Teachers as innovative professionals

Report for GTC and The Innovation Unit

May 2008

working with you
to improve social results

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1. Introduction

This report draws on evidence gathered during the first half of 2007. It reports in some detail what we found in ten case study schools and the experiences of a further 35 teachers, when asked about their personal experience of innovating in the classroom.

The first section of this report is a summary analysis of our findings, and includes our recommendations. The remainder is a full account of the definitions, methodologies and nuances we found in our field work. There is a great deal of rich detail and many case studies, which are offered both as evidence to support our conclusions and for the purpose of sharing these experiences.

We see the audience for this report as primarily policy makers and others interested in supporting and promoting innovation in teaching.

2. Summary of findings

What do teachers mean by innovation?

For most, it is either (i) responding in the moment to events and to the particular needs of the pupils in the room in a way that enables or enhances their learning; or (ii) trying something new or taking risks in the planning and execution of lessons as part of a systemic approach to continuously improving teaching and learning. Experienced teachers are more confident with the former, more spontaneous, approach. For a minority, it means freedom from following a set curriculum.

This distinction between systemic and non systemic approaches to innovation seems to be important in any analysis of what innovation in teaching looks like, when it happens, and how it can be nurtured and sustained. In order to move beyond the spontaneous, opportunist approach to innovation, teachers need to be able to discuss, share and promote examples of innovation – at the individual, as well as the systemic, or school level.

We observed a difference in response to the whole notion of innovation between those classroom teachers who do not feel part of a whole school push for innovation; and those teachers who work in an environment where there is a systemic, whole school approach. While both sets of teachers believed innovation was an important and indeed an essential part of teaching, and would probably share the views of the other group, it was interesting to see that their initial response was different. The former group (teachers innovating in a non systemic way) was more likely to readily name things such as role plays, bringing external speakers into the classroom and

organising day trips as examples of innovative practice. Their examples were about encouraging creativity, responding to the needs in the classroom, keeping things fresh and interesting. They said "of course we innovate – it's essential to the job."

Those teachers who felt that innovation was part of the ethos of their school talked, for example, about innovative timetabling and curricula; peer mentoring among pupils; non traditional management structures, professional development and involvement of pupils in the design of physical school places. Their concept of innovation was more one of managed continuous improvement and necessary change and they said "it's not really about innovation – it's about doing what works best for the children and their learning." They struggled a bit to think of things they had done which were genuinely innovative.

Why innovate?

- Interviews with teachers and exploration of innovations at our case study schools showed that teachers innovated within their own classroom primarily:
    - To respond to the needs of their pupils (a major part of maintaining their own interest and increasing their job satisfaction)
    - Because meeting pupils' needs and producing interesting, successful lessons inspires and motivates them
    - To meet the expectations of their head or senior manager
    - In response to peer encouragement.
    - Because the world is changing and pedagogy must reflect that. Learning must be designed to equip pupils for the world they will inhabit.

- At a broader school level, heads and other senior managers spoke of the main reasons for introducing innovation as being in order to:
    - Improve results – particularly in failing schools
    - Use education and the skills of all staff to open up possibilities in pupils' minds and increase their self-belief
    - Respond to a changing world i.e. recognising that schools needed to constantly change to keep pace with changing needs of their pupils and to make best use of new evidence about what works well
    - Respond to the expectations of their pupils and parents.

This differs from the rationale for innovation in the commercial world, where it is used to get or stay ahead of the competition, attract a bigger market share and attract and retain the best staff. Innovation in teaching, as far as teachers are concerned, is about pupils and their opportunities in the future. If the school develops a good or better reputation as a result, that is obviously a good thing; but the purpose is not to become known as innovators or attract potential pupils and parents with attractive offers.

Creating the conditions for innovations in teaching

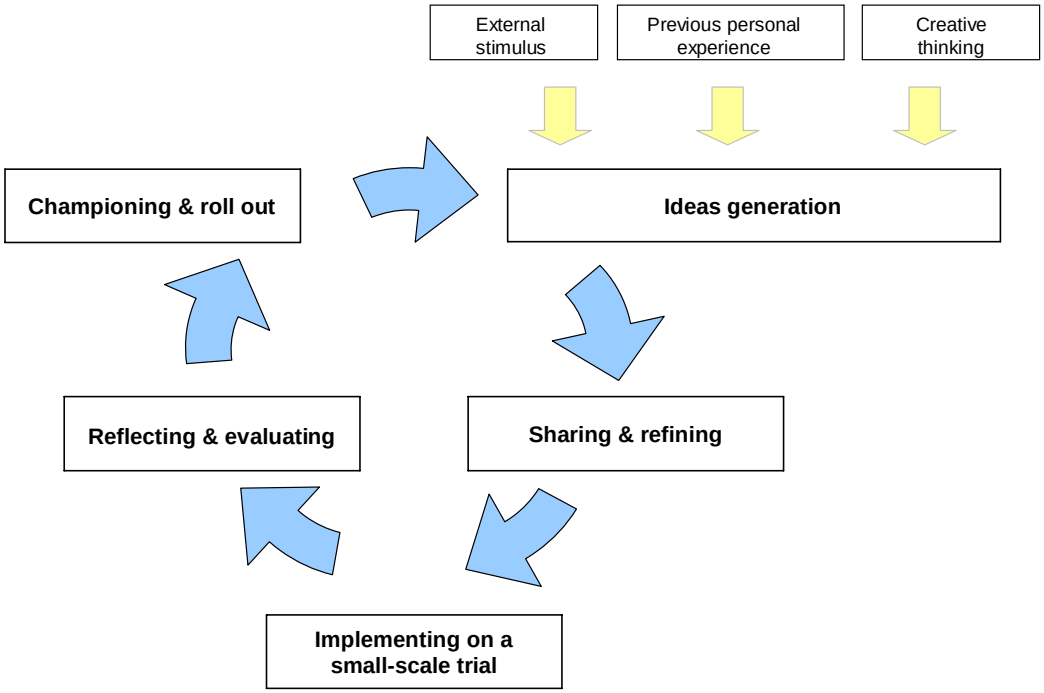
The most fundamental building block is leadership. Where there is a whole system approach to innovation, the headteacher and senior management team usually display strong and reflective leadership, principally through a clear vision of what the school is trying to achieve, and communicate this effectively through learning and collaboration. Often – though not always - this vision and the decision to implement it by building teachers' confidence in their ability to innovate is about school improvement.

Where innovation is not systemic, many interviewees said that the degree of support from their headteacher or other senior has a very significant impact on their motivation and the likelihood of them continuing to innovate in that school.

A number of other building blocks were common across our case study schools. Whilst strong and reflective leadership was still at the core, the creation of different forms of distributive leadership, where leadership is shared widely across the school, was also either a common feature or being developed as part of a programme of supported change:

Strong pupil voice	Structures for internal sharing and reflection	Commitment to CPD
Time and space to innovate	Distributive **Strong and reflective leadership** Leadership	Ok to fail
Some focus on skills and competencies	Well run organisations	Teachers' professionalism

The innovation process



Whether innovation is primarily practitioner led and classroom based or part of a broader initiative, the process depicted above - and the skills and aptitudes associated with each stage – are an essential part of true innovation.

Although we did find evidence of individual teachers working through this cycle on their own, this is clearly a huge undertaking without structured support. This, no doubt, explains why these teachers also talk about the demotivating effect of not having the necessary support. Often, unsupported innovation is primarily about ideas generation; we also heard, though rarely, about individual teachers refining, testing and evaluating their own innovations.

In the systemic innovation model, the skills required to plan and evaluate new approaches, to stimulate peers, and – crucially – discuss and reflect on new approaches and talk to new audiences about them and when and how they work, are actively developed, to support the whole school ethos of encouraging and learning from innovation and continuous improvement.

We found that individually inspired innovation was primarily the domain of experienced, confident teachers who possessed many of the skills needed to test, refine, evaluate and promulgate new approaches. Where they did not have these skills, however, they were essentially developing their own practice. The non systemic model depends on teachers' enthusiasm and their ability to inspire

colleagues. We were told about the difficulty of doing this when there is no incentive to offer insights and experiences.

Being able to talk compellingly about innovation is very important. Schools who have adopted innovation as an ethos have done so because it helps teachers reflect on their practice and invariably rediscover that they are very good indeed at generating enthusiasm for learning and being creative in their lessons, and morale improves as a result. In the systemic model, availability of the necessary skills is not left to chance.

Sources of ideas

- Ideas for innovation at both a classroom and school level are drawn from a wide range of places and spheres of influence, with teachers and heads exchanging ideas and drawing inspiration from a number of levels:
    - Within their own school
    - Other schools
    - The education system more broadly
    - The wider environment:
- Schools that were particularly innovative tended to have some formal structures in place for teachers to share ideas and showcase innovative practice rather than relying on this to happen informally. They also often had structures that were set up with the express purpose of focussing on particular problems or issues to come up with solutions. These often involved, or indeed were led by, pupils.

- Headteachers and deputies were generally more likely than classroom teachers to draw inspiration from attending external conferences, networking and observing practices within other schools. Those from our case study schools in particular tended to be highly knowledgeable about current good practice and emerging thinking. They actively sought out new ideas from a wide range of sources and were skilled at adapting ideas to suit their own context. A common feature of several of the case study schools was the international links that they had formed. These links were primarily to exchange good practice and bring new ideas into the school.

- For both lone innovators and innovative schools, the transfer of knowledge and ideas is welcomed in its own right. We also found that one of the reasons innovators are passionate about what they do is because it taps into a core skill of teaching. Responding to individuals' learning needs within the framework of the curriculum and contextualising the subject and content to make it accessible are difficult and core skills of teaching. Rediscovering one's ability to do this and being supported to do so by fellow professionals, so that it is obvious you are making a difference, is a very powerful motivator for teachers.

Evaluation

- Little evidence was provided for formal evaluation processes surrounding teachers' own classroom based innovation. When they introduced innovative practices within their own classroom without this being part of a wider school initiative, informal teacher-pupil interaction was the main, often only, form of evaluation.

- Heads and other senior managers were more focussed on having more formal and robust evaluation processes, including monitoring pupil results, appraising through line management meetings, feeding back through pupil and parent questionnaires and formal monitoring and appraisal processes. This was largely because they were more focussed on wider school innovations that were deliberately planned and implemented as such rather than the small scale classroom based innovation. However the main evaluation measure used was generally improvements in exam results.

Conclusions

1 There are 5 steps in the innovation process:

- Ideas generation
- Sharing and refining
- Testing
- Evaluating
- Championing

Developing a greater capacity within teaching to innovate - and especially to ensure that knowledge and insights are shared – means developing these skills. Innovative schools are already doing this.

2 Teachers need to feel they are permitted to innovate. This is not because they are particularly timid or lack confidence in their ability, but because there is a risk involved and all effective innovators understand this. That risk needs to be mitigated and that occurs through explicit support and encouragement. That will enable teachers to make sound professional judgements about when and how to innovate.

3 Innovation in teaching <u>is</u> personalisation. It means responding to individual needs. When asked to describe the converse of innovative, interviewees said "one size fits all".

4 So, the involvement of pupils in developing, testing, evaluating and sharing ideas is very important. All of the case study schools placed huge emphasis on the importance of pupils understanding more about the techniques behind education – as a tool for both learning and engagement. There is a continuum from seeing the school as there to 'do to' pupils with teachers knowing 'what's best'; through a notion of customer service that gives a different status to pupils' views and teachers' responses to them; and ultimately to co-production. The more innovative schools tend to be on the second half of this continuum. This notion of co-production also extends to the way that parents and other stakeholders are treated as an integral part of the school.

5 Innovation taps into something very personal, in both the teacher and the learner. At the individual, spontaneous, level this is very apparent; but successful systemic innovation always begins with what teachers love and care about, whatever that may be, and is focussed on pupils' needs.

6 The vocabulary and indeed the whole philosophical debate around innovation are not permeating the classroom. Where a school has taken a systemic approach and has sought out ideas and inspiration, from The Innovation Unit, for example, it becomes part of the conversation among professionals within the school. But it is, in general, a concept that teachers feel uncomfortable talking about.

7 There is no shared definition or understanding of what innovation is what it entails and what it brings.

8 Teachers do not have many opportunities to share information, ideas, sources of inspiration, and thoughts on pedagogy. If they did, perhaps the professional language about innovation would develop more quickly. Innovative schools make the time because they want to create the conditions for confident, creative, collaborative teaching and learning.

9 Innovation is essential to reflective, responsive teaching but at present the phrase does not convey enough of the possibilities and benefits to inspire teachers and schools to embrace it as a fundamental ethos. It may be more helpful to talk about the steps in the process, which teachers in particular more readily accept, as a means of encouraging more risk taking, knowledge sharing, pupil focus and ownership of their own professional development among the teaching profession.

10 Innovative schools tend to pick up appropriate national initiatives (e.g. Assessment for Learning, accreditation schemes and awards) and good practice from other schools and adapt them for their own needs. For these schools it is sufficient that the national bodies provide well evidenced research on successful initiatives, and indeed this is seen as a key role. In the most innovative schools well evidenced initiatives will be:

- noticed
- considered
- if appropriate for the school, adapted for the local context
- adopted
- evaluated and improved

- disseminated to a wider audience.

3. Objectives and methodology

In its most recent annual survey[1] of teachers' opinions and beliefs, the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) found that 84% of teachers believe they have the opportunity to innovate in the classroom. In response to this finding, the GTC and The Innovation Unit commissioned OPM to carry out a piece of research to explore what lies behind this very high figure, and in particular to investigate what teachers understand by 'innovation' and how this manifests itself in their practice.

The overall aim of this investigation was to enable the GTC and The Innovation Unit to understand how best to create the right circumstances and environment for purposeful innovation. This meant researching the motivation, confidence and experiences of individual teachers; and then looking in more detail at the factors supporting genuinely innovative and successful interventions. Increasingly, teachers need to feel that they have the opportunity to innovate in the classroom. The renewed emphasis on personalised learning and the autonomy and resourcefulness this implies for teachers in the classroom mean that it is vital to share knowledge of how others have used their knowledge, experience and professional judgement in a range of different situations.

More specifically, the research set out to provide evidence that will help to address the following policy questions:

1. What steps should be taken by national bodies concerned with teaching, by professional bodies and by school leaders, to encourage teachers to optimise the use and value of their professional judgement about the merits of developing, implementing and evaluating innovations in teaching?
2. What particular steps need to be taken to create the conditions for innovation in teaching, particularly in those contexts which are characterised by some teachers as leading to over-accountability and risk aversion?

Methodology

There were three key elements to this research project:

1. **A literature review** which is available as a separate document. This provided a number of frameworks that we have drawn on in our analysis.
2. **Telephone interviews with 35 teachers**

   Initially an introductory letter was sent to a sample of teachers from the GTC's database asking them to respond if they would be interested in participating in a

[1] http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/tsurvey/tsurvey06/

telephone interview as part of this study. Unfortunately, the response to this was extremely poor with only ten positive responses being received from a mail out to 800 teachers. Following discussion with the GTC, further teachers were then recruited from a range of sources drawing on OPM and GTC contacts. All those interviewed said yes to the same question asked about innovation in the annual teachers' survey: "d*o you feel that teachers in your school have opportunities to innovate in their own classroom?"*

A total of thirty five interviews were carried out. The interview guide is included as an appendix. Those interviewed were spread around the country and are broken down as follows:

	Totals
Primary Head/Deputy Head	1
Primary Classroom teacher	5
Secondary Head/Deputy	12
Secondary – other management/lead responsibility	4
Secondary Classroom teacher	13
	35

3. Ten case studies involving visits to schools

In order to explore in more depth the factors that contribute to the implementation, evaluation and disseminate of innovation within schools, ten schools that have implemented a range of innovative practices were identified through a range of networks. Each school was visited by members of the OPM research team with a number of people including the Headteacher, other managers and teachers being interviewed. The broad discussion guide used is included as an appendix. In a number of schools pupils also took part in discussions.

The ten schools were spread throughout the country and were split between primary and secondary schools. One school was a special school teaching children based in hospital. The schools taking part were:

- Chew Magna Primary School, Somerset
- Dene Magna Secondary School, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire
- Dulwich Junior School, London
- Fallilbroome High School, Macclesfield, Cheshire
- Grange Primary School, Long Eaton, Derbyshire
- Halton High School, Runcorn, Cheshire
- James Brindley School, Birmingham (a hospital special school for 4 -19 year olds)
- John Cabot Technology College, Bristol

- Oakmeeds Community College, Burgess Hill, West Sussex
- Seven Kings High School, Redbridge, London

Summaries highlighting some of the innovative practices going on in each of the schools are included as an appendix to this report.

4. What do teachers mean by innovation?

One of the primary purposes of the research was to investigate what teachers mean by 'innovation'. All the teachers taking part in the initial telephone interviews agreed that teachers in their school have opportunities to innovate in the classroom. They were then asked what they meant by that and to describe what sort of things they thought innovation in the classroom encompassed.

In responding, some suggested that there is a general lack of understanding as to what constitutes innovation, both in the classroom and at a school-wide level.

> *"I think part of the problem is that there is no commonly understood working definition of innovation with regards to teaching, so when people are told to 'innovate, innovate' then they don't really know what they are supposed to be doing. It needs to be made clearer"* Deputy Head

This view was also apparent in some of the case study schools. The language used by heads was often centred more on 'improvement' than it was on 'innovation'.

Overall, the responses as to what innovation in the classroom is were very broad but there was a clear focus amongst classroom teachers upon **creative delivery of the curriculum** carried out within their classrooms. Examples of such innovation included the use of different formats for delivering teaching such as role plays and group work, bringing external speakers into the classroom and organising day trips to complement the teaching of the curriculum. The importance of aligning teaching with the motivations of pupils outside of the classroom was often the particular focus of such interpretations of innovation. Delivering creative, and thus engaging, lessons was also seen as being key to managing pupil behaviour.

> *"Using the media and the world around to relate lessons to current affairs and the kids' immediate surroundings…..innovation in the classroom is particularly around the management of the pupils. This tends to take the form of group work, role play, drama, re-enacting the news etc."* Teacher

> *"As I was formally an artist, I like to try to present teaching of the English language through art as I think this is the best way of linking in with children's brains. Children are particularly visual in the way they see the*

> *world, and respond well to visual displays of things. For instance, when discussing the themes in the book 'The Go Between', I teach it in terms of colours, such as green for envy and red for lust. I think this helps children to associate with the feelings and situations of the characters."* Teacher

The case study schools, and some of the other headteachers we spoke to, tended to see innovation as being about the thoughtful and deliberate introduction of initiatives to improve specific aspects of their school. They did not see it as being about the creative delivery of classroom material in the way that many classroom teachers did.

The **use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** was another often quoted example of classroom innovation, particularly amongst those teachers who were newer to teaching. Innovation was defined in this sense as encompassing the use of aids such as interactive whiteboards, power-point displays and DVDs within classroom teaching. The use of technology to facilitate learning was thought to play an important role in enhancing teaching through engaging the minds of pupils and keeping up-to-date with the way they interact with the world.

> *"We have the curriculum and then we can innovate as we see fit in terms of teaching methods. We have whiteboard and other media and this is how we use innovation to support the teaching."* Teacher

Those teachers who had been teaching for a long time seemed to be less likely than newer teachers to mention the use of ICT in innovation. They tended to define innovation in a broader sense as moving away from traditional teaching methods to keep in touch with pupil needs. The potential for innovation to challenge and motivate teachers themselves, as well as their pupils, was highlighted as being of great importance amongst this group of interviewees.

> *"It's about breaking down the barriers between traditional teaching methods and new exciting ways of looking at things. An innovative teacher is one who is in touch with what pupils are interested in and constantly looking at what is out there to bring something fresh into the classroom. It can involve looking at pioneering opportunities and trying to review your subject area in a new light to stretch yourself as a teacher as well as the pupils."* Teacher

Teachers who were most enthused by the concept of innovation tended to define it in psychological rather than practical terms i.e. they focussed on highlighting the need to progress teaching methods to engage with children's brains and modern views of the world rather than focussing on practical ways of delivering lessons in a more creative way. Such teachers associated innovation with focussing on the needs of the learner and allowing for a more personalised, tailored and flexible approach to pupil learning in which different learning styles could be accounted for and reflected through teaching practice.

''Innovation breaks the mould…it is about using modern knowledge we have about the brain and how it works and making sure the teaching methods make the most of that. A lot of lessons are based around the mechanics of teaching, but innovation is going beyond this to really stretch the imagination and the cognitive processes of both the teacher and the pupil. It's also about adapting teaching to suit the situation and the children that make up the class.'' Headteacher

Wider school Innovations

Those interviewed were then asked about whether they felt that they also had opportunities to introduce innovative processes or practices into their school more generally. Around two-thirds felt that they did so although some of the teachers felt that the leadership of their school stifled this broader type of innovation.

"In theory we have opportunities but not in practice – it is talked about but never happens." Teacher

"*Opportunities are constrained by leadership personalities."* Deputy Head

Examples of the sorts of things that those interviewed felt wider school innovations encompassed in their own school included:

Innovative time-tabling and curriculum

- Changing KS3 to two years with a three years GCSE course to take the pressure off Year Nine (part of a national pathfinder initiative)
- New designs to the curriculum being offered such as introducing vocational courses at KS4
- The creation of a 'fifth period' in the school day for more creative lessons such as code breaking, and cross-curricular activities

Professional development

- An action research project where teachers reflect on their practice and write up the research as a formal project. They are given half a day to work with an Advance Skills Teacher and encouraged to present findings to the management team and others. A small financial reward for good performance is also given
- Development days set aside to share ideas amongst staff, take part in training opportunities and involve pupils in the design of the curriculum

School management

- Non-traditional management structures
- Delegated or devolved leadership models to empower subject leads and allow greater departmental autonomy
- The teaching of parents alongside their pupils

Innovative school design

- Using pupils at a Technology College to help rewire the school
- Involving children in the development and decoration of physical school spaces
- Designing classroom buildings with break-out rooms to facilitate innovative group-work

Many of these practices were also apparent in our case study schools.

Overall most of the examples of innovative practice given by both teachers and heads tended not to be entirely new ideas but were the adaptation and introduction of initiatives that have been tried elsewhere. These may be national initiatives or ideas picked up from a wide variety of other sources (see chapter 6 for a detailed exploration of sources of ideas). However, we also found that examples of spontaneous innovations were often not recalled by interviewees. We do not think that this is because spontaneous innovation is felt to be invalid. We think rather that it is less likely that it will be committed to an individual's, far less a corporate, memory than an initiative which has been planned, tested, evaluated and introduced in a more structured way.

Differences between subjects and pupil ages

People tend to perceive those subjects that they believe are intrinsically more 'creative' such as art and music as lending themselves more easily to innovation than subjects such as maths and modern languages. Equally, subjects involving a high level of practical work such as science and modern technology were thought to facilitate innovative teaching methods due to the high level of potential for activities and group work.

However, most teachers felt that the degree to which innovation occurred was more down to individual teachers and the culture within particular departments or schools than the subjects that they taught. Those headed by highly motivated and enthusiastic teachers working collaboratively with others were perceived as being most innovative, regardless of the subject area.

> *"It is all down to particular individuals rather than departments or subject areas themselves. Most subjects lend themselves to innovation, but it's down to individual teachers to make it happen. If the teachers involved look outside of the box then their subjects and lessons become innovative."*

> *"There are many examples of innovative teaching processes…which are isolated from the subject area and can be implemented across the board, e.g. children of different ages working and learning together, when the pupils become the educator. This can be done equally in Maths, Art or Science."*

> *"The difference between departments is largely down to individuals in those departments and their personal drive and experience."*

There was also suggestion that the age group of pupils being taught had an effect upon levels of innovation in teaching, with more potential to innovate amongst younger groups of pupils due to less pressure around performance and exams. Some of these teachers – though by no means all – saw the National Curriculum as a barrier.

> *"There is variation between different age groups of pupils. The foundation stage teachers at my school for instance are much more innovative than later years because they're not constrained by the National Curriculum in the same way. This means teachers have more control and can be more individual over the topics and the way they learn, whereas later on we have to teach in a more structured way. "* Headteacher

This was also apparent in our case study schools with innovations, particularly around the curriculum, being more apparent at primary school and in Year Seven.

> *"It is often felt to be easier and less risky to try out innovation with the younger classes, as there is less external accountability. Year 10 and 11 becomes trickier.*" – Deputy Headteacher

Comparison to other sectors' approach to innovation

Some of the schools that appear to be innovating most successfully and continually exhibit a wide range of different types of innovation. Whilst few, if any, would articulate it in this way, if we take Hartley's dimensions of innovation for public-sector organisations[2] we can see examples of all of these taking place. The first three of these happen at both the classroom and wider level with individual teachers being able to drive service and process innovation within their own classroom, and to a certain extent product innovation. The other four would seem to happen only at whole school level.

- Product innovation – new products (e.g. assessment tools).
- Service innovation – new ways in which services are provided to users (e.g. online links to lessons; interactive whiteboards; teachers using their own technical knowledge and sometimes equipment such as digital cameras).

[2] Hartley, 2006

- Process innovation – new ways in which organisational processes are designed (e.g. administrative reorganisation into front- and back-office processes; process mapping leading to new approaches).
- Position innovation – new contexts or 'customers' (e.g. re-positioning of the way that pupils are seen with an emphasis on co-production – related to personalisation of learning; Assessment for Learning).
- Strategic innovation – new goals or purposes of the organisation (e.g. these are apparent in new forms of schools such as Academies but also in the way that schools define their vision).
- Governance innovation – new forms of citizen engagement and democratic institutions (e.g. pupil voice).
- Rhetorical innovation – new language and new concepts (e.g. introducing a Friday morning University as part of the curriculum for a primary school; new ways of approaching teaching such as adopting system wide innovations like Assessment for Learning or introducing the use of other techniques).

In addition to being a useful way of categorising different interventions, this classification is also a useful reminder that innovation can take place for different reasons. The first step in successful innovation seems to be to consider what outcomes you want to see; and the second is to be prepared to change your approach to achieve that. Later in this report we explore the type of evaluation that is taking place and consider these issues in more detail. However it is worth noting here that part of the process that innovative schools tend to adopt is small scale trial of new initiatives before reviewing them and considering wider roll out. This is only partly to test out whether the new initiative achieves the intended outcomes. It is also often to explore the practicalities of implementation and to gain buy-in from teachers and other stakeholders.

Innovation in both the classroom and schools more generally can be classified as either **incremental** whereby minor changes are made to existing services and processes or more **radical** involving fundamentally different ways of organising and delivering learning.[3] Nearly all the classroom based innovations that individual teachers talked about in the interviews fall into the incremental rather than radical category although some may have a radical impact on the individual pupil.

Radical innovations and whole school innovations (both radical and incremental) were more apparent in our case study schools than in the interviews as the case studies had been purposefully selected because they were seen as innovative. Whilst these schools easily spoke about what they were doing and how they are doing it, they tended to see and express it more as a process of **continual improvement** rather than being about innovation per se.

[3] Hargreaves, D., 2003; Mulgan and Albury, 2003

> *"The question I always ask myself and those around me is how do you move from a first class school to a world class school? It's all linked in with the mindset of continuous improvement."* Headteacher

Where innovations are more radical they tend to be more thoughtful and strategic and may involve re-defined goals and vision for the school. This often means looking at customers and other stakeholders in a different way. **Schools may be seen more explicitly as partnerships between a number of different stakeholders** with boundaries becoming blurred – so for example a parent may also lead a workshop or be taught alongside pupils; pupils give feedback to teachers and become part of the performance assessment system; teachers see themselves as enablers of learning rather than as givers of learning and so forth.

5. Why innovate?

In describing why innovation is important, The Innovation Unit identifies that:

> *"In one sense, inventiveness leading to innovation is part of the human DNA. Without the willingness to experiment, to try something new, to solve a problem or to confront and overcome a new challenge, we would not have evolved as a species. Some psychologists argue that one of the most powerful ways in which we learn is when our expectations fail, when we do something and it doesn't work, so we are driven to try a new way to realise our goals - this can often be seen most clearly in the way in which young children learn. "*[4]

Innovation often occurs in order to improve a process or product and add value. However, The Innovation Unit also goes on to identify a number of key challenges such as globalisation, the technological and knowledge revolutions and cultural changes that mean that there is no choice but to innovate. For example, globalisation and shifting patterns of trade and commerce mean that different skills will be required by the workforce of the future, whilst new technologies and applications offer the potential for very different educational experiences and demand different ways of delivering and using knowledge. Even where current processes or products are working well the changing context mean that they will not continue to do so – or certainly will not continue to be the optimum way of doing things. Innovation would therefore seem to be an essential component of a successful education system.

Interviews with teachers and exploration of innovations at our case study schools showed that teachers innovated within their own classroom primarily:

- To respond to the needs of their pupils (a major part of maintaining their own interest and increasing their job satisfaction)

[4] http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk/about-us/what-is-innovation/what-is-innovation.html

  - Because meeting pupils' needs and producing interesting, successful lessons inspires and motivates them
  - To meet the expectations of their head or senior manager
  - In response to peer encouragement.
  - Because the world is changing and pedagogy must reflect that. Learning must be designed to equip pupils for the world they will inhabit.

- At a broader school level, heads and other senior managers spoke of the main reasons for introducing innovation as being in order to:
  - Improve results – particularly in failing schools
  - Use education and the skills of all staff to open up possibilities in pupils' minds and increase their self-belief
  - Respond to a changing world i.e. recognising that schools needed to constantly change to keep pace with changing needs of their pupils and to make best use of new evidence about what works well
  - Respond to the expectations of their pupils and parents.

Each is discussed in more detail below.

Why teachers innovate

To respond to the needs of their pupils

It was striking in so many of these conversations that in discussing their experience of innovating, we were seeing educators at their most enthusiastic and committed.

Amongst the other benefits that teachers felt stemmed from innovation was the ability to forge stronger relationships with children, and the provision of challenge required to keep teachers motivated and able to take pride in their teaching. The potential for innovation to improve connections with pupils and keep up-to-date with the motivations of young people was also mentioned as having a positive effect upon teacher-pupil relations on a wider level.

Where individual teachers were introducing innovative practices that were mostly about delivering lessons in more creative and engaging ways then a primary motivation tended to be the immediate needs of the pupils. This could be in order to personalise learning, manage classroom behaviour and/or simply to ensure that lessons were as effective as possible.

> *"The children are hugely tenacious and very committed – their enthusiasm is infectious. They constantly amaze you."* Teacher

Satisfaction of producing successful lessons

Teachers generally felt that the most beneficial aspects of innovation for teachers themselves were the increased levels of job satisfaction and the opportunity to re-energise both practice and the curriculum. The power of innovation to prevent boredom and 'staleness' in the classroom was the most noteworthy factor benefiting teachers, and was equally highlighted by newly qualified teachers and those having taught for several decades.

> *"You need a break – something different."* Teacher

> *"It's not just about educating the children but also feeding ourselves"* Teacher

The morale boost that stems from successful innovation was also highlighted as a positive consequence of innovating in the classroom, leading to growing confidence and commitment to teaching as an ongoing career.

> *''It keeps people alive and alert on the job, and reminds people why they entered the teaching profession in the first place. It reenergises an otherwise quite staid curriculum, especially after years of delivering it.''*

Meeting the expectations of the head and other key stakeholders

The majority of those interviewed, both within our general sample and within the case study schools, considered innovating in the way they delivered lessons to be an inherent and fundamental part of their professional role. Innovation is not only expected by the teachers themselves but also often by colleagues, Headteachers, parents and the pupils themselves. However the extent to which this was expected did vary between schools. There was a strong feeling that there is a particular expectation placed upon teachers in management positions to set examples of innovative teaching methods and to instil innovation within the wider culture of the school:

> *"It should be the role of every teacher, and especially everyone in a management position to instil within the culture the feeling of safety to innovate. In that sense I think it is a huge responsibility of mine.''* Deputy Headteacher

Peer encouragement

The support and encouragement of peers was also a key factor in some schools. This tended to come about as a result of a whole school ethos around delivering exceptional lessons and continually improving. In some cases this extended to friendly rivalry between teachers to produce good lessons.

> *"I'll rush over to you when I have an idea and say what do you think about this and you'll make it even better with your own idea – or maybe suggest I rein it in a bit. We're always doing that – what do you think about this or this?"*
> Teacher

There was a sense that interviewees thought innovation required a higher degree of preparation and performance by individual teachers in the classroom. At a classroom level they seem to view innovation in such a way (i.e. creative delivery of particular lessons) that it puts virtually all of the pressure on them personally, rather than on the infrastructure around them. However where they have supportive colleagues, or where there are structures specifically set up to share innovations and encourage collaboration between peers, then this pressure is eased and more innovation is also likely to happen.

Because the world is changing

> *"It [innovation] prevents the enormous panic that comes from not understanding the world of IT and modern times – learning the language of children and responding to their needs so that the children are the leaders is the only way of maintaining an effective presence in their lives. Otherwise you'll be left behind."*

Why schools innovate

Improving results

The biggest driver for whole school innovation was a strong desire by the head to improve results. This was often because they had been brought into a low performing school with the specific remit to do so and where changing things (i.e. implementing what would be seen as innovative within the current context) was seen as a fundamental necessity. In many cases these types of innovations were largely about importing ideas from elsewhere but, importantly, adapting them to suit the local context and circumstances of the school.

Help pupils to see education more positively

A simple desire to *'do what is best for the kids'* was also apparent amongst both heads and teachers.

> *"Innovation is doing something differently and trying to clarify what the conditions are for effective teaching and learning in a new way. This school is an interesting case as the school was in a good position academically and financially previously, and there was unusually no 'disaster drive' for innovation like with some schools. But the children weren't independent learners, so that needed to be tackled and innovation was required for this"*
> Headteacher

Responding to a changing world

Where the schools were already performing well, the motivation to innovate often also came more from a recognition that schools needed to constantly change to keep pace with changing needs of their pupils and to make best use of new evidence about what works well. Heads and other managers and teachers at our case study schools tended to always be on the look out for how to improve things. They would actively seek and bring in ideas from a range of sources and had a passionate interest in continuous improvement. As with teachers innovating in their own classroom, this was often fundamentally driven by the head's own passion and need to maintain interest and increase job satisfaction.

Responding to expectations of pupils, parents and governors

Pressure from pupils, parents and governors to keep up good results was also a further motivating factor for some of the well performing schools that formed our case studies as was a simple desire by the head to 'be the best' and continually strive to improve.

6. Creating the processes and conditions for innovations in teaching

Those schools where innovation is happening in a systemic way (i.e. where there is a culture and processes in place that aim to continually do things better) have a number of features in common. These 'building blocks' enable systemic innovation and create the conditions whereby teachers innovate in their own domain (be that individual classroom, department and/or year group). Some schools that are successfully innovating (i.e. the 'systemic' schools) concentrate more on leader led innovation and some concentrate more on creating the conditions for broader practitioner led innovation that takes place at both the classroom and wider school level. However, those who appear to be most successful in continually improving and innovating are generally doing both. This is largely because **the environment in which practitioner led innovation flourishes is the same as the environment that is required to sustain leader led innovation**. The most fundamental building block and the primary factor in creating the conditions for innovations in teaching was identified by all those in the case study schools, and many of those taking part in the earlier interviews as **leadership**.

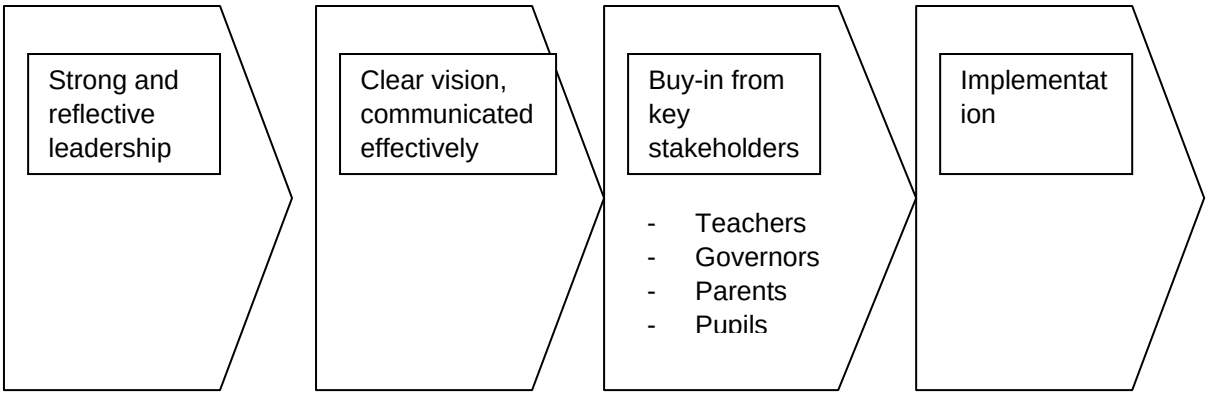
Where innovation is introduced as a way of working into a school, this is often as a result of a new head being brought in to a poor performing school with the express remit of turning the school around. The type of leadership necessary here is best described as **strong and reflective leadership** from a head who deliberately sets out to improve their school by introducing new ways of organising different aspects of

the school and the learning within the school. Many have a particular learning guru or philosophy that has inspired them and whose principles they bring into the school. Having this type of evidence base behind them is often a key element in gaining the support of the other key stakeholders – teachers, governors, pupils and parents.

> *"I was inspired by David Hargreaves. He said to get to that next level, to push achievement levels in the 60's up to 70's you've got to get your Assessment for Learning right and you've got to get a Student Voice and the two can't go separately"* Headteacher

Without this type of leadership, whole school innovation that will have a major impact on the school will not happen.

The conditions for leader led innovation



As the diagram above shows, the strong and reflective leadership manifests itself in having a **clear vision** of what the school is trying to achieve through its innovation and communicating this effectively. This is a key aspect of generating the necessary **buy-in from key stakeholders**. The vision needs to be inclusive and inspirational and should be built up from consultation with stakeholders and with teachers in particular if implementation is going to be successful. In generating ownership and buy-in, the importance of the following types of activities were noted for the key stakeholder groups:

- Teachers:
    - Having a clear rationale for why the innovation is being suggested e.g. what problem/s is it designed to tackle? what improvement/s is it designed to bring about?

  - Having a clear evidence base for the changes being suggested – unless the head is particularly charismatic and/or the staff particularly ready for change, then evidence of where similar innovations have worked before and/or endorsement from a credible national organisation is important. Explaining how ideas from elsewhere will be adapted to fit the local context, and the role individual teachers can play in this, can also be an important part of generating ownership.
  - Providing security for teachers so they not only understand what is expected of them but feel that they are not being asked to take personal risks.
  - Inspiring teachers through discussions that hook into their love of, and expertise in, pedagogy rather than discussions that have concepts such as strategic direction as their main focus.

- Governors:
  - Evaluating the changes and demonstrating improvements in results will be key to maintaining the buy-in of Governors. Their initial buy-in will already have been achieved as part and parcel of the appointment of a new head and they are therefore likely to focus more on the results rather than the means. The head will be trusted to employ effective means of achieving the required improvement.
- Pupils:
  - Being clear about what is expected of pupils and implementing changes consistently is important in order to gain their buy-in to any changes.
  - Involving pupils in giving feedback and evaluating the initiatives.
  - Treating them as co-producers who have responsibility for their own learning.
- Parents and carers:
  - Clearly explaining the rationale for changes will be important, particularly where the school is already performing well (at least for their own child). Parents will generally be supportive in a failing school of the need to change.
  - Clear communication of major new initiatives and what is expected of them and their children.
  - Open door policy to discuss issues and showcase new initiatives.
  - Providing an evidence base for the changes.

Creating the environment to sustain and encourage innovation

In addition to having reflective and effective leadership, in order to sustain leader led innovation and create the environment for practitioner led innovation, a number of

building blocks were common across our case study schools. These also tended to be features of those schools where innovation was happening as a means of continual improvement rather than to turn around a failing school. Whilst strong and reflective leadership was still at the core, the creation of different forms of **distributive leadership,** where leadership is shared widely across the school were, also a common feature of those schools where systematic innovation was apparent:

Strong pupil voice	Structures for internal sharing and reflection	Commitment to CPD
Time and space to innovate	Distributive **Strong and reflective leadership** Leadership	Ok to fail
Some focus on skills and competencies	Well run organisations	Trust in teachers professionalism

Beyond the strong leadership at the centre and the creation of distributive leadership, the other building blocks for innovation are:

- A culture in which it is '**ok to fail'**. This is achieved through strong messages, modelling appropriate risk taking and through the performance management system
- This is accompanied by a **high level of trust in teachers' professionalism** that leaves them confident in being able to introduce innovation into their classroom.
- They have **a strong pupil voice** that has real status in the school. Pupils are seen as the focus of the school with a culture of pupil ownership of their own learning and of the wider school environment.

- At least part of the timetable is structured around **skills and competencies** rather than traditional subjects. Many have a major focus on cross-curricula learning and learning in context.
- There is a strong organisational commitment to the **Continuing Professional Development** of staff through a range of informal and formal means.
- The head and other managers deliberately create **time and space** for teachers to devise and implement innovative practices.
- There are **systems and structures with a deliberate focus on sharing good practice and introducing new ways of tackling problems and improving existing practices.**
- Innovative schools tend to **function as well run organisations** leaving more scope to concentrate on thoughtful innovation and improvement rather than day to day fire-fighting. These types of schools are typified by well run administrative and financial processes and a management team with high levels of autonomy.

Whilst it is crucial that innovative practices are appropriate for the context and applied in a way that fits the local context, these key building blocks were apparent across all the case study schools. Each of the building blocks is discussed in more detail below.

The building blocks: for both successful leader led and practitioner led innovation

Leadership

Strong and reflective leadership was seen by all those taking part in the research as a key aspect of successful innovation in schools. Whilst small scale innovation in their own classrooms - mostly along the lines of non-traditional ways of delivering curriculum material - does take place where this type of leadership is not in place, for anything more radical or school wide effective leadership is necessary.

> *"A radical change in the leadership of a school is probably the most effective way of increasing innovation." Headteacher*

Amongst the teachers interviewed, the attitude of the headteacher and, to a lesser extent, the wider leadership team was seen as the most crucial factor enabling innovation within the classroom. Whilst a few teachers spoke about innovating in the classroom 'despite' the headteacher, most felt their support was key. Certainly innovation outside the bounds of one classroom requires a supportive leader – this could be a Head of Department or Deputy in a large school rather than necessarily the Headteacher themselves.

> *"It is highly dependent on the personalities of the management, but there are always opportunities. You are fundamentally constrained by whoever is at the top and their ethos and drive." Teacher*

> *"Innovation is quite restricted by the Headteacher who wants the school to be very straight down the line. She is very controlling and wants things her way…this sets the tone for all the teaching and practice in the school which directly impacts upon tendency to innovate. I often feel as if I am bubbling over with ideas which I am unable to implement. It's very frustrating." Teacher*

So what does effective leadership in terms of encouraging and enabling innovation by teachers look like? There is certainly no 'one size fits all' approach but a number of common elements from different successful leadership styles emerged from our case study work:

The **heads deliberately spent time outside of their own school searching for new ideas and reflecting on the practices within their school**. Examples of this included:

- One head who had been on secondment to the London Leadership Centre to spend a term reflecting and focussing on teaching practice and how children could become more involved in their own learning. He had subsequently attended a conference in America to learn about a particular form of collaborative learning techniques.
- Another head had been on a secondment to the GTC. She was also a member of the HTI (Heads, Teacher and Industry) group that organises secondments for teachers to businesses and carries out a range of leadership development activities and had attended various courses and conferences. For example, the day before our visit she had been at a Philosophy for Children conference.
- Another head regularly talked about regularly spending time outside his school brokering partnerships with businesses such as Microsoft and picking up ideas from elsewhere

Whilst the major driver to spend time outside their school was to learn and bring back new ideas, several also demonstrated a commitment to sharing the successes in their own schools with others. This was driven from their own professional commitment to education and personal motivation to improve schooling for as many children as possible.

Where heads were asking their teachers to implement new ways of doing things they often had to be both **inspirational and persuasive**. They tended to demonstrate personal passion and enthusiasm but were also sensitive to the fears of some teachers to try new things. This was often overcome by an initial small scale trial of

new initiatives. In other cases it was achieved through more forceful leadership accompanied by reassurance to teachers:

> *"I discussed risk issues with staff. I said 'I will take the blame' - it will be me who gets into trouble if this all goes wrong not you!'* Headteacher

In order to sustain innovation and encourage further innovation the creation of a deep level of ownership is necessary. Whilst the head's role is crucial the ownership needs to go far wider and as such many of our case study schools had set up different models of **distributive or collegiate type leadership**.

Despite being a relatively small school with only fifteen full-time teachers, Dulwich Junior School operates a distributive leadership model. Each year group of three teachers has a leader who supports and line manages the other two and represents them on the Senior Leadership Team. These year groups are fairly autonomous enabling them to bring in new ideas and resources as they wish and to be flexible in the timetabling for their year group.

John Cabot City Technology College has a non-hierarchical leadership structure and collegiate management style based on a small schools model from the USA. They have what they call 'schools within the school' that are based around subject specialisms. They then have multi-disciplinary teams that cut across all the subject specialisms with the senior management level being described as one such team.

Support from governors

It is worth noting that in talking about leadership, teachers always talked about their headteacher and sometimes referred to other senior managers (deputies and heads of departments). However they did not refer to governors. Some headteachers did talk about the support of governors as being important in terms of understanding the benefits of innovation and encouraging the drawing in of new ideas from outside of one's own school. Of particular note here was the freedom granted to headteachers by such governing bodies to be outward-looking in their approach to encouraging innovation within their own schools. Headteachers without this support from above were thought to be less likely to foster a culture of innovation throughout their school or to grant more junior staff the same level of freedom to innovate. The appointment by governors of a new head also often brings with it an expectation of change and as such new heads often have an implicit licence to innovate.

> *''Having governors that understand what you're trying to do is of paramount importance. If they are breathing down your neck saying 'standard standard standard' this will impact on the Head, and this trickles down to the teachers.*" Headteacher

"They (governors) need to encourage headteachers not to be inward-looking, and this is where it starts. My governors have actively encouraged me to be out of the school for two days a week and expose myself to others who are forward-thinking.'' Headteacher

The quote above is taken from the telephone interviews that we conducted with a cross-section of schools. It should be noted that in our case study schools governors were rarely mentioned as being a key driver for innovation but rather a force that could be a barrier if they were not supportive.

A culture where it is 'ok to fail'

Where they wished to encourage practitioner led innovation the heads and wider management team worked to instil a culture in which **teachers feel free to try new things and there is no fear of failure as long as inappropriate risks are not taken**. It is recognised that radical innovations, that may by their very nature and/or scale have large consequences if they are unsuccessful, should be discussed widely before being implemented. However, the importance of teachers feeling free to experiment with new ways of doing things in order to push innovation further and continually improve things was stressed by several of those interviewed.

"Innovation requires experimentation and a certain degree of freedom and flexibility, which is either instilled in a culture or not." Headteacher

''The culture has to be one in which people feel free to try new things, are not afraid of failing and adapting next time, and sharing of good practice is actively encouraged. This is driven strongly from the top down, as I firmly believe that you have to encourage and support teachers to change their processes and adapt to the current and future climate to bring about really positive achievement. It's too easy to stick to the old ways of doing things, and it's a human instinct to fear change.'' Headteacher

Trust in teachers' professionalism

Creating a culture of trust within the school that encourages taking risks and allows for failure was closely associated with giving teachers **the psychological freedom to try new things**. This was closely linked to headteachers and the wider leadership team giving frequent and explicit reinforcement messages to teachers about the benefits, and importance of, innovation. It was not considered sufficient to just have a culture where innovation was 'allowed' i.e. where there was nothing to particularly stop you. Having a headteacher and other senior managers who **model innovative practices** themselves was seen as an important part of this

'There needs to be a high level of trust (existing and communicated) between a Head and his/her teachers which allows them to be innovative and take

risks. An over-controlling leadership leads to fear and avoidance of anything deemed to be 'unsafe'.'' Headteacher

"The management team have given ordinary main-scale teachers at this school the opportunity to shine and develop in areas they didn't think possible – they have shown real faith and trust in our abilities, which is repaid with motivation and enthusiasm to develop the school as a whole, not just our own teaching practice. They have encouraged innovation to come from the staff, and given us the freedom to try new things. This is the kind of attitude which breeds the culture which fosters innovation" Teacher

"There are no obstructions but it's better than that – you're actively encouraged" Teacher

In describing the supportive nature of the school in allowing creative delivery of the curriculum one teacher commented that "*There is a professional trust that I will get my message across."*

Strong pupil voice

Becoming more **pupil centred and tending to focus on pupils owning their own learning was a key feature of many of the innovative schools**. Many of the case study schools had introduced Assessment for Learning and other initiatives that focussed on pupils owning their own learning.

Fallilbroome School has adopted the Kagan technique – a form of collaborative learning. The core of this is that it structures the time pupils spend talking and engaging in conversation with each other. It is a rejection of the traditional approach to teaching in which a teacher asks a question and all hands in the class go up, with only one child being asked to respond at a time. It is based on research that has shown that this is clearly a flawed model of teaching, as engaging children in this way leads to a number of negative emotional responses from those who are not asked. The cooperative structures require teachers to follow a certain sequence, of which there are many to choose from. For example "Numbered heads together" is a teaching technique that requires an individual response to a question from each pupil first, and then a team response which everyone in the group must agree upon. This method encourages 100% participation and positive interdependence of pupils at the same time. It is particularly effective for team building and class building, and is designed to make children relax. It gives children opportunities to work with other children, as every 6 weeks or so the teams change.

An example lesson: The children are put into groups and given tasks which aim to avoid someone dominating the group. Groups are selected according to high ability, medium ability and low ability, and a number of different techniques are used to get

children learning in an active way. Open-ended questions are asked and a minute is timed (often on a timer on the wall) whilst children have rallies in pairs across a table. Example question: 'What are the characteristics of a Roman?' and the children have to keep 'rallying' answers until the time is up.

At Dene Magna secondary school homework has been replaced by Independent Learning Tasks (ILTs). Type A ILTs are compulsory. Type B are optional. The aim is to give the pupils a choice over whether or not they feel they **need** to do it. This might be because they are particularly interested, they have been absent, they have found something difficult or they learn more slowly than other people. Children also have the choice over **where** they do the ILTs. The entire structure of the school day has been organised around the implementation of ILTs – even down to buses home coming at two different times so that pupils have the choice of going home to do their homework, or staying in school to do it. In school they have a further choice as they can go to curriculum areas and do it with support from teachers and teaching assistants, or they can go to the hall where there's food, drink and tables to socialise and do it in a different way. The impact has been measured and evaluated, and the system has been tweaked as a result.

Seven Kings High School has a sustained focus on Personalised Learning and on Assessment for Learning in particular. This has been part of building an ethos in which children are empowered to take control of their own learning. Teachers commented on the importance of the language used around learning as part of building this ethos:

"Just by calling us 'Learning Leaders' rather than Heads of Department it is conveying a different message about what you're here for. It reinforces the idea of focussing on the ability to lead learning rather than managing people."

"Assessment for Learning has rocked everyone's world in this school, and is now solidly embroiled in everything we do as teachers. We are essentially champions for Assessment for Learning – to see the children know how to answer questions and then answer them to reinforce their feelings of success is just amazing" - Teacher

The school has a Teaching and Learning Policy that all teachers and children sign up to. The school believes that this is an important part of instilling the ethos of children buying into their own education and feeling responsible in some way for making it work.

Whilst the teachers and heads we spoke to were extremely positive about pupils owning their learning and felt that pupils gained a huge amount, some were also mindful of the fact that it was potentially a challenge to their concept of their professional role and that embracing these types of techniques required a change of mind set and a degree of security and confidence.

> *"There is also the 'ego aspect', as in a move towards more self-directed learning for pupils there is likely to be an inevitable giving over of power to the pupils with the teacher taking on more of the facilitator role. The teacher needs to feel secure and confident in what they are doing"* Headteacher

Several of the case study schools were using various forms of pupil voice to engage pupils in designing and evaluating lessons. This **involvement of pupils with the development and implementation of innovative teaching** was felt to be beneficial in overcoming possible resistance to introducing innovative techniques as well as in improving teaching practice and learning.

> *"I think that pupil involvement is critical to our success. We have set up a pupil evaluation group which uses real research methodologies to assess the success of good practice. They actually work with teachers to design processes and work as part of the self assessment process to assess whether they have been successfully delivered."* Headteacher

> "*We have inverted the pyramid here – the students are our customers and we need to respond to their needs. In the 80's it was like the early implementation of the student voice. This has been strong and an important part of everything we do. It pervades everything".* Headteacher

Pupils were involved in various ways at different schools including:

- Being trained to give structured feedback to teachers
- Observing lessons with the prime purpose of giving feedback
- Taking part in recruitment of staff
- Being involved in performance management of staff, often through questionnaire feedback
- Having student coaches who work directly with teachers to guide them in improving their teaching practice.

> *"One of the teachers had had a student coaching session and was completely high after it. This student had said to the teacher, 'when you set us work, don't then go and sit and work at your computer, then we will think you're not interested. When you set us work circulate amongst us. If you value what we're doing, so will we." This was very insightful and helpful for the member of staff, and a great example of the value of these groups"* – Deputy Headteacher

At Dene Magna secondary school students run a Headteacher's question time which is chaired by the head of the student council. The question time is organised by year groups so that younger pupils also get the opportunity to ask questions. A number of

questions are agreed by the pupils in advance but then questioning is opened up to the floor.

At Seven Kings High School, the evaluation of teaching and innovative practice is very much pupil-led. Teachers are encouraged and supported to welcome regular feedback from their pupils, being trained and prepared to react positively and responsively to it in order to develop in their practice. A positive frame for this feedback such as **WWW** (What Worked Well) and **EBI** (Even Better If) is used to focus children upon building on what has been helpful and away from unhelpful criticism. Pupils of various ages are also being trained to become student observers. Sessions are organised by the Headteacher with equal representations of teachers and pupils to brain-storm around what makes a good lesson and the criteria against which they should be judged.

Focus on skills and competencies

There was also a tendency for those schools who had implemented whole school innovations to structure at least part of their timetable around **skills and competencies** rather than traditional subjects. This often involved cross-curricula learning and moved away from a strict adherence to the National Curriculum.

John Cabot Technology College has adopted a competency based curriculum in Year 7. They have based this on the Royal Society of Arts 'Opening Minds' curriculum and have set aside the National Curriculum for Year 7.

Long Eaton primary school has launched a new curriculum that aims to challenge subject led learning. Learning is structured around a theme that is chosen by each class within an overarching theme each term for the whole school. Teachers then devise a range of activities and lessons to bring in the different subjects, skills and competencies that the children need to learn. They structure this around four building blocks that focus on communication, enterprise, wellbeing and ICT. So for example under an overall theme of 'the past' one class chose 'food' as their theme. The teacher then devised lessons that explored issues such as where we get our food from; building a fictional restaurant and researching what courses could be served from different time periods e.g. Victorian puddings. To look at communication skills they worked with the pupils around the language of advertising and marketing, instructional writing and creating French menus.

Commitment to Continuing Professional Development

Innovative schools tend to have a very high level of commitment to **Continuing Professional Development.** They interpret this in its broadest sense and include a wide range of informal and formal means focussing both on opportunities within their own school as well as providing time and funding for teachers to attend conferences and more formal training courses. The teachers in these schools also tended to

demonstrate a high level of commitment to developing their own skills, again using a range of different methods to do so.

As part of a commitment not only to CPD but also as a means of continually improving, and of evaluating the success of innovations, innovative schools tended to strongly encourage teachers to reflect on their own practice through a range of means. This generally involved three of the building blocks previously mentioned as being prevalent in innovative schools:

- Structures to encourage reflective practice
- The time to engage with the structures
- A culture in which it is ok to fail and which therefore allows, and expects, trial and error.

The case study schools had adopted a range of means to do this, often borrowing ideas from elsewhere and adapting them for use in their own schools.

Halton High School has set up a structure whereby trios of staff work together on developing their teaching and learning practice. The trios aim to increase understanding of different teaching and learning styles and to increase the opportunities for sharing good practice and collaborating on specific pieces of work to improve the quality of learning and educational achievement. The school's timetable has been set up around these trios to allow time for each trio to work together and plan and deliver lessons jointly - they are drawn from different departments, although work with the same year group. During the first year, the trios were essentially self-managed, although each group chose an issue to research, redesign, deliver and report. The trios have now been refocused on thinking skills. The central idea is that, whatever the subject area, each lesson has the potential to hone pupils' thinking skills. Lessons are planned across subjects to make explicit links and carry on themes. Evaluation shows that the pupils love it, and have become fascinated by the concepts and mechanisms behind how they learn.

One secondary school has introduced an observation suite which has a two-way mirror and recording equipment so that members of staff can be monitored and supported in their practice development. This has the dual benefit of not having the distracting presence of an observer in the classroom and of enabling the lesson to be played back so that strategies can be discussed and teaching practice reflected upon. As well as being used for trainees and NQTs it has been used to show-case lessons.

At Dene Magna secondary school once every two weeks staff can go and observe other lessons in their school. The scheme cost around £25,000 to implement and at the request of governors has been evaluated to prove its impact. The evaluation showed a link between the introduction of the scheme and the attainment of pupils.

The scheme has been extended across a network of schools giving teachers the ability to learn from elsewhere. Some teachers have gone into primary schools to learn from there and break down barriers between the primary and secondary schools.

Teachers in these schools recognised that, whilst they were sharing practice and doing things like jointly planning lessons and jointly delivering lessons much more than the norm, it was still something that occurred just a few times a term. The sessions were seen not only as very valuable in their own right, but also in terms of embedding a culture of learning and innovation. It is worth noting that in each case the timetable needs to be constructed around the mode of joint working which has been adopted.

Creating time and space to innovate

The head and other managers deliberately create **time and space** for teachers to devise and implement innovative practices.

> *"*(We encourage teachers to innovate) *by providing space outside the classroom to share good practice and not having discussions about innovation squeezed into existing responsibilities."* Deputy Head

At Dulwich Junior School there are two part-time teachers in addition to the 15 full time teachers. The part-time teachers provide additional non-contact time for the full-time teachers with regular cover slots each week. These are allocated according the additional responsibilities that individual teachers have. The ordinary PPA time is covered by the Deputy Head who leads music and takes the whole school for singing each week.

At Dene Magna secondary school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday pupils can either choose to go home at 2.30 or to continue with independent study run by Teaching Assistants until 3.30. This has partly been in response to a belief that children don't learn so well in the afternoon but it also gives teachers time to collaborate and share practice.

Where teachers were <u>not</u> innovating they tended to highlight the pressure of the time commitment required to plan and implement innovative lessons effectively as the biggest barrier. Both teachers and Headteachers stressed the risk of exhaustion and burnout for teachers feeling under pressure to be ambitious in the design and delivery of lessons with very little spare time to do so.

In the most innovative schools, particularly in the early stages of trying to encourage innovation, **leaders tended to focus on removing barriers that individual**

teachers were experiencing. This may be giving teachers time to innovate or helping them with some of the practicalities

> *"When you are teaching 6 periods a day, 5 days a week, you need thinking time and breathing time."* Teacher

The head at Grange Primary concentrates a proportion of his time on removing barriers that might prevent teachers taking forward initiatives. This ensures that ideas don't fizzle out for lack of time or difficulties in getting the initial building blocks in place. This might involve the head getting sponsorship or contacting outside experts to help.

Structures for internal sharing and reflection

Those schools that wish to encourage teachers to innovate all had some form of system or process in place to facilitate sharing and reflection. This could mean observing each others lessons, having a regular forum to exchange ideas and practice, or occasional sessions specifically focussing on innovation to solve a particular issue. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, which explores sources of innovative ideas (see page 47). The focus of the discussions that took place within these various structures included:

- Sharing details of lessons that had worked particularly well
- Reporting back on conferences or courses attended to share the learning more widely
- Tackling specific issues (e.g. absenteeism; low attainment levels by particular groups of pupils; low take-up rate of particular subjects).

Well run organisations

Those schools that were implementing the more far reaching school wide innovations tended to already be functioning as well run organisations. The heads were spending relatively little time on financial and administrative processes.

Other building blocks

Whilst not common across all the schools, the following features were also apparent in a number of the case studies and were an intrinsic part of the success of the innovations in those schools:

- Harnessing teachers' **intrinsic interests and passions**

At Long Eaton Primary School a number of activities have been set up including a museum, radio station and a language café. The teachers who have responsibility for

these activities already had a relevant interest in these areas so, for example, the teacher responsible for the museum has an interest in archaeology.

At Dulwich Junior School a number of themed weeks are suggested and run by individual teachers according to their own areas of interest. They are also encouraged to pursue their own interests in developing activities for the pupils

"a key is…giving us recognition to follow our own enthusiasms. There is a demonstrable school commitment to this. For example we are about to have an INSET day on art that I have set up. That's not usual but here it is allowed and valued." - A teacher who has a personal passion for art and as a result is the school's art's co-coordinator.

- Making good use of **non-teaching staff and external experts**

Several schools bring in external experts to take some lessons. This might include a voluntary organisation being brought in to deliver drugs education; a teacher from a dance school coming into teach dance or a professional photographer coming in to teach aspects of a design course. This means not only that the pupils benefit from external expertise but that teachers have some time freed up as they do not have to prepare and deliver these particular lessons.

Dulwich Junior School feel that their ability to innovate is helped by having particularly dedicated premises staff who respond to teacher's requests with enthusiasm.

"The premises staff do all sorts of crazy stuff to support us. I ask if I can have a large L shaped board with non-chromatic paint and they say 'sure'. Cameras hung from the ceiling? 'no problem, why not?' It's not just a can-do culture but 'we can do more than that' " Teacher

One of the Premises Staff has also become a Teaching Assistant – an innovative appointment partly to harness his enthusiasm and partly to bring in another adult male influence for the pupils.

James Brindley school has two technicians to support the video conferencing that allows them to teach across 12 hospital sites. As well as providing the required technical support the technicians have brought new insight and expertise into the school

- **Using ICT as a communication tool through intranet and internet**

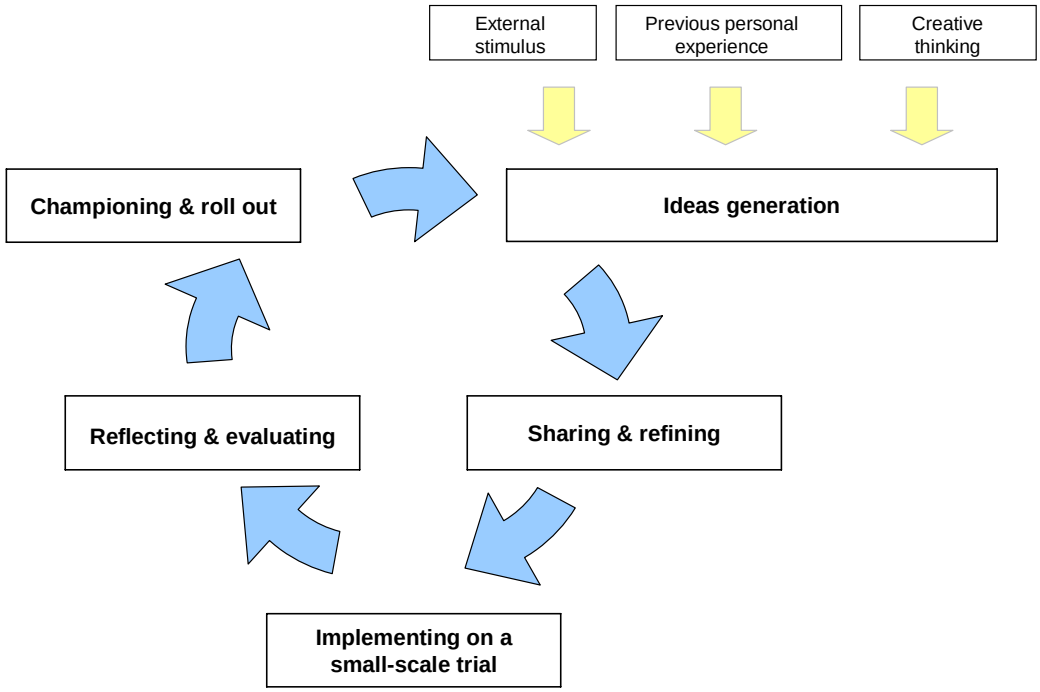
Several schools actively used their intranet to exchange ideas by, for example, have discussion boards or posting up examples of good practice. ICT was also used as a

means of encouraging attendance at various meetings by ensuring that the times and locations were transparent and available to all.

The innovation process

The building blocks described above form the environment in which **systematic structures and processes to both enable and encourage innovation** take place. As the diagram below shows, the process encompasses:

- Generating ideas
- Sharing of ideas
- Generating support for implementing those ideas - often generated through a small-scale trial
- Reflecting on and evaluating the implementation – often through action research principles
- Rolling out the initiative if it is successful



Whole school innovation

Potential new initiatives are typically tried out on a small scale before rolling them out. This is partly a risk management technique and partly a means of persuading teachers to take part by demonstrating the use, and success, of new ways of doing things. Where the innovation is systemic, schools tended to adopt a process of

tapping into the enthusiasm of a small number of teachers to try things out first by asking for volunteers and/or those with both management and teaching responsibilities trying the new methods out in their own classrooms first:

> *'You get a tipping point when trying to implement an innovative teaching technique like this….you need to get a critical mass of people in the staffroom promoting the benefits and then you start to get a situation where people feel left out if they're not involved. You need some enthusiastic champions to get the process started though''* Headteacher

> "*It was the direct opposite approach to a 'direct submersion' of all teaching staff into doing something new, which often breeds resistance and isn't so effective. The reason this was so powerful was because enthusiastic, motivated and well-respected staff were telling others that it was brilliant and that they should try it themselves. It's much more likely to catch on this way than if you're being instructed to do it from the top."* Teacher

Other schools asked all teachers to try out the suggested innovations but to do so in a small scale way – perhaps teaching one lesson a week differently or trying it out on one particular class.

> *"We asked the teachers to change just one lesson – in this way the school introduced new technologies on a small scale first."* Headteacher

Small scale trials have some form of evaluation although this was not always particularly systematic or as well developed as it perhaps should be. In many cases it relied on informal feedback from teachers, and sometimes pupils, about whether or not they felt the initiative was working.

Before introducing a change, the importance of assessing the degree to which it will benefit pupil learning was however expressed equally by teachers and Headteachers. For whole school innovation and more radical changes to the way in which learning is delivered – such as the introduction of a new curriculum – there tended to be a relatively structured process in which the risks and potential benefits were weighed up systematically to gain wider support.

> *"If you've weighed up risks, benefits, disadvantages etc before you start and built up trust, staff and parents will run with you. Might not get results but you've done it for best reasons."* Headteacher

However this was not always followed up by evaluation once the change had been implemented. The weighing up of risks and benefits before implementation was less apparent for classroom based or incremental changes.

Classroom based innovation

The process is less well defined where innovation is about the creative delivery of a particular lesson. Where innovation is practitioner led and classroom based then the process of moving from an idea to implementation is based largely on the teacher's own enthusiasm and use of their professional judgement. For incremental change, and in particular for small scale innovations at the individual classroom level, teachers generally did not think in terms of weighing up risks for each instance when deciding whether or not to go ahead with an innovation. The consequences of failure were not seen as being very great. They were more inclined to consider the necessity of operating in the context of trust between themselves and their head (or manager) and in some cases between the school and parents.

In one case study school the teachers were a bit bemused at being asked how they weighed up the risks of doing something innovative. They mostly didn't really think it was risky. They felt encouraged to experiment and that the school and head didn't mind if things weren't successful. They thought that the worst that could happen would be that a few parents might be momentarily unhappy but that the overall positive nature between the school and parents would mean this would not be a major problem.

There was evidence of a tendency for less experienced teachers to seek advice from colleagues and line managers when making professional judgements about classroom based innovation, whereas those with more experience tended to be more dependent on their own judgement and use evidence from their own experience. As such, the way in which professional judgement is exercised in the process of innovation was found to depend largely on the teachers' own confidence, which tends to come from experience.

> *"Confidence in delivery of an innovative lesson is paramount. You need to be able to react to things – I once had an Ofsted inspector in the room when a child spilt glue all over the floor. Because of my experience and confidence I was able to turn it into a science lesson in which we looked at the glue and discussed the properties and different ways of cleaning it up. A younger and less experienced teacher might have panicked."* Teacher

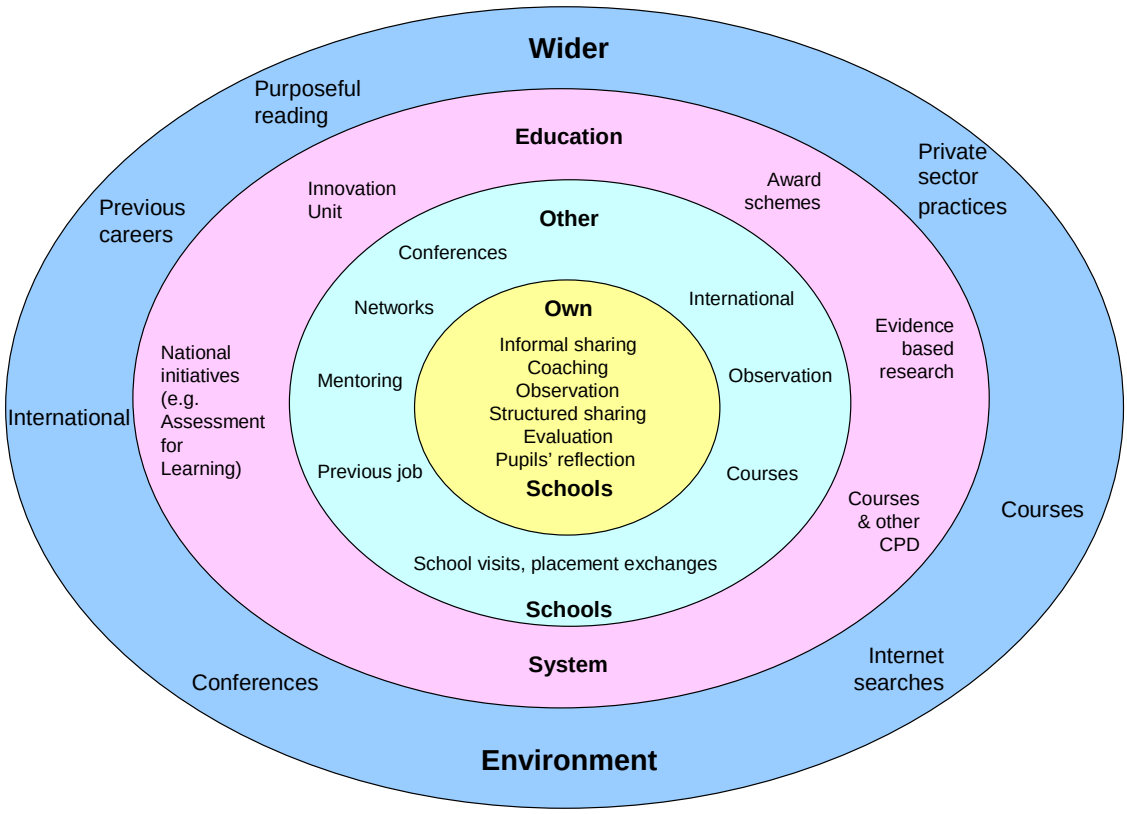
How well a teacher knows their pupils and the dynamics of the class also emerged as being a key factor in deciding whether or not to do something innovative, with judgements being made easier with a well-known class; or where pupil data is used well within schools, to identify trends and areas where individual pupils may be struggling. The size of innovation was also thought to be important, with smaller innovations being easier to judge than larger ones. More experienced teachers described judgement as a natural part of their role as a teacher, with constant decision-making based on a number of factors affecting the teaching methods employed:

"I judge at the time – it's not a scientific thing, you just have to decide whether it's the right time of the day and week, whether it's the right group of children to do it with and whether you have the energy to commit to making it work, and whether you have the psychological and emotional strength to cope if it is unsuccessful. All this has to be decided upon within a split-second usually, and that decision gets easier the more experience you have." Teacher

7. Sources of ideas

As the diagram below shows, where there is classroom based and whole school innovation taking place, ideas are drawn from a wide range of places and spheres of influence with teachers and heads exchanging ideas and drawing inspiration from a number of levels:

- Within their own school;
- Other schools
- The education system more broadly
- The wider environment



Own school

For individual classroom based innovation, the majority of teachers reported drawing ideas mainly from conversations and interaction with other teachers within their own schools. Whilst there was some mention of structured departmental forums for sharing ideas, a large number of teachers pointed to the benefits of informal conversations and simply having good relationships with colleagues.

> *"In our department we are good at sharing ideas – it's a cultural thing. One person comes in and shares and we encourage each other to all do the same. At our Department meetings we also have 10 minutes at the beginning when people are asked to share ideas." Teacher*

James Brindley school is a pioneer of video conferencing as a method of teaching across disparate sites – in this case across a number of hospital sites. The ideas originated through discussions led by two members of staff who have a strong interest in ICT led learning solutions. They also looked externally as well to further develop the ideas, visiting other schools and meeting IT suppliers. However the majority of the ideas were internally led and developed through open brainstorming between staff.

Those schools that were particularly innovative did tend to have more formal structures for teachers to share ideas and showcase innovative practice. The types of structures and systems that schools set up to do this varied. They also often had structures that were set up with the express purpose of focussing on particular problems or issues to come up with solutions. These often involved, or indeed were led by, pupils.

One school had implemented a buddying system in which teachers with more experience could be coupled with newly qualified teachers to maximise confidence in the classroom with enthusiasm to innovate. This was advocated by one of the teachers involved:

"There needs to be more buddying between experienced and new teachers, so they can learn from each other. Young people can insert more energy into the older people's practice, and learn at the same time old tips and techniques." Teacher

Another school has a Staff Development Group made up of a cross-section of staff. The group meets regularly to discuss staff development and identify new ideas and ways of sharing good practice.

James Brindley school have an intranet site that includes an area where teachers can put evidence of their innovations so that others teachers can see and share it.

Oakmeeds Community College has set up a number of cross-curricula groups drawing together teachers from different subject areas to drive forward college improvement plans. Groups focus on coming up with solutions to specific issues such as improving numeracy, introducing student voice and the effective use of interactive white boards.

There was some evidence to suggest that without specific structures and overt encouragement to talk about, and try out, innovative teaching practices that teachers do not naturally talk about and share their practice.

> *"There is little interaction with other departments, which is part of the problem of being a teacher – it's very easy to become engrossed not only in your department but in your own lessons. In my previous school they were really big on observing other people's lessons and getting ideas and sharing – but again this takes time, and time is money when it comes to running schools.''*

Teachers also tend to be fairly modest. This may be a reflection of the fact that they largely work alone and consequently do not receive positive reinforcement from peers or managers when something they do in the classroom goes particularly well. This may mean that they don't have the confidence, or indeed even think of, sharing successes. Indeed, it is apparent that many teachers who produce engaging, interesting lessons do this almost subconsciously and simply consider it part and parcel of what is expected of them. Indeed they may not even be aware or acknowledge to themselves that something they do is either innovative or successful. However at several of our case study schools practices such as: open classrooms; heads and other managers frequently making casual visits to classes; and teachers observing each others practice, were all used as ways of acknowledging and sharing good practice.

Other schools

In the interviews with a cross-section of schools, there was very little evidence provided by teachers of processes to facilitate the sharing of innovations externally with other teachers and schools. Classroom teachers in particular were unable to highlight many examples of opportunities to share learning with other schools. Several did however say that they would like more guest speakers to bring in ideas from outside and opportunities to visit other schools.

> *"When I started teaching in the 70's in London we had the opportunity to go to any school of our choice and view other lessons. We could go to Tower Hamlets one month and Wimbledon the second. I would go to conflicting schools and learn so much from what went on in the classroom. Now there are no opportunities like this because of money."*
> Teacher

Heads and deputies were far more likely to talk about the importance of external sharing and this was a key feature of our innovative case study schools.

> *''We work collaboratively with other schools, and are happy to share anything with anyone. There shouldn't be any academic property over ideas. I believe we need to continue to challenge each other and continue to encourage competition between schools around innovation. This is honestly the only way you can encourage schools to improve in areas like this. We are constantly contacting people – other Headteachers, education experts etc. - and inviting them to the school and getting their opinions. I also encourage my teachers to speak at conferences whenever they can.''* Headteacher

> *The school was so isolated and insular when I first arrived, that there was no way of knowing what anyone else was doing or reaching out to share our ideas and successes with other people. Now we have partnerships with schools in Australia, Boston, Amsterdam as well as a tight knit community of primary and secondary schools around us. We can only improve from here onwards"* Headteacher

One school held a national event two years ago in collaboration with the education improvement partnership. They closed all the local schools for the day and sold places nationally with over 350 teachers attending to learn and talk about new ways of teaching and engaging with the child's brain. The school is also planning a series of one day events called 'learning brain presents', which will be designed to share good practice and encourage innovation in other schools.

John Cabot Technology College has run a series of 'innovation exchanges' since 2004-5 with over 700 school leaders visiting them. After explaining the initial background to the technology based innovations the visiting teachers spend time in the classrooms and students present to them. The school also has a commercial arm: 'John Cabot Ventures' that has sold its competency based curriculum to around 70 other schools as well as providing consultancy support to help the schools implement the new curriculum. The money that it receives is used to help facilitate further innovation through reducing the number of teaching hours that individual teachers have to do and giving them more time to generate and take forward innovative ideas.

Several of the case study schools were part of networks with other local schools with the specific aim of sharing practice. However one secondary school did point out that they found this concept difficult as they saw themselves as being in competition with the other local schools.

The wider education system

Although most believed the exchange of ideas with colleagues to be most likely to influence their innovation and creativity within the classroom, a number of teachers also mentioned making use of resources such as the internet, teaching magazines and journals. The interaction that took place with other teachers during various continuing professional development activities was also felt to be particularly important.

> *"Continuing professional development is vital - whenever I go on courses it's the interaction between other teachers which helps me learn most."* Teacher

> *"The GTC Teacher Learning Academy has been a very good external driver in providing high quality training and networking opportunities."* Headteacher

Whilst the number of teachers interviewed is small, there is some evidence to suggest that those teachers who had had previous careers before entering into teaching might be more likely than others to get ideas from reading education publications, attending conferences and the internet. A greater inclination was also shown by this group to bring in fresh ideas from outside the existing experience of teachers within their schools.

> *"I use the internet – before to get new ideas you had to go on courses but now I usually use search engines."* Teacher

Headteachers and deputies were generally more likely than classroom teachers to draw inspiration from attending external conferences, networking with other Headteachers and observing practices within other schools. Those from our case study schools in particular tended to be highly knowledgeable about current good practice and emerging thinking. They actively sought out new ideas from a wide range of sources and were skilled at adapting ideas to suit their own context.

Several schools used award or accreditation schemes as a catalyst for introducing new ideas. This was sometimes by adopting them as a framework for focussing ideas and giving them coherence and sometimes as a driver to incentivise change. Those mentioned included an award scheme run by American Express to accredit personal financial education; Investors in People; Eco-Schools Award, Sportsmark Award, Artsmark Award and Go4it.

The wider environment

In a couple of instances our case study schools had taken inspiration from radically different contexts and developed this into innovative practice in their schools. This was a result of being alert to new ideas and actively thinking about how they could be translated into the school context.

Long Eaton Primary School has introduced a University concept into their school. There is no formal curriculum on Friday mornings. Instead, pupils choose from a wide range of around 30 workshop sessions that are run by a range of people including teachers, staff, governors and parents. The subjects include a wide variety such as a range of sports, beauty therapy, investigating science and cycling proficiency. Certificates are given out at the end of term. The Headteacher got the original idea for this from a similar scheme at the American animation company Pixar. Called Pixar University the company runs a set of formal courses in almost every aspect of the company's work. External experts are brought in to run the courses which take around two hours a week with staff being encouraged to take courses in areas completely outside of their job.

International links

A common feature of several of the case study schools was the international links that they had formed. These links were primarily to exchange good practice and bring new ideas into the school.

One case study school belongs to a scheme run by Goldsmiths around Modern Foreign languages whereby the school hosts French Assistants (a French primary school trainee) for a month each year. This has helped them in their strategy to introduce French throughout the school.

Several case study schools have formed links through the British Council. At one school this had resulted in one of the teachers going on a study visit to a school in Australia, in another strong links had been formed with a school in Madrid.

Around half of the teachers at John Cabot City Technology College have some teaching experience abroad. The school believes that this helps to bring in fresh ideas.

8. Evaluation

Evaluating classroom based innovation

Little evidence was provided for explicit evaluation processes surrounding teachers' own classroom based innovation. When they introduced innovative practices within their own classroom without this being part of a wider school initiative, informal teacher-pupil interaction was the main, often only, form of evaluation identified by classroom teachers. They tend to rely upon informal and reactive evaluations and make decisions about whether to continue and/or refine their approach based on pupil reactions and their own feelings about how something had gone down.

> *''You can tell easily how something is taken up by the students – did they enjoy it? Are they learning something new? Is it sticking in their minds? Did they understand how the instructions worked? When getting feedback about what they've done, have they actually learnt something that they can take forward?'' Teacher*

Teachers in primary schools were more likely than those in secondary schools to be reliant on this form of reactionary evaluation with a high awareness of the need to be flexible in carrying out back-up plans for unsuccessful innovation. The ability to discern the success of new methods of teaching was also thought to be affected both by experience of teaching and sensitivity to children's learning:

> *"My barometer was always looking at the children's faces and being reactive - when children are yawning and poking each other it's time to change course. You need to be flexible - but it wouldn't be learning if you didn't make it reactive and changing."* Teacher

In several of the case study schools the performance management systems deliberately sought to evaluate the success, or otherwise, of the way in which learning is delivered. This included a range of usual techniques such as lesson observation and self-assessment but as described earlier, also often included a focus on pupil voice. At one end of the scale this could be as simple as pupil feedback forms but also included more radical practices such as pupils observing lessons to give feedback and structured feedback sessions led by pupils.

Evaluating wider school innovation

Headteachers and Deputies are more likely to focus on the need for more formal and robust evaluation processes, including monitoring pupil results, appraising through line management meetings, feeding back through pupil and parent questionnaires and formal monitoring and appraisal processes. This was largely because they were more focussed on wider school innovations that were deliberately planned and implemented as such rather than the small scale classroom based innovation. There was some suggestion that methods of evaluating innovation should themselves be more innovative, such as interviewing pupils and parents and encouraging pupils to keep reflective academic diaries. Indeed in the innovative case study schools such methods were apparent with several schools having introduced **pupil feedback** including lesson observation and pupils having joint discussions with teachers and managers about the success of particular innovations.

Halton High School involves pupils in evaluating lessons through student evaluation sheets and focus feedback groups. They have also made a DVD of children being interviewed about their learning experience. This is used both as a means of evaluation and as a tool for continuing professional development.

Seven Kings High School has an initiative entitled 'monitoring the student voice'. This started a few years ago and focuses on inviting children to comment and provide feedback on their learning experiences. Effort is made to ensure that children are able to engage in the difference between their enjoyment of a particular lesson and the effectiveness of the learning.

Where whole school innovations such as new competency based curricula or approaches to learning had been introduced evaluation in some way was nearly always an integral part of this.

> *"Outcomes should dictate the direction you should go – the essential element of innovation is simplicity*. *Keep it simple, keep it workable and evaluate everything after. Never move forward until you have evaluated the impact of what done. Everything is evaluated on a rigorous basis and fed back into the system so can go forward.*" Headteacher

As discussed earlier, many schools implement a new initiative in a small way first and then evaluate its success before deciding if, and how, to roll it out more widely.

In being brought in to help turn round a failing school one of the first things one of the case study schools (Halton High School) focussed on was punctuality. They first introduced a 'meet and greet' system in the English Department where all the teachers met their pupils at the classroom door and also saw them out of the class. This had a significant impact both on corridor behaviour because of the presence of staff and on punctuality. As with all new interventions the school used a model they call 'Plan, Do, Study and Act' with a strong emphasis on evaluating the success before deciding whether to make any changes or whether or not to roll it out to the whole school. The evaluation in this particular case focussed on close monitoring of the number of pupils who were late for class as well as observational feedback from teachers on corridor behaviour.

Sometime evaluation was part of a strategy to win the support of governors and parents with heads promising that new initiatives would be evaluated after a term.

When Dene Magna schools introduced a radical change to the way it set homework they first set out a clear rationale for the change to parents and promised to evaluate the success. They sent out the results of the evaluation to parents and governors and gave them clear opportunities to respond to the evaluation.

Whilst some teachers suggested that the success of innovative teaching could be measured through improved pupil performance in GCSEs, A levels and SATs, others argued that exam results were not likely to be an effective method for evaluating

innovative teaching. Some claimed that informal and anecdotal feedback form more reliable and context-based evaluations of innovation

> *"Most evaluation is to demonstrate that something has improved the SATs. But this is stupid as children have so many different things impacting their performance that it is meaningless to claim one thing is responsible."*

However heads, particularly at secondary schools, did ultimately see exam attainment as a key indicator of success and it was often this that was the ultimate aim and indicator of the success of whole school innovation. Other indicators such as increase in pupil attendance and improved behaviour were pre-cursors to improved academic achievement and were seen as part of the interim means to this end.

One case study school set out a programme of improvements that aimed to turn around a failing school within a year. A number of initiatives were introduced including a focus on punctuality, attendance and more innovative ways of delivering lessons. The head was able to point to an increase in school attendance from 83% to 91.6%; attendance in the 'remove room' where disruptive pupils are sent dropping from 1862 to 252 and exclusions dropping from 192 to 24 at the end of the first year.

Ultimately improving academic achievement was seen to be what parents and governors, as well as the wider government system, would judge the success of the school on and all the heads used exam attainment in some way or other as part of their evaluation of the success of whole school (or whole year) innovations.

In talking about the success of video-conferencing as a method for teaching across their 12 hospital sites, James Brindley school spoke about how the innovations in ITC had greatly added to the fun and excitement of learning through children being able to engage in a wide range of activities from speaking to NASA to interviewing an actor playing a first world war soldier. They also cited as evidence the change in their results which have gone up sharply from 7% A-C grades in GCSE ITC in 2004 to 54% A-C in 2006. Social benefits in that the conferencing allows some of the long term sick children to maintain links with their friends were also noted.

One school spoke of the difficulties in evaluating the introduction of a competency based curriculum for Year 7 as it was not meant to have a direct impact on SATs and GCSEs. However they have used softer measures in that they feel that the pupils now know how to learn and that they gel together much better. They also believe the new curriculum has had a quantifiable result in that it has been responsible for the drop in fixed term exclusions in Year 7 from 16 to only 1.

Some heads took the view that the successful use of innovations such as focussing on skills and competencies and creating an environment where pupils enjoyed coming to school would mean that the improved exam results would naturally follow.

Appendix 1: The Case Study Schools

Chew Magna Primary School - Somerset

Chew Magna School is a fully maintained school which provides primary school education to children aged 4 to 11 in the village of Chew Magna. It has ten teaching staff, five of whom are teaching assistants. There are 106 pupils in the school taught within four classes.

Earlier this year, the overall effectiveness of the school was rated as good, at Grade 2. The most recent Ofsted report found that the proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average and the school has higher attainment than the national average. The Ofsted report attributes the quality of the school to good leadership from the Headteacher. The report states,

> "*The main reason for the school's success is the excellent leadership of the Headteacher. This ensures good overall leadership by all key persons, good teaching and good care and guidance for pupils. All adults in the school share the Headteacher's clear vision for improving standards."*

What does the school do that is innovative?

The teachers felt that the leadership of the school facilitated innovative practices. There was the general sense that the school provided a forum for development and **transference of different practice amongst staff**. The shift of focus away from SATs towards a more '*creative curriculum*' also allows a better environment for learning. For instance, one teacher cited an example of teaching mathematics through interior design, in which children designed spreadsheets to do the costs.

The school had developed a number of subject areas with cross curriculum links which was partly attributed to the use of ICT which has encouraged teachers to explore the links.

Evaluation is a strong element in the school's practice. The evaluation includes a survey of the satisfaction levels of the children in the school as well as more formal evaluation of teaching practices. The school has developed a sound evidence base from which to assess teaching standards to inform planning. Mini- assessments are undertaken periodically and findings from the evaluation are fed into planning. Teachers are also required to complete 'scrutiny books', which are available to the Head to look at and assess with subject leaders.

The evidence base has allowed a '*consensus to build'* and the school has now developed good class practice into a whole school practice.

Other identified drivers include coordination with seven or eight schools in the southern part of the local authority area that work closely in certain subject areas. The **cluster school approach** was seen as a particularly useful vehicle which allowed newly qualified teachers to make links and to benefit from shared practice.

Leadership is clearly steered by the Headteacher. The Head has facilitated a **collaborative approach with the teachers**, and has based her decision making and that of the school in general, on sound evidence base.

Dene Magna School – Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire

Dene Magna is a smaller than average comprehensive school which is a Leading Edge school with technology status since 1999. The school serves a rural area in the Forest of Dean, and the attainment of the students on entry is broadly average. The proportion of students requiring free school meals is low and very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students with a statement of special education needs is about average, and no pupils at all have English as an additional language.

What does the school do that is innovative?

The school runs a **Reflective Practitioner Programme,** which enables staff to observe other lessons in the school over 13 periods during the year. The investment in this time has been justified by research finding a strong relationship between the introduction of this scheme, teaching practice and pupil attainment. Regular '**Toolbox' sessions** run by staff themselves cover behaviours for learning and encourage teachers across the school to lead learning and share their experience. The programme has been opened up to be network-wide so that lesson observation opportunities and coaching relationships are **extended to other schools in the area.** A student coaching programme is also run in which children meet in triads with teachers to guide and advise them on improving their teaching practice. Pupils are also heavily **involved** and consulted on during all stages of the **teacher recruitment process.**

Homework at Dene Magna has been replaced by **Independent Learning Tasks** (ILTs) in an effort to increase independent learning. Children are given the freedom and responsibility to decide whether it is necessary for them to complete optional ILTs, and to do them independently at home or with help from peers and staff. This initiative has been supported by initial **action research** exploring the benefits of optional independent learning tasks, with impact evaluation proving the benefits being circulated to parents and governors. The **structure of the learning** day has been reorganised to maximise opportunity for **learning in the morning**, streamlining lunch-breaks and allowing adequate space after lunch for pupils to complete their ILTs. This innovative timetabling has given teachers free time in the afternoons to collaborate and embark independently upon tasks as part of their Reflective Practitioner Programme.

A strong focus on the development of **new learning environments** within the school has led to personalised classroom designs tailored to specific subject areas. Staged seating and performance areas are being built in the Languages Department, whereas the Science department have created a dual science lab and 60-seat lecture theatre to enable dual-class learning environment. Two classrooms in the English department are being knocked through to create more open space for group-work and encourage greater collaboration between teachers. The school has also built an **observation suite** with a two-way mirror and sophisticated recording equipment to enable staff and NQTs to be monitored and supported in their teaching practice development.

A virtual learning environment has been developed through which individual departments can create courses and resources for the work they do. This allows for links to other websites and greater consistency in terms of the learning that takes place in the classroom and outside. It has been highly effective in creating greater opportunities for staff to sharing resources and best practice examples.

Dulwich Junior School - London

Dulwich Junior School in the heart of Dulwich Village is a high performing school for 7 – 11 year olds with 360 pupils. The most recent Ofsted report rated the school as outstanding with a clean sweep of Grade 1's. Half the pupils regularly achieve level 5 at Key Stage 2. The school has a mixed ethnic intake with one third coming from minority ethnic backgrounds.

What does the school do that is innovative?

Rather than focussing on specific or large scale innovations it is a school that constantly introduces things to keep the pupils – and teachers – stimulated and interested. It provides a very rich and varied curriculum with many creative ways of delivering material.

The nature of the pupils is a key driver in pushing the teachers in the school to continually change and improve the lessons. The school also responds to their generally high abilities by bringing in a range of specialists to ensure that the expertise of the children can be matched and the children stretched. The school also has teachers with advanced skills in music, animation, French, Art, as well as high standards in academic subjects, several coming to teaching as a second career.

Four years ago the school introduced an **Enrichment Programme** during the final six weeks of the Summer Term. Every Friday afternoon the pupils opt into a wide range of activities. Year groups are mixed and sessions are run by a wide range of people including parents, teachers, and outside experts. The school also has a number of **themed weeks** such as BookWeek, SportsWeek, Art Week and MathsWeek which provide more creative ways of delivering the curriculum and contribute to broader social aims. The weeks are suggested by individual teachers who then co-ordinate and run them – this might for example involve organising whole school activities or a range of external people to run sessions.

The school uses kite mark Awards to focus its whole school improvement, for example the new HTI (Heads Teachers and Industry) Go4it Award provided the opportunity for teachers to identify pupil achievements in arts, sports and creativity and for pupils to communicate in the submission and assessment their adventurous attitude towards learning.

The school has developed a number of **international links**. This includes being part of the 'Comenius' programme where pupils and teachers exchange ideas with other schools and pupils in several European countries. The school is also part of Goldsmith's MFL programme, hosting French Primary school trainees and final teaching practice MFL trainees annually.

The teachers have additional **non-contact time** beyond PPA time. This is provided for by two permanent part-time teachers. This allows teachers time to take forward initiatives like the themed weeks and to develop their specialist interests. The school and individual teachers also have a high level of commitment to **continuing professional development** both through formal programmes offering professional

recognition and informal learning via the Internet and exchanging ideas with other teachers both within and outside their own school. The Training School ethos developed in the school empowers teachers to coach and mentor others and sustain longer CPD programmes.

The school operates a **distributive leadership model.** Each year group of three teachers has a leader who supports and line manages the other two and represents them on the Senior Leadership Team. These year groups are fairly autonomous enabling them to bring in new ideas and resources as they wish and to be flexible in the timetabling for their year group.

Fallilbroome High School – Macclesfield, Cheshire

Fallilbroome High School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school, designated as a Specialist College for the Performing Arts. It is the lead school in the local Learning Community as part of the national network of Leading Edge Schools created by the DfES to promote excellence and innovation. This is a school in which innovative teaching practices have been implemented where academic achievement was already high. A radical overhaul of the teaching methods used across the school has been found to impact positively on Key Stage 3 results, with more subtle effects noted on pupil attitudes to teaching and learning, staff morale and the engagement of children with their broader education.

What does the school do that is innovative?

The innovative approach to **collaborative teaching and learning** within the school has generated much interest at both a local and a national level. The school has pioneered a number of teaching processes founded on the research of Dr. Spencer Kagan in the USA, which promote a **high level of classroom activity** and encourage **increased pupil participation** in lessons. Children are required to work in groups to answer questions, complete timed tasks and provide feedback and support to each other throughout their learning. A strong element of **co-operation** between teams and active warm-up tasks are used to **maintain high levels of motivation and engagement** during the lesson.

The roll-out of this teaching format within the school has been gradual and structured, with **on-going research** used to **measure impact** and promote benefits across all subject areas. Volunteers within each department have been tasked with **championing the new teaching techniques** and supporting the training of their colleagues to become more reflective in their own teaching practice. A number of the new teaching approaches have also been demonstrated in staff meetings, governor meetings and parents' meetings to help **gain buy-in** and to **model the benefits for pupil learning**.

Unusually strong relationships have been formed between Fallilbroome High School and the **feeder primary schools in the area**, which have enabled children to start the school with a knowledge of the culture and what to expect from teaching. International training opportunities have been shared within representatives from each primary school both to enhance relations and extend the use of creative teaching processes to primary level. Joint work is currently taking place to look at ways in which the **National Curriculum** can be delivered in a **more engaging way**, with current pilot projects trialling a change of focus to work on **wild topics principles** in order to draw connections between the subject areas. The school has also been instrumental in organising **national events** in the area to bring together hundreds of teachers in Macclesfield to **share good practice** and **encourage innovation** in other schools. An Ofsted inspection judged the strategies employed by the school to be outstanding and meeting the needs of all learners.

Grange Primary School – Long Eaton, Derbyshire

Grange Primary School in Long Eaton, on the borders of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, is a primary school with 430 pupils. Five years ago the school was close to going into special measures and had been without a head for 18 months. A new head was then appointed and has made radical changes to the way the school is run, improving attainment considerably. The school continues to innovate.

What does the school do that is innovative?

The head brought in a change of ethos based on his passion for improving the quality of learning through making the school an exciting place for children to be. Lessons, extra curricular activities and the way the school is run are all built around teaching children **skills and competencies** that they can see the relevance of. Learning takes place in a **real life context** and is designed to develop confidence, independence and aspirations amongst its pupils. The focus is on the kind of human beings children should be when they leave rather than on test scores.

The main vehicle for this has been the development of the Grangeton Project. The school basis its activities around a fictional town – Grangeton – which, amongst other things, has its own mayor and council, radio station, museum and newspaper. Children are **empowered to run many aspects of the school**. This includes staffing the reception at lunchtime and running the radio station. The children have complete responsibility for these activities and are unsupervised. This includes, for example, training up other children to take over the duties when necessary and organising cover if someone is absent.

The latest extension of the Grangeton project has been the introduction of Grange University. There is no formal curriculum on Friday mornings. Instead, pupils choose from a wide range of around 30 workshop sessions that are run by a range of people including teachers, staff, governors and parents. The subjects include a wide variety such as a range of sports, beauty therapy, investigating science and cycling proficiency. Certificates are given out at the end of term.

In September 2006 the school also launched a **new curriculum.** This aims to challenge subject led learning. Learning is structured around a theme that is chosen by each class within an overarching theme each term for the whole school. This allows sharing of ideas between teachers across the year groups. The teachers then devise a range of activities and lessons to bring in the different subjects, skills and competencies that the children need to learn. They structure this around four building blocks that focus on **communication, enterprise, wellbeing and ICT**. Literacy and numeracy are also timetabled for 20 minutes four days a week. The national curriculum is used to support learning rather than dictate it.

Teachers are involved in a range of **continuing professional development** activities. This includes term long sabbaticals to provide opportunities for personal growth as well as more conventional courses.

Halton High School – Runcorn, Cheshire

Halton High School is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school based in Runcorn with 43% of children eligible for free school meals and 21% of children of SEN status. The school has a mixed intake, and had a history of academic and behavioural problems. The Head Teacher was brought in 4 years ago to implement a rigorous programme of improvements and innovative practice which has turned the school around, improved attainment, attendance and morale throughout the school.

What does the school do that is innovative?

Cross-curricula action research groups have been set up to span different subjects and departments, such as the writing group linking English and Modern Languages. Tasks are set for the groups to carry out action research in the classrooms using the **PDSA** (Plan, Do, Study and Act) model. All staff have been involved in the research, the trialling and then feeding back to the rest of the teaching staff. These action groups have led to shared teaching between different departments, such as collaboration between Geography and English on writing frames to improve the ability of the students to produce extended pieces of written work.

Every member of staff at the school has been trained in coaching and been placed in a **staff trio** to increase understanding of teaching and learning styles and to share good practice. The aim of these groups has been to focus teachers as learners, and particularly to concentrate on identifying and delivering the DfES **thinking skills** programme across the curriculum. The timetable has been structured to allow trios of teachers with a common class to work together regularly to deliver and evaluate the impact of the teaching and application of the **thinking skills** programme in the classroom. This has created a climate of openness and support which staff value immensely. It has also allowed lesson planning to be shared across subjects with key thinking skills being integrated into the schemes of work in each subject area. Innovative methods for evaluating the impact of these trios have included writing case studies and making a DVD of children being interviewed about their learning experience.

Fortnightly **staff meetings** have been transformed into *Teaching and Learning meetings* which act as a forum for sharing and reflecting upon good practice and innovative teaching methods. **Peer Mentors** help and support each other through social and behaviour problems, with an anti-bullying campaign designed and implemented by the children themselves. The children have also been heavily involved in the design of their uniform. A room entitled the '*Independent Learning Room'* was introduced by the Head which is an unsupervised computer suite for the children to use to support their learning. The level of trust displayed through this gesture has been rewarded with respect from pupils of all ages who value the opportunity to work independently.

James Brindley School - Birmingham

James Brindley is a Special School which since 1997 has provided education to children and young people who are unable to attend mainstream schooling for medical reasons. The school covers 12 sites across the City of Birmingham as well as home teaching for children living within the city boundaries. The school performs very highly, being rated as outstanding by OfSTED in their most recent report achieving Grade 1 in all major areas and has been described as *"a godsend to me and my son"* by one parent.

What does the school do that is innovative?

The school itself is an innovation **bringing together as it does twelve sites** across Birmingham, as well as many individuals undergoing home teaching, in order to coordinate learning between them. Their innovative work here is necessitated by the nature of their pupils' medical needs; many need individual tuition and others are unable to leave their bed, room, ward, home or hospital. The school's response is to *"place the individual pupil at the heart of everything".*

These restrictions on pupil movement, coupled with a high level of technical ability amongst staff members, have led to the school making particularly innovative and effective use of technology. **Videoconferencing** in particular is embedded within each of the school sites, allowing lessons to be conducted remotely and to groups of pupils in multiple locations. Every bedhead has a data point through which a computer and/or screen can be connected to the school network. Given these restrictions on pupil movement, this use of technology reduces pupils' isolation and allows them to have experiences as diverse as **discussing current affairs with students in Kosovo** and **quizzing astronauts from NASA about space flight**.

The school has a very high level of commitment to **continuing professional development**; the needs of the pupils are very diverse and the school responds by training teachers in management techniques not normally used in schools. James Brindley has a very effective **virtual learning environment** that is used for both communication and personal development. The school is also involved with the GTCE **Teacher Learning Academy**, supporting teachers to attend and acting as a pilot for the Academy's programmes.

Many of the school sites are within hospitals, highlighting the importance of **collaboration between the school and the hospital consultants**. Once again, the nature of the school and pupils are such that the school recognises the need to have a much closer relationship with other service providers, within the hospitals themselves as well as within children's services and community services.

John Cabot City Technology College - Bristol

John Cabot City Technology College (CTC) is an independent state-funded school for 11 – 18 year olds. It opened in 1993 as one of the first fifteen CTCs. The school focuses on science and technology in its curriculum, and is about to convert to Academy status. There are up to 156 students in each of Years 7 to 11, with 240 in the sixth form. The most recent Ofsted report rated the school as outstanding in every assessment category.

What does the school do that is innovative?

The Vice Principal described CTCs as an attempt *"to let the reins go [and]…not prescribe too much"*. Part of the CTC concept is to break the mould and **innovate in a way that could be replicated in other schools**. As the school's website notes;

> *"City Technology Colleges were established by the Government to test new ways of working in schools…It is therefore our mission to be at the leading edge of developments"*

The school undertakes both large-scale radical innovations and smaller-scale incremental changes. In terms of large-scale changes, one of the main examples is the change which the school has undertaken to the National Curriculum. In this case, the school has decided to compress the Year 7 to Year 9 National Curriculum into years 8 and 9 in order to deliver a radical **competency-based curriculum for their Year 7 students**. This new curriculum is designed to teach the students how to learn, and is seen to considerably improve both their attitude and aptitude for learning in more senior years. It focuses on the process of learning, rather than the content of that learning.

The school's competency curriculum is shared with other institutions via the school's **commercial arm**, John Cabot Ventures, which sells the curriculum and consultancy support to implement it.

In terms of more incremental changes, the school has developed a number of new technologies which the management team regard as integral to support innovative teaching approaches. The use of new technology is seen as an effective way to expand the classroom time that can be devoted to the students' **internal cognitive processes**, rather than being given information to assimilate, or reporting information back to a teacher.

An example of this type of new technology is **D.E.E.P. AfL** (Digitally enhanced evaluation and planning assessment for learning). This consists of a simple database programme where students self-assess their progress electronically against a defined set of learning objectives using a traffic light system. Because the programme is IT-based it gives a set of instantly analysable data in order to improve and personalise learning; each student is able to communicate directly and individually with their teacher.

The school operates a **collegiate management style** using a model of specialist *"schools within the school"* and with multidisciplinary teams that cut across these,

which the senior management see as essential in facilitating and sharing innovations. This approach to management is supported through a well developed intra net site which is used to present management information, such as senior management team meeting notes that all in the staff body can access. This has promoted a culture of involvement in decision making and accountability.

Oakmeeds Community College – Burgess Hill, West Sussex

Oakmeeds is a mixed specialist business and enterprise college for students aged 11 – 16 based in Burgess Hill in West Sussex. It is currently slightly undersubscribed and has approximately 1030 students. Most students live within walking distance of the school. Nearly all are white British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is below average and the proportion with SEN is average. The latest Ofsted report rated Oakmeeds a good school recognizing the determined leadership of the headteacher in providing a strong and clear vision for the future.

What does the school do that is innovative?

The school has re-structured from nine faculties into **four learning teams each led by a senior member of staff**. The learning teams group different subject areas together to allow for cross-fertilisation of ideas and approaches. The objectives of individual teachers are linked into the improvement plan for their learning team which in turn is linked into the college improvement plan.

The school has a staffing model that makes **extensive use of support staff** particularly for pastoral work. This enables expertise in dealing with particular issues to be developed and gives a high level of service as support staff are more easily able to be responsive by phone or in person to parents, social workers etc than teachers could be. Heads of departments and teachers are then freed up to devote as much time as possible to student achievement and delivering learning. Other functions, such as organising cover for absent teachers and making exam arrangements, are also carried by support staff.

The school is currently working to push further its **Student Voice**. They have been effectively operating a College Council, student peer group mentoring and using students on interview panels for some time and are now moving on to use student voice to affect learning.

The school has a number of **cross-curricula groups** made up of a range of teachers from different subject areas. The groups focus on different issues related to the college improvement plan. This includes groups that focus on numeracy, gifted and talented, Student Voice and interactive whiteboard training. The groups prove a good way of not only exploring solutions to particular issues but also of gathering views from a wide range of staff. Each group is asked to meet six times but have freedom about when and where to meet. This has resulted in some groups having all six meetings in one term to crack a particular issue, some choosing to meet outside of school in a more relaxed social atmosphere and others to take a more formal approach. Funding has been made available to take forward initiatives developed by some groups.

Seven Kings High School, Redbridge, London

Seven Kings High School is a mixed and multi-ethnic comprehensive school in Ilford, with a national reputation for high academic and social standards. The school has a student population of 75% EAL speakers and an entitlement to free school meals above the national average. The high academic achievements of the school have been recognised by the Government in their designation of Seven Kings as a Beacon School tasked with helping other schools to raise their standards by sharing examples of good practice and teaching. Seven Kings also became a specialist school for Science and Technology in 2001, receiving significant additional funding to develop the many exciting initiatives that are in progress.

What does the school do that is innovative?

Assessment for Learning (AFL) is embedded in all aspects of teaching and the way in which the school is run. This is founded on a method of teaching designed to equip children with all the information needed to guide their own learning and **exercise a certain level of control** over this. Homework is **without fail** set at the beginning of every lesson. Sophisticated use of **ICT hyperlinks** the objectives of each lesson so that children are guided and can bring themselves up to speed easily if they miss a lesson. A4 sheets with the **learning objectives for the entire term** are handed out in advance of the teaching programme to give pupils a clear structure of what they will be covering and can prepare in advance if they wish to. Links to the **school intranet** from home enable pupils to revisit lessons and consolidate learning.

Much is done within Seven Kings both internally and externally to share good and innovative teaching practice. The school is part of a **learning network** of schools through which ideas are shared, and leadership days are organised to bring together members of senior leadership teams and head-teachers from lots of schools in the area. A big **observation programme** within the school focuses in particular upon encouraging teachers to go outside their departments to observe other teachers in practice. A strong emphasis is also put on **coaching** within the school, with a particular focus upon self-reflection and teaching practices. There are also strong **links with a school in Beijing** with which they organise regular teacher exchange programmes to observe teaching practice and share new ideas and practice.

Seven Kings runs a particularly successful scheme to integrate students with physical and sensory disabilities into mainstream education, with about 25 of the students being wheelchair bound. The **SEN area** in the school aims to empower children with a disability to take control of their own learning and organise their own timetable and meeting with caseload officers. With clear objectives and **accountability structures** put in place, this innovative approach to integrating children with a disability into the mainstream education system instils a huge sense of ownership for these children over their learning and achievement.

The evaluation of teaching and innovative practice is very much within the ethos of all other activities within the school – structured, pupil-led and positively framed.

Teachers are led to welcome regular feedback from their pupils and are trained and prepared to react positively and responsively to it in order to develop in their practice. In line with the school ethos about continuous training and development, children of various ages are also being trained to become student observers. Sessions are organised by the Head teacher with equal representations of teachers and pupils to brain-storm around what makes a good lesson and the criteria against which they should be judged.

Appendix 2: References

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Appendix 3: Discussion guide for telephone interviews with teachers

Classification

Type of School:

Primary	
Secondary	
Other:	

1) How would you describe your role in this school?

Headteacher	
Deputy / Assistant Head	
Head of Department /Head of Year	
Subject / curriculum lead	
Classroom teacher ASK ALL IF THEY DO ANY CLASSROOM TEACHING	
Other eg Advanced Skills Teacher (AST)	

2) How long have you been teaching?

3) Do you work Full or Part- time?

4) How long have you been teaching at this school?

5) Where were you before?

6) Did you have a previous career before entering teaching? If yes? What did you do? How long ago was that?

What Do We Mean By Innovation?

Firstly we want to explore what respondents to the recent GTC Teachers Survey might have meant when they said that they felt they had opportunities to innovate in the classroom.

7) Firstly can I just check whether or not you do feel that teachers in your school have opportunities to innovate in the classroom?

Yes / No

8) What do you mean by that? - What sort of things do you think innovation in the classroom encompass? (e.g. technology; classroom processes; professional methodology; presenting material, assessment methods etc.)

9) Does it vary between different subject areas or Departments?

10) And what about opportunities to introduce innovative processes or practices into your school more generally – do you feel that you have opportunities to do this too?
(eg in terms of leadership and management, pastoral work, external links)

11) Again what sort of things do you think innovation in the school encompasses?

Factors Driving Innovation and Barriers to Innovation

Many thanks. I'd now like to move on and talk about innovation in the broad sense of it being about teachers and others in the school taking steps to continually improve the service that they are providing to pupils, parents and the wider community. This generally means people being pro-active about coming up with ways to solve problems; looking out for new ideas that they then try out and being agents for change rather than accepting the status quo. It might be called 'new ideas that work'.

12) Taking that definition – how innovative would you say your school generally is?
    a) Are some parts of the school such as particular Departments or Year teams more innovative than others? Why do you think that is?

13) What are the factors that influence how innovative your school or particular parts of it are?
    a) What helps the school (particular part of it) to be innovative?
    b) What are the barriers to it being (more innovative)?(school specific and national policy e.g. performance measures, National Curriculum)
    c) What might help in overcoming these barriers

14) Would you say that innovations tend to be fairly small scale incremental changes or things that are more radical? (ask for examples)

To Innovate or Not

15) And what about yourself, how often would you say you think about doing something that might be described as innovative?
    a) And how often do you actually implement something that you consider innovative?
    b) Can you give me any examples of innovations you have been involved in?

16) How do you decide whether to be innovative or not?
    a) What are the factors that drive you towards innovating (e.g. exchanging ideas with other teachers/others outside education; suggestions by Head of Dept/Headteacher etc,; pupil behaviour; performance targets; desire to provide a better service; just wanting to try something different; to stretch yourself; because what you were doing before didn't seem to work; to solve a particular problem)
    b) In what circumstances might you consider implementing something innovative but then decide not to? Why?

17) Where do you get your ideas from? (e.g. initial Teacher Training; Continuing Professional Development or CPD; working at a previous school; working in a previous job; colleagues; saw something on TV/at a conference/in a magazine; The Innovation Unit's work etc)

18) Do you tend to proactively seek out ideas for innovation?
    a) Is innovation something that you deliberately think about in advance or something that tends to happen in the moment? Does this differ if the innovation is an incremental change or a radical change of practice?

19) When you have been innovative, what factors have helped you to do this? (looking at factors such as their own skills and knowledge; length of time they have been teaching; pre-teaching experience; the influence of their teacher training and any subsequent continuing professional development; their role in the school; where they get their ideas from; the type of school; leadership in the school; the demographics of their pupils; other pupil characteristics such as attitudes and ability; subject being taught etc.)

20) What factors work against you being innovative?

21) To what degree do you feel innovation is part of your role?

22) What do you see as the benefits of innovation
    a) For pupils?
    b) For yourself?
    c) For other teachers?

23) What are the downsides?
    a) For pupils?
    b) For yourself?
    c) For other teachers?

Exercising professional judgement

24) How do you go about weighing up the risks against the benefits of trying out a particular innovation
    a) Is there anything that would help you in making this type of judgement?

b) Is making the judgement easier for some types of innovation rather than others?

25) Do you measure or somehow evaluate the success of particular innovations that you try?
   a) How?
   b) What do you do as a result?

26) Do you share your innovations with other teachers?
   a) Who and How?

Wrap-up

27) What is the most important thing that organisations like the GTC and The Innovation Unit could do to help teachers in their role as innovators?

Appendix 4: School Innovation Case Studies – Key questions

Heads / Managers

1. What do you do at this school that you consider to be innovative? (*how are they defining innovation?)*

2. In general why do you innovate?
    a. What do you see as the benefits? (for pupils; teachers; the school; the wider community)

3. Thinking about xxx innovation (ask these questions about 2 or 3 different innovations if appropriate)
    a. What was the main reason you decided to do this?
    b. Where did you get the initial idea from?
    c. What has driven the idea? What have been the key factors in making it happen?
    d. What barriers have you had to overcome and how have you done that?
    e. How did teachers initially react? How have they been involved?
    f. How successful has it been? (how have you evaluated it – informally and formally)
    g. Who do you think has benefited?
    h. Has anyone suffered? Have there been any drawbacks?
        i. How did you weigh up the benefits against the drawbacks?
    i. Are you thinking about developing the idea in any way?

4. Have you shared any of your innovations with other heads or schools either informally or formally?
    a. How have you done that? (*need to understand whether it is, for example, just chatting with mates at different schools; exchanging thoughts at conferences etc or more formal)*

5. Do you think these innovations can be easily translated across to other schools? What are the key things that they would need to have in place to make it work? (ethos / staff/ skills etc)

6. How do you encourage teachers in your school to be innovative?

7. Do you have anything in place at the school to encourage and enable teachers to share innovative practice with one another?

Teachers

1. What do you do at this school that you consider to be innovative?
    a. How does that translate into what you do in your own classroom?
    b. Are there other things that you do in your own classroom that you consider to be innovative? (*how are they defining innovation e.g. teaching the curriculum creatively or something more fundamental?)*

2. Thinking about xxx innovation **For classroom based innovation**
    a. What was the main reason you decided to do this?
    b. Where did you get the initial idea from?
    c. What has driven the idea? What have been the key factors in making it happen?
    d. What barriers have you had to overcome and how have you done that?
    e. How successful has it been? (how have you evaluated it – informally and formally)
    f. Who do you think has benefited?
    g. Has anyone suffered? Have there been any drawbacks?
    h. How did you weigh up the benefits against the drawbacks?
    i. Are you thinking about developing the idea in any way?

3. In general why do you innovate in your classroom? How does this school encourage you to be innovative?
    a. What prevents you from being innovative / being innovative as often as you might like to?
    b. How do you weigh up whether it is best to do something innovative or to continue with the way you have done things before?

4. Thinking about xxx innovation **For school innovations that you have already discussed with the head**
    a. What do you think about xxx?
    b. What has driven the idea? What have been the key factors in making it happen?
    c. What have been the key barriers?
        i. What barriers have you personally had to overcome in implementing the idea / practice and how have you done that?
    d. How successful has it been? (how have you evaluated it – informally and formally)
    e. Who do you think has benefited?
    f. Has anyone suffered? Have there been any drawbacks?
        i. How did you weigh up the benefits against the drawbacks?
    c. How do you think the idea / practice could be developed?

5. Do you think these innovations can be easily translated across to other schools? What are the key things that they would need to have in place to make it work? (ethos / staff/ skills etc)

6. Have you shared any of your innovations with other teachers or schools either informally or formally?

   a. How have you done that? (need to understand whether it is, for example, just chatting with mates in the staffroom; at different schools or more formal)

7. Do you have anything in place at this school that encourages you to share innovative practice with one another?