.T....now.....in case this occasion is held against me.....he was equally as good as three other candidates who applied for the job.....all of whom were ladies....I had to make two appointments and I appointed one of the ladies and him.....and the reason I appointed him was because he was a man.....and I didn't have another man on the staff.....and I know that you need to have a balance on the staff.....and I couldn't advertise for someone to do boys' games.....but I needed somebody to fulfil that.....I also needed someone to go with boys for P.E. and for swimming.....and I know a lot of my mums had been saying to me "Could do with a man...could do with a man".....a lot of these mums were one-parent family mums.....so we appointed this guy and he proved a good success.....unfortunately he was that good that he got his promotion after a year.....and we appointed someone else this year.....Similarly though, we had another interview....where we had an Indian girl....now she was positively put down on the short-list because she was Indian....but in the interview situation she was the best candidate.....so there was no need for us to say "Well they're equal".....and go positively on her.....but I felt that we needed to make a contribution to multi-racial education....and S.B.'s appointment I think is a good appointment because she is....if you like.....a very modern

Sikh lady.....in fact, you wouldn't think that she was a Sikh lady but she is.....and she.....if you like.....is helping my staff.....because my staff now are very conscious that if they were to make a racist comment in the staffroom.....they've got to think of S's feelings and I think that's good.....so that's another point.....

INT.(018)       And for the children as well?

L.T.(019)       That's right.....and also in the first week that she was here we had somebody who came in who was moving their child into the area.....and would have spoken Punjabi.....and she spoke Punjabi.....she also speaks three other Indian dialects as well.....which is useful....

INT.(020)       I would guess extremely useful.....One of the questions I was going to ask.....but I suspect you've partly answered.....is to ask what helps and what hinders 'change' for the school?       I would guess that what helps change for you.....is having the right staff.....

L.T.(021)       ....the team.....

INT.(022)       Right.

L.T.(023)       .....the team.....and everyone working towards ultimately the same ends.....I'm not naive enough to know that sometimes my staff don't have a moan at me behind my back but I've always pursued the policy.....When I was a deputy head, my head told me that the way to control a staff was to divide and rule.....right.....divide and rule.....and then they won't rise up against you.....and I thought that was scandalous.....I mean.....really scandalous....because I would rather have them united against me being an ogre.....and sometimes I think they have to kick against just more than the system....and I can always use my deputy head....as almost.....not as a bridge.....but as being.....seeing herself as being a member of staff and also as a joint team leader.....because I think that the deputy head and the head.....although occasionally I have to come down with a crunch and say I feel this.....and I know I may be talking at cross-purposes now.....but I've always said to the two deputy heads that I've had.....of whom S.M. is one.....I see this as a joint team.....we are co-leaders and I think that.....I would like

to see Mrs.L. for example.....I know this may sound futile.....but to some degree teaching is archaic.....I mean, one can only draw on personal experiences.....When I was a deputy head I was never allowed to sign any letters out to parents....whereas Mrs.L. does sign the letters home to parents.....and she takes assembly.....and she shows people round.....and that sort of thing.....she takes part in governors' meetings.....and so on.....

INT.(024).....and she appreciates that, or.....?

L.T.(025)        Hopefully.....

INT.(026)        She doesn't feel that these are an imposition?

L.T.(027)        It may not be the norm.....that's the problem....because it isn't necessarily.....

INT.(028)        The other part of the question was what hinders change for you.....

L.T.(029)        What hinders change.....I think.....what is .....it's obvious.....but it's certainly hindered change here on occasions....and that is....health....at certain times....and to a degree.....instigate and motivate a figure.....If you're not well.....or you've got a lot of stress and strain outside of school....that can hinder your capacity as well....that's an obvious one.....The second thing that hinders change is.....again an obvious thing....not having the right team.....or being stuck that you can't change your team....the Authority can hinder change deliberately.....by not giving you the resources.....because they may see that you are becoming too popular.....they also may not approve of your changes.....There was a time when some of the.....if you like....the philosophies that I hold were thought to be a little less modern than they are today....there has been a movement back.....isn't there.....to.....sort of....standards....Another thing....I do feel that parents have had a raw deal with some schools in the past.....I see my role with parents.....I always say....."We share the children with you"....you know.....and I think that that can be very exhilarating...that we have a joint feeling for your child when they've given a play or given some nice work.....and similarly.... if they've got some excitements in their life we share that.....or if they're being naughty



that's a shared disappointment.....so it's important that our parents are given a positive role in the school..... and that we listen to what parents feel.....and when I'm going for 'standards' I know that parents expect their children to learn certain basic skills in the school.....and to reach a level of achievement commensurate to their ability...I don't always think that teachers by themselves could serve us with P.R. work towards parents.....and I know certain people.....some of our younger members of staff....who haven't got families of their own.....and I'm talking from personal experience now....don't always appreciate that children work under par on occasions because of either family problems.....or because the kids are not 100% feeling well themselves.....and I think that only comes with maturity.....and if you have a family of your own....or the longer you are in teaching.....it's one of those things that comes with experience.....so what hinders us sometimes is....oh, many things....I presume that if you're a bit worried.....if the wagon's moving.....and you're thinking the wagon is on the rails....it's going to take a lot to actually derail the wagon.....you know.....small hindrances are brushed aside.....and again.....

INT.(030) We're back to the pioneer Western idea?

L.T.(031) I'm rambling on but if we were talking here four years ago.....numbers were crucial to me.....because numbers made that extra point that pushed me into.....it got me an extra member of staff....or whatever.....so if I had a fairly horrid child....I would bend over backwards.....or if I had a fairly horrid parent who wanted to take their child away....I would bend over backwards on it.....you know....."Give us another chance".....sort of thing.....Now, I don't feel like that....although I've got....I can turn round to children and say "If you don't like it, son....you tell your mum that you don't like it here and I'll get you a free transfer".....alright.....now that may not be the right educational thing to say to them.....in terms that one could argue should be more sensitive and caring.....the same with a parent....if a parent was to come and say I don't like what they're doing in class at the moment or whatever....I would say "Well you can have a look at the other children's work in the class.....and if your child isn't really achieving this....then he's wasting his time...but if you don't like it here you can go somewhere else.....That actually gives me more strength.....because I can turn round to parents or to children and say that.....and the parents say "Well...oh, no...no....I don't think we want to go anywhere or anything like that".....and it has an opposite effect than you think

it might have.....Its like any position.....when you're dealing from a position of strength you can be more positive.....If we were to introduce some minor change to the curriculum.....and we had a parent moan about it.....in the past we would possibly have to think a bit seriously about it....but now you don't.....I mean, we may consider it.....I think the role of the governors also is.....I don't think it's going to be a hindrance.....but I can see in some schools...governors could be anticipated as hindering change and want to put through their own ideas for curriculum.....I know in some rural areas of Bedfordshire.....where I live.....that governors see that one of their roles is keeping an eye on the curriculum.....now in my school.....and I should really be saying 'our' school.....I apologise for saying that....now in our school I asked the governors for delegation of curriculum matters.....delegation of financial matters ....and they give it to me....therefore my governors.....I go to them for support over problems.....rather than for them to tell me what I've got to start introducing.....

INT.(032) It looks to me as though your role in all this is absolutely crucial.....your role in the processes of 'change' within the school.....

L.T.(033) I wouldn't put it as a personal role.....I think the head's role is important.....If I was to be off for six months I have faith now.....that things would continue and perhaps even improve.....because whoever comes after me.....whether it's because I get another school, get the sack, die or whatever....I think we've got a very solid base....for someone with some new input....Heads....when I say about deputy heads....if I've got a team-leader...a joint team-leader.....like myself.....you know, with a lot of imagination and a lot of drive....in their early thirties.....they can take this on to.....if you like....another level or into another area.....One of the areas which I feel that we could go....in a general sense.....is in community education...I was very interested to see on the television yesterday that they've got a huge school in Northampton....they've got a huge computer block.....being used by old-aged pensioners, groups in school time, pre-school groups, and also first school groups coming in.....and I think that community education...and the primary school being a part ....I won't say the focus of it....but part of that...is very important for the general area's well-being.....and most certainly in some areas.....that I've worked in....they do a lot more than we do here.....In terms of the.... sort of.....academic curriculum, we are moving forward on the CDT and

Science....and I'm quite happy that that now is moving forward at a reasonable pace.....but I think that we need to put some input into Language and into general English skills....I feel we're a bit staid there at the moment....and similarly so with Maths.....We introduced a new Maths scheme.....it came out when I came here....G.G....hummed and harred at what to put in....and we put in Hey Maths....but again we probably could do with an impetus in that...We have people like A.F. come in occasionally....but we could do a lot more with investigative work....but again a lot of it is down to having the resources and the time and the equipment.....and again....talking about resources....as you're well aware.....we're paid eighteen months behind on our capitation....in that we're paid on the January the year before's figures you see.....I have now got about two hundred and forty-two to two hundred and forty-three kids in the school.....but I'm being paid on the numbers of a hundred and sixty because we had a big boost in the last two years.....they came up from a hundred and ninety last year to two hundred and forty this year.....

INT.(034) That was mainly from the Hertford Road development.....plus.....

L.T.(035) There was a factor that nobody looked at when they talked about building Hertford Road South.....a factor that no-one had realised.....that in this area a lot of the people who were housed here in 1956 have now either died or they've moved on to old people's bungalows or elderly accommodation....and new families have come in....particularly in the last five years.....and when we looked at where all the children lived in this particular area and the various schools...we found that actually.....from Hertford Road.... we had only taken about ten per cent.....ninety per cent were actually coming from the old-established areas.....and only about ten per cent from there.....

INT.(036) This was mostly to do with young families moving into the area.....?

L.T.(037) Yes.....but I think also what has happened in a number of our families.....perhaps the daughter has found it hard to get a house in the area...because of the long waiting-list in Stevenage and the high cost of housing.....for low paid workers.....They have lived with their parents in their house and had a baby...the parents

then have got an old person's home.....or one of the parents has died and the mother has either stayed in the house or got an old people's flat.....and the people have taken over the tenancy.....and that has happened as well as people moving in.....

INT.(038) I suppose last of all....is really a few details about the school.....but is there anything that you feel we could usefully have talked about but didn't.....to do with how you see 'change'.....

L.T.(039) .....(READING FROM NOTES).....'Presentation of the School'.....'Being able to talk to parents'.....I think that's very important....I think I mentioned that....'Support of Governors' and 'Communication with Governors'....'Sharing'....'Staff Appointments'....'Support from the L.E.A.'....oh, yes....'Out of School Activities'....I think that's very important....things we do here like an annual school outing where parents want to come as well.....'Meeting parents on social occasions with or without their children'...we don't have so much meeting without the children.....we could do more about that.....and we're starting a 'Friends of the School Association'....now it's a bit late in starting....but one of the reasons we didn't in the past is because I felt that the teachers would be doing all the organising.....we didn't have parents.....a lot of parents.....who would say "Oh, yes....we'll be the secretary of that".....'Getting your Name in the Newspapers'....I thought that was another important thing.....'Visitors to the School'....visiting theatre companies.....inviting the infant school over to watch assemblies....we even went out once to S.G. School and did an assembly for them over there....but again.....from time to time.....not in an intellectual way.....when you are making the changes.....you've obviously got to.....you've done your identification.....and you put forward your remedy....and then you implement it.....and obviously then you do some evaluation.....it might be over a cup of coffee....it might be just chatting at the back of the hall with the Deputy Head.....but then....at the end of the day.....if you decide your evaluation was good.....then you follow the same sort of route as you would do in promoting all good things.....in that you give further impetus to it.....you don't just leave it there and say it's okay.....we'll leave it.....and if you decide that it isn't working then you've got to go back to the start again.....and identify why it isn't working.....and go through the situation.....it's a never-ending circle.....

INT.(040) Do you do it in such a planned way?

L.T.(041) No.....I don't have time.....

INT.(042) It's much more informal?

L.T.(043) Yes....much more informal.....very much so....because I at the moment do a .6 teaching commitment at this school....I give .4 to one class to enable us to have smaller class numbers.....and I give .1 to another class and .1 to a third class.....and apart from that I do bits and pieces of games and P.E.....but that in a way is an excuse.....one could argue.....because I don't like lots of paperwork and things like that....I don't like sitting in my office thinking.....drawing up great big schemes of work.....I much prefer contact with the children....because I think that it's very important for a headteacher to know all the children in the school....and it's not asking a great deal for a head to know two hundred and forty children in the school.....because whenever a mum comes to you.....just like when a member of staff comes to you with a problem....that problem is important enough for them to mention it to the headteacher.....although it may be fairly petty I think you've got to be able to put a name to a face....and deal with that problem....whether or not it's a question of their husband who's just been sent to prison....or whether or not they can't pay their museum trip until the end of the week....whatever it is I think you've got to be able to spend time.....and talk on a friendly basis.....and I think that's crucial.....in terms that.....if things aren't going well and if parents aren't happy with things.....then they will come and tell you....and I hope that my parents will....I was once accused at my last school of being too aggressive and not always approachable.....now I tend to be sometimes a little aggressive here....but I hope now that I am not now unapproachable....I hope that if a parent is unhappy with any aspect of school that they'll come and say such and such.....you know.....we didn't like such and such....I mentioned this lady P.S....and when I was first here....she would let me know one or two things that the parents weren't happy with.....Now, where possible I tried to change that.....I didn't actually agree with one or two things....and I didn't make any changes then....I just said to her....well, we're doing it because of this and if anyone wants to argue then I'll have a word with them.....

INT.(044) Okay, that's great.....Could I have a few quick details.....number of staff?.....I know how many children there are.....

L.T.(045) Well.....it's 8.5.....plus head.....plus the Unit Teacher.....who's going.....

INT.(046) It's two hundred and forty three children on roll.....and it's a Junior School.....?

L.T.(047) Yes.

INT.(048) And how many years have you been a head now?

L.T.(049) This is the end of my ninth.....three at H. and six here.....I was Deputy Head for six and a half years before H.....

INT.(050) Have you any strong involvement in any particular INSET work at the moment?

L.T.(051) None at all.....we would like but haven't got the actual time.....because my family is split up.....the children stayed with me for nearly two years.....and it was so bitter that I left....my wife had the children then....and they went back to her but my daughter didn't get on.....so a year ago approximately they came back to live with me.....so I'm a one-parent family although I live with somebody.....but the one outlet that I enjoy in school is football.....and I run the County under-15 side and I like that because that gives me.....if you like.....I see a different area of teaching.....and it gives me some useful contacts with secondary schools...in that I can go up to B.School and borrow things off them.....and I get a certain amount of pleasure from that.....On in-service, I was very interested in Multi-Racial Education and I went on the County course at Homerton.....and I would have liked to follow that up.....but again life in Hertfordshire simply died a natural death.....

INT.(054) Okay, that's super.....thanks very much.

L.T.(055) It's a bit disjointed I'm sure.....

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcript 30

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF PATTEN  
INFANT SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 9TH 1990

INT.(001) If we could start by.....well, when did the day start for you?

H.E.(002) At school at about twenty past eight.....but actually thinking about school when I got out of bed at seven o'clock.....

INT.(003) Does it usually happen that way?

H.E.(004) Yes I usually start thinking about the day then.....I may have thought about it the evening before but I'm usually thinking about the day as soon as I get up....particularly in the bath when I've got peace and quiet....and time just to think about what's going to happen or what has happened in school....or likely to happen.....

INT.(005) What sort of things do you do.....I suppose I'm talking about the thinking part.....You map out the day as much as you can?

H.E.(006) Yes, I remember or else I'll look in my diary at breakfast.....to see what's going to happen during the day and then I think about things that need doing.....that I'm currently working on....or ought to have finished or need to check up on.....and I suppose fit those into the day where I suppose they go.....the part of the day when they need to be done.....For instance, there's a letter today that I thought I was going to write to the parents and I hadn't quite decided.....and then I decided I WOULD write it.....and I was thinking at breakfast that the Nursery are going to take it home and I'm going to be busy from eleven o'clock when someone was coming for the gerbils and I knew you were coming...so I'd better do it early on otherwise there won't be time for the duplicator.....and the Nursery go home at half past eleven.....

INT.(007) It sounds like the 'tattoo' letter to me.

H.E.(008) It was the tattoo letter..... which P. and I got our hands smacked over.....we had it first and then we'd talked and decided we'd send a copy to parents and now I've got my hands smacked.....and decided I'd send another letter to parents just to reassure them about the minimal risks and so on.....so that was that.....

INT.(009) Yes, I had parents this morning feeling a bit agitated because they'd got hold of copies of the letter ....from other parts of the County.....

H.E.(010) Yes.....Luton, Welwyn, Bedford.....all sorts of places

INT.(011) The ripples go on....

H.E.(012) The ripples go on and on.....and then a parent whose husband is a policeman.....whom I'd already spoken to about it.....came back with some more information.....so I decided I would write a sort of reassuring letter saying 'Please don't panic but I felt you should have had this information because if I was a parent I would have wanted this information'..... which is my standpoint on it.....so that's been at the back of my mind actually.....just tying up the ends of that issue....

INT.(013) What were your feelings about that.....you said you'd had your hands smacked.....

H.E.(014) It was just that I. phoned up and said have you had it and what have you done about it.....so I explained what P. and I together had done about it.....and she said we should have contacted the Drugs Co-ordination Officer.....and I said I never knew there was one...and who was he anyway... and this was a decision that we made.....we make lots of decisions....and we were entitled to make that decision.... I felt a bit cross about that.....felt a bit resentful.... all of a sudden County Hall will become pompous and say do this or don't do this....when most of the time we're left to make all sorts of decisions about things that are actually far more crucial than that.....so I felt a bit hurt....okay, so what.....I felt you either leave me to make the decisions or else you make them all for me.....

INT.(015) It sometimes seems to happen that way.....

H.E.(016) Yes, it does.....

INT.(017) You seem to make a decision and then find someone is quoting the 'book' at you....you should have done this or done that.....which is fine in hindsight....

H.E.(018) ....which is interesting what you say because I looked in the 'Guidelines to Management' and it's not an entry....and when I looked in the 'Legal Guide' and it has a thing about a head's responsibility being to inform....and I thought if my son was still at primary school then I would have liked to have known this....



INT.(019) There was perhaps every indication that the original letter was genuine.....

H.E.(020) Well, P. having talked to Scotland Yard and them having said that these things were currently available in London.....and so we felt we'd better issue a warning....

INT.(021) ...and sometimes a decision is made without full knowledge....

H.E.(022) Precisely.....

INT.(023) So, quite a lot of time yesterday evening and certainly this morning....you were what?

H.E.(024) Turning it round in my mind whether I'd done the right thing initially and what I was going to do next...and the other thing that I was turning over in my mind.... something currently going on....and that is that on Monday I've been summonsed to appear in court in an 'access' case....for a child in this school, along with a lot of other professionals.....lots of other people....and the child is an enormous worry to us anyway....and being statemented.....and now I've got the additional problem of a very bitter case going on between the original father and the mother over access to this child....and not being asked if I would appear in court.....just being summoned....

INT.(025) How did you get the summons?

H.E.(026) It arrived by post.....with a cheque for expenses saying that in law if you've been summonsed and given your expenses.....then it's in pain of four hundred pounds if you don't turn up.....

INT.(027) So is it fair to say you felt anxious then?

H.E.(028) Well, yes.....I do feel anxious about that....and there are a lot of other people involved who ring me up and talk about it.....because they're anxious themselves.....but I've been to court once before so I don't feel so anxious as I did that time because I'm a bit more aware of the set-up....but some of the other people ringing me have been asking....and I've said well these are the things that happened before.....so all that's pretty uppermost....and it's also meant re-arranging things in school because I normally teach then.....arrangements for that morning had to be changed....so that's also on my mind for the week-end because I have to be absolutely sure I know where this is and where I'm going to park my car.....you know, the actual logistics of doing all that....so that issue's been at the back of my mind as well.....and the other issue that's been

going on in thinking terms is because B. is leaving and I'm in the middle of trying to appoint an internal deputy.....find a new class teacher....allowing parents to feel there'll be continuity for the top class that's going to be assessed.....wondering who to send on the 'Assessment Day'.....all tied up with staffing issues....

INT.(029) It's beginning to sound as though a lot of your time this morning....and perhaps a lot of your time generally....is spent with 'worries' of one kind or another .....

H.E.(030) Yes, they're all thinking things....and in fact I wrote a long list of the things I've actually done in between all that thinking.....

INT.(031) That sounds very helpful of you....

H.E.(032) Well, I thought I'd write it all down.....I did this once before for a management course.....they said write down everything you do in a day and you'll be surprised.... so I'd got used to it.....so I jotted things down as I did them after I got into school today.....[REFERRING TO LIST].....another thing I did was the sister of a little boy in the Nursery died this week so we had arranged.....are arranging for a card to go to the mother.....the little boy is a Downes Syndrome baby....and the little girl was paraplegic with massive problems and she died suddenly..... so we are sending a card and a donation to the charity.....so first thing today I'd brought this card in and was saying is this alright to people...and then I talked to the music co-ordinator because she was playing through a few tunes....about Christmas.....and we were looking at a few carols and wondering about that.....then I spoke to a dad on the phone who I knew would ring me because yesterday.....it was a Bengali family.....yesterday on the previous night there had been a lot of family violence and his wife had got all of the children and herself out to Social Services to a refuge.....so I was concerned with looking after the child during the day....and talking to her to sort things out.....and then taking the child to Social Services at night and going round to a neighbour to fetch things she'd left with the neighbour.....and so I was expecting him to ring because he didn't know where they'd gone....so I expected him on the phone.....the welfare assistant who looks after one of our special needs children wasn't going to be in this afternoon.....he's the access case and it's best to have one-to-one.....so I sorted that out....who was going to cover for that....and I remembered I hadn't filled in a form for the Language Support people and that referred back to the Summer Term and I thought it's been on my table for ages so I needed to do that....and so I

zipped round to people and said just remind me....and I opened the post and through it around in various directions.....and looked at it.....then I decided what to write about the drugs letter and did all that and gave it to the secretary.....I gathered together some more stuff for the Inset Day....and wished that I'd taken it home and collated it last night....and wondered when I'd get the time to staple it together and give it to the staff because I wanted them to have it today.....I read through the Assessment Day letter that had come and wondered who I was going to send on it.....and also looked at it because it said it had a list of the schools we were clustered with.... but it wasn't in there....and I read it three times and thought well am I being dim or have they missed it out.....

INT.(033) They missed it out....

H.E.(034) Thankyou.....

INT.(035) I had the same feelings because I read the letter and was looking to see who we were clustered with.....  
[TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION].....

H.E.(036) ....then after all that J.J. rang to talk to me about the Downes Syndrome little boy and a meeting about that.....the B.B.C. pamphlets for next term had come and I didn't understand the invoice so we looked back....the secretary was new in September....so we looked back through the cheques to see whether we'd paid and we hadn't....but it seemed confusing....I kept thinking about the Ethnic Statistics forms which I didn't get to give out to parents in September in time and I kept thinking about that....

INT.(037) That's for the D.E.S.?

H.E.(038) Yes....I kept thinking that when I deal with next term's entry to the Infants I mustn't forget that I haven't done this term's entry.....so I got that letter out to have a look at it.....I went down the corridor to fetch something and met a parent who was helping in one of the classes..... a secondary teacher who'd been doing some language work and I had a chat to her about what she was doing....I had a cup of coffee then....and relayed some phone messages to different staff about what was the matter with some of the children...health things....and they wanted to know about the little boy and the Bengali family....and I told everybody exactly what had happened....I slammed a few things under the photocopier....and the secretary brought some cheques to sign in the middle of all that so she could go to the bank.....and two children came to see me to show me their work....because it was nice and they wanted some praise about that.....and then as I came back up the

corridor the teacher from K.T. came to get the gerbils....

INT.(039) Looking back....over what seems clearly to be a very busy morning.....that would be fairly typical?

H.E.(040) That's fairly typical....

INT.(041) If you could pick out the one thing that you felt most positive about....what would it be out of all of those things.....

H.E.(042) The most positive things would be talking to the parent about what work she had been doing with the children....and talking to the children who'd come to show me their work....those were the most positive things....most of the other things were in a way 'problems'....they were all niggley little worries that needed to be dealt with....

INT.(043) ... and that's a reflection of how things are usually.....that a lot of the time you have decisions to make and things to worry about....interspersed with that....

H.E.(044) ....yes...

INT.(045) ....with things that you enjoy doing?

H.E.(046) ....well,yes..... I probably enjoy doing all of them but some of them are intrinsically satisfying....and are finished business....like the children coming to show me their work and that's pleasure for them and pleasure for me.....and unless there's something I want to follow up with the teacher because there's something I've seen....it's a small finished 'happening'....whereas a lot of things are on-going or unfinished business....and therefore I've got this stack of items in my mind....some are very big and some are small....which at some stage I'm going to have to finish....you know, so the card for A. is going to have to be signed and sent and that's finished....and the music has to be settled on....and will Mr.M. come back to me....and hopefully the supply person will turn up for the nursery child....and mustn't forget to write that on a form...so it's not that I don't enjoy those but they're satisfactory when they're finished.....

INT.(047) ....but the most satisfying things for you as a head would be those things that you finish....rather than things that continue....

H.E.(048) ...yes...perhaps they're just satisfying in different ways....I wouldn't want everything to be small tiny items that I finish....because there wouldn't be any 'feel'....there wouldn't be any threads through it all....

it's hard to say really....

INT.(049) Let's just leave it on a question then....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 31

TRANSCRIPT OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH HEAD  
OF PATTEN INFANT SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 14TH 1990

INT.(001) .....I wondered a little about the 'list' that you talked about....can I ask whose list it is.....is it yours or are they things from other people that you need to react to during the day?

H.E.(002) It's like today's list really.....[SHOWING WRITTEN LIST].....which is longer....they're things which just happen and they're not really my list but things forced upon me.....and other things which are my list.....they're things which I deliberately set out to do....

INT.(003) What interests me is the extent to which you're able to create your own list and where that list comes from....what makes you put something on that 'self-created' list?

H.E.(004) This list for today.....if I went through it....some things I had to put on that list myself.....in my head.....either last night.....probably not last night because I was so bamboozled after the History and Geography day that I couldn't think straight.....and Geoffery Howe's speech then took over the evening....so it was this morning really....

INT.(005) Okay, would you like to go through the list then.....and say perhaps which is which....

H.E.(006) Well, I saw B. about yesterday and the P.T.A. meeting.....that was on MY list....I saw the secretary about things that had happened yesterday when she wasn't here....that was on MY list....the Reception class had asked me.....we decided together that I would go into the hall and 'sus' out Christmas and the stage for them....it came up in suggestion.....it was MY list but also THEIR list....the road safety lady was coming and I needed to make sure she had a timetable and she had the space....that was on MY list to do, although obviously the actions depended on her responses when she arrived....but I would count that as being on MY list.....because I knew it was going to happen.....a parent turned up whose child is going to transfer from S.G.....that was partly on my list....I knew she might come but didn't know which day or when....so she was on a kind of reserve or 'may happen' list.....'be prepared for' list....H. popped in to ask me about Christmas

music.....that was not on my list.....then B. was going to a Science course this afternnon and the Science Centre rang about a booklet that we wanted.....and so they put that on to my list.....to sort out and check.....and could she fetch it.....and did we want it.....the secretary had been through some bills and asked me to sign some cheques.....so she had put that on my list.....the post had arrived and that's a sort of on-going list....P.T.A. secretary came in with the minutes and asked if they could be photocopied for tonight.....so she put that on my list to organise....a parent came to be shown round the Nursery....that was an appointment so I knew she was coming....my list....that was an appointment....I allowed her to put it on my list.....a parent rang up about transferring a child from T.H. nursery because she's moving.....she put that on my list....I went to see the supply teacher just to say hello and have you heard this, this and this.....so I knew that would be on my list anyway....I remembered I had to speak to the caretaker about chairs for tonight....that was on my list anyway....the secretary asked me if I'd written the letter about a trip that one of the classes is going on and I said I'd do it this afternoon.....that was put on to my list.....the Language Centre rang in the middle of the parent coming round and said could I ring back this afternoon....that's on my list....the Office rang.....R.W. has put something on my list today.....that I have to go down to the Office tonight and fetch the inspection report and bring it back because he has had it in his office so long.....and the Governors' meeting is next week....and they're only just getting it bound this afternoon.....it was supposed to go out to governors on Monday and hasn't.....so R.W. has put it the list on the wrong day for me.....that's very much on my list....

INT.(007) .....because?

H.E.(008) .....not to forget that....

INT.(009) ....because of who put it on the list?

H.E.(010) Yes, it was supposed to be delivered on Friday....so it's been an on-going problem to make sure I get hold of it for the governors.....who asked me for it....

INT.(011) So, it needed to have gone out anyway and R.W. is the one that's involved?

H.E.(012) ....well, he didn't get it back to Division in time and therefore it's not Division's fault....and it's not my fault....but governors are saying the meeting's on Tuesday and we thought you were going to give us the report .....

INT.(013) ....and they're looking to you?

H.E.(014) They're looking to me.....to organise that....so there we go....

INT.(015) Most of the things have been created for you by others.....another item for your agenda....?

H.E.(016) Quite a few, yes.....probably the earlier things I mentioned....just by chance.....are created by me and the other things have come in amongst those....on top or later ....

INT.(017) The thing I wondered about when I read through the transcript was that you seemed to be telling me a lot about how you juggled with all these various things....and you steadily worked through those things during the day.... probably more efficiently than I could do at school....you knew the things you needed to do and went through them bit by bit....I also thought that the contact with children and with the parent who came in to help were satisfying to you in a different kind of way....

H.E.(018) Yes, it was....

INT.(019) ....whereas administration and managing was also satisfying....but mostly when you felt that they were finished and dealt with as far as you were concerned.....

H.E.(020) I suppose the things with the children and the parents are for 'you'.....they are personal contacts....that could be the difference....that I actually find that dealing with people the most instantly satisfying....or not satisfying.....it's an immediate response when you deal with children or other people.....whereas if I'm dealing with paperwork it makes it satisfying.....like phone calls....to have got it done but I don't get personal feedback in the same way perhaps....

INT.(021) ...so it's feedback to you that makes the difference.....

H.E.(022) Yes, I suppose it is....yes....

INT.(023) So in a sense you get feedback from the children from the way in which they're responding to you?

H.E.(024) Yes, that's right.....yes, it's from them....

INT.(025) ....so I suppose if you went to talk to a child and ran away and hid.....because they hadn't seen you before.....or were frightened by you.....then that would be



negative feedback?

H.E.(026) Yes, horrendous wouldn't it be.....maybe I just generally like people.....and so the other things are satisfying but they lack the contact with people.....if I could do my whole day's work here and never open the door then I wouldn't be happy.....

INT.(027) .....so you need that contact to balance?

H.E.(028) Yes.....

INT.(029) If you spent all of your time in contact with children and people, would that be worrying to you.....

H.E.(030) Yes.....because I wouldn't get any time for....I need both bits of it to make the job the way I like it....some days it's all one and the next it's all the other....it's getting the balance, yes.....because if I have too many children and too many people.....and a very busy day in that personal kind of way....in the back of my mind I'm worrying about the administration, documentation, organisation, the overall view that I'm not getting that day if I'm involved with too many people.....whereas on a blank day I'm conscious of getting through a lot of paperwork and tidying things up....and sorting out....but I'm also perhaps slightly lonely.....

INT.(031) Okay, the impression I got from our last chat was that it can never be entirely accurate as a picture....it's a snapshot really....a moment in time....

H.E.(032) Yes, sometimes my day seems far too fragmented and I feel guilty of....what is it....reactive management...when I just react to things that are happening....perhaps I don't delegate enough....I think I've delegated less this term because my secretary's new.....so there've been a lot things I've gone through carefully so that next time she'll know.....

INT.(033) .....I wondered in all of this where you were....because I could see what you did as a head and yet I wondered where you were as a person in that.....perhaps they're the same thing....I'm trying to think whether there's a connection between what's consciously put on your agenda.....[INTERRUPTION].....

H.E.(034) You were asking where I was in this....

INT.(035) Yes, it's really to do with the items you put on to that list to work through....

H.E.(036) ....MY list....

INT.(037) ....now many of the things seemed to be coming from other people.....and you were simply reacting to requests or events or happenings or whatever.....and then there were a few things which you were creating.....where you were able to differentiate and say I'll consciously put this on my agenda.....so I wondered whether a lot of what you did was reactive but there was another kind of agenda that you were creating for yourself.....and I was interested in that agenda.....

H.E.(038) I think the creation of that other agenda happens out of school hours.....so it happens the evening before....it happens in the morning when I get up....and in the car....and it happens at school before nine o'clock....and it happens after three fifteen.....I often find I don't have the 'thinking space' in the day....to create that....I have to work on the one that's there....I have to do my real thinking out of the school day.....

INT.(039) Is one of the things you react to in fairly instinctive fashion.....[INTERRUPTION].....oh yes, you were talking about thinking time out of school....and I was wondering if things were thrown up during the day which you made part of your agenda.....today, for example, you saw B.....you saw the secretary.....there was something to do with road safety.....you saw the supply teacher and you saw the caretaker.....they were all things you were saying you consciously put onto your list....

H.E.(040) .....yes....yes....and the new parent whom I intended to see today although I didn't know what time.....

INT.(041) ....you allowed that to be put on your list?

H.E.(042) Yes, I suppose I did.....

H.E.(026) Yes, horrendous wouldn't it be.....maybe I just generally like people.....and so the other things are satisfying but they lack the contact with people.....if I could do my whole day's work here and never open the door then I wouldn't be happy.....

INT.(043) Now, that seems to say to me that one of the things that is H.....the part that is you.....is that you need to communicate with people and see.....as part of your image of what the school should be like.....the need for good communication.....

H.E.(044) Yes, and availability.....I wouldn't want people to feel that I was only available by appointment.....or at

times of my choice.....even though that's not perhaps wise....generally if parents want to see me....and someone arrives to see me.....unless it's a rep or a publisher who I don't want to be concerned with.....you see, there are different sections of the community and society coming in at you that you don't want anything to do with.....for good reasons.....it's peripheral....

INT.(045) ....there are strategies.....

H.E.(046) ....there are strategies for dealing with those ....but generally if someone who I regard as part of the school community....a child, a parent, a member of the staff, an agency....who want to see me or talk to me....I feel it's quite important that if they come....or they've rung....mostly I know that they need it then.....possibly it can be a 'quickie' or an appointment is made....something that it's not possible to fit in....but I think that being available.....not so that I'm dancing around but being reasonably available to people....is important.....because I'm then getting the immediate response.....and I'm getting that person at the moment they want me.....and how they are at the time....because if things are always put off to formalised appointments.....although for new parents.....if they are always put off till then.....things may change in the meantime and maybe whatever I could do at the time would have been appropriate.....I don't know.....it's a feeling that I would rather talk to people when they actually need me rather than say to them I'm sorry but you need to make an appointment.....I'll see you after school on Friday....particularly for a child or parent or member of staff....they've actually come to me and there's something they want to say, or discuss, or ask or tell me....I would rather do it then.....

INT.(047) And that's an important part of the general image you have in this school and your role within the school?

H.E.(048) ....and also it's also a personal need because so many contacts have unexpected results.....a parent comes and says 'I want to talk to you'.....if I put that off for days I would be wondering why she wanted to talk to me and I would prefer to know then.....I don't know if that's wise or not.....

INT.(049) ....Is that because you can't stand suspense then?

H.E.(050) Yes, I don't like the unknown.....a member of staff said to me recently....part-time member who only works three days a week.....and on the third day she said 'Have you got time at lunchtime I just want to talk to you?'....I

said yes, catch me between this and dinner duty, certainly..... something came in the way and she arrived late and someone else was there and she said 'No, it's okay I'll go home, I'll see you on Monday.....I said really it's alright and then I did see her.....and she told me she was having another baby and that was fine.....but I would have worried because it was obviously something personal she wanted to talk about.....I would have worried about that if she had asked to see me and I had sent her away....and wouldn't have seen me for four days.....I would have worried whether I had fulfilled her need and worried what problem it was going to be that I then needed to act on.....so it's a failing in myself partly.....that I find it difficult knowing that I will have to deal with a problem.....because most things are problems in some ways.....because people are not coming to you to say 'Do you know I've had a really good morning, I just thought you'd like to know and now I'm off to do the shopping'.....so it's normally something I'm going to have to give information about or reassure or react to or organise or refer them to someone else.....

INT.(051) ....and is that need to communicate.....that need for immediacy.....is that something that's an important part.....or have we touched on something that's fairly minor for you.....or is it deeply imbedded in the kinds of things you're trying to do here.....

H.E.(052) It was fairly deeply imbedded in the ways in which I would like this school to be....

INT.(053) I would guess that if we talked there would be other things that you could describe.....

H.E.(054) Yes....to me it's important....I think the head shouldn't be someone who's remote and you only reach in the goodness of time....as a parent I would have wanted....but not necessarily get....to get more immediate contact with someone particularly if something had upset me or worried me about my child.....

INT.(055) Okay, thanks.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 32

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF  
BAKER JM SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 11TH 1990

INT.(001) You were saying that the day started for you at seven?

B.K.(002) ...at seven I was in the bath when the telephone rang.....

INT.(003) .....typical start to the day this?

B.K.(004) Well, this has happened before.....not typical but not the first time ever....and it was my caretaker saying he'd got 'flu and he wouldn't be in.....so that was a good start.....and I'd only been saying to the staff on the previous day on the Inset day that it was a very pleasant day we spent.....and now we're back to harsh realities....and we certainly were.....I usually get to school about ten past eight.....quarter past eight....but because it meant I had to unlock everything and switch off the alarms I got here about twenty to eight....about half an hour earlier in fact.....

INT.(005) How did you feel about that?

B.K.(006) I suppose slightly disgruntled.....

INT.(007) Why was that do you think?

B.K.(008) .....I was feeling disgruntled in the sense that I'd been having a nice quiet bath prior to coming to school....and it meant I had to sort something out at school early and I actually had to do someone else's job....for which I'm not paid.....but no-one else would do it....I'm the only one with another set of keys....so I have to come and unlock.....and that takes a lot of time because there's a lot of doors, it's surprising.....and the worst part comes later when I'll have to stay until half past six....until the cleaners have gone and in the dark I've got to try and find all these wretched keys to fit the doors.....When the school was put up in nineteen fifty six I suppose they had a system whereby they had a master key which fitted all the locks but since then.....over thirty-odd years.....they've changed so many of the locks.....

INT.(009) I think I heard that a number three key would open most doors of most schools in the town at one time.....

B.K.(010) Well, I've still got a number three and a number one key but they don't shut many doors now....because the locks have been changed....so I did all that and I'd just about done all that....in good time.....just after half past eight....so that staff could arrive to start work and weren't standing on the doorstep....and I then had another telephone call from a member of staff to say that she hadn't been well....she'd been away for two days....and she still wasn't well and was covered in spots and was going to the doctor's.....and she rang me back after about half an hour to say the doctor said she'd got a virus infection and she was very contagious and shouldn't mix with anyone for several days.....

INT.(011) It sounds as though you may have most of the staff going down with this...

B.K.(012) Yes.....and I was concerned about another member of staff who had also been away for two days.....because her mother is dying of cancer.....who happens to live in Northern Ireland .....so she's flown out....she was due to fly back late last night so I was a bit concerned whether she was going to come back....but she did come back....but she'll need more time off because of her mother.....so that's very sad.....so in a way it was a very typical start to the day because coming to school you don't really know what's going to happen....no idea what's going to happen....we talk about planning our day but it's a waste of time planning the day....because you've no idea what's in front of you....you can come with certain ideas that today I'll do this and this....and say I'll pay all the bills in the General Account today....but it never pans out like that....

INT.(013) Do you have any sort of plan when you come to school....a few things mapped out in your mind?

B.K.(014) Oh, yes....I've always got a list and you just keep chipping away at it.....things gradually get to the top of the list and they get done.....some things have to be done....some things have to be done spot on....immediately ....because they demand it....so that was an average start to the day....it wasn't raining....

INT.(015) What difference would rain make?

B.K.(016) It makes a difference to me psychologically....because my brain leaps ahead and thinks ugh! it's going to be an indoor playtime.....and it's going to be an indoor dinner-time....there's going to be kids all over the place and no-one's going to be able to get out....and members of staff aren't going to have a break from children all day

etcetra, etcetra.....so I suppose the mind goes ahead a bit if it's raining in the morning....so that was the start.... and J. had returned from Northern Ireland and she was a bit upset....she's under some pressure and feeling the strain a bit....so I popped into her class a few times....and I'd taken the class all morning of the teacher with spots....I hadn't taken that class before and that was fine because it meant that the basic lessons you have up your sleeve....it was okay because that class hadn't had me before so they couldn't say 'Sir, you did this before...'

INT.(017) ....and the basic lesson you had up your sleeve went over well with them....

B.K.(018) ....that went over well...that was to do with eggboxes....if I have two eggs in the eggbox....how many places can I put the two eggs without duplicating where they go....it's very, very good and they enjoy doing it....

INT.(019) ...and you've done this quite a few times....

B.K.(020) ....once or twice, yes....it goes down well....

INT.(021) It sounds as though you enjoyed doing that...

B.K.(022) I enjoy getting into a class....that's fine....

INT.(023) Why's that?

B.K.(024) Why do I enjoy getting into a class? Well, basically because I'm a teacher.....primarily I'm a teacher and I like to be involved with kids...and as a head you ARE involved with kids....sometimes a bit remotely but you get very involved with a very small minority of kids....you spend your time with ten per cent of the kids....a certain young gentleman you and I know well....I spend a lot of time with...but it's a different relationship you have....you don't get so many opportunities of having that relationship with a class....of doing something and seeing it through together....and I am timetabled to do some teaching....but sometimes that goes by the board because something has happened....like today, I was due to do some music today but couldn't do it this morning because I was taking Mrs.S's class but it did mean I had the morning with a group of children.....

INT.(025) ....and does that often happen where you've timetabled something and it doesn't quite come about because of visitors, or....

B.K.(026) ....yes...and of course at this time of year...this period from October to March....with twelve

classes and twelve teachers.....there's usually a good chance of one away on one day every fortnight I suppose....

INT.(027) I hadn't really thought of that before but this ruling.....three days is it...over teaching cover...

B.K.(028) I think it's now a two day rule and of course from next April there's no-day rule because we can get a supply straight away.....but once your supply budget's gone then that's it....

INT.(029) ....but I hadn't really appreciated that in a school with twelve full-time members of staff there is this greater likelihood of needing to cover at some point....

B.K.(030) Yes....the greater the number then the greater the incidence of sickness....

INT.(031) So, if you get an epidemic in this school....

B.K.(032) .....if you get an epidemic then 'boom', 'boom'[?].....

INT.(033) So, what other kinds of things have you been doing today?

B.K.(034) Today? Well, I also then had several phone calls to say that three mid-day assistants were out....so I in fact went straight on and did a playground duty....for the whole of the lunch hour....except for ten minutes when I grabbed lunch....and there were also some things that I had to do....At half past one I'd arranged to see a parent....it was one of those where having got the parent to come into school I didn't want to say I can't see you....and the only thing I can do in that situation....fortunately it's a relatively small class.....I just have to say three of you go to that class, three of you to that class and just spread them around the school....which they quite enjoy depending on who they are going to....and what that particular class is doing that afternoon....they very much like going to another year group.....now, a fourth year group very much like going back into a first year group where they can help....and read, and that sort of thing....now, a first year group being split very much like going into the fourth years.....so, I split them around and had them all back at three o'clock....I was just gathering them together when you came in.....seeing they were okay before I sent them off home....

INT.(035) It sounds as though a lot of your time today has been spent in keeping things going....



B.K.(036) Right! I haven't actually opened the mail yet....if there's anything desperate then that's tough luck....but I haven't actually opened the envelopes yet....but it's been just a question of physically making sure that the school is actually operating.....that the staff can physically get into the place....covering for a teacher who's away....covering for the mid-day assistants... because we have a little bit of bother sometimes at lunchtimes in the playground.....there's a lot of children in a small space....

INT.(037) Yes, this has got a relatively small playground.....

B.K.(038) Very small....in Summer we have the field but you can't really use it from now until April.....

INT.(039) And your day will still continue of course....

B.K.(040) When we've finished here I shall then have a look through the mail.....I want to talk to my Deputy when he gets back because he's been on a Science afternoon.....I want to have a quick word with the girl who did supply to cover for his class and make sure she was okay.....I'll have a look at the mail....and because I've got a bit of time because I've got to be here....I'm not normally here to six.....I'm normally here to five.....

INT.(041) What do you feel about a day like today where you seem mostly to be substituting for teaching and non-teaching staff.....and the caretaker.....

B.K.(042) Well, I think what have I actually done today other than hold the ring somehow....have I done anything constructive....other than make sure that things were ticking over.....

INT.(043) Good feelings.....what sort of feelings on a day like today.....

B.K.(044) A day like today I feel....well, you shrug your shoulders and say I've had worse....it's par for the course because another day there's maybe another set of circumstances.....the caretaker's in but someone else is away....or something else will happen....maybe a lad will kick a glass door in tomorrow....one did last week....so time's taken up dealing with that....time seems to be taken up dealing with a whole range of unconnected events....

INT.(045) Do they vary in importance?

B.K.(046) They vary in importance....they vary in

intensity, yes....

INT.(047) ....and you can't pace those at all?

B.K.(048) ...they just happen....and in a sense the boy who....in a fit of temper.....took a swing at a glass panel in a door....there has to be an immediate response.....and there are silly things that come up which are small but annoying....like buying an expensive new copying machine and it goes wrong and it has to go back to the factory and it comes back and we run off a few copies and the thing breaks down.....and we phone the guy up and he's here today....but we'd actually made the phone call a week ago....and then he tells me the thing's got to go back again....it's smashed something inside.....those are relatively small items but they just add up and on certain days it's the last straw on the camel's back.....that sort of feeling....

INT.(049) So, today is like that....you had no way of knowing when we arranged to meet today....

B.K.(050) None at all....and that happens....I couldn't say how often it happens but it happens....this is not an unusual day....

INT.(051) You're not really saying what feelings you have about a day like today.....

B.K.(052) Feelings?

INT.(053) If I used the word 'despondent' then to describe how you felt.....would that be the right word...or would you choose another one?

B.K.(054) Yes, there are tendencies to despondency....I think a lot of heads have those feelings nowadays....for the last two or three years perhaps....it's a different ball-game.....there's a despondent feeling but I don't feel despondent with how the day went....because I did enjoy the morning in the classroom.....

INT.(055) That was the two eggs in the eggbox?

B.K.(056) That was the two eggs in the eggbox....but then you can go on of course to three eggs in the eggbox....

INT.(057) I'm not sure I can work that one out....how many gaps are there.....six?

B.K.(058) There are six....and I tell the story about Sainsbury's.....and buying the eggs and boiling one and mum fries one and two in a cake and so on.....and then has two

left....and the two eggs could be anywhere in the box....so the children draw on squared paper.....six squares for the eggbox.....for two eggs there are fifteen possible ways....

INT.(059) For just one egg there would be six?

B.K.(060) Yes...

INT.(061) So there's some kind of progression....but that comes later?

B.K.(062) Yes...that comes later....when I come back in twelve months time when she's away again....

INT.(063) Okay....well, the three things I've been trying to look at have been what you've done....and you've basically told me that.....feelings about that....well, I'm not sure if it's despondency....

B.K.(064) I've been more despondent on some days....I don't know why....narked perhaps rather than despondent.....

INT.(065) Irritated?

B.K.(066) Irritated, certainly....because I have to do a job that is not normally my job....and feel narked....

INT.(067) And does that feed through to other people...

B.K.(068) Well, I didn't see a lot of other people today...

INT.(069) I mean, it wasn't a matter of people thinking that the caretaker's not here today so we'd better keep out of your way.....

B.K.(070) Well, I think they have enough sense to keep out of the way because they know the caretaker's away and I'm in the classroom because a member of staff's away....and at lunchtime I was out doing a dinner duty as well....so they've got enough sense to know that whatever problems they've got to save them for another day....

INT.(071) Now, a much harder question....is what did you spend your time thinking about during the day.....I'd guess there was little planning time because you seemed to have been reacting for much of the time....

B.K.(072) At the back of my mind I've been thinking about the Christmas activity....entertainment.....coming up and I haven't yet organised the school choir that I'm responsible for.....and I've not yet actually thought about what we're going to sing.....and we must get down and decide what we're

going to sing and get the show on the road as it were....

INT.(073) So that would be ticking away at the back of your mind?

B.K.(074) ....that was ticking away at the back of my mind....and I might start thinking about that in the extra hour when I'm here today.....or I might think about it later on this evening....not in the first hour.....the first hour I don't.....

INT.(075) Do you do a lot of that kind of planning....that kind of thinking....at home?

B.K.(076) Yes....

INT.(077) ....rather than in school.....

B.K.(078) ....yes, yes....you somehow don't have the opportunity for sustained thought....uninterrupted sustained thought....the telephone goes or someone wants to see you or someone's sent to see you because they've been naughty....etcetra, etcetra....

INT.(079) So is it fair to say that most of your time during the day seems to be reactive.....in the sense that you're responding to things as they crop up....

B.K.(080) ....sometimes you're lucky and you get days...when the weather gets better....and children are fitter.....staff are fitter....and things go according to plan....and you do actually get into the spot where you intended to be....or hope to be....

INT.(081) Are Mondays different from Fridays?

B.K.(082) Only psychologically....

INT.(083) Why's that?

B.K.(084) Only in the sense that Friday is poet's day....I think the worst time of all is late-ish on Sunday evening.....

INT.(085) Why?

B.K.(086) I always find late Sunday evening depressing....because it's the thought of Monday morning....although the thought is sometimes worse than the actual reality....

INT.(087) ....and the best time of the week?

B.K.(088) Oh, Friday at about six o'clock....I go home and put my feet up....I light a cigar....I've probably poured myself a whiskey....and I always go for a walk round the village....just to take the air....I don't jog because my knee's gone but I take a stroll round the church path....

INT.(089) Is that the time of day when you tend to think about school....or think through things that have happened?

B.K.(090) Well, I'm unwinding then....winding down and trying not to think of anything really....and think about things totally unconnected about school....like how many runs Northamptonshire made today....crucial question really...

INT.(091) ...or England against South Australia....

B.K.(092) ....absolutely....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 34

TRANSCRIPT OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH HEAD  
OF BAKER JM SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 19TH 1990

INT.(001) There was one word that I couldn't really transcribe.....and that was the phrase you used when we talked about whether Fridays were different from Mondays... you said that Fridays was "poets' day".....so that's what I've written in the transcript.....but I wondered what a poet's day was....

B.K.(002) Push Off Early Tomorrow's Saturday...[LAUGHS]...

INT.(003) I thought it was some cultural thing....I was thinking perhaps you had local poets in to school on Fridays.....

B.K.(004) ....I'm sorry to disappoint you....

INT.(005) ...I was really quite impressed....I thought it was a very impressive way to finish each week....

B.K.(006) ...sorry about that....

INT.(007) Now, I was trying to look at three different aspects of what you do as a head....one was about the things you'd been doing during the day....one was about the kinds of things you were thinking about...and one was about your feelings about what you were doing....and the picture you gave seemed largely in terms of what you felt you were having to cope with on that day....and you seemed at times to have various negative feelings about some of that.....I suggested the word 'despondent' during the interview but you seemed to be happier with the word 'irritated' rather than despondent as such....you said that much of your time seemed to be spent in just keeping things going....on the 'doing' side for example you were telling me about unlocking the school, spending time with some parents, teaching a class for much of the time, spent some time with the Deputy, checked on a member of staff who was coping with her mother being seriously ill.....I wondered in all of that whether you felt that you had little control over events of the day....they were all things that were flung at you....

B.K.(008) That seems to me to be more and more par for the course....it isn't that the caretaker is ill every day but something else will come up....you spend time in just keeping the school going.....

INT.(009) You said at one point that it was a whole new 'ball-game'.....and saying that over the last few years it's become a different 'ball-game'.....is that the same kind of thing that you're saying....that the things you're expected to do.....or which you yourself feel is part of the job.... that has now changed in some kind of way over the last few years.....?

B.K.(010) I've no empirical evidence for this of course but I did feel in days gone by that I could plan for things...and could see things through....and if I'd geared myself to do something the next day then I was largely able to do it.....it's just that I'm able to do that less and less.....and more and more you are reacting to events that are happening around you....rather than planning things or organising things....instead of reacting to things as they come and you are to a large extent just trying to keep the ship steady.....

INT.(011) I think I've heard similar analogies to that....of being the captain of a ship....

B.K.(012) Not the Titanic then?

INT.(013) Not that one in particular but it seems similar to the kinds of metaphors other people have used....spinning plates on poles is another one that's been mentioned.....

B.K.(014) That's a good one because you do have to get things in some sort of sequence....priorities....and some plates are about to fall....and need your attention....

INT.(015) You also said something about your feelings on that day....you seemed disgruntled rather than despondent about things you were doing on that day.....

B.K.(016) I'd have felt despondent ten years ago...or fifteen years ago....but now it's so much part and parcel of almost every day....you get over the despondency bit but you're still a bit disgruntled but you haven't quite become despondent mainly because you've been doing that sort of thing for so long.....and you've got acclimatised or attuned to that....whereas before it might not have been quite so much the norm....

INT.(017) What do you think has caused that kind of change?

B.K.(018) That's difficult because you can point to all sorts of things.....I suppose that caretakers have been ill before....and members of staff have been away before....there is no doubt in my mind.....and certainly since I came here....and I must be careful not to compare

this with D. which was quite different from this school.....compared with when I first came here ten years ago there are far more disruptive children than there were.....who are constantly muddying the waters.....putting great strain on individual members of staff.....

INT.(019) I suppose when I looked through the transcript it seemed to me that there was a question I needed to ask today which was about where you were in all of that....it was a day that unfolded for you.....and I wondered in all of that what you would have liked to have done so far as this school was concerned.....but I'm not sure if that's a question you feel able to answer.....I felt you were saying that the day was a very fragmented one for you and perhaps there was a sense in which you had little control over events.....and yet somewhere in all of that I wondered whether the real 'you' was trying to shape the school in some way but perhaps frustrated somewhat on that particular day.....I thought that there were signs of the inner person in the teaching side of what you said.....you seemed visibly to cheer up when you began talking about the eggboxes and so on....you seemed to have enjoyed that part of the day.....and you talked about the choir and your musical work with the children.....I wondered whether the real 'you' wanted to work with children.....especially on the music side....

B.K.(020) I seem to get less and less time going into classrooms....because I used to do a lot of teaching when I first came.....a lot.....frustrated now perhaps.....but I can't say it's the administrative load because a lot of this bureaucratic nonsense I tend ignore or just do the bare minimum.....whereas someone just appointed would take it all very seriously perhaps.....I think I've got it about right.....but there is more and more time taken up by details of bureaucracy.....and sorting out poorly behaved children to a greater extent than I used to....I used to be able to spend much more time in the classroom rather than with a child....the E.L's of this world.....

INT.(021) Last time we talked you described them as 'young gentlemen'.....

B.K.(022) Trouble is none of them is particularly gentle.....there are three hundred and thirty children here and two hundred and eighty are smashing kids.....apart from the usual hiccups of growing up they're fine but there are the others who are not particularly nice.....who are aggressive.....very selfish.....you get far more petty vandalism in schools.....I can't use the swimming pool as I used to.....I used to use it for weeks on end but I can't do that now.....if they came after school and had a swim and then went away I wouldn't mind but you have this mindless



element that's then got to throw bricks in it.....and one thinks 'Why?'.....

INT.(023) What's really changed though....is it society changing and the demands on you are changing.....becoming more bureaucratic in nature.....or is it that you're changing.....

B.K.(024) Well, none of us are standing still I suppose....although basically we must remain the same....I've just slowed down a bit.....but the children seem far more aggressive in the playground situation....they no longer play the old playground games that went on....and books have been written on....they no longer know them....part of their culture seems to be watching endless videos of American-type wrestling or turtles.....whatever it is I think it's somehow reflected in an aggressive attitude on the playground....that I think has changed and that reflects society....I could get a bit political at this point but that era is perhaps coming to an end soon.....

INT.(025) If you had the freedom to be free of those kinds of changes what kinds of things would you be trying to do for this school....what's your picture of what you'd like to create here....

B.K.(026) I've always tried to create a relaxed, harmonious, caring, cultured atmosphere in which a child can grow and develop as an individual....but also showing responsibilities to other people as well....I now find that very difficult to do in school....

INT.(027) Does that now seem very remote to you?

B.K.(028) Yes.....with the children that now seems very remote....

INT.(029) And what about the teachers....you've said about the climate of the school but what role do the teachers have within that set-up....

B.K.(030) They are the prime instruments of setting the whole thing in motion and creating that relaxed atmosphere.....which they would all like to do, I'm sure....and finding it increasingly difficult because of all the strains and stresses and demands on them....and the type of child now....and they have suffered over time by being the goldfish in the bowl....and coming to the conclusion that they haven't been looked at in any kind of constructive or helpful way.....only a destructive way such as "Standards have fallen.....reading standards have fallen....discipline has gone....things aren't what they were....we should get

rid of all the bad teachers".....and this sort of thing that we've been bombarded with.....with the best will in the world.....starts to affect and impregnate their thoughts.....

INT.(031) So a question of morale?

B.K.(032) Yes.....and I'm very consciously trying strategies to raise morale.....I think in the past I always showed appreciation but now I almost overdo appreciation of what the teachers are doing....

INT.(033) ....and that's a way of compensating what's eroding morale?

B.K.(034) Yes....

INT.(035) I suppose that one interpretation could be that in D. which was a much smaller school you were able to develop a lot of very good work.....generate a great deal of enthusiasm....and you've simply come into a much bigger school where it's more difficult to keep those kinds of things going in this much larger set-up.....it's more remote....

B.K.(036) Yes....it was easier at D. in lots of ways....it was a smaller school.....I hadn't the social problems I have here.....oddly enough, there were problems for the middle-classes in the rat-race and the big mortgages....and the strains and stresses could show....but I taught at least half time and I felt I was able to influence far more kids more directly than I can here.....

INT.(037) So problems perhaps of a different kind.....

B.K.(038) I lived in the village.....knew all the families.....knew then very well.....knew the children before they ever got to the school...but it had its drawbacks as well.....

INT.(039) Okay, that's very helpful....and very valuable...are there any things we've not talked about as part of your day-to-day work that we've not really covered....

B.K.(040) I think....you need always to keep things in perspective....it's like the bad news I had on Saturday about my friend C.....I thought there's me moaning away last week about the caretaker not being in....and a member of staff not in....and there's this chap....active, fit who drops down dead at the age of forty-five.....and I'm moaning because I've got to come in half-an-hour earlier....it's peanuts really....it makes you remember that you're a professional....you have a job to do....and the kids are

bloody awful....and seventy five per cent might be bloody awful but that's your life.....that's what you're here for....that's what you're paid to do....so keep things in perspective.....have a smile....have a chuckle...have a laugh....have a pint on a Saturday....make sure you do other things in the weekend to relax....and come back on Monday and be almost human again....in the hope that this week won't be as bad as last week....nothing serious has happened today and the things I wanted to do I've done.....and I'll take a choir rehearsal in a moment and look at what we're going to do for Christmas which I shall enjoy....and because I enjoy it then hopefully they'll enjoy it too....and things may continue to get better or there might be a disaster tomorrow....and I'll cope....but I'm a head with quite a few years experience so perhaps I'll do more than just cope and be a little more positive than just get through the day.....although last Thursday it was an effort just to get through the day....and on Friday was magnificent because Beaujolais Nouveau had just come out and we'd bought some from Waitrose and Sainsbury's.....and finished the day quite pleasantly.....deciding which one was the best buy....Sainsbury's actually....and cheaper too....so a nice way to finish the week.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 33

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF CLARKE  
JMI SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 15TH 1990

INT.(001) If I can start by just asking you about the kinds of things you've been doing today.....it's not a time and motion thing.....it's just your impressions of what you've actually been doing today....

J.M.(002) Most days it's the same impression.....I haven't started yet to do anything I intended to do when I came in to school.....because most of the things I've been doing are things that have cropped up since I've come in.....

INT.(003) Are you making a distinction there between what you see as 'real' work or 'proper' work for you and the rest?

J.M.(004) No, not really.....it's a distinction between what I know I need to be....if you like....getting out of the way now....but some of the things I've been doing today have been really essential to the children and the school....so it's not been unimportant....but as I get to the end of the week I get more and more this feeling that I haven't finished anything yet....when I've haven't actually achieved what I've got on my list....

INT.(005) Now, that's suggesting to me that you feel that you need to be doing things that are fairly tangible....that there's some kind of output....something at the end of it...is that it....or is it just to do with the list and crossing things off....

J.M.(006) ....specific things like that envelope which is on the top....which has the data for the budget...because we've got complications here....I can't complete it or send it back because it appears no-one knows the answer to the questions I'm asking so I've spent a lot of time on something that should really have taken me....I feel....just a short time....and things like that....probably, not because that's new but because I'm new here so a lot of things are quite frustrating....I can't go to the filing cabinet and find things like I could at B.H. because it's filed under a different file under a different system.....so that sort of thing I find is bothering me because it's not where it should be....

INT.(007) Okay, now that's telling me about difficulties that you have in working through some of the administrative

side of things.....and finding where the information is...and being able to put your hand on things....but I'm also interested in what you have actually been doing....and you seem to be grouping all that together and saying that's perhaps not the real part.....

J.M.(008) Do you mean just today?

INT.(009) Yes...are there things that stand out in your mind....just thinking back....are there things that stand out or is it just a blur....

J.M.(010) No, at lunchtime I'm being Senior Supervisory Assistant because we've got two MSA's short and the Supervisory Assistant....so I spend an hour at lunchtime actually organising the lunch....so that's one thing I've been doing at the moment....which I wouldn't normally be doing.....but have to because of staffing....and because I've re-organised it to make it better for the children....The first thing I did this morning was deal with a problem with a child and a parent....which I felt was very important.....that was the first thing I did....and that is an important part of my job....because that affects the children....but it wasn't actually on my agenda this morning.....

INT.(011) ....and you have an agenda of things to do when you come to school?

J.M.(012) No, not an agenda but I do have areas where I know I need to be getting somewhere....and I feel I'm not...behind it all is the fact that I promised myself at the beginning of this term that by a month into the term I would be spending some time with each age group in the school....that was behind it....that's what I actually want to do....and I have not....the only thing I have achieved is that twice a week I'm taking the second year class..... and the reason I'm doing that is to put support into a particular teacher who's got problems....so I've had to make the time....

INT.(013) ....so that wouldn't normally be something you put on your list but you felt it was something that was needed for the children?

J.M.(014) That's right.....that's something I'm trying to get towards....all of the time spending time with the children.....

INT.(015) So do you have a kind of mental list of different things that you'd like to get round to.....a kind of medium-term list....an on-going thing which you carry with you day

to day but which doesn't much change because they are fairly substantial things to do....like spending time in each of the classes....or do you keep a fairly detailed written list which you work to?

J.M.(016) I have.....At the end of most days now I write a list of all the things that have cropped up during the day that I haven't actually managed to get to....and the things I feel I should actually be coping with....but that's just a memory thing so I don't forget anything.....because I find in my old age that I'm getting very absent-minded [LAUGHS] but basically now I don't work to any sort of list....

INT.(017) ....and what happens to those lists?

J.M.(018) ....sometimes I transfer them to another list....and sometimes I actually achieve something on those lists...a lot of the things on the lists actually concern people....but I mustn't forget so I write them down....I look at them occasionally but I don't always do anything...I mean sometimes I come in and something really important crops up and so I do that.....

INT.(019) Is it true to say that things happen and you are able to deal with them immediately....because you think you think you need to see that person or remind them about something or you need to pass on information about something .....and you deal with some of those things and then at the end of the day you think through what's happened that day and pick up on things that you've missed out on and then jot those down.....

J.M.(020) Yes....that's true to a point....things that I....as we work towards April....which is the date.....I have been trying to sort out some of the problems with the building....and I had on the top of my list for a month to write to R.D.....and it stayed on the top of my list....and I've actually achieved that now because I felt that was going to be important....because we're having to pick up on carpets and furniture....that sort of thing is a good example....getting all the stopcocks in the school loosened or something....they were all seized up....all sorts of stupid little things which hadn't been picked up around the building that could be quite damaging long-term....eleven ball-cocks....several toilets didn't flush....stupid things like that.....that are actually very important to the everyday life of the children and the teacher in the classroom.....we've got a classroom of twenty-six infants and two toilets and one doesn't flush....

INT.(021) ....and that's a major problem....

J.M.(022) ....and that's the sort of thing that I feel  
....whilst it's important....maybe I could be better  
employed.....

INT.(023) ....and you jot these down as short term  
things.....usually at the end of the day?

J.M.(024) No, I jot them down whenever....

INT.(025) .....whenever you've a moment?

J.M.(026) I.....at some stage....look through it....and say  
have I forgotten anything important...like a piece of  
information I need to pass on to a teacher concerning either  
a parent or a child....

INT.(027) Do you tend to end up with a lot of these short-  
term lists.....

J.M.(028) I don't really know....shall we have a look?  
[FETCHES LIST].....it's things that are....well, I'll tell  
you what's on my list.....'school prospectus'....that's  
long-term....I've also got a note about a child who had a  
head bump that was quite serious.....now, things like that  
there are some that are long-term and some are short-  
term....the fact that we're illegal and haven't got a  
prospectus follows on from the fact that at my governors'  
meeting I have to ask my governors for policies I need to  
print in the book....which I know they haven't done....but  
one of my problems I feel is that the Education Act hasn't  
been implemented much in this school.....

INT.(029) Now, I'm not sure I've got the right picture  
about how you work as a head....and the things you're  
involved in and think about....there are things that happen  
that you can deal with at the time....and there are other  
things that go on to a kind of mental list...if you've got  
time you jot them down....perhaps at the end of the day....

J.M.(030) ....things that are important I write down....

INT.(031) ...there seems a mixture there of long-term and  
short-term....they all have some significance....but some  
you deal with over a long period of time because it means a  
lot of work or getting information from different  
places....and some are short-term and much more urgent?

J.M.(032) One of the things I did this morning that was  
important was to do with the security of the school....our  
caretaker locked himself out of his room with all of the  
school keys locked inside....so had we not sorted that  
problem we would not have been able to lock the school up

tonight....so that was a quick short-term thing....the locksmith came out and did it in no time at all....I personally feel that the things that crop up....like that...have to be dealt with there and then....actually there seem to be a lot of them now....it seems that every single day there seems to be something like that which needs dealing with there and then.....

INT.(033) ....and today is a day like that?

J.M.(034) Yes....

INT.(035) ....like the problem over access to the caretaker's room....and like the problem over whether a member of staff was going to come....that was when I arrived?

J.M.(036) Oh, yes....

INT.(037) .....and taking responsibility as SSA because two MSA's were away.....that seemed something else you were saying when I arrived....does that cover everything?

J.M.(038) ....and I tried to speak to P.W. about the budget....and I've spent time with the staff....clitter-clattering back about the Friends of P.G. meeting I was at last night until twenty past ten....I've spent time with two of the committee of the Friends of P.G. following the meeting last night.....I've chatted to quite a few children.....I can't remember anything else.....oh, we couldn't find the census form for school meals...I've signed a few things....because I've got a very good secretary ....who gets on with things....I've spoken to Mrs.B. who comes in about violin....and organised an extra few pupils to teach for violin.....wrote to another parent whose child unfortunately won't be included on the list....

INT.(039) Were most of the things you did today not on your list....as part of a mental list or written list....but were things that just....

J.M.(040) ....most of them weren't actually what I felt I should spend my time doing.....but most of the things I spend my time on are actually things that are important to the school....but I find it frustrating....one of the things I've spent some work on....I'm not sure if it's an achievement....it's actually doing something about the reading scheme....physically moved it....so that it's better for the children....we are now actually re-coding it and I've spent a lot of money on books.....the next stage is to move the non-fiction....no, the fiction library....into another space....and I just haven't had the time to get to



that and the co-ordinator in charge of that needs me there to help.....things like that I find I'm not getting to as much as I'd like to....

INT.(041) So, is that why you were saying earlier when I arrived that you hadn't done any real work.....because there are so many incidental things.....

J.M.(042) Yes, because the curriculum side....which I consider to be one of my prime....one of the things that is most important I suppose.....I feel it's the curriculum and the children.....

INT.(043) Can we think about the morning in a slightly different way perhaps....is there any moment you can pick out where you had feelings that were distinctly positive in some way....you had a nice feeling about something perhaps....when you felt it was good for some reason.....you've not been in a miserable state?

J.M.(044) Oh no, I'm not in a miserable state anyway....I get frustrated though that I feel I'm not achieving as much as I'd like to be achieving.....

INT.(045) Did you feel frustrated through the morning....

J.M.(046) ....at certain times I did...but not all of the time....dealing for instance with the man with the problems which was quite serious....although it wasn't on my agenda if you like....but I didn't feel frustrated....I felt that was important to me.....that was positive....there was something I could do about that.....and I felt I achieved something in all that.....and then the gran who actually came back with the little lad has had connections with the school in the past and the infant children were wanting to involve someone from the community in their work....and I actually taken her down and introduced her to the reception teacher and we were getting her involved in that side of things....so in that respect I felt positive....and a 'plus' came out of a bad incident...I think for me personally I'm probably comparing when I was a new head at B.H. with being a new head here....because when I was at B.H. my main objective was actually the staff as it is here....and that's beginning to gel now.....the staff are much more relaxed....and we've got a much more 'together' feeling but at B.H. I was then able to move onto working with the staff for what I felt were the educational aims of the children....but here I've achieved a certain amount but it's having to be achieved much more slowly because we're having to deal with all these budgetary problems....and working out the details....this is a complicated site....I didn't know....I wouldn't have come if I'd known [LAUGHS]....for

instance I discovered that H. water is on my bill...and also Urban Studies....and L.....and nobody knows what to do about it.....my caretaker, I have actually sorted out his contract myself.....because nobody could tell me.....nobody knew....and I've actually gone back to D.S.O. and come up with a reasonable agreement....but I've had to do that because no-one's got the answer to the questions....and, alright, it's fine but it's taken me time ringing this person and that person.....chasing this person.....seeing that person....because it's something quite important as to who's going to pay for him....and when he's going to be available for us or them....so I find that sort of thing frustrating because this budget has been thought through....

INT.(047) What was irritating to you in all of that....the time you had to spend or the lack of clear answers from anyone.....

J.M.(048) I think first of all the time....because you ring someone at County and if you get them it's fine but you can have several attempts....the same with D.S.O....it's taken me five days to actually get to the stage I'm at with the caretaker with his contract....obviously not five days of work.....but five days of remembering.....picking up the phone and ringing this person first and getting the answer back....and this I find really frustrating....time spent and having to actually make the effort of phoning again and having to interrupt what I'm actually doing.....also, the lack of clarity.....the formula and giving us a budget is good in the long run because we'll have more say....but when in the guidelines we're not going to get metering I find it's very frustrating....I don't agree with the amounts they've given us and Urban Studies so I've got to take that up and I find when I get there that there's no answer.....no-one knows....and that's very frustrating....

INT.(049) Okay, shall we stop there.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 35

TRANSCRIPT OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH HEAD  
OF CLARKE JMI SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 20TH 1990

INT.(001) .....what sort of day did you feel it was for you on the day I came.....?

J.M.(002) It seemed fairly normal really.....

INT.(003) Thinking about our chat last week, it seemed that a lot of what you were doing you had no control over....they just happened.....

J.M.(004) That's absolutely right....

INT.(005) .....so you were perhaps just reacting to things that cropped up....

J.M.(006) Yes....

INT.(007) ....and you had various feelings about what you were doing during the day.....you were slightly irritated about some things....

J.M.(008) Frustrated more than anything else....

INT.(009) ....but there were also quite positive feelings about some things, such as the time you spent with the gran.....and the way in which you involved her in the work of one of the classes.....

J.M.(010) ....that was important....and now she's going to come in fairly regularly.....

INT.(011) .....I also wondered whether a lot of your time was spent in making decisions all the time of one kind or another.....and there was a sense of priorities over some things....and that you took some things on board and not others.....some you dealt with and others you jotted down to deal with later on....do you feel that making decisions is a fairly major part of what you do each day.....?

J.M.(012) Yes.....I do....

INT.(013) Some seemed longer term than others and some were of more importance or significance for you?

J.M.(014) ....and some are negative and I'm never going to bother with those.....

INT.(015) What I wondered in all of that was where you were.....because it seemed that beneath all of the things that you described to me....there was someone called J.M. who was trying to shape this school in some way....and there seemed several points at our last meeting where some of those inner things were emerging in various things you were saying but I've had to infer what was going on in your mind.....for example, a lot of what you described to me seemed to be about communicating with people in the school....with staff, children and parents....a lot of time was spent in talking with others.....and so I wondered in all of that whether there was some kind of inner belief or feeling that good communication was important for you and the school.....that people were well-informed, the school was friendly and open.....

J.M.(016) That's my aim, yes....I would think that was one of the most important aims.....staff and children are two of the most important elements in the school.....one of the big frustrations at the moment is not spending enough time with the children....and there's parents of course....and I would like to create much closer links with the parents to get them more positively involved....and we've made a few steps in that direction....I feel frustrated about not spending enough time with the children....but I have made progress getting to know the staff....and I now feel they can come and talk to me to a degree....but I feel frustrated because I haven't enough time for that.....the MSA situation means I don't get lunchtimes to talk to staff and children....I do talk to children when I'm doing dinner duty but I can't listen to them as much as I'd like to....the highlight of my week is a sharing-assembly on a Friday.....and all the children and staff are there and it's very informal....and after assembly it's playtime so then the children can come and talk to me....and follow it through....and they do....they pick up things from assembly and come and talk....and that's good....and I've timetabled myself....because we've got a problem....a member of staff has a problem.....to take storytime three times a week....that's enjoyable as well....so far as aims are concerned I would like to create an atmosphere that is free from tension....and I know that's a very difficult aim at the moment but I think my role as a head is to stand between the staff and stress....so that they don't feel they are on a treadmill.....I do think to a degree I achieve that aim...I try, but I think I could do a better job at that....the really important aim is the curriculum and I feel that we're not doing as well as I would like us to do in that area because....for the same reason....we don't have enough time to spend on it....we have two sorts of staff meeting....a lunchtime meeting and an after-school meeting.....and the lunchtime meeting tends to be the things

that crop up like the lost tracksuit bottoms or the swimming or whatever....the evening staff meetings are now beautifully organised....we've set up three work-groups for the three areas of Grist that we're working on.....and tonight....because the Inset Development Officer from North Herts has arranged to come in on Friday....this is the sort of thing....to talk to us about assessment and what are our feelings about it.....and so we've got to spend part of the staff meeting tonight to discuss that so that we know what we all feel about it.....and these incidentals....which are important.....seem to crop up every week.....

INT.(017) ....and how important is that kind of thing for you personally?

J.M.(018) .....it's a good example of one and I think it's important because assessment of seven year olds mI don't want to do....we shouldn't have to do....but if we're going to do it then I feel it's important that we actually get it right.....and I've actually created three classes so that I have three teachers with top infant children.....so that there are three teachers assessing with the support of one another....but I also think it's very important that it's not just that year group teacher but it's to do with the whole school.....and this has been an important thing to get over....and so that particular interruption....if you like.....is a very important one.....for the children and the staff.....but it's still interfering with the road we feel we should be going down....

INT.(019) So are you saying that there's one road that you want to travel on.....

J.M.(020) No, what I'm saying is that what we've identified in our Review and Development programme.....we feel are very important to sort out....as quickly as we can....and what worries me is that....I'm not worried if an HMI comes in and says show me this document....show me that document....I'll say I'm sorry I haven't got it....and explain why...but if we don't begin to sort at least one area soon then it's wearing on staff and I feel it's important we actually go down the road....mapping out these areas they've identified as being curriculum needs and....as I say....you keep getting interrupted.....and you've got to take it into context with what happened last term....the school is a whole lot different from if you'd come in last term....we've re-organised physically the school....and the way we work....and it was very, very hard work.....and quite stressful.....because we had a point five teacher cut....so I had to create nine classes and not ten in such a way as to make it work educationally.....and I think we've got that because we've got a nice atmosphere and people are

happy....and they're working quite well....and I think the next stage....because they feel as a staff that they've had three heads in the last year....which is true....that I have to....it's part of my role....and an important part....to try and make sure that these particular areas of the curriculum do begin to come together for them....so that they feel that they have achieved something to do with special needs or record-keeping.....so does that make sense?

INT.(021) I think that's fine....although there seems an implication in all of that you want to focus on one area at least.....in order to re-assure the staff that they're actually moving ahead....

J.M.(022) No...what we've done is....we discussed this as a staff....and came to the conclusion that the three strands we've taken....they've actually split up into working-parties.....so that from tonight after our interruptions we'll be splitting up into three groups and working for however long it takes....and then reporting back as a staff....and then in the meantime this assessment cropped up....plus we've the history co-ordinator who's got to report back....plus science co-ordinator reporting back....so we've already got three things to come between us and what they've identified as their needs.....which are imposed because of National Curriculum....

INT.(023) Now, it sounds as though there might be several roads.....your own.....and then the staff who are coming up with their needs and then you've got National Curriculum....

J.M.(024) No, because the things the staff have come up with are the same as my aims....they're not separated....they are the same....there are things long-term that I would want to achieve but the staff might not....but I would hope to do that the same way that I did that at B.H.....which is to take the staff along with me....and when I actually analyse what we've achieved since I've been here I realise we've done quite well....because we've done things like going through Maths and Science resources and put them where they're more accessible for teachers and the children....lots of things like that....which take quite a lot of time really....and that's with staff input....staff sorting and deciding as well as me....so we have achieved quite a lot.....but I still feel that there's panic every now and then which I don't want to pass on to staff....because having left a school which was well down the road in meeting National Curriculum.....I know here where I'm not....if you see what I mean....that's very bad grammar....but I know what had been achieved in my last school with staff all working together with me....so I'm able to compare where we are here....

INT.(025) ....so you've come from a school that was a long way down the road towards implementing National Curriculum....and you've come to a school where you don't feel the staff as a whole have gone as far....

J.M.(026) ....I don't think they've had the opportunities most of the time.....

INT.(027) ....but the way you would approach that would not be to go to the staff and say I've come from a school which is a long way ahead in National Curriculum and these are the gaps....

J.M.(028) That's right....because it's got to come from the staff here....

INT.(029) ...so you would need to work with staff to get a sense of trust or professional sharing or....?

J.M. That's right....that's the first thing I had to do....I think I've got quite a good relationship with the staff in the time I've been here....they do come and talk to me and they do now talk at staff meetings....

INT.(030) ....instead of listening.....

J.M.(031) ....they do now realise it's not just what I'm saying but they've got an input....

INT.(032) Why do you think you want staff to have that sense of sharing with you....why is it important for you?

J.M.(033) .....because....in the new jargon.....they need ownership of what they're doing.....I can't see it working any other way....that's the way I've always worked....

INT.(034) Is it the most effective way?

J.M.(035) ....for me....I couldn't work any other way....it depends on one's personality as well.....

INT.(036) So as a person you need....a sense of harmony perhaps?

J.M.(037) Yes....which doesn't mean to say that there aren't moments when I say I'm the head....because there are moments when you have to do that....in a democracy....

INT.(038) Democracy with a touch of autocracy?

J.M.(039) There are times when the staff need a head to say 'Yea' or 'Nay'....because if they don't feel that the head

is leading or there....or makes a decision sometimes....then they can feel lost....so I think there has to be a balance....

INT.(040) Do you think you manipulate the staff?

J.M.(041) Yes, in the nicest possible way....as a head I try to achieve what I feel is best for the children and the staff....by manipulating the staff, I suppose....but it's not the best word....

INT.(042) ....'influence' then?....

J.M.(043) I don't know....I generally get people to think it through and it comes out as their idea....that's too simplistic perhaps....and if there were a situation where I had decided I would really like something to happen....and the staff talked about it and said no....and could justify it then I would go down their road.....but not if it was something I felt was really important for the children....but on little issues I would....

INT.(044) ....and have you done that...?

J.M.(045) Yes, I have....lots of times....here, a couple of times and once here when I really wondered whether I should....but I decided I ought to....to give the staff the confidence and to show I did really count what they were saying....and I do....it's not just a lip-service....

INT.(046) ...but there would be certain things you would not be prepared to compromise on?

J.M.(047) I think it's mainly a sort of....yes, I can't think of a situation but I think there would be occasions when a head has to make a decision in the interests of the staff.....sometimes there may be occasions where something crops up and you can't get the staff together.....and that shows another reason why it's important to have head and staff working together....and in the situation I'm in here that's impossible to achieve all at once because I don't know them as well as I should yet....and there are also people that I probably would never have appointed....and so you have to work on their strengths....

INT.(048) ....another way of looking at it might be that the staff are having to work with a head they didn't appoint....

J.M.(049) That's right....it does....

INT.(050) The last question is about the children because



you said that it was an important aim for you....to spend time in the classes....and you wanted to work with one class in particular because a teacher was having problems there....

J.M.(051) Yes, the main reason is that the teacher is having real problems.....and this is coming back via the parents.....and we've looked at input and what we can do to resolve it....and there's already help there....a welfare and a five tenths teacher....but I felt the best help was non-contact time so that was the main reason....and I'm enjoying doing that....so I've started to do something I really want to do....which is to work with the children....

INT.(052) Why is it important for you to spend time with the children?

J.M.(053) I don't see how as a head you can keep in touch with school if I don't stay near the children.....and I need to know what work's going on....and the way to do that is to see what's going on....that's the best way.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 36

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF THATCHER  
JMI SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 21ST 1990

INT.(001) .....well, what have you been doing today....when did the day start for you.....?

N.M.(002) Five thirty.....I got up and wrote my History notes.....this is true, I'm not lying....I wrote my History notes because.....because we didn't do the Inset day on Monday as we were supposed to do....which was our History or Geography or Topic....right?.....and our lass is going next Monday to the course....or the Inset day....when she has to have answers....we didn't do that on Monday....we planned to do it last night but dumped it last night as well....because we wanted to finish what we'd been doing on Monday which was language profiling.....and writing....so she has to have notes.....and supposed to have a result from the day.....to present on Monday.....and knowing what little time I had for the rest of this week.....and I was up and awake at five this morning.....I'm a good early morning worker....and I did it then....and I wrote the notes and brought them in to give her this morning....and had the car washed on the way to work.....and was here before eight.....right?

INT.(003) You usually get up as early as that?

N.M.(004) .....six is my time....usually....

INT.(005) .....but that was something just niggling away....

N.M.(006) I couldn't sleep really because I knew I'd got to do this.....you wanted the truth.....that's what it happened to be....so I got to school.....the secretary was out yesterday at a funeral so there was a great lot of back-log .....I was out some days last week....so the back-log is astronomic [SIC]....and so I just thought I'll have a nice peaceful time between eight and nine....or ten to nine when Mrs.B. was coming for assembly.....to do it.....and I only managed some of it....so I've actually done only a bit of my own management and it's been reactive management ever since .....and of course I've just had a visitor who's not due until tomorrow.....[LAUGHS].....I'm sorry.....

INT.(007) .....so it's been an early start.....History notes for the benefit of the member of staff.....

N.M.(008) .....why it's today too.....today they will have a working-lunch.....Junior and Infant departments.....she's

going to the Infant department to say 'Right, what do you do in History.....I've got to answer all these questions'..... and she wanted the Junior perspective on it.....they will do some of it but only a piece of it.....and so I was giving her background to the Junior side of things.....and an overview.....otherwise I've given as policy that we don't jolly well have written rapidly.....so she's got something on Monday.....

INT.(009) You arrived at school at eight.....

N.M.(010) .....did a card and 'pressie' for my secretary which was something I really managed to achieve....just.... in came our History lass with her notes.....so we had to talk about that....she's done a really good design.....and we spent quite a few minutes looking at that....a few moments later another teacher came in with the notes about the English and the writing bit we've done.....with hers written up....dealt with and discussed.....so I've accepted those.....now I've got to work on them a little bit to finish them off.....that will go in to the pipeline to be done.....J. arrived, my deputy.....oh yes, he's given me a great sheaf of papers from the days when I wasn't here.... and suddenly remembered something I hadn't put down and was urgent.... and so I had actually to phone before school....I heard about the B.J. phone call....which was in the pipeline.....because he'd had this funny phone call....and I had a few moments talking to him and told him to come back at break.....the girls arrived with their stuff.....cook came in and said the ceiling's still leaking.....which I rushed to have a look because I thought 'It hasn't rained so that means problems'.....it means it's leaking from the roof and coming in from a strange area.....and then Mrs.B. arrived for assembly.....went in to the Infant assembly with her at nine.....very good.....on 'Water'.....and had lovely artefacts....great assembly....

INT.(011) ....and your job was to introduce her.....

N.L.(012) .....introduce her and follow it through..... follow it up a bit.....that's all this time.....normally it's my assembly today.....for a Junior or Infant assembly today.....I mean both but I do it one after the other..... and it was really well dovetailed that.....because as the Infants finally went out to their music the Juniors all arrived.....it was all beautifully dovetailed for once....and usually it's not as good as that.....we went in and she was excellent.....really very thought-provoking....and instead of doing it as I intended which was a sort of discussion from me.....because of what she'd done.....it was so good.....and reached such depth....I sent them back in their groups with staff to finish it on their

own carpet.....because it was worthy stuff.....and then I came in here and.....yes.....there was a phone call....a fairly long phone call in fact....because last week we had a D.E.O's meeting.....I'd previously been to see him on behalf of a group of heads to say 'Look, we want to change the format of these meetings'.....this meeting that she'd had with us was not under new rules or guidance which I'd given many weeks ago now....which had made a lot of people very angry....and I'd been away in the interim and they'd been trying to drum me up to go and see him again.....and I said to him not now....two other people.....can't cope.....you deal with it....and there we are....and I'd been going through and found my notes.....brilliant.....lovely book there.....which I lug round now....and I write everything in it....how pathetic....

INT.(013) ...that's the red one?

N.L.(014) That's the red one.....big red one....and it's very useful.....I'm getting old and my memory goes....and so that's what that's for....and so I looked up my notes and I was reading them to tell him what was said to her....so they could build on that.....and use it for their argument....

INT.(015) Is it a diary as such or blank pages.....

N.L.(016) Well, it's.....for example, I went to the LMS presentation....all the notes from there....just all together....and if I have a staff meeting and I've got things I HAVE to do then in it goes.....if.....it's all things that are through me I suppose....rather than through other people.....that I've got to do....they're all action points....or follow-up points.....for example, a governors' meeting I'll have all those notes.....minutes are being taken but in there there are notes.....'must see'.....or whatever and it helps because I may need that.....because I just can't hold it in my mind.....because I'd forget....I have special things.....notes.....for parents.....which are different.....so that if any child comes.....I was making notes when you came and you could see.....which will go in their file....

INT.(017) ....I noticed you didn't have a filing cabinet... it's a matter of putting things into files.....

N.L.(018) There are two in the office.....wouldn't have them in here.....hate filing cabinets....but I do have these files.....visits by parents....visits by children.....new entries....loose leaf files....

INT.(019) So it's everything you are filtering through that seems significant to you?

N.L.(020) Yes.....some days there's nothing in it....some days it's pages and pages because it's notes from a meeting....

INT.(022) ....and then you look back on those as you need...

N.L.(023) ....as I need them.....but the thing is it's my 'evidence pack'....in the sense that J. wanted to know what I'd said to P. our D.E.O. and I knew instantly without having to scabble round these bits of paper....and this and that....because they'd be all over the place....I knew exactly where it was because I'd made notes in advance as a group.....when we decided what we were going to put to her....and we were also giving her a few back-notes that I'd actually seen.....so it was very helpful....

INT.(024) ....and this was something new you'd started....

N.L.(025) No, I did it all last year.....I was fed up that I had all these bits of paper.....still do....and I was forever scrabbling.....if anyone said what about.....or wanted to know about....and I decided to keep them in a larger one....I was used to small ones....ordinary size....and started this.....

INT.(026) You've not said much about children this morning....

N.L.(027) Yes, I have.....I saw some when you came....and apart from assembly of course.....I had to have a little gentle word with young J. this morning who was chewing a toilet roll as she was talking....which is very typical....so I was trying to send these eye signals across but finally had to walk across.....because half the children were looking and saying he's chewing wet toilet rolls....quite a character is J.....no, not much really....yesterday I had but not today.....I haven't dealt with any of the things I'd intended from eight to nine....the only one I did was the card.....not one other.....all those really important things....including letters.... I have not touched.....

INT.(028) When you came this morning did you have a fairly clear plan of what you were going to do during the day?

N.L.(029) Yes, a very simple one....

INT.(030) You usually do that.....make a note of what you're going to do.....who's coming....

N.L.(031) What I do.....the night before....I've got into

this habit now.....I look in the diary because I want to know what's going on.....that's a start.....the reason is because I need to know what clothes I'm going to wear.....

INT.(032) What?

N.L.(033) .....if I'm teaching I don't come in this....it's a bit pathetic to come in this.....and get clay on my suit ....while on a day like yesterday.....when the area adviser came.....I'll come in a suit or something.....if I've got new parents coming I'll wear my new parents' outfit which is all sunny and bright.....you know exactly what I mean....so I look in the diary to see what's coming up the next day....

INT.(034) ....and does the day normally unroll in the way in which you plan it.....

N.L.(035) Today's typical really....I thought today was going to be easy.....I'd just got Mrs.B. from nine until ten.....and then I'd got lunch from twelve till one thirty or so.....and all that looked pretty good really....

INT.(036) It looked straightforward.....?

N.L.(037) It looked perfect.....and in fact I'd said to the children yesterday that I'd be in class this period coming round to look at their work.....because I'd been away and hadn't been able to see it....yesterday was because I'd got J.D. in tow....a short affair....and I was into every single classroom yesterday.....and I said I'll come back tomorrow .....and I promised and of course I will....whatever happens .....this afternoon.....if I don't make it today I'll nip round to all those classrooms and say I will be in....I'll let you know later.....everything else can sit in the bin....

INT.(038) How have you felt about today.....and just looking back with you at a relatively short span of time this morning....can you pick out any significant feelings for you.....

N.L.(039) Irritation at about twenty five past eight because I really wasn't getting through what I intended..... and it means I've got to do it at the end of the day now....because of the pressure on my day....and the secretary won't be able to do it until tomorrow.....

INT.(040) What caused the irritation?

N.L.(041) The interruptions.....although each was important and had to be dealt with.....

INT.(042) That was from teachers at that time?

N.L.(043) Teachers and cook.....

INT.(044) That's suggesting you were irritated by members of staff?

N.L.(045) Not at all....the interruptions were irritating not the staff members because each one was fantastic....and I was sitting there being utterly overwhelmed by what the first teacher told me.....she worked so hard between five o'clock last night and this morning.....she must have been on the computer all night....tremendous amount of work....and the other lass it was more of a comfort level for her so far as what she'd done.....we'd done it yesterday and she'd neatly written it out....it was good for HER....so part of my brief with her was to give time and space for her.....and give her a chance to expand.....and grow a little.....and she's not had that experience very often....but my irritation wasn't with either of them....it was the fact that I wasn't getting down to my job....

INT.(046) What's your job then?

N.L.(047) .....I had other feelings.....then Mrs.B.was talking and was very good this morning....unexpectedly....and involved lots of feelings.....and there were two moods really....one involved the Infants when she produced water....and talked through all of that and was saying to the children about drinking water....and I looked at the children's faces.....dawning on them that some people didn't have a tap in their house.....and it was that sort of realisation that went all the way round....and there was that special stillness.....moving and engaging at that level....thinking about children without taps and it was very moving....we did a second one when she was dealing with famine for the Juniors and in fact she sort of had a map which she'd made out of an imaginary continent....and was talking through really all the problems that creat famine....and the blocks for getting support for that....and again for the ideas she was putting forward it was fantastic.....and moving....and I sat there with great huge tears....looked across at staff at the back and J. went like this.....[WIPING EYE].....and I looked away.....can't cope with this....this is terrible....and the children were static and there wasn't a movement because at that moment they were all engaging in what it really meant to be starving....and have no hope about it....which is very good....that's why I didn't do anything about it in assembly because there was a chance to go off to class with the teacher.....Seeing you here there was panic to start with.....I thought 'Oh, my God'.....but a happy feeling that

it was Thursday not today.....

INT.(048) It was my mistake and not yours.....if I was talking to me there would be feelings of great guilt coming out....I'm worried about your promise to the children....

N.L.(049) I'll do it this afternoon....

INT.(050) Okay, you've told me about things you've been doing.....feelings about those.....and the assembly was clearly.....

N.L.(051) .....special.....although assemblies often are....yesterday the Juniors sang a hymn that I hadn't heard for a while and it was again something special.....and those children create a tremendous aura.....I'm an emotional person.....very emotional.....about kids.....

INT.(052) You're moved by feelings?

N.L.(053) Sure....if I have staff around me who are not....which has happened only rarely....then I'm no good with that staff....I don't tolerate them.....

INT.(054) What do you do with them?

N.L.(055) It's an export job.....

INT.(056) You wouldn't say any of that in a job description?

N.L.(057) No....of course not.....who you appoint you have to live with.....you appointed and there must have been something about them.....otherwise you wouldn't have appointed them in the first place but inherited staff is a great difficulty.....that's quite difficult.....anyway, get off this business.....I'm better at management....

INT.(058) Okay, you've told me about what you do and your feelings about that.....what sort of things have you been thinking about today....

N.L.(059) Early this morning I was thinking very much about the tensions....not bad tensions.....healthy tensions....in our staff meeting last night....between those that were working on the profile bit of the writing document and those who were working on the policy bit....and there were real tensions.....because one group was going ahead great guns....and picked up from the previous day which had been a great day.....good staff satisfaction....even good feed-back the following day from the probationer saying she was pleased about it and her views were valued, etcetra,



etcetra.....and she'd actually fed that back to the area adviser who was an odd body coming in.....so that was nice.....so I was thinking about those tensions....and thinking how I could utilise them more this week because.....to galvanise one or two....who take less than their full share in all that's going on perhaps.....out-of-class commitment I mean.....I'm very very lucky at the moment.....I do have a very strong team who are very hard-working.....and blend well together....it's been total....I was trying to think my way through all that....and thinking of possible ways of using the actual groupings for better effect and swapping them round.....was that a good idea....or was it better to leave them as they were to work through some of the difficulties....the choice being mine because there were lots of logical reasons for changing it but I could see other sides.....so I was thinking about that.....I was also thinking about the History bit very strongly this morning.....to try and think within a half hour spread because that was about the limit I'd got....I had to get on with things.....what my thoughts and feelings were History were.....never mind the nitty-gritty....what was useful to a staff member taking it....and thinking what History do we actually do.....so I was doing that as I was driving along as well.....in the car-wash as well....but I was thinking about all that....and the notes I'd written.....and thinking I ought to change a couple of things....and then after that.....apart from the famine part.....I don't remember thinking a lot....haven't had much time for that.....except as Mrs.G. was talking of course....when I was thinking about all the possible negatives.....if this really was the father who's supposed to be in America or Canada....because there is a nasty, horrible feeling about that....and she was obviously very worried that it was.....it was her name and the child's name....and I was thinking about that....it's terrible....she's only been in that house about three months.....is it a prank or isn't it.....you heard what I did which was to try and calm her down, etcetra, etcetra...but it's still at the back of my mind as I've been talking to you...I've got to do something more about that... I've certainly got to deal with the people who let him come to the phone...it was quite wrong...and it's against policy but it's never something that's written down.....and it's because the secretary's not here...she was at a funeral...so there the system fell apart ....and I was also thinking what I was going to say to B. because I've got to talk to him further today and how I was going to handle that with him...he's obviously quite jumpy despite his smiley face....he's seen me twice today and he's obviously very concerned...that's it..

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 37

TRANSCRIPT OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH HEAD  
OF THATCHER JMI SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 22ND 1990

INT.(001) We were talking yesterday about things that you did.....and about feelings you had about what you were doing during the day....and you also told me about things you were consciously thinking about during the day.....which for me gave a picture of you at school.....do you think I now have a realistic picture of headship?

N.L.(002) No, absolutely not.....because there's just not the width of all that happens.....there are not the loneliness and the long moments of the big load at this desk trying to fight the paper.....if you'd seen the rest of the day and what went on.....I had planned the lunch and so forth....I thought it was just a lunch but when I got there I found it was much wider.....if I'd have read all the paperwork I would have known all this.....I met all my fourth years and talked about how they were getting on at their secondary school and that was something like fifty eight kids.....to talk to and about.....and we did have some sort of dialogue.....followed by something that was supposed to be just a discussion between secondary and heads that were there at a fairly low level.....but it was a strong....almost confrontational discussion about profiling, about 'G' forms and what secondary schools are actually going to do with curricular change because of the primary input.....and this went on for nearly two hours.....I mean, my afternoon from one thirty or whatever didn't finish until three o'clock.....and in fact I only remained because it became very, very useful.....the three primary heads were talking about the profiles and our reaction to them and saying we couldn't use the 'G' forms and explaining why.....and in that 'why' was all this incredible way that the secondary schools were working.....they still had in mind that they were going to write a syllabus on technology that started as if the children arrived with no skills.....so C. and I were saying that they have tremendous skills now and.....in our terms..... every month that passes they have new skills and it's like an enormous pattern of skills.....it gets bigger and bigger and bigger.....and I gave some examples and they sat there with jaws dangling.....and each of the heads made similar examples .....and you could see that pennies were dropping.....and they were getting quite anxious at what they had obviously just written for technology for next September.....and what was great was that it then developed into a whole real dialogue about the position that teachers at secondary

schools will be in because of National Curriculum.....and that was fascinating.....and you could see that from their point of view it was raising tremendous tensions because there's one there who's going off to be a head....which is a shame....who's their deputy head.....and their senior mistress.....and it's raising tremendous tension because one's into curriculum and raising aspects of what primaries are doing.....adapting it into their first year perhaps....could they start looking at our work....could they start looking at team-teaching.....they'd begun a dialogue in a gentle way across different subjects with staff and hadn't received much support.....and the senior mistress came in and obviously didn't want to support that.....and the tension between the two became very obvious....the head who's retiring at Christmas was full of excitement and saying 'Isn't it wonderful that you're doing all these things' .....and trying to say gently to the senior mistress 'You've got to find the children as they are coming in and adapting to that'.....which was what we were saying.....that they aren't empty vessels arriving on your doorstep.....and this is from a school that you'd have thought was a long way down the line with mixed ability teaching.....group teaching.....some liaising with their primaries.....but a long way to go.....so the rest of my afternoon was dominated....apart from the physical things I was doing....and into the evening.....with thinking about what I could do to facilitate that dialogue because that was the first time it had a real sense of enquiry about what we were at.....and was there a way in which we could help....and also how I could involve other Junior because I can't do it alone.....and I was thinking about the practical part....and on the thinking bit I was looking at the ideas behind it.....is it really going to be possible for a curriculum to go four to sixteen.....is it possible to pass children on in a continuous way....in a way that we know has never been possible before.....is it really going to be like that in the future.....I was thinking that when I was a head before....secondary schools there in a matter of eighteen months did change its first year....and changed a blackboard and chalk type approach to topic-based for two days a week.....thematically between different departments .....and had a floor in a block where teachers could move physically between children.....which meant in turn that they had to put tremendous amounts of resources into that....and they realised suddenly that they had problems in doing that....and were coming to us and lots of primaries looking at what we were doing.....and talking about what we were doing.....the tragedy of all that was that.....when I left....within eighteen months the school had closed but they had made the first inroads into that....so obviously they had secondary teachers that thought it was possible or had some vision that it was possible.....but there were some

very reluctant people.....I remember one Maths bloke coming round who went with folded arms and watching our children doing all their practical work in Maths and things.....not really believing what he was seeing because he just didn't want to....and going back.....and his department head admitting that there was nothing he could do about it....he was just an oddity and that was that....and they'd work around him.....which they did....and, you see, they're going to have primaries coming with all these tick lists of target attainments.....or whatever.....saying Johnny Smith is level whatever.....and what are they going to do.....ignore all that or write a curriculum to accommodate that.....and certainly in the discussion that they were having with D.N. the English person.....and H. who was their Maths....they were thinking that they'd have to have a syllabus that accommodated rather than assume nothing.....like problem-solving activities.....they were talking about that yesterday.....because C.W. was there and she was talking a lot about problem-solving with children at primary level and they were just listening....the head and the deputy....and we gave some examples.....and that's the most hopeful thing....so it was time spent that I hadn't intended to spend but I think very valuable because it's opened a door....but the immediate problem was the 'G' form which is a hopeless document.....and we need something else....and it's no good having a new form unless it's going to be used....it's better to use something that we're doing and maybe photocopy.....lift it in one piece.....write it for them in one and let parents have a copy as well.....do it all in one.....

INT.(003) I was asking whether you thought that the picture you gave yesterday reflected what headship was about..... and you said the thing that wasn't there was the loneliness of that desk and the width of what you do.....so what's missing?

N.L.(004) It's not just sitting here and smiling....there's not the telling off or that side of headship where you're having to make decisions which may be negative....or have a negative frame to them....this morning for example I've written a fairly stiff letter about my caretaker who still hasn't been paid for his overtime in September and that's a stiff, cross letter.....it's an aspect of the job which you have.....there's the aspect of the job when things aren't going right.....like the parent who isn't accepting all my chit-chat yesterday.....the problem with B.G.....and the parent who's saying no you're not handling it properly....you see, there's that negative part of the job that wasn't there at all yesterday.....

INT.(005) ....but still part of headship?

N.L.(006) ....absolutely....and it's a common and regular part of some headships....I feel frustrated by the sort of bashing on the door saying what you're doing is rubbish and what are you going to do about it....those sort of negative pressures.....

INT.(007) .....so headship is often a negative thing?

N.L.(008) I don't know....it's leading a team.....trying to inspire people....at times, whether I feel like it or not....I have to manage it sometimes.....it's to keep inspiration high and morale high.....I was doing a piece of that this morning.....someone I know who's beginning to feel the pressure of last Monday's debate and going to talk it through.....and one of the difficulties of headship is to have enough positive plans for interaction between people you care about.....between the children and teachers....and the staff.....you notice I've not mentioned governors....that's another thing altogether....

INT.(009) I hadn't noticed.....

N.L.(010) ....because of all that the planned bits get pushed and pushed and pushed until you're fighting to try and do them.....I mean, when we went round the school yesterday I was pleased you'd come....and really there was a flip-side.....I got a bonus because I was able to go round the classes again and at least keep my profile high on that..... and at the end of the afternoon I did rush back to that classroom where I said I would....I did do that...

INT.(011) I'd guess that was a fairly high priority for you because you referred several times to it yesterday.....

N.L.(012) Yes I did....and that's all good stuff.....and that aspect of the job does get pushed....and if I'm saying what my headship is about.....a large piece of my headship .....being eroded.....is to keep the whole thing as an homogenous thing.....by my input in that sense.....making sure that everything is well.....testing the temperature.... saying here is a sad person or here is a child with difficulties.....parent.....or whatever.....

INT.(013) Is that a kind of monitoring role?

N.L.(014) Yes, it is a bit but it's more than that because it's also a caring role.....

INT.(015) So, it's a caring monitoring role?

N.L.(016) .....the other sort of monitoring....which is different....is where I'm actually looking at their plans

and records.....because for example an HMI inspection is dumped on my desk this week.....coming up on the third of December.....great timing.....and coming to look at plans and records.....so obviously some of my thinking today on that is that I must make sure everyone has a chance to talk it through with me first if they want.....so that's one job .....

INT.(017) I suppose one of the things that came through quite strongly for me yesterday was about your relationship with the staff.....it seemed important for you in your headship.....there was also a sense in which information was constantly being fed back to you from staff....information on the curriculum.....people's thinking.....reporting back to you.....and that almost seemed a kind of monitoring that you were doing.....

N.L.(018) Well, yes it is....because one of the things I have endeavoured to do since the day I came was to raise the thinking of teachers about what they were doing in the classroom.....and one of the ways which has helped....and has oiled the wheels.....is that there's an expectation now that people will share information about whatever it is with each other.....and it's now quite natural for me to say 'Well, let me know what you said about that and your reasons.....or let me have notes about it'.....if they have done any work like that at home then it's entirely off their own back.....and they will wish to show it to me because it's all part of our discussion.....it's all part of our learning and growing.....

INT.(019) Now, we've shared a lot about things that you do and feel as a head.....but beneath all of that what is your vision then of what the school should be like.....what is it you're trying to achieve?

N.L.(020) I hope that as a person and a head I am creating a piece of joy.....I find that very important.....if I can't have laughter around me.....if I don't see smiling faces or whatever.....

INT.(021) That came through yesterday I thought.....with the assembly....we talked afterwards about that emotional side.....that you wouldn't appoint someone who didn't share that kind of emotional commitment with you.....

N.L.(022) Yes, that's right.....but having said that....this was not a caring community when I came to it....teachers neither cared for their children and certainly nor the children back.....therefore there was no pride.....it really was so negative.....it was essential .....and I am sure I was appointed for that

reason....because I ran a school where there was some caring.....so that I hope in this 'joy' bit that there is this great joy now in their learning.....and everyone is enjoying what they're doing in this school.....and at the end of the day they are excited by it.....so that excitement that I have about their learning.....and still do....is the same with them.....

INT.(023) If I change the question slightly and ask what is it that you want to do as a head in this school.....would one thing be to lead then?

N.L.(024) Yes, but only in the sense of inspiring leadership.....I don't want to be at the front of all the decision-making.....I don't need all that.....my sign of 'a good job' is that I'm not needed for that as the leader of the pack.....but I should be behind the scenes having inspired others.....and not necessarily by me but by others.....because it's all an interwoven conglomerate.....and it's great to see someone like A. who's now ready to go on.....it's tremendous.....she's grown such a great deal.....and does so much in the school.....or J. who was really a chalk and blackboard chap has changed his whole way of working and thinking.....and that's marvellous.....and that's partly my inspiration and also my facilitating .....because I'm also a facilitator.....getting people to help or places to go....setting up conversations with him.....because he's a thinking man anyway....we've had those sorts of dialogues.....and now he's up and running....doesn't need me and that's great.....that's how I was as a teacher.....inspire children until they can do it themselves.....

INT.(025) Are you an orchestrator then?

N.L.(026) .....I'm certainly a manipulator.....

INT.(027) That was the next question.....

N.L.(028) Yes, I'm certainly that.....I'm known as a wheeler-dealer.....

INT.(029) Do you see yourself largely as a catalyst then?

N.L.(030) Yes, I've got to there but I did have to walk in with two heavy boots on.....and lead from the front....and felt isolated for a long time with no-one understanding my vision.....and frightened to understand it too....I couldn't have stayed in that first position.....up-front all the time.....knowing every damn thing that was going on....in terms of thinking about things.....because it's exhausting and wearing.....and I didn't want it.....I need to be

inspired too.....

INT.(031) .....so is this a kind of mutual thing going on with you acting as a catalyst.....promoting things, drawing out, encouraging.....with staff....and getting sustenance in return.....

N.L.(032) Absolutely.....one hundred per cent.....a hundred percent.....can't operate without that.....

INT.(033) I sensed that the staff were very important to you.....so part of your vision would include this mutual support and sharing.....which has an emotional side for you as well.....so it's about sharing feelings?

N.L.(034) Yes, it's also sharing ideas in their own right away from feelings.....

INT.(035) .....and it includes standards as well?

N.L.(036) Yes.....imposed standards.....that's almost a bit of the negative side of the headship role.....because if there's a tatty display then I don't allow it to stay there.....I don't just let it die.....I will try by various routes to get my point of view approved but in the last analysis.....if the teacher still leaves it up then I will say 'That is not good enough.....it must be improved'.... obviously I don't like doing that.....but I have done it.....so there is a standard being imposed.....for example, there was no display in the school when I came and now there is.....there was a way of walking round the school and they were all conscious decisions on my part....it was my decision and I've involved staff with that....but taking them willy-nilly because I decided that would happen....and then there are other decisions which are totally collaborative and sometimes.....against my will....had to accept a set-up where teachers make decisions and take responsibility.....and then you've got to accept the mistakes that are there....in your terms....in your eyes....and that's the hardest thing to relinquish....being up-front all the time.....and coming to terms with that.....

INT.(037) There was a small point from yesterday when you were talking about the notes that someone had written and was showing to you.....you were pleased with them but said you would need to re-draft a little.....

N.L.(038) Oh, yes.....that was a low-level thing.....when she came in I could see she was moving forward but in terms of the school.....and the school's policy.....it was not enough and because it was still 'discussable' it would have been perfectly okay for me to add my part to



that.....because it was an equal thing going on....what wouldn't have been right....or helpful to her.....if I'd added that at the next stage when it was going to be utilised.....this was her saying to me what do you think about this.....is there anything you want to add.....so it's still at the sharing stage.....that's okay.....but if it was handed to me as her finished product then adding anything at that stage is going to be really difficult.....from her point of view and because it was that particular teacher.....whereas another teacher.....like A.....it would be perfectly okay to do it at the last minute and say God, I've had a re-think and what do you think of this, A.....and say that's much better....if it really is....and she would have the courage to say 'No, I don't agree' and I would accept that.....so I'm saying something about the big overview that the head has but there are some things they think they have better than you.....so as far as S. is concerned she has still some development to make before she's reached that point.....

INT.(039) I'm being Devil's Advocate perhaps....but could it be said that what you're trying to do is create clones of yourself.....and that you keeping working at it until you get that kind of replication....?

N.L.(040) ....some aspects perhaps....yes, certain aspects .....but only up to a point because I'm a conglomerate of all the people I've had.....maybe I wasn't the leader of A.L. school.....I was only the token leader there.....but all that I learned with those people and at that school.... some of which I obviously reproduce here.....was on the backs of all those wonderful teachers at A.L. who were much better than here in terms of teaching skills....taking them as a whole lot.....bits of some of them I've now got but not the total.....some of them out-shone by miles....there was no way I could have the temerity to say they were clones of me.....and J's style here is definitely not my style and the way he approaches things is not.....the way he plans things is not.....all those things.....but where he's going....his end-product with children.....he's trying to give depth.... but there are certain standards I've imposed on the school .....little things like behaviour and so....and at first it was imposed and then it was by discussion.....and just to take a stupid example, I have a brass bell.....a lovely brass bell....and I have had to give in about using it here to bring the children in....it's had to stay in the cupboard .....it's really sad.....but the staff decided it was much more civilised if the children just stood there at the end of playtime and there was one whistle and the teacher pointed to a group and off they would walk....and they walk off the playground quietly.....they do it and it's magical ....I didn't think it would work....I prefer the bell....I'm

old-fashioned....I just love the whole concept of the bell.....it's some sort of harking back to the old village school ma'am.....

INT.(041) Did you go to a village school when you were young.....

N.L.(042) It was a private school.....a Roman Catholic all-girls school.....I was taught to tell lies there....

INT.(043) .....and they have a school bell?

N.L.(044) Yes, they did.....made of brass.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 38

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF JOSEPH  
INFANT SCHOOL ON NOVEMBER 27TH 1990

INT.(001) Perhaps I could start by asking when the day began for you?

M.H.(002) About eight o'clock.....

INT.(003) That was to do with school in some way?

M.H.(004) .....it was a call to say someone wouldn't be in.....to say they weren't available.....so straight away I then either had to organise cover....which strictly we're not allowed to do now.....but make arrangements supporting the teacher....in this case the nursery nurse and a welfare helper.....

INT.(005) .....and what other kinds of things have you been doing today so far.....is it a jumble of things or is it possible to map out what's happened during the day?

M.H.(006) It's very much concerned with what crops up..... it's very difficult to actually say within a particular day I'm going to cover certain aspects.....so although I try and map out.....say, for instance....I'm going to do say two or three things.....particularly, I'm trying to get to some diagnostic testing with a group of children this week....and last....and circumstances have arisen each morning.....because that's the best time to do it.....that have prevented me actually getting to that.....so the general plan that I might have for a day is affected by the incidental things that happen.....like for instance starting the day with having to re-organise one of the classes or re-organise welfare or whatever.....to cope with absences....

INT.(007) Can you tell me about that plan that you have....is that loosely put together in your mind where there are, say, half a dozen things you would like to get round to or is it a physical list that you keep?

M.H.(008) I often jot down, say, the day before....or even a couple of days before....a couple of reminders of things that I feel are very important to get either organised or started within a period of the days ahead.....but I don't sort of sit down with a long list and say well I have to do this, this and this....in a set time.....it's a day-to-day thing.....a long time ago in a period of acting headship I thought that that would be useful to have a plan of attack

but I very soon felt that it was unproductive and got more frustrated trying to keep to the plan.....whereas it became pretty obvious that things happened incidentally and needed handling straight away and it was important to do that.... rather than abandon everything to a list which was more or less impossible to keep to.....

INT.(009) So what sort of things have happened for you today?

M.H.(010) Well, I had a parents' meeting this morning which had been planned well ahead....so I knew that I'd got to cover that.....while that was going on I had a parent come in who wanted to see me.....I wasn't able to and made an appointment for them to come back.....they've since come in ahead of time and thrown out the plan for yourself to talk with me at one thirty.....so, again, it's an illustration of how things are often pushed out of line because of needing to handle it straight away.....most occasions when I'm taken from the plan I might have had it's almost always things to do with handling staffing problems or things that crop up as a result of people being away.....things like that....or handling incidents that have happened to do with parents or perhaps a child needing to be taken home....they're the sort of day-to-day things you can't plan for....

INT.(011) ....and that generally happens during the day?

M.H.(012) It often happens....

INT.(013) ....and that happened today?

M.H.(014) Yes....

INT.(015) What kinds of things cropped up today?

M.H.(016) Well, there's the parent problem and there was a parent who came in about a stranger who seems to be causing some trouble in the area.....so I had to ring and speak to that parent because I was in a meeting....as a result of that I needed to phone the police.....another incident at lunchtime means I have to get back to the police at some time this afternoon.....all these sorts of things....I mean, I'm not saying that I have to phone the police every day but it's just an illustration that you can't schedule things....you can't predict what will happen....

INT.(017) I would guess that no day is typical for you....how is the day shaping for you generally....what sort of feeling do you have about it.....

M.H.(018) There are quite high levels of frustration and

1  
stress, I suppose.....I mean, I feel quite not exactly aggressive but I feel quite antagonistic.....that's not the right word either....the problems that have arisen during the day have actually over-ridden everything and filtered into everything that is going on.....so I feel quite keyed up about today.....I shall go home and be glad that today is over.....and I know that the day.....particularly the stressful situation will re-occur at the end of the afternoon and I shall have to handle that in the calmest possible way but you're aware that these things are going to be there.....so I feel quite stressed....I think that's about the only word that handles it.....I mean, to some extent there's a feeling....not of aggression....towards people.....there's this sort of adrenalin going....

INT.(019) Adrenalin is often thought of as something positive.....it helps performance.....

M.H.(020) Yes, yes.....it does sharpen the wits.....

INT.(021) Now, the picture I've got at the moment is of a fairly early start for you.....you then had something pre-arranged with parents.....then something unexpected cropped up.....and there's been a range of things that you've reacted to during the day.....and one of the results of that is you feel tense and under some stress perhaps because of that....particularly in the tasks that have cropped up....is that a fair picture?

M.H.(022) Yes, the things that actually.....if you look at it in terms of peaks and troughs.....in terms of stress levels.....your problem times in the day....they are punctuated with other aspects that balance that out....for instance, I had a session just before lunch with the school....with the children.....singing for Christmas and that is a calm....well, for me.....a calming aspect which gives me time to think about what we're here for....the children themselves....and again sometime during the afternoon I'll get another opportunity to spend time with children to have a session where that sort of peaks and troughs balance.....

INT.(023) Can you control those peaks and troughs....

M.H.(024) To some extent....so far as contact with the children goes....which for me is a sort of calming element I do have specific times that I do have allocated....I've said to the staff I am having that particular time for you or for those children.....then I have to as far as is possible adhere to that....and I try and make sure that whatever else intrudes from the day that I try and keep to those as closely as possible.....most situations that arise....unless

they are really critical....I can defer to some extent...and we're not talking about the whole day being taken over..... we're talking about significant periods but with those I can punctuate them with calming periods that I spend with the children.....

INT.(025) So, in a sense it's pre-planned....so that you've got peaks built into it....which may or may not coincide with your needs.....with a peak following a trough.....I mean, I would guess that talking with me might not be the best way of having a peak after the trough you've just had....and seeing that particular parent....

M.H.(026) Well, let's say it was a trough....the point is when you're in a situation of tension....as you call it....then to have a distraction.....and I suppose the times that I have with the children are distractions....then something like this could easily be termed as a distraction .....something that actually focuses your mind on something different....something that is not quite so immediate....I mean, a problem with a parent coming in in an aggressive manner is an immediate problem but I wouldn't say that this was a particular problem.....

INT.(027) Okay, you said earlier that the kind of thing that happen where a parent comes in were things that you'd got to react to.....and then you were able to balance that with the real work....what we're really about....so, are you saying that what you're really about as a head....when you can.....is to spend time with the children.....

M.H.(028) Yes, because if I'm to be effective in terms of leadership so far as the staff is concerned then I need to have knowledge about what's going on.....what children are about and what their needs are....and how this particular school population are shaping....and what the particular problems are....I'm not long out of the classroom so I still have almost a common bond with the staff because they know I've been there recently....but if I don't maintain that involvement....I wouldn't say my credibility goes....but my effectiveness in understanding what problems they are experiencing is going to be lessened.....I suspect this is something that all heads who have been heads for a period of time may find....they have to make active steps to compensate for because I've seen it happen....I've done it myself this last two terms.....that I've tried to say earlier on to allocate myself to release teachers or whatever.....and I actually have got a day.....an afternoon a week assigned to staff so that they can be released for a session for co-ordinator work....it's very difficult to do it but unless I do keep that balance then I feel I can't be effective in understanding what their needs are....and

support them in the developmental aspect.....so it's a very trying time.....

INT.(029) Now, you've told me a lot about things you've been doing and you've probably told me a little more about your feelings.....and the peaks and troughs.....but what kinds of things have you been thinking about during today?

M.H.(030) Well, I've been thinking ahead....when I start my day.....towards the end of the day in particular.....not so much this afternoon because we have a staff meeting until five.....so I shall be keyed up with that but towards the end of the day I shall start thinking about what's required tomorrow and how I shall organise myself and plan for the morning.....and all sorts of aspects may have come into my mind.....for instance, that letter about the LMS training days.....I've started to think about what I might need or what I've got to 'gen' or 're-gen' myself on for the training day.....so that's one aspect.....the session I went on last evening about assessment....I've been thinking about that because I want to cascade back to the staff tonight....I've been thinking a lot about the parental involvement because I've had a parental involvement session with the reception class children.....new reception class children today.....so I've been thinking closely about what I wanted to say and what I wanted to put across there.....then there's things coming up....and at lunchtime we were thinking about our plans and our practices for Christmas....so that's taken quite a lot of brain-power....I've got another member of staff who's obviously not very well so I was thinking 'Well, should I actually go down and tell her to go home'.....I've already suggested that she should and I'd organise it and thinking is it sensible to go down and say 'Right, push off....this is not the place for you'.....so there are lots of other little things that creep into the day that I have to think about and organise.....stupid things, like two eggs flying over the hedge there and landing in the playground....and had to think about that....it happens regularly here....and had to phone the police about our phantom egg-thrower.....[INTERRUPTION]...

INT.(031) Okay, I'll switch off.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript 39

TRANSCRIPT OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH HEAD OF  
JOSEPH INFANT SCHOOL ON DECEMBER 5TH 1990

INT.(001) .....a lot of what you seemed to be doing was in reaction to things that cropped up during the day.....to such an extent that on most of your days you are not able to plan beforehand.....and know exactly what you were going to do because things were shifted out of position by things that cropped up.....in particular, parents seemed to cut across that because they were a high priority for you and you seemed to feel these were things you had to deal with immediately wherever possible....rather than delaying them ....does that kind of thing create difficulties for you... are you unwilling for example to take on tasks at particular times because you know that other things are likely to cut across those arrangements.....

M.H.(002) I'm not unwilling to allot time but I'm unwilling to plan in the long term....to allot time.....it has to be fairly short-term, for instance, it would be short-sighted to plan, say, for a half-term to allot time in the classroom .....because that is unfair to staff who have to plan and then find that I'm unavailable....so I allot time to those specific things like teaching, like supporting teachers, or whatever....on as flexible a basis as possible....and it works only in that the staff are aware there needs to be a flexibility and if I can't get there at ten then we re-adjust.....not throw it out but re-adjust....and slot it in on a flexible time scale.....

INT.(003) So staff as well need to know about that particular problem you have and all the things that may crop up for you during the day.....[INTERRUPTION].....a lot of the jobs you were doing during the day seemed social in some way.....to do with relationships of some kind.....is that the kind of picture you have of what you are doing during the day.....?

M.H.(004) .....yes, and communicating.....it's communicating the requirements or needs of those relationships right around the school as well.....

INT.(005) Does that kind of communicating vary according to whether it's parents, staff or whatever....

M.H.(006) Oh, yes....there needs to be a particular 'modus operandi' almost for each group of people.....mainly because, for instance, the relationship with parents needs



the feed-back and the support from the staff....so I'm very much communicating and gathering information and passing that backwards and forwards from parents to staff and to all the bodies involved.....

INT.(007) I suppose that people have different pictures of what a head does....and sometimes talk about the head as a manager or a facilitator or whatever.....but the picture I'm getting of your work as a head is of you as a communicator .....receiving information, dealing with it and then feeding that through.....making sense of it.....making judgements about it.....and very much to do with relationships....is that how you would see that as well....

M.H.(008) Yes.....yes.....

INT.(009) Is it something which is a total thing in that it's virtually all that you do during the day?

M.H.(010) No, although I would say that it's quite a heavy proportion.....but there are still managerial and administrative things that have to be going on at the same time.....they actually have to slot into times that are left available or times out of school hours.....when I can have more control over what's actually happening to the environment and where we are and so on.....it still has to go on....I mean, I can't discount or push aside all the other aspects of the job which are necessary.....the managerial and administrative aspects which have to go on .....because if I ignore them then I have a big problem.... but I have to assess where to slot them in and how much precedence I give them over other aspects of my day....I mean, you're talking about.....as far as the 'relationships' aspect is concerned.....to some extent you've got a finite period in the day, haven't you, where that's important..... and it's from nine o'clock.....I mean, slightly before for staffing but the biggest drain on myself as a communicator comes from nine o'clock.....when parents may well want to see me.....to half past three when parents aren't in school .....so I have to then look at that day and decide when is best to slot in the other things necessary for running a school....

INT.(011) Does that create problems for you in that you have a particular role within the school which is mainly tied up with communication of one kind or another.....are you happy with that role.....because you're describing to me the role which exists in the school....but is it one that you're happy with.....or do you accept that that's how it is?

M.H.(012) I'm happy with it in as much as the end-product

...if you like....justifies the approach or the time that I put in to it because although you accept that from time to time.....when there are breakdowns in communication....and mis-information gets passed and so on.....as a whole, the atmosphere and the feeling of the school is a good one I feel and so it's actually.....how can I say it.....it seems to indicate that the lines of communication and the amount of precedence....the importance we put on aspects of the school are worthwhile and justified.....

INT.(013) What are your touchstones then which signal to you that your communicating role is productive and fruitful .....that there is a good atmosphere in the school....what tells you that?

M.H.(014) I think that the fact that staff don't appear to need a go-between to communicate.....and that staff are actually prepared to some extent to act on their own initiative and to have confidence in the sort of decisions that are necessary.....and that to some extent this is also due to the fact that I'm not long out of working in a team-teaching situation.....that a high proportion of staff have got some knowledge about how I will react to situations.... now, it's up to me from this point on.....bearing in mind how soon I'm into headship that I maintain that knowledge ....for them.....and I'll obviously have staff move on and it's going to be less easy for me to do it.....but the things that indicate to me....most clearly....are the fact that staff come in and say 'Well, we've actually worked through on this and we've used these ideas that you've given us or other people have given us and now we've come up with this'.....and then they discuss it with me....having worked on their own ideas but being able to communicate across the staffing and then to communicate to me as well.....

INT.(015) I just wonder if there's a faint contradiction somewhere in all that.....if I'm asking how you know whether you're an effective communicator or not.....and the signals you pick up.....and the cues that tell you that things are going well....and you seem to be saying that one of your signals is that the staff are communicating with each other rather than yourself.....

M.H.(016) Not rather than but as well as.....it's a whole group interaction not just, say, between the teams but between the whole group.....and I am actually included within that group.....so there is no distinction between one team and another team.....and the Nursery or whatever....but all the communication that goes on.....particularly with regard to, say, the Review and Development work that we're doing.....at the moment, for instance, there's the assessment work going on which is most relevant to the Top

Infants but all of the staff are communicating and supporting one another over that....and they are not actually isolating themselves.....they are working as a whole team and within that team I am just another part of it .....I'm not the decision-maker.....it's not 'We've talked about this and we'll go and see what she thinks'.....I mean, I am included as a part of that team.....

INT.(017) What would happen if you had particular thoughts or feelings about how something should go and that one of the groups of staff.....who were looking at one particular aspect of Review and Development, for example.....were to come up with something which felt alien to you....does that happen.....is it a problem for you.....or is it simply unlikely.....

M.H.(018) It's unlikely although it has.....I think you have to look at the whole picture before you can appreciate why I would react the way I would.....whatever we're talking about....whatever decisions are made.....they are discussed completely and I think that the fact that as a general rule decisions that are made are made democratically as far as is possible....I mean, there are some things that obviously you have to go down certain avenues because that's the way you're directed....not just from me....but decisions are made democratically....and in that sort of environment what I feel happens is that if there is a decision.....that isn't such that I'd want to endorse it as the head.....then if I felt that I couldn't go down that road then I'd say I'm sorry.....I'd actually say I'm sorry but that decision is not the one we actually have to make as a group....

INT.(019) ....and would you anticipate that the group of staff would come into line behind you?

M.H.(020) I feel that they would come into line simply on the basis of the fact that they appreciate that I would only .....as a last resort.....take that stance and that it wasn't a case of 'Well, you can carry on chaps and if I like it then I'll go along with it'.....it's all a question of give and take.....if they are seeing that I'm prepared to go their way and compromise then they're more likely to accept my reasons for actually jumping in and taking the initiative on the odd occasion.....and as long as it is the odd occasion then they're prepared to say 'Oh well, fair enough' .....but I would justify it.....I wouldn't actually say 'sorry chaps but this is what would actually happen'.....it would be a question of putting forward the view....and I would think it would be necessary if I'm taking a stand like that to fully justify it.....for myself as well as for them .....

INT.(021) We talked a little bit about your feelings during the day.....there were difficulties in picking out the right word to describe your feelings on that day when we were talking....and 'keyed up' was the best in the end and you also talked about 'troughs' and 'peaks' during the day.....which to some extent you could control in that.....if there were troughs you tended to do something with the children .....either whole school or a class or a group of children.....so there seemed some sense of control in it...is that a fair picture of your feelings about it.....about the day?

M.H.(022) Yes, there are situations that arise during the day that are more stressful and tension-creating than others .....I think if you were to take out.....obviously there are different levels of interactions, say, with parents....and when you came in before I had a particularly stressful half-an-hour or so with a parent.....and we actually resolved it .....it was okay and there's no problem there but that isn't entirely the picture in terms of relationships.....so I don't get that level of tension with every parental interview or external interaction that I have.....but I think as far as this idea of the 'peaks' and 'troughs' is concerned that there is a certain frustration in realising.....and I realised it fairly quickly before I actually became a head in my own right.....that the frustration is that you're not actually doing the job that perhaps you initially perceived it to be and from my point of view the child aspect of a headship is the most important one.....and it's what I've spent years gaining experience in....and it's what I'm best equipped for....to understand the teaching side of it and the needs of the children.....so the frustration perhaps of not being able to pursue that side.....or being able to use what talents I might have in those directions.....is quite high.....so I think that a lot of the tension that might arise is perhaps from that section of my role....and then it's heightened obviously by the level of problem that you have.....particularly, say, with parents.....

INT.(023) Okay.....and the last thing really was....and you may already have answered this.....because one of the reasons I was initially talking to you was to find out the kinds of things that you did, your feelings about that and also the things that you thought about during the day.....what your thinking time was spent on.....and I would now guess that there isn't so much thinking time during the day.....you're not able to plan out things.....

M.H.(024) .....no.....

INT.(025) I suppose it depends on what we mean by 'thinking'.....it seemed to me that a lot of your 'thinking'

.....if by that we mean 'planning' tends to be done outside of school.....whereas if I'm asking what you think about, meaning 'what are you concerned or preoccupied about'..... then there is 'thinking time' but mostly three or four things that are on your mind and need to get round to at some point.....

M.H.(026) ....yes, that are important for that bit of the day or perhaps the next day....

INT.(027) ....and supported by the little yellow notes you stick on the wall?

M.H.(028) Yes....the only aspects that....as I think I mentioned to you before.....which I find is necessary for me is that....say, for instance, I have to make a phone call to Social Services but.....before I make that phone call..... what I'll do is think now what are we going to be talking about and assess what the conversation might be....I may know that it might be about certain children so I'll think about what I need to get available....it's almost like the old flagging of the question in an interview situation.... you attune yourself to what you are about to get on with....

INT.(029) That's fine.....I'll stop there.....

END OF TRANSCRIPT