CHAPTER ONE

RATIONALE

1.1 **Introduction**

Researchers suggest that there is a need for increased understanding of the potential benefits of learning intervention procedures, by administrators and practitioners. This thesis is the result of an investigation into the practice of a learning mentor support mechanism in primary schools in a Local Authority in the Midlands, England, devised with the intention of enhancing current knowledge. It examines the relationships involved in, and the impact of, learning mentoring programmes on reducing identified barriers to learning for six children. One of the ways in which it contributes to knowledge is through utilising multiple methods, including direct observation which is previously under-explored in the field of learning mentoring.

The author of this thesis is head teacher of a primary school deemed to be in 'challenging circumstances' (Hayward, 2001). In such schools, pupils attain low academic results, a high percentage being eligible for free school meals (FSM), this socio-economic factor being accepted by the British government as an indicator of disadvantage. The Excellence in Cities initiative was introduced to address need in such schools, in projects involving learning mentors. The disadvantage arena purports that the social and emotional circumstances of some children exert pressure on how effectively they learn and hence upon their attainment.

1.2 **What is a Learning Mentor?**

The purpose of learning mentors is to help individual pupils overcome barriers to learning, both within and outside school. They support those pupils who are at risk of underachieving or disengaging from learning for a variety of reasons (Department for Education and Skills, DFES, 2004a: 22).

Learning mentors are school-based support assistants who work with individuals or small groups of children. Guidelines for learning mentors (Hayward, 2001) include criteria of needs in pupils ('mentees') for whom undertaking a programme would be considered appropriate (see Appendix 1). These directives state that children should be selected by their class teachers if they need to improve their attendance; social skills and emotional intelligence; attitude and behaviour; expectations and aspirations or attainment. Support may be provided in response to a temporary personal difficulty. Referral may be undertaken for one, or for multiple, reasons. Learning mentor support is part of the 'Inclusion' agenda in English schools, which implies that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities, regardless of ability, race, gender, physical disabilities, additional or special learning needs or socio-economic background (DfES[1], 2004a).

It might be deduced from the above paragraph that a key objective of the learning mentor programme is to seek to meet the child's social and emotional needs as well as raising academic attainment. Should this deduction be founded, these three areas may be considered to be inter-related, which is an area explored in this thesis. It has been suggested that social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties have a great effect on pupil attainment, creating the 'biggest challenge to the good running of schools' (Bennathan and Haskayne, 2009). The learning mentor role has many facets. It is suggested that:

> learning mentors work with groups of pupils and individuals, teachers and managers, parents, carers and families, schools and other agencies, helping to construct a network. Within that framework they develop trusting relationships in which information can be shared (Hayward, 2001: 8).

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[1] The Department of Education and Science of 1964 (DfES) was renamed the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in 1995, which became the Department for Education and Skills in 2001 (DfES), becoming the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007 and the Department for Education (DfE) in 2010.

As a research practitioner seeking the best possible support for my pupils in a school in challenging circumstances, I decided that the possibility of removing barriers to learning required in-depth consideration.

1.3   Context of the Research

In this Section I explain the national context of Excellence in Cities and the development of the specific local Excellence Cluster in which this research was conducted.

National context of learning mentoring

Learning mentoring is situated within a variety of different intervention initiatives intended to support learning which have been introduced in schools in England since 1999 (see Chapter Two, Section 2.3). Financial support has been given to schools by the British government to fund a steep rise in the number of hours provided by 'school support assistants', including learning mentors. In English primary schools, the numbers of such para-professionals have increased from 41,900 in January 1997 to 351,300 in January 2010 (DCSF, 2010). This indicates the commitment to such interventions by the government and school leaders of the time.

It was intended that the Excellence in Cities (EiC) project, introduced first in secondary schools in 1999, would promote:

> inclusive schooling which provides a broad, flexible and
> motivating education that recognises the different talents of all
> children and delivers excellence for everyone (Department for
> Education and Employment (DfEE), 1997).

It has long been suggested that there exist more opportunities to address pupils' difficulties in learning if children's needs are identified and addressed

early in their schooling (Clark, 1988). In line with this idea, in the year 2000 the EiC project was extended to include primary schools in challenging circumstances. The EiC initiative was underpinned by four core values which participating schools were expected to pursue:

- high expectations of all pupils;
- diversity of provision;
- liaison with local networks;
- extension opportunities beyond the usual curricular provision.

These core values were later presented in primary schools through four 'strands': 'Gifted and Talented'; 'Learning Mentor'; 'Primary Learning Support Units' (LSUs); a tailored school agenda. The LSUs were intended to function in conjunction with learning mentoring, attended by pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour, but were rarely adopted in primary schools. The term EiC was replaced by 'Excellence Cluster' (EC) when fewer cities and more towns were introduced to the project.

Local context of one EC

In 2002-3, the school in which I was head teacher became part of a newly designated EC, including three secondary schools in challenging circumstances, one successful secondary school, and their twenty-five primary schools. It was expected that the successful school would cascade its strategies to the other 'families' of schools. An Executive Committee was formed to develop and monitor the project. The timing of this initiative fitted within the school improvement priorities for my school at that time so the projects were swiftly embedded within familiar school arrangements to improve attendance, behaviour and attainment.

A short time-frame set by the government for the commencement of this initiative did not enable smooth implementation of the project strands, in common with the inaugural situation of other ECs (The Office for Standards in

Education, OfSTED, 2004). This engendered in leaders the feeling that something was happening over which they did not have control, however many school leaders were appreciative of their inclusion in the EC project as it initiated funding to help schools facilitate desired improvements for pupils.

As head teacher, I realised that learning mentoring had potential for enhancing the 'raft' of educational intervention support initiatives which school provided in order to help identified pupils attain their learning potential. The development of learning mentor projects in schools was a leadership task: introducing new personnel within staffing establishments, with new policies and practices relating to learning mentoring. There was, however, a 'steep learning curve' to be addressed in aiding understanding of the EC initiative by the senior management team, staff members and governors in schools. Previous liaison work undertaken by senior leaders in our network of schools proved to be excellent grounding for this, with regularly held meetings and sharing of information. Initially, this mainly concerned allocation of funding and many school leaders deferred their lack of understanding of the project to the task of completing the initiation of the learning mentor programmes within their own schools.

In the EC being described, the primary schools agreed their spending of the funding available in the GAT, 'Tailored' and Learning Mentor strands. I was keen to begin this new and exciting learning mentor project and tried three methods of organising it, each for six week periods, as this was suggested as the appropriate duration of a learning mentor programme. First, a serving Behaviour Teaching Assistant provided part-time learning mentor work, possessing appropriate skills and knowledge to help challenging children develop in emotional and behavioural skills and abilities. It proved difficult for him to assimilate with the culture pertaining in school as he attended within a restricted timetable and the pupils exhibited an improvement in behaviour only when he was present.

Next, I facilitated mentoring by experienced class teachers with good records of pupil management and pastoral skills. The rationale for this was the teachers' knowledge of the pupils' needs and their position of status within school, although the increased staffing costs reduced the time available for mentoring to take place, which was not ideal.

Third, I continued to wonder whether help for these pupils would be best provided by staff members who knew and supported the aims and ethos of the school, and whom the pupils and parents already respected as academic enablers. I organised a pilot project with two experienced and committed teaching assistants and a group of six pupils. The teaching assistants implemented individual learning mentoring programmes for children, using policies and documentation provided by the EC. The pupils were monitored against the criteria agreed with class teachers as the reason for their inclusion as mentees, and began to improve, with appropriate motivation and good attendance. The adoption of teaching assistants as learning mentors was considered to be an appropriate template for learning mentoring and appropriate training to national standards followed swiftly, with in-school training in Positive-Play[2].

As the project evolved, wider school and agency staff members as well as class teachers began to identify children for learning mentoring programmes. The specific needs of my pupils compared well with those found in practice nationally (DfES, 2005a): emotional difficulties or trauma; disaffection with school; lack of self-organisational skills; on-going or short-term family problems; social interaction difficulties; poor attendance; or challenging behaviour which placed the children at risk of exclusion from school. Learning mentoring was included in the school 'provision map' of intervention support

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[2] I am accepting here that 'Positive-Play' is a defined procedure for working with children one-to-one, helping them to develop social skills and including other children as pairs and then within small groups. It takes place separate from the classroom and is aimed at improving social awareness and skills. Positive-Play is practiced in three sections in approximately thirty minutes: a welcome, an instruction time and a 'calm down' time, after which the child returns to lessons.

available for pupils across the school, and time for working with teaching assistants as learning mentors was allocated to each mentee according to advice from the Local Authority. Most classes in the school included one or more pupils who received learning mentor support.

Mentees were monitored by means of standardised tests at the start and end of each six week programme to identify individual progress. Experience suggested that this was impractical and my pilot work had indicated that mentoring programmes needed to continue for longer to realise impact. Consequently in our school, referrals were undertaken twice yearly (except in emergency) thus reducing pressure on staff, pupils and their parents. The tracking of impact for mentees showed that there was a 'turnover' of some pupils in the programme when using this time-scale.

Monitoring and evaluating an EC learning mentor project

Monitoring of the learning mentor strand by the Local Authority was established at the outset. Schools were requested to present data for each mentee at the end of each of three school terms. This included: percentage attendance; number of exclusions from school (rate of exclusions being used as an indicator of improved pupil behaviour); and attainment points score (calculated from the National Curriculum Mathematics and English attainment levels). These percentages were compared with each mentee's scores at the start of the project, deemed 'the baseline' (see Appendix 1, Table A1.3). The data were submitted to the Local Authority and the results were then analysed and reported to the DfES as part of the evaluation of the national EC initiative. Targets were set for EC outcomes to improve annually above the baseline statistics.

As with many new initiatives, there were initial 'teething problems' for the project. The monitoring requirement suffered a variety of drawbacks related to the use of computer software; the related exclusion of Reception children (aged four) from the data, and a discrepancy between data collection times

and school assessment timetabling. Also, the findings were reported as percentages of school cohorts of differing total numbers of pupils, which meant that one pupil could, for instance, represent ten per cent in a cohort of ten or only two per cent in a cohort of fifty. The discrepancies in the data were, therefore, greater for some schools than others, and the findings had to be interpreted in the light of this, sometimes analysis for the overall EC being very different to that for an individual school. I considered that this made interpretation of the overall EC data insecure. To supplement the quantitative evidence collected, the Local Authority facilitated an external evaluation of the project through qualitative research by interviewing learning mentors, pupils and their parents, and scrutinising a sample of standardised assessments.

The situation of limitations and difficulties encountered in initiating the EC in this context appeared to be similar to that previously studied (Schagen, Blenkinsop, Braun et al., 2003). Despite this, school leaders continued to consider that EC initiatives had the potential to enable schools to address a climate of 'frozen capability' (Harris and Chapman, 2002) existing in challenging settings. EC projects were positive, providing a facility for staff to learn and to move forward together to attempt to improve the situation for pupils. My school certainly showed evidence of this.

Experiencing the organisation of an EC learning mentor project invited me to ask questions of learning mentoring, particularly monitoring of the project within the need to evaluate overall school effectiveness. I contemplated the outcomes relating to the areas of attendance, behaviour and attainment which were represented in the data collection and considered that many factors may have been influencing these which were not related to learning mentoring, which I discuss in depth in Chapter Two, Section 2.6. Monitoring by only these three factors could have been deemed inappropriate for some mentees.

I also considered that if factors may have been involved in effecting the outcome of attendance, exclusions and attainment other than the work of learning mentors then, conversely, learning mentoring may have had an

impact in other areas of education affecting attainment, apart from attendance and behaviour. A concern for the limited nature of the on-going monitoring and evaluation of the learning mentoring project in my school added to my impetus for devising a research project which would extend the breadth of data-generation and widen the knowledge base then being used in evaluating the impact of the learning mentor project.

1.4   Rationale for Further Research

Literature supports learning mentors in their role (Hayward, 2001; DfES, 2004a and b) and research has been undertaken into learning mentoring practice (for instance, Hobson and Kington, 2002). The main intention of some previous research has been to investigate the extent to which school initiatives have had a positive impact on the mentees involved, given the resources deployed. This indicates an interest in the outcomes of the projects rather than in the processes which have led to those outcomes. Evaluation of the national EiC mentoring project has been based on a mixture of data collection methods: surveying participants (OfSTED, 2004; Ridley and Kendall, 2005), analysis of case study (Rose and Doveston, 2008) and by quantitative outcomes (DfES, 2005b).

I was concerned whether monitoring by outcome provided a sufficient and effective picture of the learning mentor situation in schools. As well as querying the evidence base of the monitoring, I had experience of teachers identifying a wider range of needs to those suggested in the criteria list as barriers to learning in individual children. I wanted to find out about the process involved in learning mentoring as there is a scarcity of research into *how* mentoring is practised and what actually happens when mentors attempt to create the intended outcomes for their mentees. In this research I concentrated only on the learning mentor strand of an EC. I ensured that sufficient clarity of method and design in the research project provided detailed examination of the provision and practices of this strand as a discrete section of EC work. I included examination of the attributes, attitudes or

characteristics of five learning mentors in three primary schools, their interaction with six of their mentees and with closely involved adults, providing an in-depth examination of the effectiveness of the mentoring programmes. This was undertaken in order to respond to the following research questions:

- What is the role of primary school learning mentors, in practice?
- What types of relationships are forged within their roles?
- How do strategies feature in enabling such practices?
- What facilitates or inhibits the successful impact of mentors on barriers to children's learning?

In addressing these questions I examine the *process* as well as the *impact* of learning mentoring. I believe that the individuality of each mentoring setting could be an important factor in the impact of learning mentoring, and I have developed an understanding of the changes which may be encouraged through the process of mentor/mentee work by undertaking personal interviews with the participants involved in mentoring, supported by direct observation of mentoring in action.

This thesis includes seven chapters. In the next chapter I examine literature to explain how learning mentoring came to be an actively pursued method of intervention to support learning. I consider mentoring of adults and children, relating this to learning mentoring and suggesting conditions for effective mentoring. In Chapter Three I explain the design of my research and the methods which I adopted in order to employ this. I present my findings in Chapters Four and Five. In Chapter Six I explain my analysis of the findings in relation to the impact of learning mentoring. In the final chapter I discuss my analysis in relation to my original research questions, presenting some commonalities between examples in the data (it was not intended that generalisations to all primary schools could be made from these findings) and making suggestions regarding what could be best practice of learning mentoring in primary schools. I suggest potential implications for further

research into mentoring in schools, with due consideration of possible limitations of my research.

The context of this study is school effectiveness, from the aspect of pupil intervention strategy, as specifically exemplified in learning mentoring. In this I accept the premise that the learning mentor role is potentially diverse. As one anonymous learning mentor stated:

> the role of the Learning Mentor is not one that is easily explained or described in a few choice sentences, because individuals are not easily categorised or described into a neat package' (Hayward, 2001:4).

1.5 **Conclusion and Summary**

This chapter has established the rationale for further research into learning mentoring. It has provided a description of the title 'learning mentor', as defined within the EiC/EC initiatives. In Section 1.2, I described the national context of learning mentoring in England, providing an account of the local context of an Excellence Cluster initiative in which the present study was situated. I have explained how a learning mentor project was implemented and explained that the success of the learning mentors in the EC project was identified formally through collection of data concerning attendance, exclusion from school and attainment.

The factors employed to evaluate the project did not always relate to the needs of the mentees, children being included in the learning mentor project for a variety of reasons such as to improve attitudes, confidence, organisational skills, studentship, or for other emotional or social reasons. This suggested that there was scope for broader research adopting different approaches in examining the impact of learning mentoring. Perhaps this related to the omission in the evaluation of ECs of a consideration of what actually needed to change for these children in order to remove their barriers

to learning, or of the strategies employed by learning mentors and their impact. Studies using qualitative approaches might be useful in addressing these issues. I have explained the aims of my research into examining the process and impact of learning mentoring in primary schools.

My research questions relate to the arena of learning mentoring as a support process which aims to facilitate the removal of barriers to learning and so to improve pupil achievement and educational attainment. In this thesis I examine what constitutes the process of learning mentor support, and the impact of that support.

In the next chapter I provide a review of literature which provides insights into the advent of learning mentoring and the socio-cultural theories contingent upon the impact of learning mentoring. I search the theory of mentoring as a basis for understanding the conditions which may be most likely to be successful in providing effective mentoring and I consider a working definition of mentoring for application to my research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: LEARNING MENTORING IN SCHOOLS AND

CONSIDERING EFFECTIVE MENTORING

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I explained the context of learning mentoring as an
intervention strand of the EC initiative. In this chapter I review the literature
regarding a definition of mentoring and suggest a working definition of
mentoring for this thesis (Sections 2.2 and 2.3). In Section 2.4, I present the
development of learning mentoring over time in relation to intervention policies
and programmes in the British context, which have been introduced to
address the affective and educational needs of the 'disadvantaged' child[3]. In
Section 2.5, I explain the adoption of learning mentoring as a strategy for
removing barriers to learning, relating this to my working definition of
mentoring. In Section 2.6, I consider appropriate markers in identifying the
impact of learning mentoring, as one such intervention. In Section 2.7, I reflect
on the conditions which might relate to the effectiveness of mentoring within
the school as a cultural institution. In the final section of this chapter (2.8) I
explain my theoretical framework for understanding learning mentoring.

2.2 Defining Mentoring in Education

Formal mentoring has long been implemented in various disciplines and in a
variety of ways, indicating many definitions and perhaps universality in, and
transience of, mentorship (Roberts, 2000). Monaghan and Lunt (1992)
suggested that a description of mentoring should be fluid: there was perhaps
no generic term 'mentoring' as it described different roles, relationships,
contexts and depths. The authors suggested that the role of the mentor could

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[3] The government combines factors of economic, social, education, skills and training,
employment, housing health, crime rates and the living environment to provide the English
'Index of Multiple Deprivation' for each area (neighbourhood). Deprivation of children is
mainly measured by free school meal eligibility and area-based measures such as are
recorded in the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

be practised at three levels: an elementary, peer supportive, personal relationship; active guidance as a critical friend; and a formal, managed programme of mentoring. Mentoring shares many definitions with coaching and the two are often confused. Bush, Coleman, Wall, West-Burnham, 1996) suggested that mentoring could include 'coaching and counselling'. The use of coaching within mentoring has, however, been a contentious issue, for instance in mentoring head teachers (Hobson and Sharp, 2005).

Similarities of Mentoring and Coaching

 Mentoring and coaching are both relationship-based active processes which involve the mentor in practising skills which encourage learning, with an expectation of change and development in the mentee. Both can be adopted in order to develop knowledge in the learner in the form of strategies and skills, and both have been adopted as an approach to professional development (Garvey and Alred, 2000). Research by the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE, 2005) identified 'core principles' of mentoring and coaching, while clearly stating that the style of either process was dependent upon the context in which it was undertaken. The authors suggested that common factors existed between the two practices, frequently referring to 'coaches or mentors' and using the mentoring role synonymously with the mentor's personal skills and abilities (Parsloe, 1995). Commonalities between the processes of mentoring and coaching continued to be found in some one-to-one intervention procedures, for instance, the 'Specialist Coach', and the 'Academic Coach', whose support was often deemed 'mentoring'. The latter, however, also exemplified the differences between mentoring and coaching, which I explain next.

Differences between mentoring and coaching

'Mentoring and Coaching' (MAC) was a trend adopted in the professional development of teachers and Katbamna (2009) implied that a difference between mentoring and coaching existed by the use of this title, with both

practices differing by intention and in the implied understanding of the mentor/coach's role in the development of knowledge. Hobson (2003) suggested that mentoring encouraged the mentee to change through reflection, and was generally undertaken by a more experienced person, whereas an aim in coaching was knowledge transfer, with explicit outcome-orientated goals, specific skills and capabilities being related to long term goals, referring to 'forms of assistance relating more specifically to an individual's job-specific tasks, skills or capacities, such as feedback on performance (Hobson, 2003: ii). Coaching may be informal in style, frequently initiated by the learner or 'coachee' and undertaken between two people of equal status and experience, it potentially having two forms: specialist and collaborative (or co-) coaching (CUREE, 2005).

The development of skills appears to be a key difference between mentoring and coaching. Hall and Youens (2007) examined the role of thirteen academic coaches in three secondary schools, situated in socio-economically disadvantaged geographical areas, schools which had been identified by inspectors as 'failing'. It was expected that the coaches would provide support which would increase the academic attainment of pupils[4]. Hall and Youens (op. cit.) found that the implementation of the academic coach project was not effective, as a consequence of the staff members' diverse perceptions of their roles, poor initial organisation of the initiative, a lack of monitoring, and limited sharing of coaching practices with colleagues. These findings are strikingly similar to the findings of the initial stages of the learning mentoring project in the EiC initiative (DfES, 2005a) discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.3. Mentors provided an appropriate role-model for the mentee (Jarowski, 1993) nurturing the transmission of values and attitudes of the school culture (see Section 2.6). The main difference between mentors and academic coaches was that the academic coaches minimised their 'role model' effect and lacked relationships with their pupils. Coaches agreed that coaching was not

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[4] I refer to pupils of primary and secondary school age as 'pupils' or 'children' so as not to confuse them with higher education students participating in placements or mentoring in schools.

providing effective practice for supporting these pupils, as within this role they could not address the pupils' lack of motivation, social, cultural and material barriers to learning.

2.3   Mentorship in Schools

Adults and children are mentored in schools in various ways, adult mentoring often involving the mentor sharing time with the mentee, explaining procedures, policies and established practices of the particular institution (Hobson and Sharp, 2005) adopting 'a variety of practices and strategies to achieve (these) purposes and goals' (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson, 2009: 207) and undertaking formal assessment against externally agreed standards, for instance for trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers. In England qualified teachers may determine the agenda and the goals of the mentoring relationship with student teachers (Elkin, 2006; Moyles, Suschitsky and Chapman, 1999; Hobson et al., op. cit.) against core qualified teacher standards (Teaching Development Agency, TDA, under review in March, 2011 by the revised TDA, the Teaching Agency). In the following subsections I discuss four aspects of mentorship in schools.

2.3.1   Ethos and relationship

I have selected the role of mentoring trainee teachers as an example of the mentoring of adults in schools, as this has attracted a wide range of research projects, is relevant to the practice of teaching and learning, and includes examples in which a social-constructive approach was adopted. The culture of the school was found to be vital to mentoring by Yeomans and Sampson (1994), Guba and Lincoln (1994), McIntyre and Hagger (1996) and Bush and Coleman (1995). Yeomans and Sampson (op. cit.) considered the role of teacher mentors, the strategies and skills adopted by them and personal qualities which enabled their roles to be successfully fulfilled. Students from a range of initial teacher training courses were represented in their research sample and comparison was made between the mentoring of students

undertaking different courses. Yeomans and Sampson (op. cit.) examined mentoring in twelve English primary schools in a range of rural and urban settings in three Local Education Authorities. The schools were not randomly selected but assigned themselves to the project or were chosen by the Initial Teacher Training institutions. This may have produced a bias in the findings but provided a sample which included a range of schools by catchment area, type and size. Yeomans and Sampson did not claim their work to be representative of all primary school settings but to be an interpretative understanding of issues which were likely to emerge in primary schools, reliability being assured by the formalised quality assurance of the data collection techniques between the researchers. Their interviews and observations were exploratory in an attempt to 'enter into the other person's perspective' (Yeomans and Sampson, 1994: 43). Students were seen to build trust in the mentors, viewing them as 'counsellors', 'host' and 'friend' - capable of converting stressful situations into learning experiences.

How a teacher mentor interprets the ethos and culture of the school to mentees in her[5] mentoring role was examined by Orland (2001) who completed a case study of how one 'good' teacher mentored a trainee teacher (the reader is not informed how 'good' was defined). It may be that the findings of this one case cannot be generalised into other scenarios, but this year-long study provided a depth of 'rich data'. Orland held frequent interviews with the mentor about her role and observed mentoring activities both in one-to-one situations and with a group of mentors (though information of the size and frequency of group mentoring was not provided). The study was enriched by the writing of personal journals by the participants.

Though she recognised that a participant's understanding of the causes of behaviour will always be partial (Legewie, Weidman and van Diepen, 1988), Orland (op. cit.) considered how the mentor 'read' the mentoring situation, interacting with it and extracting information by her own prior knowledge and

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[5] I refer in this thesis to mentors as 'she' and to mentees as 'he' to prevent frequent repetition of 'she/he', except where I refer to specific individuals, when my text is gender-specific.

understandings. Hence, a would-be teacher mentor could not expect the skills of previous professional experience to have translated directly into the 'teacher as mentor' role; she had to be inducted into this new context. Such 'positioning' (Hollway, 1984) involved constantly reviewing and refining ideas as a mentoring situation occurred, undertaken in the light of further participation in mentoring practice. At the end of a year, the studied mentor had learnt to attribute more complex interpretation to her mentoring practice, developing new areas in her role, but not new depth in her understanding of what that role should be. Orland (op. cit.) concluded that the construction of the role of the mentor could be understood in five steps:

- the transfer of assumptions from the teaching to the mentoring context;
- ability to compare differing mentoring contexts;
- analysis of how conditions in the school affect practice;
- development of an awareness of how the mentor's own views influence the agenda;
- analysis of how interpersonal, organisational and professional aspects of mentoring work together.

These steps highlighted how mentoring relates to the school ethos and to the mentor/mentee relationship.

2.3.2   Hierarchy and status

Yeomans (1994) suggested that the teacher mentor acts in a 'structural role' as the person in authority and knowledge, indicated by how s/he plans for, organises, negotiates and inducts an initial teacher mentee into the practices, acceptable norms and values of the school. Gay and Stephenson (1998) suggested that a mentor directs a mentee if a formal style of mentoring is adopted, indicating that mentors should be more experienced than their less skilled mentees. Undertaking a nurturing, teaching, encouraging and counselling role in order to promote personal development of the mentee, perhaps being a champion or sponsor for the mentee are further aspects of a

mentoring role (CUREE, 2005). This implies a hierarchical mentor/mentee relationship, the mentoring role being constructed in each social situation by and for the individuals involved, the status of the mentor and her adopted style of mentoring being linked. It also, however, implies that the mentor has the skills and aptitude to facilitate learning and change in a circumstance or in the reception by the mentee of a social situation or incident (Jarowski, 1993) (further discussed in subsection 2.3.3).

Bush et al. (1996) suggested that to effect change, assertiveness by a mentor is necessary although, with adult mentors, it may not be found in practice. Hobson et al. (2009) suggested that these aspects relate to the level of support available in each school setting. Yeoman and Sampson (1994) asked how mentors provided a sufficiency of help for mentees, examining how they enabled the mentee to undertake a balance of directed and freely chosen options, relating this to the position of status in the mentor relationship.

Conversely, Daloz[6] (1999) considered gender rather than authority and status to be a key factor in adult mentoring relationships, and he provided rich descriptions in a case study of adult learners. Peters (2010) concluded similarly, suggesting that a mentoring relationship between a female head teacher mentor and less experienced female head teacher mentee led to benefits for both mentor and mentee, though perhaps this exemplified coaching rather than mentoring as a counselling role was adopted by the mentor. It appears that the mentoring relationship between adult mentors and mentees cannot universally be defined as hierarchical, while studies have not examined hierarchy and status of mentors of children.

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[6] I have limited this review to mainly British research literature as learning mentoring described in this thesis is specific to the British initiative. I recognise that similar programmes are offered in other countries, with mixed levels of effectiveness, and make reference to those of similar policy and practice to those in Britain. I use a non-British reference here as it is a rare example of a study into the effect of gender in adult mentees.

2.3.3 Nurture and challenge, through reflection and experiences

Yeomans and Sampson suggested that, in their 'professional role', teacher mentors were 'trainers' and 'educators', concerned with enabling trainee teachers to make long-term choices and decisions and leading the mentee from dependency, stating:

> it was the mentors' skill in moving students towards independence, characterised by self-generated reconstruction, that was the essence of effective educative mentoring (Yeomans and Sampson, 1994: 73).

'Training and educating' implied that learning was endemic in the mentoring role, the mentor being skilled in providing nurture as well as challenge through a 'multifaceted' (Yeomans, op. cit.) skills approach and being able to develop such skills through training (Hawkey, 1998). Mentors practised self-evaluation and reflected on the impact of mentoring both before and during mentoring work (Daloz, 1999), guidance of the mentee being a 'core goal' of mentoring (Schon, 1983). Through such reflection and encouragement, the mentee took responsibility for his own development by developing questions and finding the evidence for the answers to these in the actions and abilities of the mentor, and so learning could result (Day, 1998). Garvey and Alred (2000) suggested that the mentee and his school would benefit from this. Learning could be encouraged if mentors reflected upon their mentorship with other mentors (Orland, 2001) and if the transfer of skills from mentor to mentee was practised in discussion, indeed Vygotsky's (1962) 'theory of social learning' suggested that reflection with other practitioners could promote learning. Further to this, it is implied that a partnership between those involved with the mentoring of a mentee could affect knowledge production in mentees, which has been compared with a 'community of practice' in a 'theory of situated learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Laluvein (2010) described ten variations in the depth of the relationships between school staff members and parents interacting in such practice with mentees in secondary schools, varying from successful interaction to irreconcilable partnerships. Within these typologies,

mutual agreement, negotiated enterprise and a sharing of resources existed. Parent, school and child interacted as a network with mentoring, with each contributing 'different kinds of knowledges' to enhance or inhibit the process. Laluvein stated:

> for a 'community of practice' to develop, there has to be a site of knowledge production and shared practice where theories and ways of understanding can be developed, negotiated and shared as part of a participatory knowledge construction process (Laluvein, 2010: 38).

Each involved party brought their own understanding of reality to such a network and what was socially acceptable to one may not have been accepted by others: there was a danger in attempting to transfer uniformity of social definitions and values to others (Colley, 2003). For instance, teachers and parents may not have agreed about what constituted 'good parenting', such areas requiring sensitive handling.

The level of emotional resilience of some mentees may have influenced their ability to reconsider their understandings and this would have hindered the development of learning and thus of change. Contrary to research studying adult mentees (Day, op. cit.) research into reflectivity in child mentees is rare, although research has been undertaken into the reciprocal effect of mentoring, that is, how the *mentor,* rather than the *mentee,* was positively affected through experiences of mentoring adults and of children (Grisham, Ferguson and Brink, 2004; Hobson, 2003; Schmidt, Marks and Derrico, 2004; Hobson and Sharp, 2005; Fresko and Wertheim, 2006).

Mentoring involves nurture and challenge, emotional support, and engaging the mentee with acceptable values, skills and attitudes, through reflection and appropriate experiences. I suggest that the importance of self-evaluation by the mentor would be evident in the tasks employed and in the mentor's organisation of her mentoring time.

2.3.4 Identifying targets, effecting change, monitoring impact

The above discussion suggests that effecting a change in the mentee, or 'transformational learning', has been found to be a consequence of the mentoring relationship, as the mentee makes changes in knowledge and personal skills or attributes. It has been suggested that, to enable this, mentors should:

> work through individuals, rather than on them. At their heart is the notion of the 'active individual': that individuals should be encouraged to participate in determining their role in, and their contribution to, the society in which they are a part' (Watts, 2000: 203).

Daloz (1999) suggested that the mentor effected change by acting as guide to her adult 'protégé' through the progression of effective experiences. Mentoring was unsuccessful when the mentee was reluctant to learn and accept a personal change as a consequence of his interaction with the mentor, relating again to the relationship which developed (see subsection 2.3.1). Daloz (op. cit.) warned that the mentor may have expended her own assumptions of how mentoring should effect the mentee, value judgements perhaps being made which did not fulfil the mentee's own choices and decisions. Colley (2002) warned against the potential conflict of interest for the teacher mentor who was the 'devoted supporter' of the mentee but also was charged with assessing her, as the mentor was also 'gatekeeper to the profession'. Colley's studies centred on volunteer mentors, however, not teacher mentors and reflected an informal style of mentoring, rather than the formal mentoring employed in training teachers.

The implementation of a mentoring programme implied that some type of change in the mentee was considered necessary (Wilkin, 1992), being challenged to change by mentors establishing supportive relationships, providing constructive and critical advice in order to challenge practices and

misconceptions. Ayalon (2007) [7] studied how teachers acted as mentors by agreeing the intentions of mentoring with mentees and seeking a change in barriers to their learning. She indicated that the mentees' targets were time-related and were monitored for impact. Thus target-setting, change and impact can be related aspects of mentoring adults and children.

2.3.5   <u>An initial working definition of mentoring</u>

I am concerned in this thesis with formally organised mentoring, such as would be exemplified by learning mentoring. In the above four subsections I have indicated that mentors share some commonalities in mentoring children and adults in schools, though assertiveness and the hierarchical status of the mentor are more likely to be factors of mentoring children rather than of adults. I have accepted the premise, in subsection 2.2, that coaching is distinct from mentoring and can be adopted within the mentoring process when it suggests nurturing. I have provided perceptions and calculated evidence defining mentoring as an active teaching process involving the mentor and mentee in an interactive relationship. Nurturing is experienced by the mentee through the example and teaching of the mentor, which enables the mentee to effect a change in his social, emotional and behavioural responses and attitudes, when he accepts the values and attitudes which are modelled by the mentor. I identify core components of mentoring and have applied these in adopting an initial working definition of mentoring for this thesis. My criteria for defining mentoring are that it relates to one-to-one support and could relate to group mentoring, with multiple mentees, when the focus is each individual in the group, as the mentoring is received by each individual differently according to his social construct of reality (see Section 2.7). I agree with Colley (2002) that a definition of mentoring could merely result in a list of well-meant adjectives and verbs and in my working definition I

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[7] I use a non-British reference here as it successfully links the mentoring style, relationships with research into disadvantaged children.

attempt to give these some form. I suggest that mentoring is:

- a culturally-situated hierarchical relationship ;
- a skilled programme of nurture and challenge, acceptable values, skills and attitudes, with reflection by the mentor and appropriate experiences offered;
- to encourage change in identified areas;
- for agreed purposes, defined and time-related targets, with monitoring for impact.

Before relating this definition to learning mentoring it is relevant next to address the reasons for the adoption of this intervention strategy in England.

2.4 Addressing the Attainment of Disadvantaged Children Through Intervention Programmes

Learning mentoring was adopted by the British education system in acknowledgement of the existence of socio-economic disadvantage and its impact on children's educational attainment. In this Section I explain a history of this, changes in policy, and practical intervention initiatives introduced.

2.4.1 History of addressing disadvantaged pupils in Britain

In Table 2.4.1, I indicate examples of literature related to attempts to reduce or eliminate educational disadvantage and illustrate the gradual trend towards adoption of parent/school links in education. The Halsey Report (1972) stated:

> for many pupils the major determinants of educational attainment are not schoolmasters but social situations, not curriculum but motivation, not formal access to the school but support in the family and the community (Widlake, 1986: 7).

Table 2.4.1 <u>Historical attempts to reduce disadvantage in education</u>

Date	Reference	Initiative	Impact
1944	The Butler Education Act	Extended education for all.	'*Accessible approach'* to education, with free schooling available to all from age five to fifteen years.
1958	National Child Development Study (Wedge and Prosser, 1973)	Longitudinal study examined the social conditions and dimensions of child disadvantage.	Described the arena of disadvantage in education over time.
1963	The Newsom Report	Identified disadvantage in 'Half our Future'.	Importance of early educational development identified (Bloom, 1964).
1967	The Plowden Report	Recognised the influence of the family on a child's education.	Importance of home/school links raised.
1971	Bernstein	Identified 'cultural deprivation'.	'Restricted code' of speech became synonymous with disadvantage.
1969	Designation of Educational Priority Areas (EPAs)	Geographical areas in which 'deficit' in learning of disadvantaged children would be addressed through schools compensating for poor home circumstances.	'*Compensatory approach'* to education – improving learning by offering good pre-schooling; the school helping in the regeneration of the local community; home/school links.
1972	The Halsey Report	Importance of social circumstances in the motivation of pupils.	Schools needed to be pro-active in supporting links with parents.
1973	Wedge and Prosser	Disadvantaged children exhibit more behavioural difficulties and attain lower than pupils in advantaged geographical areas.	A gap in understanding between home and school compounds low attainment and less pupils access Further and Higher education from disadvantaged homes.
1986	Widlake	Emphasis on the importance of parents in the schooling of their children. Policies needed testing for 'efficacy'.	'*Communications approach'* to education - role of the school became identified as being of importance for the whole regeneration of society.

Date	Reference	Initiative	Impact
1991	Mortimore	Communications approach continued.	Policies seen by some as 'fragmented'.
1993	Keys and Fernandez	Research into secondary age pupils.	A link was established between parental support, pupil attitude and disaffection, poor behaviour and a negative school ethos - '*participatory approach'* to education began.
1994 1996	William Crane Mentoring/Achievement System and National Mentoring Network	Research into mentoring of secondary school pupils by students of further education.	Gains were limited to improvement of class ethos and improved social/affective skills of the mentors.
1997	Golden and Sims	Industrial Mentoring linked the world of work with disadvantaged pupils.	Mentoring found to lack: training of mentors; criteria for the inclusion of mentees; defined objectives; good communication with all participants; effective monitoring and evaluation. Relationship between mentor and mentee found to be vital to success in mentees' personal development.

In Table 2.4.1, I have indicated my understanding of the direction in which education has been led, from education merely being '*accessible'* to it attempting to *compensate* for socio-economic factors of family and home circumstances, to *communicating* with parents as partners in the education of their children, to a more *participatory* approach. I will indicate later how this changed again.

Research into mentoring in *primary* schools has been scarce (Potter, 1994) and, although this is the area on which I intend to focus this literature review, it is prudent to look briefly at research into *secondary* pupils as this led to mentoring being extended into primary schools, not least by the recommendations of Golden and Sims (1997) that mentoring increased pupils' self-esteem and confidence and mentees in primary schools could benefit likewise.

The transformation of the approach of government towards education into participatory education was identified in the instigation of a National Commission on Education (1991) which requested an investigation into the attitudes of secondary school pupils. Keys and Fernandez (1993) examined the influence of the home and parents on pupils in Years Seven and Nine (twelve and fourteen year olds) and established a link between parental support, pupil attitude and disaffection, poor behaviour and a negative school ethos (identified in low teacher expectations, poor feedback from teachers to pupils, and a lack of pupil praise). Pupil attitudes related to the type of support provided by parents (Wedge and Prosser, 1973) and the authors recommended that schools should: involve and include parents in supporting their children and improving their confidence and expectations in education and in life. This was also found to be necessary in primary schools (Keys, Harris and Fernandez, 1995) with a tenth of pupils surveyed found to be negative towards school. The authors identified a link between boredom in school, disaffection and poor achievement.

These recommendations raised the possibility of the causal factor of poor attainment not being what could be termed 'situational disadvantage' (that poor attainment was a consequence of the pupil residing in a particular geographical area or belonging to a specific socio-economic class) but that attainment might be related to social and emotional factors within the child. In agreement with Keys et al. (1995) after focusing their research on the support initiatives for disadvantaged pupils in thirty schools across fourteen Local Education Authorities, Kinder, Harland, Wilkin and Wakefield (1995) suggested that disaffection in pupils was influenced by the individual, the family, and the school in inter-relation. The authors identified the need for schools to improve school ethos by managing attendance better, providing support for emotional/social/behavioural needs and offering an alternative curriculum to all pupils at risk of disaffection.

The authors suggested a clear basis for linking the child, the family and the child's school in what I term a 'triangle of influence' for learning, as I consider

that each of these three factors can affect mentoring depending on their level of interaction. I suggest this goes further than simply support: the child can withdraw his cooperation; the parent can influence the child in supporting or not supporting school; and the teacher and mentor can be pro-active or not in providing intervention strategies for the mentee. This was seen in the identification of attendance, behaviour and learning as factors of improvement, which were later adopted by the EiC initiative in evaluating learning mentoring (see Chapter One).

2.4.2 Policies affecting mentoring in education

The government's participatory approach to education, explained above, was exemplified in Acts, regulations, initiatives and guidance issued between 1997 and 2010 as part of the Labour government's drive to address and improve 'Education, Education, Education' (Blair, 1996). Many of these recognised the potential of addressing the affective needs of children in order to improve their learning. A National Curriculum was introduced in1988 and revised in 2000, with an aligned national assessment system in 1990 which enabled monitoring of the attainment of children, aimed at improving national attainment standards as part of the government's 'school improvement agenda'[8] in England (DfES, 2001). The EiC project in 2000 and the EC Project in 2002 were introduced into this arena to reduce barriers to learning by reducing the differential between children living in advantaged and disadvantaged areas.

Action for Children (Allard and McNamara, 2003) suggested that a gap exists between the intellectual development of disadvantaged children and others, and that disadvantaged children need additional support, particularly at times of vulnerability (change; family illness or bereavement; poverty). Harris and Chapman (2002) suggested that learning mentors were particularly effective in schools successful in raising attainment in disadvantaged areas. Hobson and Kington (2002) evaluated the learning mentor strand of ECs in primary

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[8] The new British government of 2010 discontinued certain of the previous government's initiatives, although some Local Authorities continued to fund learning mentoring for a while.

schools, using qualitative data gathered from eleven primary schools. Four main aspects of learning mentoring were assessed, the:

- leadership influence within each school;
- mentees' characteristics, backgrounds and perceptions of learning mentoring;
- details of learning mentor provision (perceptions, referral processes, types of provision, communication with the wider school staff members);
- impact of learning mentor work, as identified by the mentors, mentees, class teachers and head teachers.

Hobson and Kington (op. cit.) suggested that learning mentoring encouraged a positive effect on individual mentees, on teachers and teaching, and on the school as a whole, stating:

> the Learning Mentor Strand was working well and having a positive impact in schools, with many of them reporting improved pupil behaviour, attitudes and motivation, better relationships with adults, and improved attendance and punctuality (Hobson and Kington, 2002: 39).

The authors' study again indicated the importance of the parent/school link, the child's background being an influential factor in the impact of learning mentor work. The interaction of the parents and family with learning mentoring, and the perceptions of the mentees' parents, were potentially important areas in which further research could be undertaken.

Learning mentoring was still in its infancy as a support project at that time and teachers were often not choosing to refer children to it, possibly as a consequence of a difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitable mentors (O'Donnell and Golden, 2003). As with previous research, data was not collected directly from families to support this deduction. Instead, the

characteristics of 'pupil background' applied were: ethnicity; gender; uptake of free school meals; 'special needs' or being 'Gifted and Talented'; and the number of previous exclusions from school received by the pupil. O'Donnell and Golden (2003) concluded that most mentees: spoke English as a second language; had special educational needs; were male; accessed the learning mentor more frequently than a 'drop-in' opportunity; and were more likely to have been excluded from school than other pupils. They lived with only one of their parents, achieved poorer attainment than others in Year Six, exhibited less motivation and were less well-behaved. Learning mentoring was popular with most mentees, who tended to continue to access a mentor in their secondary schools.

Progress in the EC initiative continued (DfES, 2005a) being identified through monitoring behaviour, attendance and attainment. OfSTED (2006) reported that a gap in attainment remained between pupils in socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged geographical areas, with an association between poverty and underachievement, especially for white British boys (OfSTED, 2008; Department for Children, Schools and Families, DCSF, 2007a). A link continued to be identified between deprivation and learning, from pre-school to school leaving age (DCSF, 2009a, b, c). OfSTED inspectors did not accept this link as a 'foregone conclusion' for individual children, reporting that some primary schools were 'outstanding' in developing pupils' attainment, despite being situated in socio-economical disadvantaged areas (OfSTED, 2009).

The DCSF (2009d) also reported that new initiatives were having an effect as some schools in challenging circumstances achieved their required standards, suggesting that the gap in educational attainment between the most and the least deprived children had narrowed sharply and schools in disadvantaged areas had improved their results in national testing twice as fast as 'advantaged' schools. Indeed, the gap in attainment[9] between individual

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[9] This was identified by analysis of data collected from the pupils' results of national tests in English, Mathematics and Science, taken in their last year of primary schooling.

children who were eligible to receive free school meals and those who were not eligible, was shown to be greater in schools in areas of *advantage* (DCSF, 2009b). This indicator of disadvantage, however, is contentious, as not all families eligible to claim free meals do so, and some families who claim are not disadvantaged in their parenting skills and support for their children's education.

Key government policy changes were implemented, shown in Table 2.4.2, which had the potential to affect learning mentoring and to involve learning mentors (DfES, 2005), using policy as a vehicle for educational change.

Table 2.4.2   Policy changes and implications for learning mentor provision (DfES, 2005a: 9).

Area of change	Impact on learning mentors	Contribution of learning mentors
Every Child Matters: change for children - focus on five key outcomes - more multi-agency support - integrated strategic Planning through Children's Trusts - emphasis on self-evaluation and evidence gathering.	Likely to increase demand for roles like learning mentors. Could lead to more opportunities for learning mentors.	Skills and role complement the aims of Every Child Matters. Already place strong emphasis on evaluating and reflecting on practice so can provide evidence to support the delivery of Every Child Matters. Could take on the role of lead professional with appropriate training and support.
Every Child Matters: change for children in schools - more emphasis on personalised learning - extended school - links between special schools and mainstream provision	Schools will gear learning, pastoral and support services to meeting the five outcomes – to impact on all those working with children and young people.	Take pupil-centred approach to learning. Understand and work with different learning styles. Could play a key role in: - supporting pupils from special schools in mainstream programmes - supporting transition and transfer.

Area of change	Impact on learning mentors	Contribution of learning mentors
School and children's workforce development. - developing skills and capacity of the whole children's workforce - school workforce remodeling.	Learning mentor roles will need to be reviewed as part of the remodelling process, with reference to the national occupational standards.	At the interface between the schools workforce and the children's workforce, so learning mentors bring valuable knowledge about each workforce to forge understanding and more inte grated ways of working.
New relationship with schools - schools becoming more autonomous and funding fully devolved from 2006.	Schools can decide whether or not to fund or continue to fund learning mentor provision.	Demonstrable contribution to school standards as well as promotion of children and young people's health and well-being.
Primary and secondary national strategies - behaviour and attendance strands in both strategies - development of social and emotional aspects of learning.	Schools likely to want learning mentors to play key role in this area, as aims of the behaviour and attendance strands overlap strongly with learning mentor remit.	Adept at identifying barriers to learning so could contribute effectively in this area. Can be key practitioners in early intervention strategies because of understanding of learning context and regular contact with pupil.
Youth Green Paper - more activities - better information and advice - better support for those with problems.	Learning mentor resources and roles likely to be part of the package of support for young people in and around schools.	Support schools in all four of the strategic challenges: empowering young people, helping them make a positive contribution, offering information and guidance, supporting young people to make choices and helping young people achieve.

I suggest that the policy initiatives in Table 2.3b define the latest approach in the direction of English education at the time of writing this thesis, that is, a **'community approach'.** This was implicit in The Children's Act (DfES, 2003, 2004a) which identified the individual child as a member of a family within a wide, and widening, community: the home/ school/child triangle of influence within society. Local Education Authorities were renamed 'Local Authorities' (LAs) and their schools became 'community schools' in which locally-

diagnosed needs were emphasised. In order to fulfil the first policy in Table 2.4.2, Every Child Matters, some agencies set mentoring at the heart of their agenda, suggesting that optimal use of mentors should be adopted:

> NCH's professional experience, reinforced by research, is that mentors can be extremely effective in helping less able and less advantaged children and young people to succeed in school. We commend their use and call on the government to encourage and support a sustainable expansion in mentoring schemes across the country (Allard and Mc Namara, 2003: 10).

This linked well with the learning mentor support initiated in EiC projects, although the research to which this quote refers was small-scale and included only children and young people already referred to the NCH for support. The authors appeared to link disadvantage and lower ability in the child; two factors which are distinct and, although may relate to an individual pupil, will not necessarily do so.

Table 2.4.2 indicates the value placed by the then government on the positive benefits which learning mentors could bring to disadvantaged children, and some researchers agreed: 'there is evidence that these programmes are starting to reduce the differential between areas' (Slater and Mansell, 2002). OfSTED (2004) evaluated learning mentoring as part of the extension of the EiC initiative into primary schools, suggesting that the EiC was beginning to realise its potential as attainment of pupils in EiC schools was being raised at a faster rate than that for schools nationally. The authors related this to raised expectations of school leaders and a broadened range of experiences being offered to pupils, with improved interaction with families. They suggested that best practice of learning mentoring considered attendance and behaviour, and concluded that evidence for improvement in these factors was found, but learning mentoring required development in: transition between schools; maintaining high expectations of pupils; and appropriate monitoring. It is possible that exceptions to these results existed within the EiC initiative

nationally, as only twenty eight schools were surveyed for these findings, including fourteen primary schools. A subsequent report, using similar data collection methods, concluded that the effectiveness of learning mentors was weak when:

> their work is not fully integrated with the rest of the school, and when teachers do not take into account the targets for pupils set by learning mentors (OfSTED, 2005: 12).

2.4.3   New initiatives issuing from the policy changes

Table 2.4.3 indicates the swiftness of changes in the government's educational agenda from 2005 to 2010, including specific training for learning mentors, a curriculum for personal development and developments intended to ensure good liaison between agencies involved in the care of children.

Table 2.4.3   Initiatives pertinent to interventions in schools

National Initiative	Purpose	Intended Effect
The Integrated Children's Services (DfES, 2005b).	A new multi-agency approach was adopted by the amalgamation of all children's services.	To improve liaison and reduce bureaucracy.
Learning Development Support Services, 2006.	To provide a functional map of the provision for children, with integrated national standards.	Learning mentors study for the LDSS National Vocational Qualification and Foundation Degrees.
Social, Emotional Approach to Learning (SEAL) curriculum, 2006.	To enable a standardised personal, social, education for children from 5 to 16.	Motivation of disaffected and emotionally challenged pupils.
The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) 2006.	A joint-agency commissioning structure providing a standardised approach to assessing children's additional needs.	Close liaison between agencies involved with families would provide more effective support.

National Initiative	Purpose	Intended Effect
The Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007a).	To strengthen the support for all families during the formative years of children's lives.	Highlighted the importance of the child's 'well-being'. To close the gap between those disadvantaged by poverty and other children.
21st Century Schools: A world class education for every child' (DCSF, 2008a).	To provide a strategic plan for improving standards in British education.	Educational improvement for all.
Sure Start agencies, created between 2008 and 2011.	Supported Early Years children who resided in deprived areas. Linked parents with the Extended Schools project.	Support for children from birth to school age.
Sure Start Children's Centres.	Models of integrated provision, facilitating the working together of the Primary Care Trust (health department), Local Authority, Jobcentre Plus (employment), education and childcare providers, Social Services, community and voluntary agencies.	Support for children from birth to school leaving age, supporting families in parenting skills and in family issues, for instance finance.
Early Years Foundation Stage (three to five year-olds) curriculum (DCSF, 2008b).	To provide similar curriculum across all settings providing care for Early Years children.	Taking a rounded view of children's development – giving support for the home, family, disadvantaged, vulnerable, those at risk of harm.
'The Extra Mile' project (DCSF, 2009a).	Gave suggestions of what 'good schools do' and specific extra measures which could be employed to raise attainment in school in deprived communities.	In secondary schools and was extended to a sample of primary schools in disadvantaged areas of Local Authorities in 2008.

Table 2.4.3 provides examples which indicate that the approach of the government involved early intervention for children, summed up in the 'Children's Plan' which was intended to:

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strengthen the support for all families during the formative years of their children's lives, take the next steps in achieving world class schools and excellent education for every child, involve parents fully in their child's learning (DCSF, 2007a: 3).

Schools were seen by the government in a position of 'could do better'. Indeed, it had been stated in the Children's Plan that the variation in the quality of schools could be blamed for children, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, underachieving: 'too many children and young people suffer unhappy childhoods because of disadvantage or problems that are not addressed, or tackled too late' (DCSF, 2007a: 5).

Learning began to be specifically personalised to meet the needs, aptitude and interests of individual children, in attempts to ensure that each child achieved and reached the highest standards possible, whatever their background or circumstances, and right across a spectrum of areas of achievement. This was expressed in the range of individual learning programmes which were adopted, within which exists learning mentoring. A selective directory of these programmes is presented in Appendix 2.

2.5   Mentoring of Children to Remove Barriers to Learning

In this Section I explain learning mentoring and relate my working definition to this. The training information 'manual' of learning mentoring (Liverpool Excellence Cluster Partnership, LECP/DfES, 2005) provided a clear definition of the role of the learning mentor and the process she should adopt with children. Learning mentors were to be:

> role models to their mentees; active listeners; observers of young people; encouragers; professional friends; challengers of assumptions young people may have about themselves and their aspirations; target negotiators (LECP/DfES, 2005: 28).

This definition shares commonalities with the four aspects of my working definition of mentoring: the mentoring relationship; the programme of nurture and challenge; encouraging values (modelling behaviours); adopting targets for impact; and including friendship but excluding counselling. The importance of the culture of the school setting and the monitoring of mentees are also included in the necessary 'key principles' which the DfES defined for mentors to adopt in encouraging success. These were:

> identifying barriers to learning; removing barriers to learning; setting targets, monitoring progress and providing guidance; building confidence and self esteem; liaising with families and staff; contributing to the whole school culture of support; working with individual caseloads which are "reasonable" and allowing time for networking, home visits, administration and training (LECP/DfES, 2005: 29).

The learning mentor manual (LECP/DFES, op. cit.) stressed the importance of the mentoring relationship, referred to the requisite of the adoption of an appropriate style of mentoring by the mentor, and directed that the mentor should encompass key personality traits and character attributes, for instance integrity, reliability, being approachable and non-judgmental but realistic with pupils, parents and staff. Morley (2007) suggested that to facilitate an effective role, learning mentors should have confidence, calmness, vision, flexibility and be innovative. This suggests similarities between learning mentoring and the mentoring of adults, with successful mentors encompassing appropriate style, personality and personal attributes (Hobson, 2003). Although key skills are necessary, the 'kind of person' appears to be more important for undertaking mentoring (Yeomans, 1994) than the abilities exhibited, which was implied by Smith and Alred (1993).

In the practice of learning mentoring, the requirement for effective pairing of mentor and mentee to encourage a positive inter-relationship between mentor and mentee implies that, as discussed in subsection 2.3.2, appropriate status

was understood to be a condition of learning mentoring. We are warned against the dangers of the mentor exerting influence on the mentee through direct intervention (Egan, 1990; Cruddas, 2005) though I have accepted in my definition that there are *accepted values* which child mentees are encouraged to adopt in schools. Indeed, such dangers are perhaps not always evidenced in practice: Rose and Doveston (2008) concluded from their research that the younger child did not differentiate the role of the learning mentor from that of other staff members in hierarchical positions who helped them at primary school. Conversely, the authors also indicated that pupils perceived learning mentors differently from other school staff, viewing their relationships 'qualitatively differently' (2008: 153) to their relationship with teachers, and citing occasions when the mentors acted as intermediary between child and teacher. Perhaps this related to the mentors' contextual role in the school which Jones, Doveston and Rose (2009) suggested was often unclear, learning mentors being in an 'almost missionary' situation (Jones et al., 2009: 48) within the context of the school with regard to defining their responsibilities.

Apart from the assertive/status factor, a second difference between the mentoring of adults and the learning mentoring of children is 'liaising with families and staff', which became important in countering disadvantage, (Section 2.3). Learning mentors are expected to pursue an active role in liaison with the school culture and the wider cultural situation of a mentee's family. Contextual factors were identified as variable in an adult mentoring relationship (Healy and Welchart, 1990) affecting the quality and nature of mentoring, but learning mentoring was positioned clearly as the 'interface' (Jones, Doveston and Rose, op. cit.) of the triangle of influence of child, school and home with the learning mentor often liaising with staff from agencies other than education.

Rose and Doveston (2008) suggested that the focus of mentoring was on 'learning through social collaboration, addressing real problems in the here and now' (146), suggesting that learning mentoring of pupils with social

difficulties resulted in improved attendance and a positive attitude to learning. They argued for researchers to listen to the pupils' voices as evidence of the impact of mentoring, as prior studies indicated that pupils who were listened to improved their behaviour, attitude and engagement in learning. Mentors interacting with mentees from primary and secondary schools demonstrated respect, empathy, genuineness and empowerment, four values which Egan (1990) named as factors of the mentoring relationship.

A third difference relates to the benefit gained in the type of skills and attitudes which I suggest that child mentees may be encouraged to adopt compared with those for adults. Young children are still forming social skills and understanding, whereas it may be expected that the vast majority of adults might have gained such values[10]. Morley (2007) indicated that learning mentors helped pupils to improve their behaviour but that their role was more than this. A transformational change in the mentee was of benefit to the mentee and to the culture of the school (LECP/DfES, op. cit.) not to the mentor, as was suggested by Schmidt, Marks and Derrico (2004) and Fresko and Wertheim (2006) (see subsection 2.3.3).

The learning mentor manual (LECP/DFES, op.cit.) indicated that time-related targets for change should be agreed between adult mentor and child mentee and, as suggested in my working definition, monitored. Further, targets should be *mutually* agreed, which is a fourth disagreement with my working definition of mentoring. The idea of 'coaching' within mentoring of children has not been proposed by researchers and Colley (2002) warned against the dangers of the outcomes of learning mentoring being directed by the external school attainment targets rather than the requirements of the child. Hewitt (2008) concurred, that targets in learning should relate to understanding, not to externally set judgments. Cruddas stated:

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[10] I recognise that the existence of 'acceptable values and norms' of society may be questionable.

there is also the risk that learning mentors will become the instruments to impose institutional goals on young people in ways that are experienced by them as diminishing and destructive rather than engaging and enabling (Cruddas, 2005: 3).

Perhaps this stems from a political stance but it may be wise for learning mentors to keep in mind the child's needs while appreciating that theirs is not a voluntary role and they represent the school organisation and the policies and practices of that cultural setting.

The learning mentor role

Next, I compared my working definition to literature regarding the role undertaken by the mentor and I identified four aspects.

First, all four core components in the Functional Map for the provision of learning mentor services (relationship, nurture and challenge, encouraging values, targeting for impact) (Sauve-Bell, 2003) are in my definition of mentoring. The learning mentor was to consider: transition times in schooling; assessment and progress of the mentee related to the school systems of attainment; identify barriers to learning and develop strategies to overcome these. In relationships, the learning mentor was to act within a time-bound action plan. The map defined learning mentoring as support and guidance for mentees and those engaged with them, thus extending the mentor's role to the teachers, staff members and family of the child. Involvement in networks would facilitate agency support and liaison, as the learning mentor engaged and motivated the mentee, being 'professional'. Learning mentoring would promote effective participation; enhance individual learning; raise aspirations and encourage the mentee to achieve his full potential (although this last factor would be difficult to assess as it may be impossible to identify a child's absolute potential).

Second, my definition of mentoring as relationship was an aspect of mentoring which was key for Cruddas (op. cit.) who stressed the gains for individual mentees, the learning mentor role being to facilitate 'freedom to learn' in the child, using a 'problem-management, opportunity development' model of skilled helping (Egan, 2002) within social development theory (situated-learning, see Section 2.7). Cruddas (2005) developed Sauve-Bell's (2003) definition and suggested that a theory of learning mentoring should be based on a model of practice which focuses on experiences, skills and knowledge. She provided various accounts of learning mentoring and suggested six basic factors in the role of learning mentoring:

- a working alliance of all involved;
- person-centred, value-driven, reflective practice, with the mentor showing respect, empathy, genuine professionalism;
- problems being accepted as opportunities;
- learning is viewed as a social process;
- the goal of learning mentoring is empowerment and personal growth;
- learning mentoring integrated equality and democracy.

The learning mentor's role as facilitator of learning is paramount for Cruddas, with delivery of the curriculum and attainment secondary to increased motivation in the mentee, person-centred capacity-building. Rogers and Freiberg proposed that 'the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner' (1994: 153). It has been suggested, however, that Cruddas' model would benefit from comparison to different school settings (Rhodes, 2006).

Third, my suggestion of the need to provide targets was highlighted by Davies and Thurston (2005) who adopted a similar child-centred focus of learning mentoring to Cruddas, but with a 'spotlight' on impact. They examined the introduction of a learning mentor project in four primary schools, undertaking semi-structured interviews with the head teachers, children and four learning

mentors in these schools, totalling twenty-eight interviews. Two limitations of this research were: the timing and duration of the research were not specified, and included only minimal reporting of children's comments. Davies and Thurston (op. cit.) identified two major advantages of mentoring children which were not exercised in the mentoring of adults. First, children in primary schools benefited from 'quality time' with a supportive adult, not a parent; a relationship which regular school staff could not provide. The authors associated this with lasting mentoring success and decreased depression in the child, as did Rhodes, Ebert and Fischer (1992). Second, early intervention afforded by learning mentors resulted in impact which was evident in both affective and emotional changes, also identified by Boydell (1994).

As previously suggested by O'Donnell and Golden (2003), Davies and Thurston (op. cit.) found that learning mentor projects lacked basic clarity, stressing the importance of: an agreed criteria for referral to learning mentoring; clearly focussed mentoring activity periods; agreement between mentor and mentee for content of, monitoring and ending learning mentor programmes. The authors stated:

> involving the children in setting realistic targets and celebrating their achievement would be one way of moving towards a culture of empowerment, enabling children to recognize their barriers to learning, and supporting them in learning strategies to overcome them (Davies and Thurston, 2005: 43).

Lastly, I considered my working definition with reference to change in the mentee. Matusov suggested that 'the success of interventions to enhance development is measured by the process of change of and in participation' (Matusov, cited in Daniels, 2001:40). Other authors in America identified a link between mentoring support improving family relationships and the child's self-worth (Jekielek, Moore, Hair and Scarupa, 2002).

The aspect of affective and emotional change was examined by Rose, Doveston, Emly and Bonnett (2006) in Britain in a qualitative evaluation of the role of learning mentors in primary and secondary schools. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with participating head teachers, thirty-six learning mentors, thirty-three pupils, eleven parents, eleven governors and three staff members from LSUs, over a period of two years. This was supplemented by scrutiny of documentation and the results of quantitative data collected. Anecdotal evidence was provided, and case studies were later developed by visits to seven schools, intended to be illustrative of the practice of the learning mentor process. In contrast to the research of Davies and Thurston (2005) the authors found that this learning mentor project had been initiated with good definition and was consistently applied across the schools in the particular EC. The learning mentors worked within a good support network and other nationally recommended aspects of their role were in place[11]. On enquiry, I found that the participants were self-selected within the schools in the EC, perhaps being representative of mentoring overall. Rose et al. (op. cit.) recommended that mentors should share successes with other schools and with parents, further develop liaison with other agencies, rationalise their training, and evaluating their roles within the raft of child support interventions but concluded that they could not substantiate claims that learning mentoring reduced the rate of exclusions from school. They stated that:

> learning mentors have established positive relationships with
> families and have often taken additional responsibilities for pupils
> when families have experienced difficulties. The pastoral role of
> learning mentors has been a strength of the project and their role
> as intermediaries between home and school has often come to
> the fore (Rose, Doveston, Emly and Bonnett, 2006: 39).

The qualitative research literature discussed in this subsection indicates that an evaluation of the role of the learning mentor would be valuable and further

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[11] Rose et al. (2006) found organisational procedures of learning mentoring (referrals, information for and communication with parents and carers) to be satisfactory.

in-depth research into the interaction of the participants involved in a learning mentoring relationship would be a useful addition to current understanding.

2.6 Appropriate Markers in Identifying the Impact of Learning Mentoring

The trend of the research and directives discussed in this chapter so far is based on the perception that there was a necessity to increase attainment of pupils in England and that this could be achieved by compensating for disadvantage. The existence of a link between pupil attendance, behaviour, and educational attainment was assumed, as these factors were frequently applied in identification of the effectiveness of such interventions, and were scrutinised in the evaluation of learning mentoring. Colley (2003) suggested that such markers of progress are restrictive, stating: 'the audit culture that prevails in our education system reinforces hard outcomes as the definitive measure of success' (Colley, 2003: 163).

Although Colley adopted a political approach to education, which I do not address in this thesis, the acceptability of such markers to a child's progress are worthy of consideration. In this Section, I consider from experience of an EC and from research evidence whether attendance, behaviour and attainment are sufficient identifiers of the impact of interventions in reducing barriers to learning.

Considering attendance

The assumption that the EiC learning mentor project could affect a mentee's attendance in school was subject to helpful and limiting factors. A helpful factor was that attendance is a measurable statistic for pupils. I propose three limiting factors which relate to the comparability and reliability of that statistic. First, the collection of attendance figures for EiC data related to each half term of schooling, each half term having differing numbers of maximum potential attendance sessions and across various Local Authorities, which limited the effectiveness of the analysis of data. Second, attendance data was restricted

to only five of the six half terms each academic year, not therefore being accurately representative of a child's full year in school. Third, attendance was affected as a consequence of authorised absences e.g. family holidays. In collecting data on attendance an assumption was made that unauthorised absence was a consequence of truanting (DfES, 2004a) however holidays not granted but taken, rather than a tendency to truant, often affected attendance figures (Reid, 2007). Despite these factors, researchers have concentrated on attendance as an indicator of truancy from school and of the impact of learning mentoring.

Reid (op. cit.) researched pupil attendance as it related to learning mentors, examining the perceptions of mentees and learning mentors regarding their remit (Hayward, 2001) to manage attendance, as part of their role in EiC and EC projects. His research may have been limited by the adoption of a purely questionnaire research design (Briggs and Coleman, 2007) in that the findings depended upon the response statements which he offered to the respondents (the top four choices were selected by over half the respondents). Also, only four of his statements related specifically to issues of attendance management, which was stated as the main aim of his survey. Contrary to the Government's ideal (Department for Education and Employment, DfEE, 1997) Reid (op. cit.) found that the majority of learning mentors did not practice attendance management as part of their role. While research investigated the link between home, socio-economic background and attendance (Audit Commission, 1998) Reid indicated that problems of persistent absence could be linked with psychological factors, for instance low self-concepts, neuroticism and anti-social behaviour. The range of 'in-school' factors which corresponded to low attendance levels of mentees were related to: a negative school culture or ethos; leadership; pupil relationships with staff; quality of teaching; and out-of-hours provision (Hallam, 1996).

The Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE, 1995) clearly linked attendance issues with performance in education for all age groups, with many pupils who absented themselves from school without permission also

exhibiting significant learning deficits. Reid, however, found that of the schools in which learning mentors were established, one in seven were working in schools with *high* attendance rates which may relate to the inclusion of *examplar* secondary schools in ECs (see Chapter One, Section 1.3).

Considering behaviour

Behaviour was evaluated in EC projects by monitoring the number of exclusions from school which a child received during the data collection period. This did not take into account the previous history of exclusion of mentees but appeared to assume that pupils receiving mentoring were likely to be excluded from school. The criteria for referral to learning mentoring were based on a wide range of factors of vulnerability, and severe behaviour issues were not included in the categories for becoming a mentee (see Appendix 1). Mentees could have been undertaking mentoring programmes to address a need unrelated to behaviour, and hence may not have a history of exclusions to improve: experience proved this to be the situation for many mentees.

Considering attainment

The attainment information collected and analysed for evaluation of a learning mentor project was: Literacy and Numeracy National Curriculum levels, using a range of attainment 'point scores'[12] as indicators. For many children there was little increase in points over the course of a six week data-collection period, assessment could not be accurately assured, and differences in numbers of mentees in each school could have affected the analysis of data. While no generalisation can be made from one subjective experience to the EC project nationally, individual situations make up the overall evaluation and this discussion may be understood to limit the validity of the conclusions made.

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[12] The National Curriculum assessment includes levels 1 to 6, each level being subdivided into a, b and c sublevels, each sublevel allocated a number of points. For instance, Level 2b equates to 15 points.

It is recognised that many factors influence attainment: the quality of teaching and learning; rigorous monitoring; personal development and independent work and the type and flexibility of the curriculum provided for the needs of individuals (OfSTED, 2008). The vehicle for this can be the school, with parents and other agencies working together (DCSF, 2007a). While all factors may not be discussed here, the most significant factor to this study is school ethos. OfSTED (op. cit.) suggested that good school ethos can be a key to raising pupil attainment, particularly in schools in disadvantaged areas. Similar suggestions have been offered by Mongon and Chapman (2008) when researching the leadership of schools in similar circumstances. The authors adopted a slightly wider perspective on the subject and suggested that schools could aim to improve their ethos by focussing on the emotional and social needs of their pupils, addressed through learning mentoring. Knight (2000) used a mixed method research approach and suggested that when teachers provide emotional support by mentoring primary age children, their writing and mathematical attainment improved.

Haswell (2009) suggested that more research is needed into how schools raise the attainment of all children, irrespective of background and family circumstances. Whole-school approaches to the national educational directives could, he suggested, enable the identification and assessment of children's needs at an early stage, to provide effective early intervention. He acknowledged that schools routinely targeted interventions with the intention of improving learning and behaviour outcomes, reducing absence rates and encouraging good behaviour. Haswell (op. cit.) also identified a necessity for schools to widen their focus from these three data collection sets if children were to be aided in the development of their general wellbeing. Schools should examine the underlying environmental factors which influence emotional well-being (DfES, 2004a) such as ensuring pupil safety and encouraging pupil competence, for instance in self-respect within a school culture of mutual respect. Social and emotional aspects of learning were, Haswell stated, extremely important in raising attainment.

In consideration of the discussion which I have presented to the reader in this section, I would argue that, while the approach of analysing attendance, behaviour and attainment as indicators of the efficacy of learning mentoring has been adopted in ECs, limiting the approach to data collection in this way restricted the evaluation of the project. It ignored information about a child's social or emotional needs and progress towards addressing those needs. I next consider what may be better approaches to be adopted in learning mentoring programmes.

2.7 Conditions for Effective Mentoring

In this Section I identify conditions which evidence presented in this chapter suggests aid effective mentoring, and relate these to my working definition of mentoring and the definition of learning mentoring (see Section 2.5).

Ethos, status, mentor/mentee relationship

A positive ethos in the host school, in the form of effective support systems for all staff, enables successful mentoring of newly qualified teachers (Moyles, Suschitsky and Chapman, 1999; Smith and West-Burnham, 1993), supports affective and cognitive benefits for student teachers, and benefits teacher mentors as a source of professional development (Hobson et al., 2009). The key to successful impact of learning mentoring programmes in schools appears to include good liaison between teachers and learning mentors (Reid, 2007), a system of mentoring which is timely and well-organised within the life of the school (Hobson and Kington, 2002; O'Donnell and Golden, 2003; Hobson and Sharp, 2005). Understanding could be gained by further study of the relationship between school organisational conditions and their support for, or hindrance of, mentoring within different school cultures.

I query how ethos and status affect the quality of the mentoring relationship. Stephenson and Sampson (1994) identified a 'culture of collaboration' and

also indicated that mentoring was most effective when the mentor was in a position of leadership (for instance, the deputy head teacher). Colley (2003) suggested otherwise, that a less hierarchical status within an informal mentoring style was a condition of successful impact, terming this 'engagement mentoring' when mentoring disaffected adolescents in low socio-economic geographical areas. The intention of the mentoring was to create an improvement in the social inclusion of the mentees and by 'adopting friendship' with the sixteen to eighteen year old mentees in this type of 'soft' intervention strategy, Colley suggested that success was fostered, provided the mentees were not previously 'deeply alienated' from society. Although in a position of status, teachers have effectively adopted an engagement style of mentoring with primary school mentees. Ayalon (2007) found this to be successful when studying poor, minority ethnic disadvantaged mentees in one school in Israel, who were mentored by their class teachers. She adopted a case study approach and interviewed nine mentor teachers and 'guidance' staff, exploring the nature of interaction in the two hours of weekly mentoring activities.

The author identified three key conditions for effectiveness. These were: the status which was afforded the mentor/mentee relationship; the type of participants included in the mentoring practice; and liaison with parents of mentees. She concluded that the mentors were partners with each other, mediators between parents and school, problem solvers and 'drop-out preventers'. The status of the mentor had a direct consequence for communication between everyone involved in the mentoring programmes, not as a hierarchical influence but in her relationship as friend and supporter of the mentee. The willingness of parents to participate in the mentoring practice was vital to success, in concurrence with LECP/DfES (2005) and Hobson and Kington (2002).

I questioned whether the type of mentoring goals identified affected impact for these teacher mentors and found that teacher mentoring with a purely academic focus could also be successful (Hylan and Postlethwaite, 1998).

Pupils in some age and ability groups attained a measureable increase in examination results and improved in positive behaviour after mentoring, when compared with pupils who received no mentoring support. All mentored pupils increased their motivation for learning. This research was undertaken with mainly quantitative methods and included only female mentees, though a potential gender bias was counteracted by adoption of a control group. Despite these studies, learning mentors in schools continue to be mainly support assistants, para-professionals who fulfil a pastoral role for children, not trained teachers, nor student teachers. Mentoring has been found to be an ideal process to create what Reed, Phillips and Shaw termed 'a legacy of care' (2002). Teachers bring teaching skills and competencies to a mentoring role while non-teacher mentors may bring different skills and competencies. While the comparison between teacher and non-teacher skills and abilities is a wider area for study than the range of this thesis, it is relevant to consider the possible conditions for success in mentoring which may issue from personal mentor attributes.

Personal attributes

The mentor/mentee relationship was found to influence successful adult mentoring by three other factors relating to the mentor's characteristics (Yeomans and Sampson, 1994). These were: the personal qualities and attributes of the mentors; her previous training; and an effective match of mentor to mentee (Bush and Coleman, 1995; Hobson and Kington, 2002, with child mentees: Lucas, 2001; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). This is summarised as:

> it seems likely that a mentee's willingness and openness to getting the most out of a mentee relationship will be influenced to at least some extent by the context within which the mentoring takes place, the suitability and characteristics of the mentor allocated, and the preparation received and strategies employed by that mentor (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez et al., 2009: 211).

Appropriate qualities and attributes of mentors were found to be conditions for the success of the mentoring of students when combined with mentoring systems employed and pedagogical knowledge (Hudson, 2007). The author applied quantitative data collection methods when studying a large sample of student teachers (446), the questions being provided rather than allowing the respondents to explain their perceptions personally, which may have limited the research. Hobson et al. (2009) applied qualitative methods and also suggested the importance of the mentor's personal characteristics, finding that these related strongly to aspects of formal mentoring practice with trainee and newly qualified teacher mentees: making the mentee feel welcome; giving sufficient time for mentoring; applying an appropriate level of initiative; observing the mentee and reflecting on this; and providing appropriate challenge. Such programmes were effective in meeting mentees' emotional and psychological needs. Hobson et al. (op.cit.) suggested that the mentor of student teachers should be supportive, approachable, non-judgemental, trustworthy, of positive demeanour, a good listener, empathetic, and capable of taking an interest in the particular mentee with whom she is paired. This was enabled by well-defined boundaries to the role and the establishing of 'a unity of purpose between all concerned individuals' (Hobson et al., 2009: 50). The depth of reflection undertaken by the mentor was also a condition of success (Edwards and Collison, 1996). Indeed, Goleman (1995) and Johnson and Ridley (2004) suggested that a key condition to effective mentoring of adults was the mentor herself.

Johnson and Ridley (2004) identified a wide range of factors which promoted impact on mentees, which they grouped into six 'primary themes': the mentor's skills; her mentoring style and personality; her integrity in the role; her ability to begin a mentoring relationship, to restore a situation when mentoring was proving difficult to effect and to end a mentoring relationship. The authors subdivided these six themes into fifty-seven 'elements of practice' through which the mentor nurtured the mentee including a 'readiness' for the role or 'emotional literacy' (Hawkey, 2006).

When considering child mentees, the adoption of a 'non-judgemental and empathetic approach' was suggested by Jones, Doveston and Rose (2009) as a condition of effective mentoring. The authors suggested that the mentor should be capable of recognising that a child's difficulties could be socially constructed and pastoral responsibilities be placed above academic attainment. Jones et al. (2009) considered that it was 'critical' for a successful learning mentor to be altruistic, although she should be aware that she could then be at risk of her role being considered of low status in the school setting, whether she was an employed or a voluntary mentor. The development of the mentor/mentee relationship and the impact of mentor skills and characteristics is an area which would benefit from further research, which could be undertaken by studying the personal attributes and attitudes, skills and competencies of learning mentors.

Appropriate experiences

There also exists a gap in evidence relating to what constitute appropriate experiences in mentoring programmes. Researchers have indicated that mentoring strategies should be the result of discussion between mentor and mentee and should relate to agreed objectives and goals (Lindgren, 2005) but were not clear about the specific strategies which could lead to success (Johnson and Ridley, 2004) perhaps as a consequence of existing studies being limited by excluding data generated by examples of actual mentoring in practice. A study focusing on the identification of such practice might be useful in addressing these issues.

Change

The learning mentor had to identify a child's barriers to learning and the change which was required in order to plan an appropriate programme of strategies and recognise when impact was made. Development of socially appropriate behaviour, attitude and school attendance were changes which learning mentors have frequently encouraged (Reid, 2007; Hayward, 2001). A

condition for effective change in a child's behaviour and attitude appeared to be the interaction of the participants involved with the mentoring process (see Section 2.3). Laluvein suggested that:

> for the child to benefit from the practice of their parents and teachers there needs to be a transparency within and among relationships which encourages participation, extended learning and complementary contributions (Laluvein, 2010: 43).

The author further suggested that this participation should be embedded in an organisational structure which was fully supportive, recognising the value which each partner brought to the process. He indicated that there was a gap in knowledge of the participatory approach in schools and I suggest that a study of such partnerships in action could enhance understanding in this.

Targets and monitoring

It has been suggested that working towards targets rather than merely 'befriending' the child (as in engagement mentoring) was effective in learning mentoring (Davies and Thurston, 2005). Such targets should sit within a mentoring framework, including: an agreed referral criteria against which the child's need should be monitored; focused mentoring work and monitoring of development; identification of impact and the mentoring ended. A key factor within this was that the child should be involved in the development of his own mentoring programme.

2.8 Situational/cultural Setting of Schools: the Social-constructivist Paradigm

Aware of the suggested conditions for effective mentoring, in this section I focus on a consideration of school ethos in investigating the nature and impact of learning mentoring. Learning is individual and is dependent upon individual circumstances, situations and opportunities: the individual school. Ethos is

experienced through the cultural atmosphere and acceptable behaviours within the school, its functions and organisation (the Elton Report, 1989). The improvement of school ethos has steered practitioners in education to use many intervention strategies.

I questioned whether or not the adoption of exclusion rates as indicators of the impact of learning mentoring, discussed in Section 2.6, may have had a wider implication than monitoring of the behavioural practices of individual children. Exclusion rates reflect an assumption that the behaviour exhibited by a few could affect the behaviour of many, and the whole school could thus be improved if the behaviour of a few were to improve (their exclusions being decreased). I have considered whether this would be a valid assumption: can the factors affecting a few individuals relate to the whole school community, or are the factors affecting 'the whole' reflected in 'the few'? The theory of culture in schools influenced the discussion of this question, and a brief explanation of this theory is presented next. I consider three areas relating to ethos: how reality can be comprehended; what this understanding means for learning mentoring in a school; and how social-constructionist theory relates to this. First, social-constructionists argue that we comprehend the world through our construction of it. There are many realities, based on the different assumptions of individuals, which contribute towards our understanding. Lave and Wenger stated 'all theories of learning are based on fundamental assumptions about the person, the world and their relations' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 47) suggesting that learning is social, and mentoring is explained as taking place within a learning relationship (Hayward, 2001). Lave and Wenger suggest that identity, knowing and social membership interact as 'learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 31).

Within this, the 'language' of the school enables the mentee to participate in the accepted practices which constitute the school culture. In accepting this theory, Alred and Garvey (2000) indicated that a triangulated relationship existed between the mentee, mentor and mentoring process, the interaction of

these three contributing to the mentee's production of knowledge, enabling learning to take place. Learning and knowledge were situated, therefore, in the mentoring strategy employed within the breadth of interactions between the individual, the school and the wider community. Alred and Garvey (op. cit.) stated that, as a consequence of this, mentoring was not just important for the mentee but had relevance also to the organisation itself. Change in the individual mentee could be encouraged through: logical reasoning; communication; reflective and emotional capacity; creativity; relationships and meta-cognitive skills (Alred and Garvey, op. cit.). These related to the construction of the mentee's social understanding and 'affective' comprehensions of the world - learning being social and mentoring being a learning relationship. I suggest that, even when a learning mentor supports a group of more than one mentee, the mentoring is received by each individual differently, according to each mentee's social construct of reality.

Boydell (1994) examined the rise of the affective dimension of change, through the learning developed in student teachers. I have indicated how affective factors were important in government educational policy over time (Section 2.4) and how some mentees could suffer from issues relating to emotion and self-esteem (Section 2.5). Boydell (op. cit.) suggested that emotion was integral to our understanding of the world. He suggested that we alter our 'map' of understanding by our feelings and then change can occur. If we did not change, we did not 'move on'. Challenge, at an acceptable rate, was important in this. Too much challenge posed a threat but the level of challenge perceived as threatening was subjective to each individual and to his/her personal 'theory of life', affective feelings (as understood through self-esteem and self-confidence) and the size of the change effected.

Second, a social-constructivist approach has implications for including learning mentoring in schools. Socio-cultural theorists believe that culture framed the organisation of a particular setting, as evidenced by what took place and was accepted as the norm of that institution (Harris, 1992; Morgan, 1997). The introduction of learning mentoring into a school was a culturally-

related event. Head teachers indicated that action for social inclusion was typified by particular pupil groups overcoming barriers to learning (Muijs, Ainscow, Dyson et al., 2010). The cultural theorist would suggest that school leaders had to make changes to the values and attitudes which already existed within the school community, into which a new project was to 'fit'. New ideas which were congruous with the 'jigsaw' of expectations which constituted the socio-cultural setting of a particular institution were accepted, becoming new 'norms'. The theory of a cultural model of leadership in schools implied that the beliefs, values and ideology of the leaders were at the heart of school organisation.

There was contention and probable failure ahead for ideas which did not align with the accepted culture of the school. I apply the term 'culture' to describe the unique character of each school community and its values which are fostered. This has been found to have an impact on the effectiveness of mentoring student teachers in primary school settings (Hayes, 1998). Hayes suggested that we use personal experience to interpret the world as well as providing information through the collection of 'hard' data. In line with this argument, my research methods in this study were inductive, context-based descriptions (see Chapter Three).

Muijs, Ainscow, Dyson et al. (op. cit.) suggested that a head teacher's vision for a school was a key factor in providing social inclusion, as s/he focused on three areas: socialisation and increasing capacities for improvement in pupils; removing barriers to learning; and raising attainment. The authors suggested that it was the interaction of the leader's vision in combination with the school context that created success in these areas. Learning mentoring being adopted as an intervention to reduce barriers to learning, it was within the leader's vision that the school culture could allow learning mentoring to become effective, the vision and the culture being congruous for any effective school development: 'principles are blinded by their own vision when they feel they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it' (Fullan, 1992: 19).

I was aware of a potential for wide discussion about the differences and practical applications of leadership and management, as concepts and as applied to education, while limiting my argument to the socio-cultural debate. School leaders have developed the ways and means of assessing, analysing and evaluating their own organisations and outcomes, in order to pursue change which could result in further improvement in pupil attainment. Within this, the culture of the 'whole' school can affect the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, 'the few' to which I referred above. Government policy was keen to provide for individuals, however, by adopting mentoring: 'we believe that a good mentor can make all the difference to outcomes for disaffected young people' (House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, 1998: xxxvii). Perhaps, in providing for the introduction of learning mentor projects, the school leadership supported the few, while the improved behaviour of these individual pupils affected the ethos of the whole school.

Third, social-constructivist theory aids the discussion above, relating to the application of mentoring in practice. Burr (2003) suggested that, to be within the 'umbrella' of social-constructivism, research should agree with four basic tenets:

- knowledge cannot be 'taken for granted' but should be critically appraised;
- understanding is specific to historical and cultural settings;
- knowledge is sustained by social processes;
- knowledge cannot be separated from social action.

Burr stated that 'social-constructionism cautions us to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be' (Burr, 2003: 3) suggesting that concepts were formulated in relation to their historical setting. A glimpse of the costumes and social conduct in a televised 'period drama' exemplified how our concepts also relate to specific cultural categories: concepts are not only *specific to*, but are understood to be *products of,* their

particular historical and cultural settings, with the economic arrangements of the times. Similarly, understandings of an event relate to the person experiencing it, and may be understood differently by someone else, especially in a different place and time. Participants build their 'reality' of events within their social processes and interactions, constructing their 'world' according to their understandings, relationships and interactions within their own settings.

In accepting the influence of the social construction of situations and relationships, Lucas (2001) indicated that the individual nature of learning was dependent upon individual circumstances, situations and opportunities. She examined the development of mentoring roles, using a case study approach with direct observation of planned mentoring by 'pairs' of undergraduate students mentoring secondary pupils. She also undertook interviews and analysed 'reflective writings' from the participants. She stressed the difficulty, found in many mentoring situations over time, of identifying its impact as the mentoring takes place and the mentor/mentee relationship developed.

Lucas (2001) suggested that the roles within a mentoring situation were socially constructed by the participants. The mentor could alter his or her role according to the responses of the mentees, thus the role was not pre-defined and the mentoring in each mentor/mentee pair would be directed by individual perceptions and interactions. Lucas' research was small-scale, with a sample of ten mentors and mentees. She illustrated her research by only one case study, which could be considered restrictive in method. The research was undertaken in three different school settings, and some comparison between the settings would have enlightened her readers with an indication of how the initiative related to different socio-cultural settings. Her organisation, however, was thorough and it could be said that the depth of her research overcame limitations created by its small scale. It remains to be considered whether the type of socially-constructed roles created between adults in a mentoring pair, exemplified by Lucas' research, may be transferred to an understanding of the interaction between an adult mentor and a pupil mentee in primary schools.

In adopting this approach, perhaps it is not appropriate to state 'the world' but, rather, 'our worlds'. As we each construct our worlds in social-constructionism (for instance, regarding authority, and how to interact with others) there can be no acceptance of objectivity. This has implications for research, in the interactions between researcher and those involved, and between the participants themselves. It is for this reason that, in this thesis, I prefer the term 'participant' to 'subject', as subject implies that those taking part in the research are being merely the objects to be subjected to the researcher's authority (Howitt, 1991). In my research, the interaction between and concerning participants is a focus of the study, in attempting to glimpse the 'reality of their worlds'.

Socio-cultural factors relate to the needs of children in each individual school, and also to each particular staff organisation, ethos and culture. They also relate to the social situations of the child and his/her family circumstances. In working with the wider community, especially families, schools share their culture and ethos. Given the theory of social construction, perhaps schools are well-placed to influence parental attitudes and raise their aspirations, as when understandings and knowledge are changed an impact on decreasing disadvantage could result, as was discussed in subsection 2.3.2. The learning mentor has a key role to play in this.

In arguing that the culture of the school affects those individuals within it, I do not negate the possibility that the converse may also be true: that the actions of individuals can affect the 'whole'. Certainly the introduction of initiatives with a few participants can affect the socio-culture of the school. Theories suggesting that a new initiative can explicitly affect the culture within which it is situated, however, encompass an area of study which the present research can only partly illuminate. There is a strategic expectation, implied from the history of support for the disadvantaged (Section 2.4) that by supporting 'the few', change in 'the whole' can be effected. Experience suggests that the actions of one pupil in, for instance, running 'off school site' or attacking a

peer, can affect the staff and pupils as the 'ripples' created by such an incident reach out to the edge of the school community 'pond'. Apart from the emotional state of the disruptive pupil, there are obvious effects on: the well-being of witnesses; attitudes and emotion of the pupil's parents; and ultimately, depending on the severity and frequency of such incidents, this can reflect in the school's relationships with other agencies and the Local Authority. Such effects have possibly resulted in the use of exclusion and may therefore be reflected in its use as a marker for school efficiency and the learning mentor initiative (discussed in Section 2.6). The reality and experiences of the pupil and the wider culture of the school interact and can affect change in each other. I would argue that a social-constructivist paradigm should be the approach to understanding the setting and impact of school initiatives, including learning mentor programmes.

Theories of learning

Social construct theory suggests that each child develops a 'working model' of the world. From infancy, a child develops a bonding relationship with a primary care-giver who is available, sensitive, responsive and actively supportive (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978). From this the child learns survival and security and develops social and emotional competencies which can last into adult life. 'Attachment theory' suggests that patterns of attachment lead to internalised perceptions, emotions, thoughts and expectations of the world (Bretherton and Munholland, 1999). A parent can, for instance, influence a child's working model of life by subjective criticism which can result in a lack of self-esteem and confidence. This can adversely affect the child's response to new situations and events, social interaction and emotional literacy, potentially influencing the child's motivation for learning. It is widely understood that prolonged absence from the parent, breakdown in communication, emotional unavailability, signs of rejection or abandonment all pose threats to security which can affect attachment between parent and child (for instance, Ainsworth, op. cit.). Where an attachment bond is weak, intervention is often

needed to aid the child to develop appropriate social and emotional understandings.

Schaffer (2004) suggested that complex social relationships indicate that attachment theory may not have universal application, and alternative explanations of how children create, and relate to, working models of the world have been suggested. I briefly describe three of these. First, Maslow (1962) proposed that children develop from physiological needs to self-fulfilment by progressively having safety, social, emotional and achievement needs satisfied. He theorised that children cannot fulfil their potential for learning when their needs remain unmet at the social or emotional levels, as they relate understandings only at these particular levels. Secondly, Kelly (1955) suggested that we all build 'personal constructs' in understanding experiences, some of which he termed 'core constructs', believing these to be commonly shared. Lastly, Weiner (1984) suggested that we comprehend experiences in life by attributing to them positive or negative explanations, according to our expectations gained from prior experiences. Dweck (2000) extends these psychological theories by explaining *why* such explanations are formed and how self-development occurs in children: experiences, social interactions and relationships all influence a child's 'self-theories' which relate to his/her disposition towards learning.

Dweck (op. cit.) believes that behaviour, motivation and personality are not solely dependent upon innate traits but can be modified by events and situations, either temporarily or with lasting effect. Through interactions and relationships Dweck argues that we develop beliefs by which we organise and give meaning to experiences, therefore each person's 'social world' is unique: 'mindset theory'. She suggests that our response to events is directed by the meaning which we give them, in positive or negative emotions, according to our belief or 'meaning systems' which are stable yet malleable. As children grow they develop theories about themselves, approaching learning with a fixed ('helpless') or an incremental ('growth') view of their intelligence. Adults influence the child's mindset, a fixed mindset message being 'you have

permanent traits and I am judging them' (Dweck, 2006: 173), encouraging (unintentionally perhaps) feelings of failure by attending to ability and attainment. A growth or 'mastery-oriented' mindset statement could be: 'you are a developing person and I am interested in your development', attending to opportunities for learning, and developing the child's concept of achieving through effort and practice, not just through confidence and being successful. This incremental system is fuelled by teaching a love of challenge, effort and of viewing errors as opportunities for learning. Motivation can issue from mistakes and self-esteem from encountering a positive self-image that arises from being fully engaged in using skills and abilities to pursue a valued goal.

Arguably, this either/or definition is more 'blurred' for many children, as responses to interactions can be specific to the child's relationship with a particular person. Furthermore, dispositions towards parents, family members, teachers or learning mentors can differ (e.g. the child 'behaves' for grandma but the parent states 'he/she is always naughty'). Dweck (2000) stated that self-theory explains why children act differently in 'identical situations' (though a situation cannot be 'identical' if it is perceived and experienced differently by individuals). Self-theory though can help to explain how children adopt adaptive or maladaptive patterns of behaviour, and the resulting consequences for fulfilment of their potential. Children can absorb from their parents' messages of accepted norms and understandings, and their ways of dealing with the world. This leads children to act accordingly towards their peers, as expectations of others reflect their reasoning about their performance and aptitudes. Absorbing a fixed low perception of intelligence often leads to low aspirations for the future. Entwined with self-identity and self-esteem are the motivators and goals which children choose, for instance, children with a fixed self-theory often seek validation in relationships. Social competency, intelligence and personality are all subject to the patterns children create in their worlds.

This theory implies that praise should be offered in response to effort and achievement rather than for personal attributes. Teachers should therefore

employ a 'language of acceptance' to diminish dissension, rather than a language of rejection and derogation which can destroy a desire to learn, and may even enrage the child (Ginott, 1972: 12). Reassuring children with excuses for not attaining is viewed as counter-productive to growth in learning. Well-intentioned positive praise can also be counter-productive in encouraging positive learning dispositions and self-worth when it does not exhibit messages of non-judgmental critique, process and growth. For example, why certain actions or attainment are admired, or what effort and choices the child could employ in order to improve and develop. By receiving messages at an appropriate level of demand, children can be taught how to assess for, and take, risks in learning and in social interactions, which in turn encourages resilience and determination. Dweck (2006) identifies the importance of 'hard love' (Rose and Doveston, 2008) where setting appropriate and challenging goals in a nurturing environment, within positive and supportive relationships, leads to improved learning dispositions and achievement.

Dweck (2000) further suggests that adults need to understand a child's need to feel valued in order to develop positive self-esteem and a positive learning disposition. A child who has developed a positive learning disposition will exhibit an innate response to a learning experience, working towards agreed goals, and not relegating learning to the mere acquisition of knowledge. Claxton and Carr (2004) further suggest that teachers should understand each child's learning disposition and include this understanding in the teaching and learning opportunities offered in school. In this way, each child can identify, and develop, his or her own disposition. Where teachers adopt formative assessment strategies to identify the next steps in learning, this too can motivate the child to attain specific goals (Hood, 2008). When engaged in identifying such goals, motivation links with goal selection directly as a part of learning disposition and appropriate self-esteem for the child. Yun Dai and Sternberg (2004) suggest the importance of linking emotional and motivational aspects of teaching with cognitive learning, stating that affective and cognitive domains of learning are inseparable. It may be that herein rests the key to the successful impact of learning mentoring: the mentor and teacher interacting

with the child and parent, and outside agencies as appropriate, to help the child develop positive attachments and learning disposition.

2.9 Conclusion and Summary

Researchers have clearly suggested that learning mentoring is a valuable process through which attempts are made to remove barriers to pupils' learning. An understanding of the potential impact of learning mentoring can be gained through searching the theory of mentoring, so that research can be based upon a comprehension of the concept and what conditions have been considered to be most likely to be successful in providing effective mentoring. In Section 2.2 and 2.3 I discussed definitions of mentoring adults and children and I have suggested a tentative working definition in four aspects:

- a culturally-situated hierarchical relationship ;
- a programme of nurture and challenge, emotional support, acceptable values, skills and attitudes, with reflection and appropriate experiences;
- to encourage change in identified areas;
- agreed purposes, time-related, with monitoring for impact.

Most aspects of mentoring apply in both adult and child mentoring situations, being undertaken in relation to the socio-cultural situation of individual settings. In Section 2.4, I have argued that the understanding developed over time has led to the implementation of intervention work with children in need of extra support to help them to attain. The history of supporting disadvantaged children has suggested that improvement of learning was situated within an improvement in their attitudes and an increase in their motivation. The literature reviewed in this section indicated the historical research basis for the adoption of mentoring as an intervention in support of disadvantaged pupils, which provided a basis for the inclusion of mentoring in the work of the EiC and EC projects. This left the identification of the effects of mentoring still to be found but explained why attendance, behaviour and academic progress

became factors which were employed in the evaluation of the impact of learning mentoring in schools.

In Section 2.4, I have indicated that the needs of the disadvantaged child have continued to be seen to relate to poverty but the focus of disadvantage has been widened to encompass any aspect of social, cultural and emotional need. The influence which the family and community exert on a child's development of life skills and chances has been recognised, together with the importance of support for this, or other, barriers to learning being provided early in a child's life as Government initiatives have, over time, developed an acclaim and practice of 'community education'.

I have proposed, from the literature discussed in Section 2.5, that learning mentoring is a vital part of the raft of additional support interventions in use in schools. I have suggested that it is an erroneous belief that evidence of mentee improvement can be singularly based on the quantitative data of pupil attendance, behaviour and attainment, as these cannot provide a full and effective description of a learning mentor project (Section 2.6).

In Section 2.7 I have discussed conditions of effective mentoring. Increasingly, researchers have adopted methods which allow for an understanding of the nature of the mentoring process, particularly in relation to learning mentoring. I have suggested that gaps currently exist in the evidence base regarding the practice and impact of learning mentoring, indicating in Section 2.8 that a socio-constructionist approach could direct research into this, the school being a cultural institution and socio-cultural aspects having an impact upon such initiatives. Interaction within the specific circumstances, situations and opportunities contriving to produce an impact upon learning, the particular staff organisation, ethos and culture, and the wider community of parents and family, cannot be ignored. As a consequence of such social construction, I have proposed a suggestion that, for pupils in school, the 'whole' and the 'few' may have an integral effect upon each other.

As the form and function employed in each mentoring situation and relationship have been found to vary in individual circumstances and settings, I suggest that the effectiveness of learning mentoring could be studied by examining:

- the individually constructed role of the mentor and the relationships between those involved in mentoring, comparing the cultures of different mentoring situations;
- personal characteristics of learning mentors, their characteristics, skills and competencies;
- the process of mentoring provided by the mentors and the strategies employed as appropriate experiences adopted;
- identification of any changes in mentees and evaluation of the relation of mentoring processes to such impact.

I suggest that further study could contribute to the existing evidence base regarding the practice of learning mentoring as it occurs in the primary school context. In Chapter Three I explain the approach and methods which I employed in examining this and identifying what might constitute best learning mentor practice.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design which I adopted to seek answers to my research questions of Chapter One:

- What is the role of primary school learning mentors?
- How is learning mentor practice enacted through strategies which mentors adopt?
- What types of relationships are forged within their roles?
- What facilitates or inhibits the successful impact of mentors on barriers to children's learning?

There are eleven further sections in this chapter. In Sections 3.2 and 3.3 I describe the research design and my methodological framework. The adoption of multiple methods of data-generation is explained in Section 3.4. Ethical considerations in Section 3.5 preview the theory behind my case study approach in Section 3.6. The methods of generating data are explained in Sections 3.7 (interviewing) 3.8 (direct observation) and 3.9 (documentary evidence). I explain my rationale for the selection of the research sample in Section 3.10 and the process of data analysis in Section 3.11.

3.2 Research Design

In order to investigate learning mentoring from the perspective of the participants involved, I employed a case study approach to data generation, each pupil's mentee 'picture' being a case study. The research involved discourse with learning mentors, mentees, their parents and their teachers, the primary method of data generation involving in-depth interviews with these participants in two stages. Individual interviews were supported by direct observation of mentor/mentee situations for each case. In this way, I situated

the interview data within first-hand evidence of how mentoring is practiced in primary schools, validating responses provided in interviews by considering the interaction between the mentors and mentees. Information from my 'field-notes' and the scrutiny of documentation provided a third method of data generation. I then employed 'cross-triangulation' of the data. The aims, methods and target sample of this research are summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2   Research methodology in overview, showing the target samples

Research aims	Research methods	Target samples
1 To gain an understanding of the role and practice of learning mentoring in primary schools: To provide a detailed account of the practice of learning mentoring in primary schools, including: who the mentors are; the frameworks they work within; the policies and practices involved; the administration systems which support the process; their understanding of their own roles within the frameworks.	• Start-of-programme interviews. • Access to supportive artefacts and documents. • Notes taken in the research 'field' and log of research events.	The learning mentors for six mentee primary school children, two to attend each of three primary schools.
2 To understand how mentoring practice is enacted, through strategies and interaction: To provide a detailed account of the mentees, their characteristics and history in mentoring. To gain an insight into mentoring practice being enacted, through targets, strategies and interaction. To gain an insight into the relationships between mentor and mentee.	• Start and end-of-programme interviews. • Stimulus provided by mentees' drawings/mind maps of learning mentors. • Direct observation of mentor work with mentees.	Individual interviews with the six mentees, their parents (mother, father or carer) their mentors and class teachers. Observation of mentor work between the mentors and the six mentees.

Research aims	Research methods	Target samples
3 To understand what facilitates or inhibits the successful impact of learning mentors: To gain an insight into what facilitates or inhibits the successful impact of learning mentors, by examining the perceptions of the impact of mentoring of the participants.	• Start-of-programme and end-of-programme interviews. • Direct observation of mentor work with mentees.	Interviews with mentees, their parents, mentors and class teachers.

Details of the generation of data through this research design are provided in Section 3.3, followed by a justification for adopting these multiple methods in Section 3.4.

3.3   The Methodological Framework

The decisions leading to my choice of the methods, their sampling, analysis and presentation of data, were guided by four main considerations:

- provision of a methodological framework appropriate for answering the research questions;
- the perceived strengths and limitations of employing the different data-gathering techniques;
- the practical constraints of undertaking this study;
- ethical considerations.

A theoretical framework within which the research was conducted was intended to do justice to the socially-constructed nature of learning mentoring (see Chapter Two, Section 2.8). This located the work within a possible research paradigm and suggested appropriate methods of data collection (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995) although I accept that many researchers consider that the relationship between what is termed a 'paradigm', and specific methods, are not as clear-cut as is sometimes suggested. I

considered the implications of two historically accepted distinct research paradigms, which can be presented as 'post-positivist' and 'interpretive' and I next explain different understandings of the nature of reality and knowledge, which was pertinent to my selection of an appropriate research approach.

In post-positivism, as traditionally depicted, understandings of the nature of reality and knowledge are fixed, tangible, existing independently of the researcher and of those participating in the research. Post-positivist researchers consider that reality and knowledge can be finitely established, given rigorous methodological procedures (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). This approach might rely on 'quantitative' research methods, for instance a wide-scale social survey using questionnaires, which would enable an objective researcher to provide 'hard' evidence, upon which to base firm findings (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Bell, 2007).

In contrast to the above, within an interpretive paradigm differing versions of reality and knowledge may be accepted. Each person's experience of reality is subjective to him/herself, which applies as much to the researcher as to the participants. Appropriate interpretive research methods might be 'qualitative', making reference to the individual situations being studied and creating 'rich', 'soft' data from which insights emerge (Brewer, 2000).

The above two descriptions may be considered simplistic and exaggerate the existence of two competing paradigms. They can also amplify the connections between reality and knowledge on the one hand and research methodology on the other. For this reason, some researchers believe in the benefits of a 'flow' between qualitative and quantitative methods (Hammersley, 1996). What appears to be important is that the methods of data-gathering selected should provide the best 'fitness for purpose'. I accepted this consideration in devising my methodological framework.

I believe that reality is socially constructed and therefore is subjected to the circumstances and interpretations of the individual (see Chapter Two, Section

2.8). In the light of this, I rejected post-positivism as an appropriate paradigm for this research. My main focus was to illustrate 'understandings', as well as identifying and describing processes and practices within a socially-constructed learning situation. Recognising the 'fitness for purpose' principle, in order to suggest answers to my research questions, methods were required which would involve gathering data and interpreting these within qualitative parameters. Therefore, the paradigm which I adopted could be described as interpretive. I selected methods of data-gathering which would be most appropriate in providing rich data sufficient for providing insights into the perspectives of the mentors, the mentees, and the other 'actors' significantly involved with the mentor/mentee process (whom I perceived to be the parents and the class teachers). These methodological decisions were also influenced by previous research into learning mentoring (see Chapter Two, Slater and Mansell, 2002; Ridley and Kendall, 2005) which provided descriptions of the perceptions of learning mentoring and did not consider the mentoring process in action, stating that further in-depth research into mentoring was necessary.

To supplement current knowledge, the objective in the present research was to examine actual learning mentor situations and settings, including a desire to detail the process of mentoring. This included examining the learning mentor programmes created, by whom and with what purpose, and detailing the perceptions, experiences and accounts of the participants involved. My intention was to provide a 'trustworthy' description of learning mentoring. By this I mean that the information and opinions gained enabled the compilation of a full and comprehensive 'picture' of the practice of learning mentoring.

Surveying those involved by questionnaire could provide a superficial and possibly 'untrustworthy' view of mentoring, limited as it would be by the respondents' perspectives of their own mentoring knowledge and skills and by the receptive and expressive language abilities of the young primary age children mentees. My decision to further an interpretive stance enabled me to avoid these possible restrictions. My method included undertaking individual confidential interviews with the programme participants, supplemented by

observing the mentoring 'in action' through which I intended to facilitate a depth of understanding which was as representative as possible of the 'reality' of the mentoring encounters. These research methods were selected with careful ethical concerns in mind, which are fully discussed in Section 3.5.

The practical constraints which limited this part-time study were those of time and distance. The sample size was restricted so that the amount of data generated was sufficient to be rigorously analysed and evaluated within the time available for research. Distance between research settings was a constraint because the sample schools needed to be situated within a certain geographical area in order to facilitate my travelling between sites at the times dictated by school timetables. The sampling strategy employed is further discussed in Section 3.10.

An understanding of the strategies used by mentors was sought, together with the interactions which facilitated these and their mode of benefiting mentees. My research was intended to fill the gap in published research regarding data collected from direct pupil observation in primary schools to provide evidence of the mentor/mentee process. The methodology of practising this through a trio of data collection methods is explained in detail next.

3.4   Data-generation Through the Adoption of Multiple Methods

Education researchers frequently adopt more than one method of data generation. The term 'cross-method triangulation' implies that different methods are applied within one research design so that the 'trustworthiness' of the resultant data can be supported. The researcher can 'use multiple sources of evidence to demonstrate convergence of data from all sources' and so 'establish a chain of evidence that links parts together' (Burns, 2000: 476). By this 'methodological pluralism' the benefits of each method are gained while one method may potentially compensate for limitations in another.

Multiple methods of research can also provide 'cross-method validity-raising' (Hobson, 2000). This suggests that, not only does one method help build the understanding of the data gathered by another means, but that the addition of that other method actually can support the interpretation gained from other methods. For instance, observation may help build a rapport between the researcher and the participant and thus benefit the research by increasing the trustworthiness of data later obtained in interviews.

Methodological pluralism was adopted in this research in an attempt to provide as trustworthy as possible an interpretation of mentor/mentee situations. It is possible for an interviewer to construct an interview which succumbs to misinterpretation of the respondent's meaning, perhaps as a result of a lack of knowledge or understanding of the specific cultural or linguistic context of the situation being researched, here being mentoring. In order to provide a fuller picture of social life, some means of directly observing the situation could compensate for these limitations and aid understanding of the perceptions of the interviewees and of the mentoring context being undertaken. In this research, cross-method triangulation ensured that the data generated by the interviewing of participants could be checked against their behaviours in the natural mentoring situations. This involved developing a relationship between researcher and interviewee over time, with the aim of encouraging an atmosphere of trust within which the direct observation of mentoring situations could be comfortably experienced. The use of observation then supported the possibility of considered and trustworthy responses being provided in the data generated from a second stage of interviews. The rapports which developed also increased the potential for participants to offer artefact and documentary evidence to the research. Cross-method validity-raising could thus be said to have been provided and carefully considered, trustworthy responses gained. Data from field-notes, artefacts and documentation were also gathered (see Sections 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9).

3.4.1   Validity in research

Research design should be: trustworthy and credible; able to be confirmed and constituted of dependable data. Such aspects can be defined by context, internal and external validity and reliability. Context validity can be described as construct, seeking agreement between the researcher's theoretical stance and the specific procedures which are applied, and then exploring the extent to which the intended content factor is reflected in the selected measurement (Carmines and Zeller, 1991). Internal validity refers to the rigour with which research is undertaken and the extent to which the researcher takes into account any alternative explanations for causal relationships, if explored. External validity is the extent findings of research can be generalised, although in case study research this may correspond more to 'transferability' of results than generalisation. Reliability suggests that the operations applied are repeatable, while accepting that, in social construct theory, findings are specific to different participants in different cases. Thus, addressing validity can effectively facilitate reliability.

Validity in relation to this study

I addressed the issue of validity by developing a case study protocol in which procedures for applying multiple methods in developing a formal database were identified. I developed a chain of evidence by rigorously gathering and analysing each data source before connecting the pertinent issues to specific evidence, with appropriate citations. I drew on my previous expertise as a researcher and also practised selected instruments in the pilot study. Professional experience as a head teacher meant I had significant expertise in scrutinising documentary evidence and linking emerging themes at a national and local level.

I addressed construct validity through data and methodological triangulation; multiple data sources (cases) enabling multiple measures of the same phenomenon. Such organisation enabled me to analyse 'converging lines of

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enquiry' (Yin, 2009). A data base system was developed so as to be accessible by others, should the system be repeated in future research. The data base system developed comprised four aspects.

Case study notes:

A logbook was organised into separate sections for each school setting. Into this I wrote notes, in chronological order, of: dates when research instruments were used; a diary of informal discussions with participants; their or my queries initiated by our interactions; suggestions initiated by the research. Written notes of discussions held after interviews or observations, and as a result of verification by adult participants of transcripts, were recorded on relevant proformas.

I organised individual files for each mentee's case study in which were stored: permission forms relating to the ethical statement; original notes of interviews and observations in chronological order; transcriptions of the same, complete and categorised for themes and strategy codes, when analysed.

Documents:

Only documentary evidence directly pertinent to the role and practice of learning mentoring was collected. Documentary evidence provided by participant learning mentors was stored in the related mentee's file and was cited in the log and cross-referenced to transcripts as necessary. A list of available documents pertaining to the EC was dated and stored in a separate file with tabulated evidence (see Section 3.9).

Tabular material:

Tables were developed for ease of reference and to ensure completion of research instruments for each participant. Tables included: dates, timings; Dictaphone reference nomenclature for interviews in Stages One and Two of

the research; observations. Grids of overview findings of the six cases were also created.

Narratives:

Initial drafts of interview questions and answers in relation to my research questions were composed which integrated the evidence and enabled tentative initial thematic interpretations of the data generated, through convergence of the different method strands.

I ensured content validity by cross-case analysis, repeatedly exploring the transcripts, searching for matching patterns and themes. I built analytic categories as 'umbrella' themes and compared cases against an initial analysed case, building and revising explanations and ideas in an iterative way. This approach led to further questioning. I developed a descriptive framework for organising all mentee cases against the themes. Adherence to case study protocol (explained above) maintained focus during the analysis stage of the research.

I tentatively addressed transferability (external validity) by indicating commonalities and differences in a logical format across the multiple cases and settings.

Drawings of learning mentors were requested of each mentee. Imagery can be used as a tool for research (Prosser, 1998) and drawings can provide insights into the understandings of adults (Burnett and Gardner, 2006) and of children (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Rudenberg, Jansen and Fridjhon, 2001). Kellogg (1979) examined many drawings from children in 'all parts of the world', however she suggests that using children's drawings as aids to psychologically interpreting their emotions may be a fallible tool. Child art is an indicator of child development, and while not necessarily mimicking reality for the child, can be a source of reference, a 'visually logical' system which represents 'visual thinking'. There are strengths and limitations to the use of

art theory and image-based research. As there appears to be an absence of strong evidence for the employment of drawings as indicators of children's understanding, the mentees' drawings in this research were restricted to being stimuli to facilitate initial discussions between the researcher and the mentees (see Section 3.11).

The four categories of people included in the target sample were those involved with, and could be considered to have an influence upon, the mentoring of the mentee, which were: learning mentors; mentees; the mentees' parents (who could veto their child's involvement); and the mentees' class teachers (being directly affected by having a mentee child in their classes). I included only those groups of participants which could be considered of closest relevance to the mentee cases, since my focus was on the interactions surrounding each child. In being alert to the interpretive nature of this research, I realise that others may have been influential in interacting with the child, for instance head teachers, however it was possible that information relating to the influence of head teachers could be gained through observation and interviews with these four case groups of participants. I provide a consideration of ethical issues in the design of the research relating to these participants next.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

An overarching need in educational and social research is to preserve the rights and welfare of the participants. The processes adopted in research and the decisions for the dissemination of data should ensure that those who take part will suffer no 'harm' by so doing (Burgess, 1989). Although the definitions of 'welfare' and 'harm' can be debated, researchers may agree that they should make every effort not to intentionally inflict physical or emotional hurt, stress or threat to the participants, or affect their privacy or freedom to make choices (Cohen et al., 2000). What is possible in one situation is not attainable in another and there is no agreement amongst educational and social science researchers about any one highway for facilitating such welfare issues when

undertaking research (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995) but it is of paramount importance that ethics are considered and I adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) in undertaking this research.

Prior to beginning this fieldwork I developed an ethical statement, which identified the considerations for arranging access to the research and for approaching participants (see Appendix 3). I ensured the privacy of the participants involved, making efforts to recognise the process of learning mentoring without influencing that process as it happened. This was assured by the researcher maintaining confidentiality by: treating information gathered confidentially; storing data in a secure situation; and providing pseudonyms for those involved, including the institutions with which they were affiliated.

Informed consent

The consent of all taking part was gained within certain parameters. It is a matter for debate regarding whether it is practical, or even possible, to fully inform research participants about the nature of the study being undertaken. Relating full knowledge to participants might influence their responses and thus compromise the data and the adoption of 'reasonably informed consent' is considered acceptable in some cases (Cohen et al., 2000). Some researchers consider this defensible if the welfare of the participants is not jeopardised and benefits to 'knowledge' are considered to outweigh the detriments to the individual.

The BERA (2004) guidelines suggest that, wherever possible[13], the participants in research are informed of what is requested of them and that they give their free and unconditional consent to this. I attempted to fully inform potential participants of the nature of the study. To aid potential participants in deciding whether or not to participate in this study, they were

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[13] I state 'wherever possible' because, in research using covert observation, there would be an inherent lack of consent. This is considered in subsection 3.8.2.

provided with the broad aims of the research, the methods which were to be employed, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. I checked consent at appropriate times during this longitudinal study. I appreciate that full knowledge may not be attainable if the data lead the researcher into areas which could not be anticipated at the outset of the work; it would then be important for new information to be provided to participants at such a time as is necessary in the data-gathering period. No prospective participants withheld consent and no such unforeseen areas were encountered during the process of the research.

Through a focus on 'picture drawing' the practice of learning mentors, I attempted to represent participants' views as trustworthily as possible in two principal ways (see Section 3.8). First, in all interactions with participants I respected their views and preferences. For example, when a learning mentor was reviewing a transcription of her interview for accuracy she confirmed the content, but requested that recorded hesitations be removed, which I interpreted as a wish to 'appear in a good light'. Where such amendments to the text did not affect the clarity or meaning of information gained in the interview, I judged it appropriate to accede to the request. When another participant requested that a section of her interview transcript be withheld from quotation, further discussion revealed this to be because she had mentioned a mentee's personal inadequacies. We were then able to agree that, while the information may be relevant to the study, it would not be reported as a direct quotation.

Second, I represented participants' perceptions by routinely checking the accuracy of my transcriptions with them, both in the record of what was said and more importantly my interpretation. Transcript evidence from interviews was generally clear, for example, a parent stated:

> I used to judge others alright but judge myself harshly. It took the school to let me see what I was doing wrong (Stage Two interview, 15.07.08).

However, interpretation can be less clear, for example when I suggested an interpretation of this in relation to the role of learning mentors in liaison with parents this prompted her to add '*they've helped with the whole family'*.

I asked a learning mentor (Karen) where her role would sit on a continuum from being a friend to being a disciplinarian. Her initial response was 'half of both', to which she had added,

> I try and tell them in a way that they would understand, and that it's for the best for them, and that's why I'm telling them – 'you're going to get into trouble for this from the teacher so please don't do it', you know in that kind of way (Stage Two interview, 23.06.08).

When I shared my interpretation of this with Karen, namely that it was important to her to provide 'clear boundaries' for mentees and to undertake a preventative role, she agreed.

Similarly I checked the response of teachers, for instance:

> Researcher: In school, do you think it (learning mentoring)'s brought any benefits?
> Teacher: Definitely, it's definitely benefited the children that have had the learning mentor programme you know they go out of Y6 more confident they, you know, they've been, had, that specific learning directed at them and they've had one to one time to chat which obviously in a class of thirty-seven you don't get that much time for so, so they've got the children that need this extra input, they're getting it. I think it's definitely... yeah (Stage One interview, 11.12.07).

I clarified with the teacher that she was implying that support by para-professionals effected change in the child, which was evidenced in improved confidence in school. This was facilitated by three factors: addressing specific learning needs; individual support; and appropriately selected children.

3.6 Case Study Approach

In this Section I provide an overview of the case study approach adopted and my rationale for its adoption. In deciding upon the methods appropriate for my research design, I set the parameters of a 'case', identifying which criteria designated the work as 'case study research'. The data-gathering in this research maintained elements of ethnography by involving me in the school communities for an extended period of time, up to a year, becoming a regular visitor to those schools and documenting the social interactions of real situations, however I did not participate in the settings being studied (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). It may be that Brewer's definition of ethnography could be applied to some extent in this context:

> ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social *meanings* and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer, 2000: 6).

In describing the situations in which I was present, although not taking an active part, I identified a 'focus unit' as one mentor/mentee social situation. Some researchers consider that any focus unit of research can be described as a 'case', it being implied that, whatever research method is used, the work can be termed a 'case study' (Stake, 1994; Stoecker, 1991). Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1980) suggest, rather, that case study is an 'umbrella' term, because it can encompass more than one research method. Yin (2009) stresses that, whatever research method is adopted, the major factor in deciding this should be its congruity with the research questions being asked, not an affiliation to a specific approach.

The case is the 'bounded system' (Stake, 1995) within which the study takes place and complexities are described. Thus, it is suggested that case study can be a research paradigm in itself (Simons, 1996) or it can be identified as a distinct research method (Hammersley 1992). For Stake (op. cit.) the focus should not be too general for the term 'case' to apply. Cohen et al. (2000) define the characteristics of case study as empirical research, with qualitative methods, using participant observation and in-depth interviews, in natural settings and with the researcher seeking to interpret the findings of the data gathered. This description does not fit my research method, as the observations undertaken were as non-participatory as possible and the interviews, whilst in depth, could be termed 'part-structured' (Hobson, 2004) as discussed in more depth in Section 3.8. It is within the wider description of a case study as a focus unit that 'case study' is adopted in my research. It sits within what Yin (1994) identified as 'descriptive' case study and Bassey (1999) termed 'picture-drawing'. I consider the case to be the individual mentee, which involves the interactions between the mentee, mentor, parent and class teachers which relate to the process of learning mentoring, and their perceptions of the process itself. In accepting this, the people involved in the research were the primary data-gathering 'instruments' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Limitations of a case study approach

There are limitations to case study as an approach to research. It can be time-consuming, generating great amounts of data which are complex in analysis and thus lack rigour (Yin, 1994), being difficult to generalise the findings to other situations. In adopting an interpretive paradigm I did not intend that my research would be comparable with a wide population. I suggest that all situations are reliant upon the social constructs of the individuals involved and the cultures in which they operate therefore it may not be possible to find exactly similar conditions for comparison to those being studied. I adopted case study as an interpretive approach and, as such, did not expect to provide generalised 'truths' (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Stake, 2000).

Strengths of a case study approach

Schofield (2000) and Anderson and Arsenault (1998) suggest that the use of multiple cases can increase the benefits of cross-case analysis. My aim was to generate data from different settings and cases to facilitate the exploration of significant features of each case. Miles and Huberman state:

> one aim of studying multiple cases is to increase generalisability, reassuring yourself that the events and processes in one well-described setting are not wholly idiosyncratic (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 172).

The findings of multiple cases can be compared in order to 'construct a worthwhile story' (Bassey, 1999). I made tentative judgements from the insights gained into mentoring practice, 'fuzzy generalisations', as termed by Bassey (op. cit.). These were intended to provide 'deep' descriptions which were analysed to create a 'working hypothesis' about the learning mentor/mentee process (Lincoln and Guba, 2000) relating more than two 'sufficiently congruent' cases. Inferences may be made to 'theoretical positions' considered as inherent to the cases studied (Bassey, 1999) and recurring themes can be identified if extensive data are gathered from multiple cases. By such means I could generalise within cases, formulating what Stake calls 'petite generalisations' (1995) by the assimilation of the data findings to my own experiences. Stake calls these 'naturalistic generalisations', which readers can interpret as having 'happened to themselves' (1995). Lincoln and Guba (op. cit.) would disagree, arguing that this idea places the efficacy of the research upon the reader, not the findings.

It may be that in order to maximise the potential of case study research, the researcher should consider whether the cases selected are typical to the wider population being studied. Schofield argues that cases should be selected for their typicality (Schofield, op. cit.). Others, however, consider this

to be unrealistic, stating that any population consists of too many varied contexts for a case to be considered 'typical' (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000) and what is needed is for the level of 'typicality' to be ascertained and clarified by the researcher. Some educationalists agree that, with the use of multiple cases and extensive data-gathering, further understanding can be gained than existed previously from analysis of typical or atypical cases (Hammersley, 1992; Stake, 1994). The multiple data-gathering methods which I adopted are described in the next three sections.

3.7 Data-generating Methods: Interviewing

It was important for me to adopt a style of interview which would provide for iterative interpretation of the data generated. Methods of interview are often categorised into 'structured' or 'formal' and 'unstructured' or 'informal' types, considered next.

3.7.1 Structure in an Interview

Interviewing can be described as:

- structured – interview content and procedures are prepared in advance, identical questions are used, questions are delivered in a set order, questions are usually 'closed'[14] and all questions in the schedule are presented to all interviewees;
- unstructured – can appear 'conversational', the questioning includes issues rather than set questions, questioning is open, inviting free-flowing responses.

A range of interview techniques can be employed between these two extremes of structure, depending on the data required (Hobson and Townsend, 2010). An informal style is often congruous with an unstructured approach, however the degree of structure and the degree of formality in

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[14] Closed questions usually indicate a 'yes or no' response, without an opportunity to extrapolate in reply.

interviewing are not necessarily synonymous and different styles could be employed at different points along the 'structured/un-structured continuum' of an interview.

Three potential benefits of structured interviews can be identified. First, it is easier to ensure that all aspects of the researcher's agenda are covered in a structured interview than in an unstructured interview. Second, participants may be more likely to respond similarly to different researchers if they are being asked to respond to identical questions. Particularly if this is combined with a formal style, there would be minimal opportunity for the interviewer to influence the interviewee, thus the approach could be said to be more 'reliable', as the interview could be replicated. Lastly, structured interview questions are frequently numbered and coded, enabling swift analysis of the data collected.

Conversely, some of these factors can be said to be detrimental to obtaining trustworthy responses, in five ways. First, structured interviewing can create a situation where the interviewee is not given an opportunity to express individual responses which could be vital to the issues being researched. Second, despite employing identical questions, the researcher can influence the interviewee's response by posing questions with differing emphasis or tone of voice, according to his/her own stance on the importance of the issues included. Third, the interviewer who employs a structured interview may appear to be more 'interrogator than interviewer' (Dyer, 1995) leading to the interviewee seeking to protect him/herself by providing guarded replies, which would then reduce the trustworthiness of the data gathered. Furthermore, questions could be interpreted differently by individual respondents and, as structured interviews do not allow for deviance from the questions set, this cannot be accommodated within the structured interview method. Lastly, a time-limit is sometimes applied in structured interviews, which can restrict the data obtained.

Overall, it could be said that structured interviews, while attaining the responses required in *content* by the researcher, do not achieve *depth* of response. In any interview, as with other research methods, the possibility exists of receiving inaccurate or dishonest responses. I would argue that more accurate responses could be encouraged by the development of a relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Within such interaction the respondent may take the interview more seriously than in a structured situation. Punch (1986) and Burgess (1989) agree that an accessible and equitable relationship between the researcher and the researched can be a key to undertaking an effective interview: 'pivotal to the whole relationship between researcher and researched …is access and acceptance' (Punch, 1986: 12). An interactive relationship enables a rapport to take place in the interview situation, and opens up the potential for the interviewee to gain trust in the interviewer, thus encouraging honest responses.

A further advantage of a less structured interview is that the interviewer and respondents are not limited by only discussing predetermined questions: the interviewer can follow responses with further prompts and questions not devised prior to the interview, and the interviewee is able to frame his/her replies in an individual way, thus allowing for personal experiences to be shared and perhaps for the data generated to be more trustworthy. Both of these advantages can also, however, be considered to limit the interview process. First, being able to deviate from defined questions can create the potential for 'going off track' and data may not enable the intention of the research to be met. The 'free-flow' aspect of unstructured interviews can restrict their reliability, as the dialogue could not be replicated by another researcher[15]. Second, as in structured interviews, the body language of the researcher can create a specific response in the interviewee, whose reply could be counted as trustworthy but may be more affected if a relationship is encouraged. Furthermore, interaction between the interviewer and interviewee can be subject to a 'halo effect' (Thorndyke, 1920): a perception of positive

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[15] In accepting in this thesis that the social situation is specific to the participants, I would argue that no two interviews can be identical.

traits in the interviewee by the interviewer reduces the interviewer's awareness of his/her negative comments or traits (or vice versa). Similarly, the interviewee's responses can be influenced by a desire to appear 'in a good light' and it can be difficult for an interviewer who has a rapport with an interviewee to distance him/herself sufficiently to be able to identify when the interviewee is trying to appear favourable. Given the above evaluation of different approaches to interviewing and recognising that all types of interview inevitably have their limitations, I selected an appropriate structure to be employed in this research which is consistent with the interpretive and case study approach being followed, explained next.

3.7.2 <u>Selecting an appropriate degree of structure of interview</u>

It was important that my interview method facilitated the inclusion of areas which were capable of providing answers to my research questions into mentoring processes and practices. In accepting that mentoring is socially situated (see Chapter Two, Section 2.8) the interviews were devised in order to access the social interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing discourse as it occurred: for this reason, a totally structured interview was not appropriate. Replication of the work by another researcher could not be envisaged, but trustworthiness of response was sought. I posed pre-written interview questions, while allowing flexibility in order to accommodate potential variable circumstances in each case being studied. A totally unstructured method was therefore not selected.

I adopted a combination of structured and unstructured questions in the interviews in order to elicit responses to all necessary questions while allowing the respondents to speak reasonably freely. Such a method is usually termed 'semi-structured' and I refer to it more specifically as 'part-structured' (Hobson and Townsend, 2010). I included 'structure' and 'focus' questions. The initial main interview questions were structured 'closed' questions, which served to acclimatise the participants to the interview situation. Identical focused 'open' questions were then asked of all interviewees, in order to elicit personal

responses in extended answers to the research questions. Research literature into mentoring was consulted in devising the questions[16].

In this way, the interview questions were designed in a similar fashion to the 'hierarchical focusing' described by Tomlinson (1989) but with specific differences. A hierarchical focused interview can be said to have two phases:

- presenting initial general questions to which the interviewee would respond;
- asking secondary 'prompt' questions if some identified areas were not freely addressed by the respondent.

Hierarchical focusing thus ensures that all aspects of the interview considered necessary by the researcher are included and responses can gain greater 'depth'. In my research, 'prompt' questions were planned to follow the focus questions. These were asked, when necessary, to encourage the interviewee, particularly if there were aspects of the interview agenda which s/he had not included. This enabled me to remain in control of the interaction but allowed for individual expression from each interviewee (for instance, 'can you tell me a little more about that?' or pausing). Gillham (2004) states:

> your (unobtrusive) control is essential if you are going to achieve
> your research aims, i.e. you need to 'steer' for the *direction* and
> also ensure that *key points* or topics are covered (Gillham,
> 2004: 45, original emphases).

3.7.3 Styles of Interview

From my explanation in subsection 3.7.1, the styles of interviewing can be identified as encouraging different types of responses from the interviewee;

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[16] Interview schedules developed for research by Hobson and Kington (2002) were accessed by kind permission of Kendall (Ridley and Kendall, 2001). A further schedule, adopted by Rose, Doveston, Emly and Bonnett (2006) was also considered in this study. Neither schedules were replicated.

structured interviews are usually associated with a formal style, while unstructured interviews may be informal, however care has to be taken to avoid influence by the character and style of approach adopted by the researcher. When conducting multiple interviews, five factors can aid trustworthiness, which are:

- seeking similar environmental settings for all interviews;
- adopting a similar approach in interaction with all respondees ;
- recording by audio or video recorder;
- not appearing to be too familiar with/distant from the interviewee;
- not displaying emotion to responses which may suggest the researcher's own perspective of the issue in question.

These factors can also limit the interview, however. First, recording interviews can 'constrain the respondent' if undertaken too overtly (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 281). Second, although it is probably not possible to eliminate personal considerations when undertaking an interview, care should be taken not to 'lead' the subject into 'right' replies by adopting too friendly or familiar an approach. In my research, an attempt was made to minimise the 'researcher effect' while still putting the interviewee at his/her ease by asking closed questions first (for example, numbers of children in class). Prompts and probes were kept to a minimum, and care was taken to provide similar wording to that offered by the interviewee, in order not to influence or alter his/her intended response. I offered the school-situated respondents the option of a tape recorded interview in order to obtain an accurate record of the responses made: all accepted this except one teacher. I adopted telephone interviews with the parents with the intention of this being less intrusive and more likely to elicit responses than taped face-to-face interviews. This proved to be helpful as all parents agreed to be interviewed. When telephoning parents I recorded the replies in note form, with his/her knowledge, and checked the responses with the interviewee for accuracy at the end of the conversation.

Transcriptions of the recordings or notes were undertaken as quickly as possible after the interview, while the conversations remained fresh in my mind. Checking for accuracy with the participant at the earliest convenience after transcribing the interview was a vital part of my method, aimed at reducing any error caused by misinterpretation of the interviewee's intentions. This was part of the ethical framework adopted, provided the opportunity for the participant to make necessary alterations or extractions from the transcriptions, and was aided in practice by undertaking a pilot project, in order to develop the appropriate interview style needed. All participant learning mentors and teachers reviewed the transcripts of interviews and I checked what would be transcribed with mentees at the end of their interviews.

3.7.4   Pilot Research

The structure and style of the Stage One and Stage Two interviews were refined by undertaking a pilot study which was conducted during the spring of 2007. It was undertaken in my primary school. I included one learning mentor and two mentees, both in Year Six, a parent of each of the mentees and their class teachers. One mentee had just completed her mentoring programme, for improving social awareness and social skills; one was still undergoing a programme aimed at 'improving confidence'. Each mentee was interviewed for ten minutes. The interview with a learning mentor lasted thirty-five minutes. Discussions with parents and teacher were shorter (fifteen minutes, twenty-five and thirty minutes respectively). I explained my ethical stance to the participants.

The pilot study provided three advantages. First, it facilitated practice for me, as researcher, in presenting questions in an appropriate technique. Second, it enabled me to carefully phrase the questions, for instance I was able to refine appropriate wording of relevant prompts. After each pilot interview I checked the respondent's responses with him/her to clarify that I had perceived and noted their responses with accuracy. Transcriptions were written soon

afterwards. These were analysed for whether the questions met the needs of my research questions. Undertaking these transcriptions enabled me to gain practice in transcribing for accuracy and in calculating an appropriate time allocation for the actual interviews and their transcriptions. Third, the pilot study enabled me to practice a level of informality in interviewing while maintaining a certain 'distance' from participants. I realised that this could have been difficult to achieve as I was already familiar with the respondents, being in a position of leadership and known by the learning mentor and mentees who participated in the pilot study.

I also practised observation and field-note methods (see subsections 3.8 and 3.9) with the same sample of participants. I appreciated that familiarity could have affected the pilot research findings but the pilot was undertaken in order to identify and practice aspects of the research methods and the findings were not integral to those of the study in other settings. Undertaking the pilot study in my own school setting also helped me to remain distant from the schools in which the sample participants were located.

3.8   Data-generating by Direct Observation

In order to accomplish my aim of examining the practice of the role of a primary school learning mentor, and the relationships forged within that, it was necessary to supplement the data generated from interviews by studying the interactions which constituted learning mentoring. This also provided a check on the perceptions gained from the participants. The following consideration of observation as a research method helped me to define the type of observation which was relevant for this.

3.8.1 <u>A definition of observation, its strengths and limitations</u>

Observation has been defined in many ways, including 'a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place' (Kumar, 1999: 105). Kumar describes

'watching and listening' as two elements of observation. Gillham (2000) adds a third factor to these: questioning people in the natural situation being observed. Observation is a technique which is adopted in natural situations. The researcher does not attempt to hypothesise or experiment in observing, but enquires into 'live' situations (Cohen et al., 2000).The data generated is 'first hand', and could not be gained in any other way (Whyte,1981).

Within ethnographic research, focusing on the natural situation as created in a specific setting, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that adopting observation as a research method includes four main elements. In deciding on a preferred type of observation (Gill and Johnson, 1991; Scott and Usher, 1999) a researcher applies these four elements:

- a strong emphasis on the nature of the social phenomena being studied;
- unstructured data;
- adoption of a small number of cases;
- analysis by interpreting meanings and functions of the human actions involved.

The adoption of direct observation is subject to strengths and limitations. A major strength of observation for my research was that it allowed me to encounter natural settings, witnessing at first-hand the behaviour exhibited and the relationships involved in the scenes being observed. This enabled identification of mentoring strategies, which may not have been identified in discussion with the participants themselves. It also allowed for the monitoring for consistency of the interactions which the participants reported in interviews.

A limitation of direct observation is that it is extremely time-consuming, in practice and in analysis. This restricted the size of my sample although I designed the research with the intention that my selected sample of observations was sufficient to pursue consideration of the research questions.

To some extent, I also alleviated the restriction of time by the use of multiple methods (see Section 3.4) which helped me to ward against a potential 'Hawthorne effect': participants altering their behaviour as a consequence of the presence of an observer. The longevity of the research and the timing of interviews prior to observations helped participants to feel comfortable in my presence and to behave as normally as possible, aimed at decreasing the 'observer effect' (Gillam, 2000).

Third, it was possible that I could have been affected by what I observed and attempted to effect change on it. The pilot project (see subsection 3.7.4) was useful in limiting this effect, as it afforded me recent experience in direct observation. The main two ways of conducting observation are explained in the next subsection.

3.8.2   <u>Modes of direct observation: overt and covert, participant or non-participant</u>

Any observation can be 'overt' or 'covert' and the researcher can participate or be 'non-participant' in the setting being observed. As with the structure of interviews, these definitions may be simplistic as differing degrees of 'overtness' and 'participation' may be employed (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Gold, 1958). The level of overtness in observation relates to whether the observer is being open and frank about the observation or is working covertly, with only those who provide access to the arena of research being studied (often termed the 'gatekeepers') being aware of the research occurring. An advantage of covert observation is that the people being observed continue to behave naturally during the observations. Covert observation can, however, lead to conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas.

The participants in my research were in possession of information about the research intentions and were taking part in the research interviews; therefore, covert research by the same observer would not have been possible (and the study was restricted to just one researcher). Consideration of ethical issues

supported my desire/intention that the participants should gain the fullest access possible to information, in order to encourage trustworthy responses (see Section 3.5). Therefore, I adopted an overt style of observation.

Observers can participate in the scene being observed to varying degrees (Gold, 1958) as befits the data being generated (Gillham, 2000). Participant observation is often descriptive, interpretive and subjective. It emphasises meaning and interpretation, it is mainly informal and the researcher can be flexible about the information collected, analysing by qualitative interpretation. The observer may make descriptive notes about what is observed, as active participation can limit note-taking during the observation. Such notes would subsequently be refined. At the other extreme, non-participatory observation can be described as detached, structured, objective and formal. A highly structured data schedule may be used, devised by prior piloting and focusing on the times and frequency of specific behaviours of the subjects. This is frequently scored on an observation grid in a specific sampling way, providing for quantitative rather than qualitative analysis. Nasen and Golding (1998) suggest that a total absence of social interaction in observation is impossible to achieve, but the observed session must not be affected to the point of making observation meaningless. There are implications for the researcher to practice care when observing.

This dichotomy of non-participant styles of observation is simplistic, not allowing for the complexity of social situations and individual differences in participants. It is possible that a continuum exists from fully involved to wholly detached observer and the styles and methods of observation would be selected to meet the needs of the research at hand, within the social settings concerned. In recognition of the need to influence the data as little as possible, I adopted a non-participant approach to observation. The degree of non-participation was a matter for consideration and I accepted that I could request distance from a situation but not completely withdraw from it (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) while allowing interaction to take place as naturally as possible. This approach made it possible for me to take notes

during the observations; a strength which enabled the data generated to be as accurate as possible.

It has been suggested that the development of a relationship between participants and the researcher would be different for each observation, which would present a variable of 'differential validity' (Hobson, 2000) in the accuracy of the data thus produced. For this reason, I consciously attempted to adopt a similar level of rapport for each observation and in general interaction with each participant. In recognition of the young age of the mentees involved, I considered that this was best pursued in observations by the observer not participating in the exchange, if at all possible, although I accepted that the children could not completely ignore my presence. In any situation in school which involves young children, the presence of another adult may affect 'their world'.

3.9   Documentary Evidence

As well as data generated by interviews and observations, a third source of evidence in my research was documentation and artefacts, in three modes. First, in field-notes I recorded incidents and situations which occurred at the time of the interviews and observations, these being as accurate as possible and useful for my transcriptions. At observations I included strategies which the learning mentors appeared to be employing. Through scrutiny of the scripts I devised a list of strategies which I checked with the mentors, analysing the field-notes taken at each observed mentoring session (see an example in Appendix 3.9).

Second, I maintained an up-to-date log of pertinent events during the course of the research. The notes included the participants' views, and comments from other staff members which had a bearing on the learning mentor project at the schools involved (see Appendix 3.9). Third, I scrutinised documents and examined artefacts (for instance, photographs) which were offered as evidence of the mentoring policies and practices by the interviewees. These

afforded me a check on the consistency of the data generated by interview and observation, often being volunteered by participants, for instance the type of pupil assessments adopted in monitoring learning mentoring. This source of evidence was a supportive strength to my study and I avoided the potential weakness of obtaining only selective documentation by requesting items which were not voluntarily offered (no items were withheld).

3.10   Sampling and Application of the Research Methods in Practice

Four parameters were taken into consideration in my strategy for selecting the participants for inclusion in this research:

- facilitating data generation;
- providing examples of mentoring from a variety of types of schools;
- sampling a range of mentees (that is, with different ages and a variety of barriers to their learning);
- facilitating the generation of data from the maximum number of participants possible within the time-frame of the research.

3.10.1   Selection of the sample

In accepting the suggestion, discussed in Section 3.6, that the study of more than one case can provide robust evidence (Stake, 1995 and Yin, 1994) six cases were selected for this research. This sample size was small but it has been found that depth of information can overcome such a limitation (Gillham, 2000). Studying six mentees allowed children to be included with a variety of reasons for their inclusion in a learning mentor programme. These mentees were studied for my interest in their individual cases (Stake, 1995) and for the potential to compare and contrast the findings between them, as I intended to follow case study parameters and to seek for themes and generalisations within and across the researched cases.

Although I was a head teacher in a school within the EC in which the study was undertaken (see Chapter One, Section 1.3) and knew the schools which were included in the study, I did not have prior knowledge of the mentors nor the mentees who participated. My findings were therefore not liable to any issues associated with the potential limitation caused by familiarity. A multi-site sample was adopted in an attempt to increase the benefits of cross-case analysis (see Section 3.6) while no claims were made to typicality of the population of all primary schools or of all learning mentor/mentee situations and relationships (see Section 3.6). The criteria used to designate the sample ensured that:

- the sample schools accepted primary age children;
- all schools were located within the EC under study;
- all schools were within my local geographical area;
- two mentees attended each of three schools.

These criteria were adopted in order to: locate the study in one socio-economic area; provide comparison of provision within the same schools as well as across settings; concentrate on younger mentees; and provide for efficient use of the researcher's time travelling between settings.

Securing access

A policy of obtaining informed consent was strictly maintained with all participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). An initial discussion was undertaken with a senior Local Authority representative to obtain agreement for the research to take place. Initial contact with schools in the geographical area was made through the head teachers of the eleven primary schools in my EC network. I undertook conversations introducing the scope and purposes of the research, and followed these with individual interviews with head teachers who expressed an interest in participating. A part-structured head teacher interview schedule was devised (see Appendix 3.10) each head teacher receiving an informative copy before the interview took place. The schedule

was designed to generate data about the setting up, scope, and structure of the learning mentoring projects which had then been in existence for three years in each school. One head teacher preferred to be interviewed by telephone, all other interviews being undertaken 'face to face' in the respective schools in an attempt to put the head teacher at ease. The interviews lasted from half to one hour, being timetabled in an informal setting after school hours in order to reduce the potential for interruptions and work pressures on the head teachers.

After the needs of the research were discussed, the head teacher considered whether or not s/he and his/her staff would be willing to take part and I confirmed the suitability of the school for the research, from the information given. This provided an initial trawl of ten possible schools. A decision was taken not to include infant schools where the head teachers were unsure of their potential intake of mentees for the coming academic year. This reduced the possible sample of schools to seven. Of these seven schools, four head teachers remained interested in further involvement with the research. During the summer term, 2007, individual initial meetings were held with each of these head teachers. A summary of the intentions of the research was forwarded in a letter, and the head teachers signed forms indicating their agreement for the school to participate.

The head teachers indicated which learning mentors were to be involved in the study. As there were no male learning mentors in these schools, the sample was restricted to female mentors only. This compared well with the gender of learning mentors nationally, however concerns regarding this may exist and such issues are discussed in Chapter Six. In negotiating access with school staff, I held individual discussions about the project with learning mentors. An explanatory letter about the research was given to the learning mentors who expressed an interest in participating, which outlined the structure and purposes of the study and contained a 'Code of Agreed Safeguards' for staff and parents, in line with my ethical statement (see Section 3.5).

I explained that my thesis would reflect mentoring as understood by the researcher, taking into account the data collected, and that participants could add their own views if they wished. All data would be securely maintained, with access only by the researcher, the participants and the researcher's supervisor. In this way, respect for the welfare of the participants was maintained (Cohen et al., 2000; Bassey, 1999). Participants were informed that confidentiality would only be breached if it was necessary for the safety or security of the participant concerned. At this point, one learning mentor withdrew her interest: the remaining learning mentors in three schools provided a sufficient sample of mentors for this research.

3.10.2   <u>The sample selected and duration of data-gathering</u>

My research was conducted in two junior schools and one primary. The entry criteria set by the EC for allocating learning mentor programmes to children were applied by each school, which provided comparability in the research undertaken (see Appendix 1). Learning mentors in each of the three schools were asked to select two mentees for inclusion in the research against these criteria:

- pupils just starting or near the start of their mentor programmes - *to enable tracking of response from participants over the duration of the programme*;
- pupils whose class teachers and parents could be approached and probably would be interested in the research - *in order to increase the positive response in commitment to the research and to reduce the likelihood of drop-out within the time-frame allowed;*
- pupils with defined different criteria of need - *in order to provide insight into mentees within a range of barriers to their learning.*

My research involvement with schools extended from summer 2007 to May 2008; a clear data-trail timetable over that time is provided in Appendix 3. In

Table 3.10.2 I indicate the number of participants in the research sample and their involvement with each research method over that time. The total time in which I was involved with each school differed according to each setting because the duration of observations differed, and interviews conducted in a part-structured manner did not take exactly the same amount of time. Furthermore, discussions with participants were sometimes necessary in order to clarify or agree transcriptions and details regarding events and observations undertaken.

Table 3.10.2   <u>The samples selected and timing of the data gathering</u>

Research method	Achieved sample	Timings
Part-structured interviews	Two mentees in each of three schools; the five learning mentors; seven[17] class teachers; six parents. Start of- and early-programme and post-programme interviews were undertaken with each participant: 40 interviews in total.	Stage One interviews: July to December, 2007. Stage Two interviews: June and July, 2008. Interviews were of 15 to 35 minutes duration.
Observation	Three mentee/mentor sessions were observed with four mentees. Two sessions were observed with two mentees who completed their programmes earlier than the end of the research period (a discussion with the mentor took the place of their third observations). All observations were dated across the duration of the mentoring programmes.	Mentee/mentor sessions were observed between July, 2007 and June, 2008. Observations were each of 25 or 30 minutes duration.
Documentary analysis	Mentee interviews were augmented by drawings and/or mind maps of learning mentors. Planning documents, targets set and examples of mentoring work were obtained. 'Field-notes' were written throughout the research period.	Documents and artefacts were collected from June 2007 to July 2008.

[17] One of the six mentees was transferred to a different class during the data gathering period, and therefore was taught by two class teachers, making seven teachers in total for six mentees.

The next participants to be accessed were the pupil mentees and their parents, for whom the learning mentors were the gatekeepers, agreeing with the head teachers which mentees would be appropriate for inclusion in the research, and forwarding my explanatory letters and consent forms to the children's parents and class teachers. In one school the head teacher also was involved in this. Letters and consent forms, similar to those devised for adult participants, were available for the pupil participants. While these were initially intended to be explanatory of the research, it soon became clear that, due to the young age and maturity level of these children, this literature would be too complex to be understood by most of the mentees. In practice, therefore, they were used for one child only. For the other five children, information was abridged to a six bullet-point list of information which I verbally explained to each child. Each mentee was given the opportunity to sign the list in agreement of the research (five of the six children took this opportunity).

I undertook appropriately frequent verbal checks between interviews to ascertain the participants' continued agreements to participate in the research, the parents providing assurances for themselves and for their children. In this way, the participants were provided with reassurance and I attempted to gain, and keep, their trust in myself and in the research process.

3.11   The Process of Analysis

In agreeing a process of analysis for my qualitative data I considered two initial strategies: 'analytic induction' and 'grounded theory'. Analytic induction is understood to rely on the definition of a problem and the subsequent testing-out of possible theories in explanation of this. It is suggested that this strategy is considerably demanding (Bryman and Burgess, 1994) involving repeated examination of appropriate cases until no further cases are found which fit the stated theory and it could not be appropriately used here. Grounded theory relies on the generation of categories which 'fit' the data, further research being undertaken to check against these until the ideas are

'saturated'. The categories are then used as criteria against which other issues are cross-checked, thus reducing the data, displaying the result and drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Bryman (2008) suggests that coding areas of data can lead to the evidence being broken up and fragmented, which I intended to avoid in this research.

While the adoption of grounded theory would have enabled me to use comparison and cross-checking of data in the analysis of this research, I have preferred a descriptive analytical process as a means of providing 'narrative analysis'. I generated insights from data as the research progressed, which were then used to deepen the understandings gained, for example I determined the foci of the post-programme interviews by analysis of the previously generated data. Constant reading and checking of the data was undertaken over time in two stages. Table 3.11a shows that at Stage One I considered the data gathered from the initial interviews and the observations undertaken. A developmental approach was used, examining all of the data relating to each individual mentee. This provided an understanding of initial descriptions of each of the six mentee cases. An approach similar to grounded theory was adopted in order to create a theory that would 'fit and work' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is, it fitted the situation studied and provided a suitable explanation of the behaviour under study. I scrutinised field-note transcripts to identify strategies which the learning mentors applied. I then checked the categories with the learning mentors and ensured I had a workable list of strategies which had been employed and against which I could explain the learning mentor work. This analysis is presented in discussion of the findings in Chapters Four and Five, and my interpretation of the impact of the findings in Chapter Six.

In Stage Two I designed and undertook interviews and analysed the findings, describing the impact within each mentee case as perceived by the case groups of participants. I compared the mentors' understandings of the effectiveness of their learning mentoring and then identified variability within the perceptions of the different groups of participants. This enabled me to

suggest conclusions regarding the impact of learning mentoring and the best means of undertaking effective learning mentoring in primary schools.

Table 3.11a   Stages of analysis

Stage of analysis	Areas analysed	Analysis and presentation of findings
Stage One	Start of- and early-programme interviews with each individual from four groups of participants for each mentee. Drawings of learning mentors by each mentee facilitated interaction between researcher and mentee. Observations of learning mentor sessions for each mentee. Consideration of documents and artefacts disclosed to the researcher.	Analysis of data to enable/support discussion of each case in terms of the interaction of the four groups involved, and the policies and practices of mentors and class teachers. Writing of the 'story' of each mentee case, and the relationships and interactions experienced by the participants involved with each mentee. Categorising the strategies used by learning mentors to address targets. Cross-referencing of information to interviews. Cross-referencing of information to interviews.
Stage Two	Post-programme interviews for each mentee. The three school settings and the six mentee cases.	Analysis of the data gathered for each mentee, to enable discussion of how the role of the learning mentors developed. Identification of impact of mentoring in each case. Comparing and contrasting the three school settings and the six mentee cases using thematic analysis.

Analysis of interview data

The process of analysing a taped interview began by listening to the Dictaphone recording several times before transcribing the discourse and repeatedly reviewing to ensure accuracy. The data were then coded according to emerging themes. For example, the questions used in interviews with learning mentors were grouped into five themes, shown in Table 3.11b. I searched across these themes for specific events, identifying emerging categories and meanings. Other themes were identified over time in an

iterative way, thereby retaining the integrity of the narrative substance of the interviews. An example of the ensuing analytic process for a Stage One interview with a learning mentor (15.06.07, see Appendix 3 for the full transcription) is outlined below.

Table 3.11b   Analysing a learning mentor interview transcript

Theme	Location of commentary for selected interview
1 Learning mentor role and skills	Chapter Four, subsection 4.2.1 - factual data included in 'Anton Junior School'; Section 4.3 – 'The professional details of the learning mentors'; Subsection 4.4.4 – 'The learning mentors' understanding of their roles'.
2 Impact – help, hindrance, effectiveness, challenges	Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.5 – data related to role definition and help or hindrance to the mentor, discussed in 'Help and hindrance to the learning mentor role'; Chapter Six, Section 6.4 – 'Factors influencing impact'.
3 Training	Chapter Four, Section 4.3 - data mainly reported in this section.
4 Programme and evaluation	Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.1 - 'referral of mentees'; Subsection 4.4.2 – 'The mentoring programme'; Subsection 4.4.3 – 'The content of a programme'.
5 An opportunity for the participant to add anything she wished about the role or the project.	Data from this section enhanced various sections.

Responses to questions and ensuing prompts or probes were frequently allocated to categories relevant to more than one theme. Table 3.11c is an example of the process undertaken when interrogating an interview transcript.

Table 3.11c   Process of interrogating an interview transcript
(bold text indicates researcher's questioning)

Questions and responses	Categories applied in interpretation of the findings	Text reference to which this response (with other evidence) contributed.
1.5 **Who sets what you will be doing with the children?** I do.	Autonomy	4.7: "Unwritten policies' of referral of children to learning mentoring differed in all schools, specifying ...the level of autonomy afforded to learning mentors by school leaders...Even within the same school... the two learning mentors practiced within different levels of autonomy... one devised her own initial assessment procedures. This suggested that ...their actions were also influenced by the understandings and decisions taken by the mentor herself'.
They are generally referred from or via (head teacher), sometimes I have had teachers and TAs refer direct to me and depending on what they say they're referring them for is what I start out doing.	Gatekeeper -leadership Referral	4.4.1: 'Referrals to the learning mentor programme at Anton Junior School would usually be initiated informally by the head teacher, sometimes by class teachers and teaching assistants. ...'
Quite often, especially the Y6s, they get referred to me and I get out the anger management pack and you do your initial assessments and realise it is not anger management at all: they have got problems at home or something's bugging them.	Referral -staff Role -confidence - use of initiative	4.4.2: 'Teresa reported that she often diagnosed that a mentee exhibited different criteria of need from those initially identified by the child's class teacher. When this happened, she was sufficiently confident in her work to follow her own instincts...'
2 Impact 2.1 **What do you think currently helps or hinders you in your role?** The hinder is lack of time and lack to a certain extent lack of me being organised	Hindrance -time -help -organisation	4.4.5; 6.4.2: 'learning mentor Teresa easily identified time constraint as a hindrance to her learning mentor success...'
and the fact that I am doing two jobs within the same school. So, if I am busy doing TA work I don't always get the mentoring done and sometimes children don't know which role I am in at the time,	Hindrance -multiple roles	4.4.5; 6.4.3: 'Analysis indicated that in the two schools where time was a limitation on their work, the learning mentors undertook more than one role. In Anton Junior School, Teresa frequently received requests to undertake

Questions and responses	Categories applied in interpretation of the findings	Reference of interpretation to which this response (with other evidence) contributed.
'cause as a mentor you are more of a friend	Relationship -status	(continued) general teaching assistant duties during her allocated learning mentor time and believed that staff colleagues and pupils were potentially confused as a result of her undertaking more than one role in school which impacted on her mentoring'.
whereas, as a TA you are slightly more authoritative.	-authority	6.4.1: 'In Anton Junior School, the learning mentors identified themselves essentially as informal supporters of the mentees within the school environment. They fostered a non-authoritarian manner, as a 'critical' or 'professional friend'...Teresa took charge of her own situation'.
4 Programme and Evaluation 4.1 **Is there a process of referral?** It's usually quite an informal 'Ooh, we have got a problem with so and so, can you 'pick them up'?' I will see them once and have a chat to them and if I think they are suitable for mentoring then I fill in what I know on a referral form and give it back to who referred them to me for them to fill in all the details so I have got all background information on them. From that I fill in an action plan so I can set targets and then I'm just working on those targets, assessing them.	Referral -staff Referral -practice -process -policy -practice -practice	4.4.2: 'Both learning mentors in Anton Junior School followed similar, though not identical, processes for executing a learning mentor programme, using their intuitive skills to make individual decisions. Teresa used initial assessment forms, provided by the EC Executive ... as a basis for identifying the mentee's possible areas of need and then worked on her specific plan for each child. She devised a programme by applying information from the child's referral form. This involved the creation of an action plan with individual targets to be attained'.
I was told initially that we should be assessing them every six weeks, but realistically you are just so bogged down with paperwork that you would never get to see the children. I now do it three times a year, unless it is a child who is new to the school, in which case it would be such a short term intervention anyway.	Evaluation -policy -practice -process	4.4.2: 'Teresa and Patricia described their procedures for assessing a child's progress towards his targets over the course of a programme. Their assessments had changed over time from those directed by the EC ... in three ways, which I validated by scrutiny of documents...Teresa had formed her own opinion of the forwarding

Questions and responses	Categories applied in interpretation of the findings	Reference of interpretation to which this response (with other evidence) contributed.
		of assessment data to the EC. ... Teresa had begun monitoring the mentees three times a year instead of the recommended six times, which was more practical'.
4.6 **Can you tell me about ending the programme for a child**? I have just discovered that I should be doing more than I am with the ending. At the moment it sort of 'peters off' and its kind of, ah I don't want to see them but talking to other learning mentors it seems that really we should be saying 'you know you have come on so far now you have met all your targets', so that is something I am in the process of looking at, how I can change it.	-policy -practice Staff -mentors Programme -ending Programme -development	4.4.2: 'As well as provision and assessment of learning mentoring being specific to mentor and mentee, the decision to end a programme was also made individually, however the procedure by which this was undertaken differed for each mentor. At the start of the data-gathering period, Teresa was developing her own process for ending mentee programmes'.

3.12   Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter, I have described my research aims and explained the methodological framework which I developed in order to examine the mentoring process (the relationships forged and strategies used by learning mentors, the impact resulting from these and conditions which facilitated or hindered the process). I have discussed issues relating to different understandings and my choice of an interpretive paradigm.

I have indicated the ethical concerns inherent within a research programme and considered the practicalities of setting up and executing this research. I examined the relative advantages and disadvantages of using a case study approach, adopting this as the best means of accessing the perceptions and practices of the participants within the social situation which I wished to explore. I explained my preferred use of multiple research methods and described the theory behind the use of interview and observation as methods

of research, supported by documentation. I have described how samples of settings and participants were selected, and the process of analysis which I applied to the data generated.

In the next Chapter I consider the findings from the data generated from interviews and documentary evidence regarding the participating learning mentors and their roles.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS (I): THE ROLE OF LEARNING MENTORING IN THREE SCHOOL
SETTINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present my analysis of the data relating to the role of learning
mentors.

In Section 4.2, I describe the three schools in which the case studies were
undertaken. In Section 4.3, I provide the professional details of each
participating learning mentor. In Sections 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6, I consider the
policies and practices of learning mentoring in each of the three sample
schools and relate these to the learning mentors' own perceptions of their
roles and their personal characteristics. In Section 4.7, I compare and contrast
the practice of learning mentoring in the three school settings.

4.2 The Three Schools Involved in the Research

I named the three schools included in this research Anton Junior School,
Bradley Junior School and Caldwell Primary Schools. In the descriptions
which follow, the figures given are for the academic year 2007-2008. I
describe each school by four main features[18], selected for their pertinence to
the social settings of each site, acknowledging that other descriptors may
have affected the ethos and ways of working of each school.

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[18] The four features are: size of pupil population; organisation of the pupils into classes; the
physical features of the school; and how these were adopted for learning mentoring.

4.2.1 Anton Junior School

The children transferred to Anton Junior School (150 pupils) from the nearby infant school at age seven. School leaders had organised the pupils into classes of mixed year groups of children: National Curriculum Years Three and Four, or Years Five and Six. Furniture was used creatively in the school to provide areas in which learning could be undertaken in small groups. Learning mentor work with individual mentees was usually situated in a 'cosy corner' area. Here, reading scheme books were stored, giving an ethos of learning. Photographs of learning mentor activities and personal development work decorated the walls, denoting emotional care. Substantial floor cushions enabled informal seating. In this way, the space was designated as being different from the rest of the school and so was recognised by all as being used for 'special' work.

Sometimes, learning mentor support 'sessions'[19] took place in the open plan library, a classroom or in a small multi-purpose 'office', with activities available at a table with two chairs, enabling individual, uninterrupted learning mentor/mentee work to take place. Two learning mentors individually held mentoring[20] sessions, wrote reports and recorded assessments here. Group work with mentees took place in the school library as this was of a sufficient size for mentees to be seated in an inclusive circle of chairs.

4.2.2 Bradley Junior School

Bradley Juniors (305 pupils) was of modern design. A fountain showered a sense of calm in one outdoor quadrangle, with wildlife and gardening area. The classrooms opened onto three corridors around two quadrangles,

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[19] A 'session' is the term used frequently by the learning mentors in this research to identify the time spent by the learning mentor and mentee together in a support context either one-to-one work or in a group situation. The term 'session' is therefore adopted as an identifying term in this research.

[20] In order to remain concise, all further references to 'mentor/ing' relate to 'learning mentor/ing'.

administration rooms along the fourth corridor of the building and a central hall and dining room. The children transferred from two village infant schools at the age of seven years and the head teacher identified the numbers of pupils in each class as 'high' (thirty-three to thirty-six pupils).

Two part-time learning mentors mainly fulfilled their roles in class lessons, as part of an 'inclusive education' approach, which is explained in detail in Section 4. 5. When mentoring activities took place outside lesson time, they were initially situated at a small table in a corner of a corridor, later in the data-gathering year being in a newly designated 'Special Needs' room where resources for intervention strategies were stored and work with individuals or small groups was undertaken at a circular table.

4.2.3   Caldwell Primary School

Caldwell Primary School (260 pupils) was built in the 1930s when fresh air[21] was thought to aid learning. It had open corridors, which had long-since been sealed off from the chilly elements, around a central quadrangle. The on-site nursery was well-attended by pupils prior to admission into this mainstream school. The numbers of pupils registered in each infant year group was more than the thirty allowed by government, but not sufficiently more to warrant extra classes. The classes, therefore, contained pupils of mixed ages: Years One and Two. This situation continued into Years Three and Four, and Years Five and Six in the Junior department.

A converted store-room had been renovated to create a specific learning mentor base, in which a personal computer facilitated access to appropriate software and internet-based resources and reports and assessments were written. It also enabled electronic communication, supplemented by a personal telephone and 'walkie-talkie' communication system, making contact with the learning mentor possible by any staff member in the school at any time. The sizeable stock of mentoring resources was stored there. Learning mentor activities were shared by mentees and mentor, seated at two tables

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[21]   George Widdows was a main architect of this style of school building.

accessible to children. Sessions also took place in a room set aside for Positive-Play[22] work furnished with drapes, soft toys, cushions, a sink and work benches for craft activities. Up to four people could be included at a round table.

4.3 The Professional Details of the Learning Mentors Involved in the Research

In Table 4.3, I summarise the relevant work experiences and qualifications of the learning mentors, gained in relation to their roles. I present the training undertaken, generic and specific to learning mentoring, and details of their roles during the data-gathering.

Table 4.3   Details of the participating learning mentors

	Previous relevant experience (February 2008).	Relevant qualifications	Specific Mentor Training (on-going)	Previous and non-mentor on-going training	Role at the time of data-gathering
Anton Junior School: **Teresa**	Part-time, 25 hours Special Needs Teaching Assistant (SNTA) for two years in the same school. Three years of experience as learning mentor	British Technical National Certificate in Child Care and Education. National Learning Mentor Training. National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level Three Learning Development Support Services (recognised as the learning mentoring NVQ).	Regular meetings every six weeks with local learning mentors.	Various local authority courses for teaching assistants, e.g. bereavement, depression in children, 'circle-time'.	Part-time. Five hours as learning mentor, with10 mentees; occasional group work undertaken e.g. transition work each July for pupils transferring to secondary school. Teaching assistant for 1 hour 10 minutes.
Anton Junior School:	Part- time teaching assistant SNTA in the same school.	NVQ Level Three, Child Care in Education.	Regular meetings every six weeks with local learning	Various local authority courses for teaching assistants, e.g. anti-bullying, literacy, numeracy.	Part-time. 2.5 hours learning mentor before school on playground duty; 2.5 hours with 12 mentees, nine in a group

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[22] 'Positive-Play' was defined in Chapter One, Section 1.3.

	Previous relevant experience	Relevant qualifications	Specific mentor training	Previous and on-going training	Role at the time of data-gathering
(continued) **Patricia**	Three years of experience as learning mentor.	National Learning Mentor Training.	mentors.		meeting once weekly for 1 hour; mentees in Years 3 to 6, and three mentees meeting Patricia for 20-30 minutes each week. Teaching assistant for ten hours. SNTA for 16 hours.
Bradley Junior School: **Karen**	Positive Play Worker and SNTA in the same school. Three years of experience as learning mentor.	National Learning Mentor Training.		Various Local Authority courses for teaching assistants: Therapeutic stories; Positive-play training; positive images; raising self-esteem; 'Social Emotional Aspects of Learning'; anti-bullying; managing children's behaviour; attachment.	Part-time. Seven hours learning mentor for 10 mentees: 30 minutes weekly with each mentee, in Years 3, 5 and 6. SNTA continued. 5 hours as Positive Play Worker (which could overlap with the other job practices).
Bradley Junior School: **Margaret**	Positive Play Worker, 1:1 part-time teaching assistant for four years, at the same school. Learning mentor for three years.	National Learning Mentor Training.	Regular meetings every 6 weeks with local learning mentors.	Various local authority courses for teaching assistants, e.g. therapeutic stories; managing bad behaviour; working with children in care.	Part-time. 12 hours learning mentor with 12 mentees, in Years 3 to 6, 30 minutes each. 2.5 hours SNTA. Five hours as weekly Positive-Play Worker,
Caldwell Primary School: **Louise**	Work with the elderly, liaison with agencies. Supply teaching assistant, special needs teaching assistant at the school. Three years as learning mentor.	NVQ Level Three Child Care in Education. National Learning Mentor Training.	Regular meetings every six weeks with local learning mentors. Annual Excellence Cluster conferences.	Various local authority courses for teaching assistants, e.g. Positive play; Social story; Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder; emotional literacy; restorative justice; restraint; midday supervisor; children's mental health; art therapy.	Part-time. 29.25 hours as learning mentor: Includes daily lunch-club for any children; work with three groups for various reasons; 1:1 mentoring with four mentees in Key Stage 1 and 2; Positive Play with three children.

Table 4.3 indicates that there were similarities in the previous professional experiences which these mentors brought to their mentoring roles. They had mainly worked as teaching assistants, either 'general' to their current school

(providing a range of support to staff or classes generally) or specifically employed to support pupils with Special Needs, including the role of Positive-Play Workers at Anton and Bradley Junior Schools. Their head teachers had considered these to be relevant backgrounds for prospective learning mentors.

The learning mentors had undertaken specific training for their roles. In two schools they had attained the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level Three, Child Care in Education or the British Technical National Certificate in Child Care and Education. They had qualified at the start of their mentoring careers in the National Learning Mentor qualification, and had experienced other courses which they considered to be related to their mentor posts. They all described benefits issuing from the courses which they had undertaken, and continued to participate actively in continuing professional development. For some, the role took precedence to further training: Karen expressed that further training 'stole time' which she preferred to spend with the mentees.

Each learning mentor had attended courses in social, emotional, and behavioural theory and considered that courses designed for Teaching Assistants were also relevant for learning mentors. In interview, some teachers agreed with this, because they considered that staff occupying both Teaching Assistant and learning mentor roles had to 'deal with' children who needed to talk about personal concerns, these being 'emotionally charged things' (stated by Brian, a class teacher in Anton Junior School). Indeed, the mentors reported that their training helped them to deal with emotional situations. Their training was not only related to 'emotional literacy' however. Patricia at Anton Junior School identified literacy and numeracy training as being relevant for the particular mentee pupils at her school, because their 'other issues' often had implications for their progress in learning.

Each half-term the learning mentors in local schools were invited to learning mentor group meetings, organised by the area mentor coordinator to aid learning mentors in the development of their roles, to provide up-to-date

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information and opportunities for mentors to discuss issues together and to exchange ideas. The mentor coordinator occasionally invited visiting speakers to engage learning mentors in discussion, for instance, the local consultant for Gifted and Talented children. The learning mentors appreciated the training from this local mentor group, typified by Teresa at Anton Junior School: she declared it 'brilliant' as she gained ideas from the other mentors, whom she perceived as sharing similar experiences and whom she thought 'feel the same things'.

Table 4.3 also indicates that the learning mentors engaged in different weekly workloads, ranging from five to twelve hours for mentors in Junior schools, where working hours were specifically spent working with individuals or group mentoring. Conversely Louise, the learning mentor in Caldwell Primary School, committed the majority of her time (29.25 hours each week) to learning mentoring through supporting pupils across the school, leading groups or clubs, as detailed in subsection 4.6.4. She allocated a minority of her time to her mentoring of four individual mentees. The learning mentors allocated thirty minutes weekly to their work with individual mentees or groups of mentees, Patricia allocating twenty minutes to individual mentees.

I next consider the policies and practices relating to each of the learning mentors, previously described, by examining in-depth accounts of their perceptions within their school situations, strengths and personal characteristics for this role and interaction with the school culture. I introduce the reader to the individual mentees who participated in the research, describing the organisation and procedures relating to learning mentoring in each school in four aspects:

- how the referral system for mentees was effected;
- the procedure adopted for executing and evaluating learning mentor programmes;
- the constituent elements of the learning mentor programmes for the mentees;

- the learning mentor's perception of her role.

4.4 The Learning Mentors in Anton Junior School

In Table 4.4 I introduce the participants involved with the mentee cases at Anton School. When this research was undertaken there were two part-time learning mentors at Anton Junior School, Teresa and Patricia. Teresa worked with Catherine and both mentors provided a different type of support for Quentin. Catherine was identified as a mentee needing support with socialising, being a Gifted and Talented student. Quentin's criteria of need were communication and socialisation (see Chapter Five for fuller explanations of all six mentees in the study).

Table 4.4   The sample of participants in mentoring at Anton Junior School

MENTEE –	Catherine	MENTEE -	Quentin
PARENT –	Mother	PARENT -	Mother
LEARNING MENTOR – Teresa		LEARNING MENTOR – Teresa	
TEACHER 1 –	Brian	LEARNING MENTOR – Patricia	
TEACHER 2 –	Nerys	TEACHER –	Tricia

4.4.1   Referral of mentees to learning mentor programmes

Referrals to the learning mentor programme at Anton Junior School would usually be initiated informally by the head teacher, sometimes by class teachers and teaching assistants. A referral form was completed in response to symptoms which a child was exhibiting in school as a consequence of one or more identified, or at that time unidentified, problems or difficulties. The child's problems could be long-standing as with mentee Catherine, or caused

by a trauma, as in Teresa's intervention for mentee Quentin. Typical triggers of referral were reported by Teresa to be 'bereavement, illness or hospitalisation of the child's relatives, being gifted or talented' or starting at the school 'mid-term'.

Upon receiving a referral, the learning mentor would 'chat' (Teresa's word) with the child and, if she considered that a mentoring programme was necessary, she would submit a form to the class teacher (see Appendix 4.4.1). Completion of this form by the teacher indicated that s/he understood the child's difficulties or problems. Sometimes a learning mentor would refer a mentee to a colleague mentor, as happened with Quentin (see subsection 4.4.3).

4.4.2   The mentoring programme

Both learning mentors in Anton Junior School followed similar, though not identical, processes for executing a learning mentor programme, using their intuitive skills to make individual decisions. Teresa used initial assessment forms, provided by the EC Executive (which recommended Boxall Profile[23] assessment) as a basis for identifying the mentee's possible areas of need and then worked on her specific plan for each child. She devised a programme by applying information from the child's referral form. This involved the creation of an action plan with individual targets to be attained. Teresa reported that she often diagnosed that a mentee exhibited different criteria of need from those initially identified by the child's class teacher. When this happened, she was sufficiently confident in her work to follow her own instincts, apparent in her cheery and assertive manner in her relationships with colleagues, as well as with mentees.

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[23] The Boxall Profile is a standardised assessment tool. It is a two-part checklist of 34 descriptive items, to be completed by a staff member who knows the child well in the classroom environment. The profile is designed to be used as a framework for precise assessment of children who are failing in school, to help teachers plan a focussed intervention programme. It is described by the author as a quick and easy way to enter the child's world and assess what lies behind her behaviour: the teacher then uses empathy and her own life experiences to think of what could then help the child (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998 and 2000; Boxall, 2002).

Mentor Patricia provided both individual and group mentoring programmes for pupils at Anton Junior School. She described how she used a child's criteria for referral as a starting point for creating a programme. She then prioritised the child's needs, deciding which strategies to apply in order to address them. She initially began working on the child's most urgent need, sometimes designing a strategy to meet multiple needs, for instance 'Circle Time'[24]. Patricia worked through each need until she identified that the mentee was ready to exit the programme. Her manner within the social situation of the school staff appeared quiet, perhaps reticent but, as with Teresa, she was confident in her learning mentor work.

At Anton Junior School, different criteria of need were addressed by programmes of differing duration. For instance, a child who was admitted to or leaving the school received a short-term transition programme of three to four weeks, with the intention of assisting the mentee in adjusting to a new learning situation. The mentor discussed with the mentee any concerns about the new school. Mentees were selected for a secondary transfer programme by the mentor or class teacher when perceiving that, without support, the child lacked the ability to cope with such a transfer. A pupil who was already on a mentee programme could be included in a transition programme. In addition, Teresa pointed out that a child could 'dip in and out' of support, according to need: 'you get someone who you think you've finished with and six months later they are back again'.

Evaluation of mentoring programmes

Teresa and Patricia described their procedures for assessing a child's

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[24] 'Circle Time' is a title used to describe the practice of training pupils in acceptable ways of responding towards each other; for instance, in how to make friends or to appropriately consider others. It is frequently used in primary school Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship (PSHCE) lessons and as an intervention strategy for pupils who are identified as having needs additional to those of the majority of children (Mosley, 1996).

progress towards his[25] targets over the course of a programme. Their assessments had changed over time from those directed by the EC Executive (see Chapter One, Section 1.3) in three ways, which I validated by scrutiny of documents. They no longer included: standardised testing (at the start and end of each programme by Boxall Profile) nor formative assessment of literacy and numeracy attainment; the child's number of exclusions from school; information concerning attendance. These factors were not considered by mentors to be pertinent to the on-going assessment of each mentee. Teresa had formed her own opinion of the forwarding of assessments data to the EC, stating: 'realistically you are just so bogged down with paperwork that you would never get to see the children'.

Teresa had begun monitoring the mentees three times a year instead of the recommended six times, which was more practical. Both learning mentors at Anton School assessed mentees against their individual targets as they identified that there was no such thing as a typical programme or session - the mentors followed whatever activities or discussions they considered necessary for each mentee. They did not use a time limit for a learning mentor programme: it could last for as long as the mentee needed it[26].

As well as provision and assessment of learning mentoring being specific to mentor and mentee, the decision to end a programme was also made individually, however the procedure by which this was undertaken differed for each mentor. At the start of the data-gathering period, Teresa was developing her own process for ending mentee programmes, considering that 'it just sort

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[25] For ease of communication, I refer to mentees as 'he' and mentors as 'she', unless referring to specific participants. No gender reference is intended by this.

[26] At the time of the data-gathering for this research, the learning mentoring project had been established for four years. The EC Executive then recognised that the frequency of assessments for each mentee created an excessive workload for learning mentors and reduced the number of annual assessments required to three, amending the recommended forms for assessments. It also removed the need for schools to submit information on attendance, exclusions and attainment of all mentees. Schools were expected to continue to monitor their own learning mentor projects by their choice of data as indicators of effectiveness, tracking and analysing these within each school.

of 'peters off'' (Interview 1). Over the academic year she developed assessment forms, using ideas which she had gained from her then current NVQ LDSS training. She began to assess each mentee against these, surveying the mentees' opinions of their programmes and valuing their ideas as a means of improving her mentoring work. Documentation of such assessments indicated that she was skilled in evaluating the effectiveness of the mentor/mentee sessions which she led and she stated that she was enabled in this by 'pondering my own effectiveness' (Interview 2).

Contrary to the approach adopted by Teresa, Patricia continued to assess her mentees against an evaluation form issued by the EC. This involved a mentee evaluating his individual support programme, using a rating scale to show his opinion of various descriptors of the programme, at appropriate levels (see Appendix 4.4.2). Using her professional judgement gained from her experience as a learning mentor, Patricia then decided whether the mentee was ready to leave his programme.

4.4.3 The content of a programme

Learning mentor programmes at Anton Junior School were varied. For Teresa, each programme contained three targets to be addressed, usually including an aspect of social skills, and more than three targets being considered unmanageable. Teresa considered that the concepts which she included were those which most children would usually learn when younger but which the mentees had not developed, such as the understanding that it is acceptable to lose a game. She stated 'it's the mothering, nurturing thing'. Her individual sessions with mentees usually included three sections which were:

- specifically directed activities (for instance, role-play);
- games with specific purposes relating to a particular mentee's targets;
- a game which would often involve turn-taking, particularly if socialisation was included in the child's targets.

The specific activities and strategies which I observed to be adopted for meeting each mentee's targets are described in Chapter Five, and evaluated in Chapter Six (Section 6.3).

Teresa's work with Quentin usually involved encouraging him to converse, which she did by following his interests. She urged him to imagine and to express his thoughts verbally. When she found that he could not do this, she referred him to her colleague, Patricia, requesting her to undertake work to improve his imagination. This exemplified effective liaison between the mentors, and Teresa's confidence in her colleague's skills in mentoring group sessions, which I later observed.

Patricia mentored a group of nine mentees at the start of the data-gathering period, increasing to twelve over the academic year. Her main mode of operation in group sessions was Circle Time. She sometimes only asked the mentees to contribute a single word to the group discourse, later in the programme asking them to construct a sentence about their ideas (see Chapter Five, Section 5.4). Patricia explained her rules for the sessions which I observed the mentees following in later sessions. Her approach was clear, based on games and enjoyment, and concentrated specifically on the mentees' personal development and social skills. Patricia described her group work as helping children to 'handle' their problems: 'they just need some other support outside their community'.

She identified 'their community' as the mentees' usual class and social group network. She believed that all members of a school staff were potential channels of support for the mentee, including teachers and teaching assistants as well as learning mentors. This suggested implications for the execution of her role within the school community and culture, which is considered in next.

4.4.4 The learning mentors' understanding of their roles in Anton Junior School

At the time of the research Teresa was the mentor for ten mentees, including Catherine. In Catherine's class, Teresa often supported a less able group of pupils as Special Needs Teaching Assistant for a pupil who was disruptive and frequently challenged staff members. Teresa undertook mentoring for five hours a week. Observations showed that the individual mentoring sessions lasted an average of twenty-six minutes once the child was located and delivered to the place where the mentoring would take place. This indicated that she had hardly any 'spare time' within the hours for which she was contracted to work as a learning mentor. She exhibited confidence in her role, enjoyed using her initiative and was not shy of altering her practices as her training deepened.

Teresa showed commitment to her mentees[27]. She identified her role as a 'critical friend', describing her relationship with Catherine as 'very informal', stating that she responded more authoritatively towards some mentees as this was necessary in order to achieve appropriate support for some children (see Section 4.7). Patricia's definition of her role was slightly different, considering herself to be a 'professional friend' to her mentees. She also was committed to her role and was confident within her group mentoring situation, though not as dominant of character as Teresa. She maintained an effective pace in her work and clearly wanted to 'do it right'. Perhaps the difference in perception in the role between the two mentors related to the definition of the learning mentor role within the culture of the school, which Teresa suggested was still not clarified even though the learning mentor post had been established for three years at that time. This has implications for the impact of the mentor role, and is discussed further in Chapter Six, Section 6.4.

Teresa described her mentoring role as 'being available for all pupils in the school and then for specific, referred mentees'. This was exemplified as the

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[27] See Appendix 6.4.4 for an analysis of the characteristics of the learning mentors.

learning mentors began each day by 'meeting and greeting' all children on arrival in the busy, hectic playground. In this, Teresa had two purposes: to guarantee the good behaviour of the children and to be pro-active in helping any child to 'settle' who arrived with problems that day. Indeed, Teresa dealt with behaviour overall in school and with any difficulties brought to her by individual children. She stated that behavioural problems presented to her might need conflict resolution or anger management, especially when they concerned pupils in Year Six. Contrary to Teresa, however, Patricia reported that she considered that she was basically just observing the pupils at the 'meet and greet' times, describing her learning mentor role as:

> obviously not to be a counsellor first and foremost, but we're there
> to assist children in times of trouble and to listen to their problem,
> to help with their social skills or, if they've got any…if they're not
> interacting with their peers – to assist with that.

Teresa was clear about where the boundaries to her role lay, which were with the children. Her role included liaison with other learning mentors when a mentee transferred to or from the school and she liaised with other relevant agencies when necessary, always through the head teacher. She appreciated, from discussion with other learning mentors, that the learning mentor role was different in each school. She considered that schools adapted the role according to their own needs, stating:

> some learning mentors are almost social workers. They go to
> the house, the parents have got problems, they deal with the
> doctor on the parents' behalf, and that's not where I see my role.
> My role is with the children. I will liaise with parents - if they are
> willing, I am quite happy to do that, but I am not there for helping
> the parents' problems – I am there for helping the children.

Patricia's practice indicated that she agreed with Teresa's perceptions regarding the boundaries of her learning mentor role: it 'stopped at the school gate'.

4.4.5 Help and hindrance to the learning mentor role

Teresa could not identify anything which aided her in her role, while mentor Patricia considered that she helped herself in her learning mentor role by always being certain that she executed it well: 'what helps me is the outcome. If I see a positive outcome from the children - that really helps my role'.

Teresa was adamant that 'time' hindered her role. She had tried to set regular times for meeting with her mentees but found that such timetabling often had to be changed because of the rearrangement of other priorities within the class or school by staff members. Teresa's solution to this problem was to try to allocate contact time with each mentee to a specific day of the week and, if she could not meet with a mentee for a session on his allocated day, explain this to the mentee, reassuring him that they would meet the next day and ensuring she kept this new appointment. She indicated that a further challenge which she faced as a learning mentor related directly to the unpredictable nature of the children's problems. This is best exemplified in her own words:

> it takes you out of your comfort zone because it gives you
> challenges, you know, that, that you probably wouldn't chose
> to do. Having to sit down with a seven year old child whose father
> was murdered…it's what do you say?

Patricia considered that the challenge to her mentoring role came from the children in a different way: 'it's when they're not cooperating (she laughed)'.

Perhaps Teresa's certainty regarding her role was a product of the fact that her other role at Anton Junior School had clear parameters, it being Special

Needs Teaching Assistant. Patricia also undertook a Special Needs Teaching Assistant role (sixteen hours per week) but in addition she acted as General Teaching Assistant (ten hours weekly). She stated that she could spend time flexibly within these other roles if her learning mentor role warranted extra time. This was frequently necessary for her work with three individual mentees, as she needed more than her allocated twenty minutes (weekly) for them. She supported some of her mentees, in all year groups, in more than one role; for instance, she mentored Quentin within her group work and she also was his Special Needs Teaching Assistant. In this latter role she liaised with his class teacher and with the out of school agency, Speech Therapy, about his Individual Education Plan at special needs level 'School Action Plus'[28]. This 'multiple role' of learning mentors is an important point, regarding the impact of mentoring (see Chapter Six, subsection 6.4.3).

4.5   The Learning Mentors at Bradley Junior School

Karen and Margaret were the learning mentors at Bradley Junior School and had undertaken learning mentoring at the same school for three years at the time of my research. Kieron and Zac were their mentees, as shown in Table 4.5, being identified for support from learning mentors due to their aggression towards other children. Kieron also needed support for communication and socialising, which manifested in school by his exhibition of selective mutism.

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[28]   Special needs support for pupils ranges from children receiving extra support in school, termed 'additional needs' (classed as 'School Action') stage, to those requiring support also from other agencies (School Action Plus), and to those requiring a statement of special needs ('statemented'). This is explained in 'The Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs' (DfES, 2001).

Table 4.5   The sample of participants in mentoring at Bradley Junior School

MENTEE –	Kieron	MENTEE -	Zac
PARENT –	Mother	PARENT -	Father
LEARNING MENTOR – Karen		LEARNING MENTOR – Margaret	
TEACHER –	Lesley	TEACHER –	Zoe

4.5.1   The referral of mentees to learning mentor programmes

Class teachers at Bradley Junior School usually referred a pupil to the learning mentor, who then liaised with the head teacher for permission to initiate a learning mentor programme for the child. The learning mentor would then write to the child's parents to offer learning mentor support and obtain parental agreement. She then issued forms to the child's class teacher for completion, which stated the child's problem in school and the type of support which was necessitated; she added these details to the information gained in informal discussion between staff about the child's needs. The class teacher facilitated the introduction of the learning mentor to the child's parent at the start of the programme, when the mentor provided the parent with a leaflet in which learning mentoring at Bradley Junior School was explained.

4.5.2   The mentoring programme
Mentees' programmes were devised by the learning mentors under the advice of the school's Special Needs Coordinator (SENCo) who subsequently oversaw the progress of the programmes. Each class teacher set learning targets for his/her class members to work towards each term and the learning mentors worked with these for mentees. An on-going formative assessment document relating to this was completed for every child in the class. Karen also applied her own smaller targets for her mentees, for which she rewarded the mentee's attainment with stickers. As in Anton Junior School, the six-week period advised by the EC for a learning mentor programme was rarely the

duration of a programme at Bradley Junior School, the length of a programme differing according to the mentee's needs. Karen reported 'you never sort of give up on them at all': it had taken four years of continuous learning mentor support for one particular child to learn how to interact appropriately with her peers.

I explained in subsection 4.2.2 that learning mentor sessions were usually undertaken in a variety of places, mainly in class lessons. Margaret's work with mentee Zac, however, was usually undertaken in individual learning mentor sessions, without the 'audience' provided by pupils in a classroom. Margaret liaised with other agencies and used a range of strategies to help Zac develop social and emotional competency and, as Zac's responses and capabilities changed over time, she altered his programme accordingly, increasingly involving friendship groups in his sessions (the details of Zac's programme are provided in Chapter Five, Section 5.6).

Evaluation of mentoring programmes

The procedures for learning mentoring were revised at the start of the data-gathering period, including the monitoring of progress. This was congruous with the change in organisation by school leaders at Bradley Junior School towards simplifying all systems and 'reducing paper-work' (Margaret's phrase). They considered that the use of the standardised Boxall Profile as an assessment tool was time-consuming for the teacher to complete and for the mentor to interpret the information given. It was replaced by a simpler type of non-standardised assessment which provided for assessment of similar areas. Mentees were rated on a scale of one to five, signifying 'poor' to 'very good' improvement in a range of areas, for instance 'behaviour and attitude towards peers/teachers'; and 'organisational skills'. Mentor Karen explained that this assessment format was easy to use and gave her an immediate understanding of the areas in which the mentee had made progress over time. The revised school policy incorporated the undertaking of assessments of the achievement of pupils each school term (intervals of approximately twelve

weeks) and progress towards learning mentor programmes was included as an aspect of this.

The class teachers were actively involved in the assessment of mentees through evaluating the work of the learning mentors over time. A similar form to that of the learning mentor had been introduced (see Appendix 4.5.2) on which the teacher rated the mentee's interaction in class in a range of areas. Emphasis was placed upon evaluation through discussion between staff members, however, rather than through recorded documentation. This included discussions with the learning mentor regarding ending a programme for a mentee, which staff referred to as 'rolling a child off'[29]. Such discussion included:

- the child's attainment grades – had he improved academically?
- the child's general improvement in class, regarding the criteria for the initiation of his programme;
- the child's happiness in school.

A three-part procedure existed for ceasing a programme following this discussion. First, the mentee would have been prepared by the learning mentor for this in the previous weeks, informing him that he was doing really well and did not need the mentor's support any more, stressing that, even though he would not be on the programme, he was welcome to come and talk to her at any time. Second, the mentor sent a letter to the parents, stating the progress made by the mentee and informing the parent of the decision to end the programme. Lastly, the child was presented by the staff with a certificate, usually during a school assembly, in recognition of his success in the programme.

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[29] 'Active', 'monitoring' and 'rolling-off', were terms used frequently, and with a common understanding, by the sample of learning mentors in this study. These terms indicated: a mentor programme in use; observing a child after an active programme for possible need of further intervention; ending a programme for a mentee. Monitoring' involved not setting timetabled appointments but the mentor paid close attention to the mentee's coping ability in class and around school and by informal discussion with the class teacher.

4.5.3 The content of a programme

Both Karen and Margaret stressed the need to familiarise themselves with a new mentee's needs, discussing during an initial mentoring session. They then created programmes aimed at addressing that child's needs. The learning mentor programmes at Bradley Junior School were undertaken in sessions of twenty-five minutes, with a further five minutes allowed for 'writing-up notes' (recording what had been completed with the child in the mentoring session and documenting any problems which had been encountered). In reality, Margaret needed to remain with the mentee longer than twenty-five minutes, if he was talking. This meant writing the notes in what she termed her 'own time'.

The learning mentors reported that mentees frequently needed to develop speech in social settings and this was included in many programmes. As a consequence of selective mutism, Kieron's responses were initially non-verbal. His programme included enabling him to function and learn effectively within class lessons. I observed Karen listening intently to Kieron's whispered answers and responding with quiet verbal support, with reassurance, and empathy, without explicitly referring to how he should speak in school. Mentoring time was concentrated on learning, not on improving behaviour, although improving behaviour was a significant part of his criteria for referral to mentoring. His programme for confidence-building was observed in one-to-one sessions, held separately to class lessons.

Both mentees at Bradley Junior School shared a common target in their programmes: to reduce aggression towards peers and to improve interaction with adults in school. The problems of the two boys were, however, evident in different ways, and their mentoring programmes indicated how this was acknowledged and developed through strategies by their separate learning mentors (see Chapter Five, Sections 5.5.2 and 5.6.2). Zac's learning mentor programme concentrated on acceptable social and emotional interaction within school through discussion of experiences which were familiar to him

and which he considered in a positive light; explicit learning tasks were observed to be in the minority. Programmes were amended according to need (for instance, Positive-play Work was added to Zac's programme).

4.5.4 Karen and Margaret's understanding of their learning mentor role

As Special Needs Teaching Assistants for individual children, and five hours as Positive-Play Worker, both Karen and Margaret provided much one-to-one support for pupils in school. Learning mentoring was the main role for which both were employed. As well as Kieron in Year Group Three, Karen mentored eight mentees in Years Five and Six for a total of seven hours weekly, while Margaret mentored children for twelve hours (see Table 4.3).

In an attempt to encourage inclusive practices, the head teacher had made a decision to transfer mentoring from individual learning mentor sessions in favour of in-class support[30]. The learning mentors could remove a child from a lesson if his needs warranted the support being undertaken outside the classroom. This was observed to occur in the practices of both mentees in the study. Karen identified her learning mentor role as a support within class lessons, and I observed her acting as Keiron's work partner when in a lesson, keeping him on task and working at the fast pace of the lesson:

> we do sit in class with them … obviously behaviour, you're able
> to sort them out whilst you're there, you know, just explain – 'is
> that the right thing to be doing?' In a gentle way not, not sort of
> telling them off about it, 'cos that's not part of our role. It's just a

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[30] The inclusive practice for learning mentors had followed a change in Bradley Junior School's curriculum policy to a practical, creative style and content. Led by the head teacher, the staff considered that this curriculum would encourage self-motivation and a love of learning in their pupils, and so improve attainment across the school. This had been in place for just one year before the data-gathering period. During fieldwork, teaching staff reported that creating this curriculum had involved much work on their part and that it was still being developed. The new curriculum was popular with teaching staff members and with the pupils, who, the staff considered, had improved in motivation and in their enjoyment of schoolwork through this initiative.

quiet word in their ear very often, sorts that situation out.

Karen saw her role as providing praise for good work, reassurance and encouragement, helping to raise Kieron's confidence in his abilities, not just to improve his behaviour. She stated 'now being in class, it's just helping them get started first of all 'cos very often they're not quite sure what they're about to do'. She became his speaker in response to the teacher in lessons. She identified positive feedback from her work in class lessons.

Karen's mentoring style included patience and calmness, with positive language and reassurance. Her persistent personality indicated a strong character, which she exemplified during all observed sessions. She provided support for Kieron in her other role as Positive-Play Worker, with an expectation that success in this would be conveyed into his response to her as a mentor. This comment indicated that Karen identified the importance of emotional support in the mentor/mentee relationship, because only in such a relationship would the mentee talk freely to her about his problems. This was an area which perhaps she considered to be at risk in the new role which had been allocated to the learning mentors at that time.

As with Karen, Margaret's mentoring manner was a necessary part of a mentee's programme. She believed that a good learning mentor was a good listener, being approachable but capable of dealing firmly with a mentee if necessary. She showed sensitivity towards Zac, ignoring his rudeness and cheating manner. She remained calm and confident at all times during my observations, even when he stated aggressive interests. Both mentors agreed that a mentor needed to be half friend and half disciplinarian, a 'professional friend'. Their role was not to reprimand a child, but rather to clarify acceptable boundaries, undertaking preventative conversation rather than intervening after a problem had occurred. Mentoring for Margaret was just 'letting the child talk', which has relevance for the impact of mentoring (see Chapter Six, subsection 6.4.1). Margaret was active in liaising with agencies outside education: Educational Psychology, the Special Needs Support Service and

the Behaviour Support Service. She explained that she was expected to consult about such liaison initially with the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator. It is significant that there was some discrepancy in this expectation from other staff members (see Chapter Six, subsection 6.4.4).

4.5.5 <u>Help and hindrance to the learning mentor role</u>

Initially, the learning mentors found it difficult to perform their mentor duties during class lessons. The emphasis on creativity by teachers and pupils affected class timetables, as lessons were spontaneously altered following the needs and interests of the class, with little, or no, prior warning to colleagues. Karen was organised in her role for Kieron but on one occasion the class had departed to have an orienteering lesson, so for that allocated mentoring session she 'chased after him'. Margaret reported that, when such situations happened to her, it was sometimes feasible to offer the session to a different mentee. Even within a planned timetable, the content of mentoring sessions was flexible, dictated by the mentor's interpretation of the mentee's needs that day. Karen said:

> really, you know, we're not there just to simply get them to work,
> get on with what they're doing, but we're professional friend as well,
> that they can talk to if something's upsetting them.

In previous years, learning mentors at Bradley Junior School had assumed short-term intervention as part of their learning mentor role. If any pupil had experienced a 'sudden blip' (Margaret's phrase) causing the standard of his/her work to decline, the mentors would arrange to undertake mentoring sessions with the child to discuss this. Karen reported that her experience suggested that, after a short time, the problem would decrease and the child would require no further support. She had utilised worksheets on personal development issues to encourage reticent pupils. If a child was having a specific difficulty with learning a particular concept, she would help him. She always created a fun situation in mentoring sessions and two sessions would

not be the same. She spoke about these practices in the past tense, and with a tone of regret. Karen expressed her feeling that these elements of her learning mentor's role at Bradley Junior School had disappeared, and her time had become committed to supporting children with long-term needs. She declared that she was 'given' children with 'quite a lot of problems which, I know they are being disruptive, but it's not something that you can solve in the six weeks'.

Margaret appeared to share some of Karen's regrets concerning their new mentoring procedures. She considered that her role was ultimately to make the mentee happy in school, not simply to help him 'meet his targets', as being happier also helped children in class. She described maintaining flexibility in their new organisation, even while including her learning mentor duties in lessons at the school: 'some children it works better with, but there are some children who would still need the support away from class because they just need someone to talk to'. To affect such flexibility she needed to seek the 'approval' of the head teacher and then liaise about the mentoring with the class teacher.

Despite the change which had taken place in the organisation of learning mentoring at Bradley School, I observed continuation of four elements of previous practice which the learning mentors had considered important. These were: one-to-one sessions; 'drop-in sessions'[31]; the length of a programme; contact between learning mentors and agencies other than education.

4.6 The Learning Mentor at Caldwell Primary School

I introduce the participants involved with the mentee cases at Caldwell Primary School in Table 4.6. Nicola and Timothy were the mentees, Nicola's criteria of need being communication and difficulties with interactions at home

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[31] Keiron's class teacher stated that Karen still held these for pupils in need of specific immediate support.

and Timothy being hyperactive and aggressive towards other children at the time of the data generation.

Table 4.6   The sample of participants in mentoring at Caldwell Primary School

MENTEE –	Nicola	MENTEE -	Timothy
PARENT –	Mother	PARENT -	Mother
LEARNING MENTOR – Louise		LEARNING MENTOR – Louise	
TEACHER –	Lorraine	TEACHER –	Lorraine

The only learning mentor at Caldwell Primary School was Louise. She described herself as 'people-orientated' and interpreted her previous experience in different care agencies as good preparation 'building up to' her learning mentor post, which she intimated was a vocation. Four years previously she had arrived at the school to undertake supply Teaching Assistant work with a group of challenging 'struggling boys' (her term) at the same time as the learning mentor post was being created. Very soon, learning mentor was her only job at the school.

4.6.1   The referral of mentees to learning mentor programmes

Each September and October Louise undertook an audit of all pupils at the school. She requested teachers to identify pupils with academic, emotional or behavioural difficulties while she monitored the classes to identify and support children who were having difficulty settling into school after the summer break. She then focused on the audit results with the head teacher in order to agree her future workload and pattern: which mentees from the previous school year were ready to cease their programmes; which would remain on full programmes or on a lighter monitoring programme; who should become mentees, as individuals or as members of a group.

Louise then sought parental permission, by letter, for the prospective new mentees, enclosing a leaflet which explained the mentoring project. Each November her mentoring timetable started and further referrals from teachers would not include academic difficulties. Frequently, Louise would have prior knowledge of a child who was referred and of his difficulties, due to the strategic position which she held in the school (see Section 4.6.4).

4.6.2   The mentoring programme

Louise appeared autonomous in developing mentoring programmes. She liaised with the head teacher about issues relating to: perceived difficulties with her mentoring; necessary decisions; child protection concerns; work with a mentee's family; and liaison with other child agencies. Individual mentor programmes constituted a minor part of Louise's work, the mentees' needs directing their programmes with a maximum of three targets for each child. The venues for mentoring sessions differed according to the content of a child's programme. For instance, Timothy and Nicola's sessions were undertaken in the designated learning mentor room but also one session each week was undertaken in a separate room in order to include Nicola's mother as an essential part of her programme.

The school maintained a policy of rewarding pupils for creating good work and for behaving well. Louise initiated a positive praise incentive system for learning mentoring which included rewards for mentees when goals were met and at many points towards this for consistent good behaviour or attitude. Rewards were specific to individual programmes and frequently involved other staff in school, for instance, sending a mentee to visit each other for approbation to reward working well. I frequently observed Louise allowing mentees to choose a sticker from a 'Rainbow box' for participating in a successful mentoring session. On attaining their targets, letters of congratulation were presented to mentees in school assembly.

Rewards as incentives were adapted to each mentee's age and circumstances, ranging from a chart with stickers to a game of football outside, being immediate for younger children. Louise identified that a mentee's problems were frequently generated as a result of his family situation and was very keen to involve parents in learning mentor programmes. She used a wide range of family-related rewards at any time in a programme and when a programme ceased[32], for instance, a child having difficulties separating from her mother baked a cake with Louise and took it home, in order to show the child that school and home worked together. Mentees frequently returned home at the end of a school day with stories and booklets made during mentoring sessions. Parents and carers were involved in agreeing rewards to be provided at home when targets were attained, rewards such as taking the child on a visit to a place of interest (Louise tried to influence parents in selecting healthy incentives).

Time-specific individual mentoring programmes were devised when required, for instance for school transfer, while other programmes were continued for as long as necessary, sometimes for two or three years, particularly if the family was being supported as well as the child. Mentoring programmes for groups were set for a limited time period (see subsection 4.6.4).

Evaluation of mentoring programmes

Louise undertook continuous formative assessment of the progress of her mentees towards their targets, frequently revising her strategies according to this. She scripted thorough notes on each mentee's progress and retained copies of any recorded work completed by the child in mentoring sessions.

When targets were met, Louise ended a mentee's programme by asking him to complete a pupil evaluation form (see Appendix 4.6.2) about his understanding of the programme and anything which he considered had not

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[32] Examples of positive incentives which involved the mentee's family were the sending of text messages or telephone calls to the child's home.

supported his mentoring. The class teacher completed a recording grid as an evaluation of the year's mentoring each July. The evaluation forms were those initially recommended by the EC Executive and Louise had always found these useful. Her practice was to assess a mentee using her experience and through liaison with class teachers. She acknowledged that some mentees had undertaken programmes but made no progress towards their targets, or 'got worse', in which case she had ended the programmes. After ending a programme, Louise continued to monitor ex-mentees for 'a fairly lengthy period'. If traumatic incidents occurred for mentees, she would 'pick them up again'. Children could ask to see her again at any time and availed themselves of this opportunity.

4.6.3   The content of programmes

Louise's programmes were clearly child-specific. She listed a wide variety of resources which she used. She stated:

> when I first start seeing them, I start to build up a relationship with
> them so they get used to it. Then we start working on the targets,
> once we've got to know each other. And then we pick activities
> that would deal with that issue, for instance, anger.

Examples of her strategies were: Circle Time with groups; practical activities; discussions; play-acting scenarios; story-writing; 'hot-seating'[33]; supporting pairs or small groups of children together to build their skills and their patience. Louise used a basic format of games and discussion in sessions although this differed for each mentee. Her work with Timothy concentrated on social, emotional and behavioural targets (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.8.2) while her work with Nicola included building confidence and learning about

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[33] 'Hot-seating' is a strategy adopted to combat bullying between pupils .The pupils sit in a circle with a victim or a bully of whom they ask open and frank questions in an enlightening discussion is led by the mentor, helping them children to understand how the subject feels/behaves'.

verbal expression. Louise showed recognition of a mentee's young age by including active, practical craft activities, often modelling acceptable social behaviour and emotional responses to events, including significant amounts of praise and encouragement. She liaised with parents in order to encourage them to provide a continuity of practice of her ideas in the home, intending in this way to secure better or quicker mentoring results for the child in school (story was a vehicle for affirming acceptable boundaries at home and at school in Nicola's programme, see Chapter Five, subsection 5.7.2).

4.6.4 Louise's perception of her learning mentor role

Louise provided support for four individual mentees, programmes for groups of six pupils (three groups of forty-five minutes duration, on six or seven weekly occasions at the start of the school year) with specific shared foci, for instance girls' physical image, and two lunchtime clubs with a wider, self-selected membership. The number of groups altered over the year, the programme content also changing with need. She explained that group work could prevent problems because it:

> really does have an impact on the children because they're working together as a team, it builds up the skills and that goes on into the classroom and out onto the play ground. The children do improve, it's quite powerful – I love that side of it because I think it's most productive.

Louise also provided Positive-Play programmes for three children. She clearly indicated that her learning mentor work fitted within the 'raft' of support interventions for additional needs in use at Caldwell Primary School at that time.

Louise undertook her role in an approachable and helpful manner, being flexible in her duties and exuding efficiency with a placid, patient nature, a personable character and kindness for the mentees. Her role was to be

available for any child who needed her and for parents who were upset or worried about their child. She stated:

> we're there as a supporter and a friend. Where there's a problem in the classroom with the staff ... even when they've got worries about home - we can be their voice then and I think it's important that we're not disciplinarians because they're less likely to open up to us and that's very clear in the remit for learning mentors that we're not there to discipline.

Louise identified learning mentoring as a pastoral role which she had clarified with other staff in the school and in links with other agencies. She was in a strategic position in school, beginning each day by visiting every class to check if any child needed her, enabling all children to access her through 'worry boxes' placed in each classroom[34]. Louise's work-load altered frequently as the needs of pupils changed.

In summer terms Louise supported vulnerable pupils at the school transition periods of Nursery to Reception classes. Year Two to Year Three (Junior department) and Year Six to secondary school. The latter group, she undertook with the learning mentor from secondary school, in accordance with the EC agreed procedure. Louise offered anxious pupils extra, supervised visits to secondary school and held discussions, with individuals and small groups. She also discussed pupils' needs with the Special Needs Coordinator at the secondary school prior to their transfer.

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[34] Children with worries could write their names on a slip of paper and put it in the box. Later each day, Louise would collect the papers and discuss their problems individually with children. This procedure gave hesitant children an opportunity to obtain her support privately with confidence.

4.6.5   Help and hindrance to the learning mentor role

Louise had no difficulty in identifying what made her role effective: consistency; being organised; planning well and in advance; and sundry, personal, social and health development resources; her training equipping her with 'a very clear vision' of this. She appreciated being accessible to all pupils in the school and valued their trust, building up effective relationships and recognising her main challenge as being when this was difficult to attain, the children occasionally being fearful of what to expect of her sessions. Louise believed in obtaining support for her mentees from as many sources as possible, 'networking' with staff of her continually updated list of agencies.

The school employed a Behaviour Teaching Assistant whose role was to promote acceptable behaviour. She had been absent during the previous year. In her absence Louise had frequently been called to classrooms to deal with disruptive children (absconding without permission, exhibiting a tantrum, perhaps throwing chairs in the classroom). The boundaries of Louise's role changed during the data-gathering period as a new behaviour teaching assistant was appointed and Louise looked forward to being able to pursue her learning mentor role more thoroughly. She was, however, still called to classrooms via radio-controlled handsets to deal with disruptive children[35].

Louise carefully planned her timetable and implemented this if at all possible. She made herself accountable for the learning mentor project at Caldwell Primary School and completed reports for teachers and annual evaluation reports for the school governors. She made her work accessible to the whole school by exhibiting bright, visual displays of children's mentoring art work and photographs, along corridor walls, including children and staff in communal projects. She really enjoyed her work, conceiving great potential in it for

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[35] On one occasion, my interview with Louise was interrupted by a telephone call from the administration office: a child had arrived late and the staff needed Louise to talk to the child, as she did not want to remain at school.

trialling new ideas, stating:

> I love it, it's a job I really do enjoy doing. It's very rewarding. It's
> quite stressful at times and you do take it home in your head and
> you worry about it and about 'this' child, particularly if they're going
> through a really rough time. Sometimes I think they just want
> loving, don't they? And taking care of? So that's what we can do
> in school.

4.7 Comparing Learning Mentoring in the Three School Settings

In comparing the data generated by the mentoring situations in the three
schools I identified commonalities in policies and practices. These related to
the physical setting of learning mentor sessions and to the practice followed in
undertaking a mentee's programme:

- systems for referring, executing, monitoring and ending programmes;
- recommendation of pupils for learning mentorship from class teachers;
- undertaking mentee work with individual children;
- inclusion of up to three individual targets in mentoring action plans;
- inclusion of emotional, social, communication and behavioural targets;
- individuality in all mentoring sessions;
- planning of sessions with flexible content, altering according to 'how the
  session went';
- flexibility in programme duration;
- application of transition programmes;
- the practice of transferring mentees from mentoring to monitoring
  programmes (and back again(;
- the practice of mentees undertaking self-evaluation of their monitoring
  support;
- the undertaking of self-evaluation by learning mentors and an
  understanding of accountability for their work;

- an understanding by mentors that their role was to befriend the mentee in some way.

The EC policy regarding data for the evaluation of the learning mentor project had initially been followed in all sample schools. In two of the schools alterations had begun to be made to the practice of that policy: some mentors had adapted the documents used for assessment of mentees and all had revised data collection and extended the length of programmes. Inconsistencies across the settings had become apparent in pupil referral, organisation of learning mentoring and the mentors' perception of their roles.

Pupil referral

'Unwritten policies' of referral of children to learning mentoring differed in all schools, specifying who acted as the gatekeeper to mentorship[36] and the level of autonomy afforded to learning mentors by school leaders. In Bradley Junior School mentoring programmes were created with direction from the SENCo, so autonomy of initiative was restricted, as in the formulation of targets for mentees, mentors being obliged to include those devised by the class teacher. Even within the same school, Anton Junior, the two learning mentors practiced within different levels of autonomy, as one mentor rigidly pursued the EC documentation while one devised her own initial assessment procedures. This suggested that school policies, written or existing by experience, were followed within the cultural setting of the school and directed the mentor's practices, while their actions were also influenced by the understandings and decisions taken by the mentor herself. This would reflect the individual characteristics of the learning mentor (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.9.4).

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[36] The gatekeepers were: the head teacher in Anton Junior School; the class teacher in liaison with the SENCo at Bradley Junior School; and the learning mentor in consultation with the head teacher in Caldwell Primary School.

The nature of learning mentor provision

In all schools, the mentoring sessions were timetabled into weekly schedules, learning mentor work being undertaken within different practical parameters at each setting. A degree of flexibility was allowed in Anton Junior School, the timetable was frequently ignored and altered at Bradley Junior School, while regular appointments for mentees were well-kept in Caldwell Primary School (except in emergencies). Examples from Anton and Caldwell Schools indicated that the learning mentors understood their role to encompass all pupils in the school, whereas in Bradley School, mentors were allocated to specific mentees.

The practice of group mentoring differed as no group mentoring work was undertaken at Bradley School while it remained a regular feature at the other two schools. Consistent groups were supported during an academic year at Anton School, with fluctuating membership, whereas the main feature of group mentoring at Caldwell Primary School was the different array of groups undertaken during the same school year, organised according to the pupils' needs at the time.

Learning mentor practices were consistent with general school policies and practices. For instance, rewards were particularly important in Caldwell and Bradley Schools, and the learning mentors ensured that such approbation was integral to mentees' programmes. The degree to which this was undertaken, however, differed from school to school. A major difference in practice related to academic attainment: academic needs were taken into account at Caldwell Primary School at the start of the school year; at Bradley Junior School there was emphasis on the learning mentors continuously pursuing academic targets, such goals becoming more common as the year wore on (when in-year attainment progress of pupils was evaluated by teachers). In furtherance of this, mentors supported the mentees in lessons at Bradley School whereas in both other schools mentee work was only undertaken independently from class lessons.

Mentors undertook revision of the learning mentor programmes within different levels of support and autonomy afforded for the mentor at each school. All mentors required mentees to evaluate their mentoring, at the end of each session (Caldwell School) or at the end of their programmes (Anton and Bradley School). The ending of a programme was undertaken by use of the EC documentation or by the mentor's own procedure at Anton Juniors, through a set procedure at Caldwell Primary, while no mentee ended a programme while attending Bradley Junior School that year.

The learning mentors' perception of their roles

The above mentioned differences were reflected in the learning mentors' perceptions of their roles. I identified four aspects in this: relationships; the daily mentoring role; role boundaries; and help for/hindrance of the role.

First, the learning mentors differed in the relationships which they fostered with the mentees, three mentors developing relationships of just friendship. Four of the five mentors saw their roles as a mixture of friend and authority figure, depending upon the character and needs of the individual mentees: a 'critical' or 'professional' friend.

Second, the daily learning mentor role differed in each setting and was perceived differently by two mentors in one setting (Anton Junior School). Shared, clear understanding of the role was declared, however, by the learning mentors in Bradley Junior School where the historically accepted procedures for learning mentoring had been changed. The role was clear in Caldwell Primary School, although despite this, the learning mentor was expected to deal with any pupil discipline incident.

Third, there was discrepancy in the mentors' understanding of the boundaries of their roles. This related to the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the mentors in their settings and to the expected links between mentors and other staff

members, mentees' families and agencies. In Anton Junior School, mentoring policy was directed by the head teacher but the mentors were allowed autonomy within the programmes which they devised. They perceived tight boundaries to their roles within the school setting and external liaison with outside agencies, and support for mentees' families, were not understood to be integral to the mentor role – mentors stated that their remit was 'for the children'. In Bradley Junior School a distributed leadership culture existed, with the head teacher taking a leading role in policies and delegating leadership to other leaders and to teachers. Within this culture, the mentors included themselves and exercised the practice of mentoring within boundaries directed by the delegated structure. This resulted in external liaison when it was necessary, including the involvement of parents in the mentoring process, with regular review meetings. At Caldwell Primary School the learning mentor enjoyed delegated responsibility within a strongly committed staff ethos. The mentor referred queries and agreements to the head teacher but the decisions made regarding programmes, liaison with families and with agencies, remained with her. She exercised strong liaison, openly seeking interaction with parents, families and agencies in her support for the mentees, thereby identifying her boundaries as somewhat wider than the other mentors in the sample.

Fourth, the mentors considered that the effectiveness of their roles was aided by their available resources and a range of factors: identifying a positive and successful outcome; consistency; effective organisation and planning. They perceived the main challenges to their roles in different ways. In Anton School, challenges were related to time restrictions and alterations to timetabled events; in Bradley Junior School they were related to the school curriculum and restrictions to time caused by timetable alterations; in Caldwell Primary School they related to the importance of the mentor's relationship with the mentee.

In this section I have indicated that the learning mentors' perceptions of their roles could be interpreted in relation to the cultures of the school settings in

which they functioned. Within these socio-cultural settings, however, the mentors' own personal characteristics, attributes and attitudes to the role also significantly featured in the practice of their learning mentoring. Despite their individual characteristics, all five learning mentors shared a similar commitment to their mentoring work, which could be seen to be manifested in a determination that their mentees would improve and succeed in mentoring.

4.8 Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter I have described:

- the details of the three schools in the sample;
- relevant training and experience of the learning mentors involved;
- policies and procedures involved in learning mentoring in each school and the perceptions of the learning mentors regarding these practices;
- the content of learning mentor programmes;
- the learning mentors' perception of their roles and of what helps or hinders them.

I have considered these descriptions and compared and contrasted learning mentoring in the three schools. This has shown that, although sharing the same geographical and socio-economic context, these schools shared some policies and directives but also employed different policies and practices in their undertaking of learning mentoring. Some of the more notable findings are that mentors differed in their relationships with mentees, and that their mentoring was related to differences in personal approach and to the individual cultural settings of the schools. One commonality was that, in whichever school it was situated, each learning mentor programme was unique, created specifically to address one particular child's barriers to learning.

In the next chapter, I describe the findings relating to the mentees' experiences of learning mentor work.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS (II): LEARNING MENTORING OF SIX MENTEES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from learning mentoring practice, contributing towards answering my research questions:

- What relationships and interactions were experienced by the participants involved with the mentoring of these mentees?
- Which strategies did the learning mentors use?
- What were participants' perceptions of learning mentoring?

In Section 5.2, I describe the sample of six mentees[37]. In Sections 5.3 to 5.8, I address the mentoring experiences of each mentee through his/her needs, programme and progress attained. I consider the appropriateness of their targets and the strategies undertaken to address them. I present my analysis of perceived interactions with each mentee of the participant 'others' closely involved with his/her learning mentoring in school: the parents and class teachers. Finally, I compare and contrast the six cases.

5.2 An Overview of the Sample of Mentees

My sample included children of different ages, with different problems which were deemed to act as barriers to their learning. Descriptive information about the mentees is presented in Table 5.2, using allocated pseudonyms.

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[37] For ease of communication, in Chapter Four I referred to mentees as 'he' and mentors as 'she'. From this Chapter I revert to the correct gender of specific participants.

Table 5.2   Information about the six participating mentees

Mentee	Gender	Year Group	Dates of programme	Criteria for referral	Learning mentor/s
Anton Junior School: Catherine	Female	4-5	June 07-Dec 07 and then monitored.	Gifted and Talented child. Difficulty socialising with peers.	Teresa
Anton Junior School: Quentin	Male	3	October 07- July 08 and continued.	Communication; Problem with socialising.	Teresa; Patricia
Bradley Junior School: Keiron	Male	3	October 07- July 08 and continued.	Aggression towards peers; elective mutism; communication difficulty.	Karen
Bradley Junior School: Zac	Male	4	October 07- July 08 and continued.	Aggression towards peers.	Margaret
Caldwell Primary School: Nicola	Female	2	October 07- July 08 and continued.	Communication; difficulty with interactions at home.	Louise
Caldwell Primary School: Timothy	Male	1	October 07- May 08 and then monitored.	Hyperactivity; aggression towards peers.	Louise

5.3   Case One - Catherine's Story

The participants in this case were:

the mentee – Catherine;

the parent – Catherine's mother;

the learning mentor – Teresa;

the class teachers – Brian (Catherine's teacher in Years Three and Four) and Nerys (class teacher in Year Five).

5.3.1 <u>The mentee and her needs</u>

Catherine was selected for the learning mentor programme because her above-average ability in Mathematics appeared to staff and her parents to be reflected in a difficulty in coping with social situations. Her best friend was less academically successful than Catherine but was more mature in her social skills. The problem for staff at the school was to keep Catherine challenged with work of appropriate difficulty; the problem for Catherine was to remain socially accepted by her peers while being challenged in this way.

Table 5.3.1 indicates that Catherine's learning mentor support began when she attended a class of twenty-seven children late in National Curriculum Year Three and continued for two years. During 'monitoring' in the last seven months, she participated in small group work for two months, individual mentor appointments having ceased.

Table 5.3.1 <u>Tracking profile of Catherine's mentoring</u>

2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008
May	September	September	October	January	May
Year group 3	Year group 4	Year group 5			
Need for support was identified. Catherine was assessed and accepted onto a programme.	Class teacher remained the same in Year group Four.	Programme continued into new class for transition continuity;	Mentor consulted with mentee.	'Challenge group' of able pupils piloted.	Programme ceased.
Parents were informed by the head teacher about the commencement of the programme.	Individual sessions 30 minutes weekly or as class teaching time permitted. Work on friendship, undertaking responsiblities, differentiated Maths work in class. Mentor and teacher encouragement.	considered by learning mentor pupils to be settled	Programme reduced to monitoring; some small group work began in November with 'light touch' support.		Catherine had informed her parents of the activities and progress of the mentoring programme throughout.

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5.3.2   Catherine's programme

Catherine's programme provided for the targets set by Teresa, which were:

- to improve her social skills;
- to encourage wider friendships;
- to ensure that school was sufficiently challenging for her.

The following extract from observation of a mentoring session exemplifies how two targets were addressed simultaneously, socialising and widening friendships, through discussion of Catherine's interaction with peers.

> *Activity 14.16-14.30 Introduction to the session – discussion between*
> *Catherine and Teresa about friendships in non- school time.*
> *14.35 Catherine asked Teresa about friendship group dynamics.*
> *Catherine described her best friend of two years:*
> *'she talks to me like a two year old. She makes Diane (a peer pupil)*
> *cry. She has to 'play the character' she wants'.*
> *Again: 'It was easier when Diane was away but I don't know why'.*
> *Catherine reported that she tried to get 'them' (her best friend and*
> *Diane) to be friends – relating with feeling 'it doesn't work!' (22.11.07).*

This response, after six months of learning mentor work, indicated her lack of social understanding, requiring continued learning mentor support in social skills.

Catherine stated in her initial interview that she had no knowledge of targets towards which she was working and the programme was formalised later in the data-gathering period. Teresa had not made targets explicit to mentees because she 'knew where the children were going' and the mentees knew what they were doing. Observation enabled me to identify the strategies which

were adopted in order to address Catherine's targets[38]. Table 5.3.2 shows that Teresa threaded open-questioning and logical reasoning through a variety of activities, allowing for Catherine's intellectual ability. She sought to build Catherine's confidence in social situations by reassurance and empathy, encouraging her to assess her own progress.

Table 5.3.2   Strategies observed in Catherine's mentoring programme

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
• Open questioning; suggesting; eliciting knowledge; logical reasoning; advising.	Completion of a questionnaire about school, with shared dialogue for each question, used to elicit logical thinking and reasoned responses. Setting: one-to-one.	Confidence-building; reassurance; empathy; confirming self-targeting and the mentee's high academic abilities.
Open questioning; suggesting; eliciting knowledge; encouraging imaginative description; reasoning; showing understanding of the mentee; advising. Providing advice for social situations.	Considering a variety of photographs to elicit responses, with imaginative description, thus exercising creative thinking and reasoning. Setting: one-to-one.	Confidence-building; reassurance; empathy; confirming the mentee's capabilities in self-targeting and her high abilities.
• Open questioning; suggesting; eliciting knowledge and reasoning; showing understanding of the child; giving social advice.	Focus on a school newspaper being written by the mentee. Setting: one-to-one.	Confidence-building; reassurance; empathy; confirming the mentee's high abilities.

After settling into a Year Five/Six class with a different teacher, Catherine had met all her targets and therefore Teresa considered her no longer in need of

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[38] See an example of field-notes in Appendix 3.

support. She was not, however, 'rolled off' mentoring but allocated to 'monitoring' as a consequence of it being considered 'useful to keep a GAT (Gifted and Talented) child 'on the books' for the learning mentor external evaluation system. The monitoring programme included her in a group, purporting to assist another pupil in his programme. Teresa intended to maintain contact with Catherine, monitor her social and emotional competencies, and intervene with support if necessary. Catherine was also included in a series of sessions, mixing with a small group of GAT children for six months, after which Teresa evaluated that the group was not successful due to timetabling difficulties. Catherine's mother considered that Catherine's programme should end, with further support available in her final term in Year Six to help her with transition to secondary school.

5.3.3 Relationships between the participants involved with Catherine

Catherine agreed with Teresa that they interacted in an 'informal' open relationship (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.4). In her second year in teacher, Brian's, class, her mother thought that Brian highly regarded Catherine as he commissioned her to undertake responsibilities, which he confirmed in interview. Catherine was described by her mother as self-reliant but enjoying the company of friends, while responding to situations sensitively and 'personally'. This, together with Catherine's capable attitude and innate conceptual abilities, were considered by parent and learning mentor to restrict Catherine in forming friendships. Her parents supported her in her educational life in any way they could and mother told Catherine she needed 'to toughen up' when she encountered social upset with her peers being sensitive to the educational situation and school culture: 'I told her to shrug these things off. I'm tentative about telling school because it may not be the best thing'. The class teachers in Anton Junior School only liaised with parents at formal interviews twice yearly but frequently liaised informally with the learning mentors, which helped the teachers to form perceptions of mentor roles.

5.3.4 The mentee, parent and teachers' perceptions of the role of a learning mentor

The mentee, Catherine

Figure 5.3.4 Catherine's drawing of a learning mentor
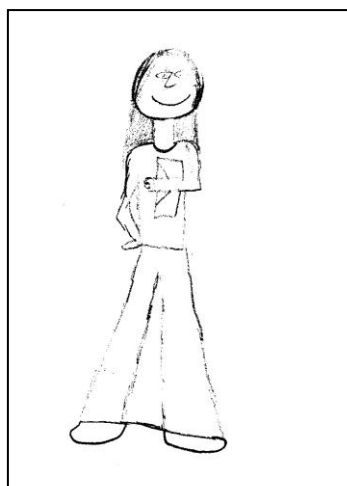
In Chapter Three, Section 3.10, I explained that all the mentees in the sample were asked to 'draw a learning mentor' in order to provide an impetus to conversation at the initial interview. Catherine talked about a learning mentor who was informal, always smiling, with lots of work to do. She chose to write a list of mentor characteristics, suggesting that a mentor's role was: a listener; interested in the mentee; kind and caring; open to suggestions; trustworthy; helpful, through fun and games. Catherine stated that she looked to Teresa for support in the classroom situation. She recognised in her someone who helped with learning 'when the teacher was busy with other children'. She considered that Teresa's help could be provided for her in any lesson when Teresa was working with the class (perhaps as SNTA, see Chapter Four, Section 4.3). She liked working with Teresa and was keen to continue her mentoring sessions, not as a means of help but as a result of the content of sessions being different from school work: 'because it's just like stuff about things that you want to do and stuff and it's not like work or... and it's not work, so it's just better'.

Catherine's parent

Catherine reported to her mother details of what happened in her individual mentoring and her mother held clear expectations of the mentor: she was to help with the development of Catherine's social and emotional skills. She thought that Catherine was 'learning how to… be happy and confident to deal with things at school'.

Catherine's mother had been included in discussions with the teachers about how best to educate Catherine at her level of understanding and ability. This enabled her to express her wishes for Catherine's education and to respond sensibly to the school's ideas - such discussion was not seen by the mother to be the role of the learning mentor.

The class teachers, Brian and Nerys

When in Year Four, Catherine's teacher, Brian, described the learning mentor's role as:

> just keeping up a communication with them (the mentees) about
> how they are feeling, about what they are doing at the moment
> and the progress they are making in their life in school.

Brian saw this as 'trying to make her (Catherine) fit in'. He was referring to Catherine's frequently identified isolated social position in the class. Brian retained a professional approach, describing himself as 'the educational side of learning' and the learning mentor as the 'what do you think about your learning, how do you feel about your learning?' empathising with the child, with calmness of character, and the ability to attain the child's level of understanding.

Brian acknowledged that his knowledge of the learning mentor programme was weak, with confusion over her role, in part caused by the multiple roles

which Teresa held in the school. Over the year, Teresa's role in his class had developed from Special Needs Assistant to general assistant and then to learning mentor. This was a result of external, policy-related factors and the altered needs of class members (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.4). Teresa had previously achieved successful improvement of one of his pupils and Brian further attributed his perceptions of the mentor role to their established working relationship, considering that he trusted her to organise her time and left her in charge of managing her role in the class, without liaison unless she wanted to report back to him. He said that Teresa had a way of 'calming things' which enabled the teacher to 'get on'. He had no knowledge of the length or frequency of mentor/mentee sessions and felt no responsibility for this but commented: 'this is fascinating mainly...it means I really ought to sit down with Teresa at some point and go through it exactly, the details'.

One of the areas which was frequently highlighted during my interviews with teachers related to whether 'friendship' was evident in a mentor/mentee relationship. When asked about the learning mentor's role, Catherine's teacher in Year Five, Nerys, agreed with Teresa that the learning mentor role was definitely that of 'friend' to the child. She implied that this had not been entirely successful for Catherine; special support was not needed as Catherine had become over-confident and was perhaps not really a 'Gifted' child.

Nerys believed that pressure was being placed on Catherine by her parents in understanding her ability and their need to keep 'pushing her on', also that Catherine was challenged in her learning by attending a class with Year Six pupils who were working at a higher level than she: Catherine was no longer the cleverest in the class. This suggested that either Catherine had, during Year Five, reached a temporary plateau in her learning, as experience suggests can occur for young children, or perhaps the expectations of Nerys, a teacher of older children, differed from those of Brian, who was familiar with the learning of younger children.

5.4 Case 2 - Quentin's Story

The participants in this case were:

the mentee – Quentin;
the parent – Quentin's mother;
the learning mentors – Teresa (individual support); Patricia (group support);
the class teacher – Tricia.

5.4.1 <u>The mentee and his needs</u>

Quentin was a pupil in Year Three in a class of twenty-one children, taught by the same teacher for two years at Anton Junior School. He was chosen to undertake a learning mentor programme because he had difficulty communicating in school, it being particularly difficult to understand his speech when he was energised, accelerated his speech and his voice increased in pitch. His expressive language often appeared to be illogical, omitting words from verbal sequences or simply verbalising the initial letter of a noun. He was monitored by the Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) Service and completed their activity sheets with his Special Needs Teaching Assistant (who was also his group learning mentor, see Chapter Four, Section 4.3). His behaviour was erratic and he had few friends. Table 5.4.1 indicates that Quentin received learning mentor support in school from an early age for improving his behaviour and learning. This continued into the Junior School as small group support to improve his communication. He was allocated additional one-to-one learning mentor support for four months after a traumatic experience in a busy school hall, causing Quentin to pull his coat over his head, refuse to remove it and to shout loudly and constantly for some time.

Table 5.4.1   <u>Tracking profile of Quentin's mentoring</u>

2005	2006	2007	2007		2008
	September	September	October	December	March
Year group1/2	Year group 3	Year group 4			
Need identified in Infant school: one-to-one sessions, individual work was provided.	Support continued into Junior school. Teaching assistant supported him in class. Group work was started with Patricia.	Trauma in hall caused a need to be identified. Teresa began 1-1 mentoring. Same teacher as in Year 3. Medication calmed him when in Year 4.	Referral to external speech and language agency. Individual weekly mentoring continued. Weekly small group learning mentor work with Patricia.	Programme with Teresa became monitoring. Circle time activities in mixed age group, to promote speech, with Patricia.	'Rolled- off' in March programme with Teresa. Continued to be supported by Patricia to July.
Previous head teacher informed parents.	Head teacher liaised closely with mentor and continued to inform parents when necessary.	Parents were informed by the head teacher about the start of his new programme.			

Quentin's mother described him as hyperactive, with a medical diagnosis. Agencies other than education were involved in his care. Mother said that he was often 'made a scapegoat': 'if it goes wrong or something is broken in school or home or the street, he gets automatic blame 'cos he's the naughty one'. She agreed that he was easily distracted and identified reading and writing as areas in which he needed help in school.

Quentin exhibited traits of low self-esteem, immediately replying in the negative about tasks which were given to him (for instance, 'I can't read it'). When asked if his sessions with the learning mentor might change anything for him, he said 'things might get worse'. Despite this, his mother said he was a happy child, getting upset only when he did not 'get his own way'. Quentin's

'own way' was often different from that of his peers. Observation suggested that he was a literal thinker, hardly using imagination, labelling things by linking them to previous experiences and understandings[39], and relating everything to his own interests. He focused on one thing at once, concentrating really hard, even if this was not what was required of him by a staff member[40]. Assessment indicated that he made average academic progress throughout Teresa's support for him. He said he wanted help with his learning 'and nuffin' else, just learnings'.

5.4.2   Quentin's programme

Quentin was not aware of any learning mentor targets and Teresa stated that she was not using targets in his individual learning mentor programme as she was only dealing with his traumatic incident. I interpreted from her programme, and from interview, that her aims were to develop his social skills, communication, and confidence:

- to give practice and confidence in verbal speech;
- to calm him in order that his speech could be comprehended by others.

Teresa encouraged Quentin to use his speech and imagination to express his feelings and thoughts (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.3), often repeating what he said in order to model to him good diction and syntax. Their one-to-one sessions were similar in style to Catherine's, the activities being different and undertaken in the designated room. Teresa understood his conversation within the context of these learning mentor sessions. Her programme for Quentin is shown in Table 5.4.2a to include strategies of questioning, talking

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[39] For instance, when asked what food he liked, he made reference to food provided for school lunch.

[40] In one observed learning mentor session his attention was taken by the learning mentor's laptop making noises and he spent nine minutes speaking about this and about the electricity used to power it. His learning mentor had difficulty restoring his attention to the task in hand.

and turn-taking. It appeared in observation that no progress was being made in the aspects conveyed.

Table 5.4.2a   <u>Strategies observed in Teresa's mentoring programme for Quentin</u>

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
• Questioning; suggesting; eliciting knowledge attempting to elicit discussion, description; make representational drawing; make decisions; imagining; logical thinking. • • Memory game	Attempt to discuss dreams, request for Quentin to 'draw a dream' was abortive. Attempt to engage in discussion about a drawing of a present, 'what could it be?' This was also abortive. Playing a memory and description game, 'Guess Who?' Setting: one-to-one.	Confidence-building; aligning herself with the mentee, developing trust in Quentin. Opportunity to express feelings and thoughts. Attempt to link home and school. Concentration; listening to others; logical thinking by memorising cards and making deductions.
• Questioning and encouraging conversation.	Completion of an assessment activity for identifying possible problems in school and the mentee's preferred learning style. Setting: one-to-one.	Quentin liked school and learned best by listening, although this was not Teresa's experience of him. Opportunity to express feelings and thoughts.

Quentin could not maintain, nor appeared to wish to participate in, discourse. He did not reason nor use short-term memory to enable him to play a turn-taking game effectively. The mentor's analysis of a monitoring assessment undertaken during my second observed session implied that he learned best by listening. It was understandable that Teresa disagreed with this result, as Quentin had found it extremely difficult to listen to the questions, taking charge of the order of questions and directing the use of the assessment form on numerous occasions, verbalising strange responses. Teresa concluded that

he had not participated sufficiently for the assessment to be of value. Due to Teresa ending Quentin's programme after the second observed session, a third session could not be undertaken. Instead, an interview was held with Teresa about Quentin and his progress, details from which are referred to in discussion of the impact of mentoring in Chapter Six.

Quentin's group mentoring programme continued, devised by mentor Patricia to address his long-term needs, which she identified as 'communication and socialising'. His programme involved meeting weekly with eight other mentees, from older year groups. His targets were:

- to interact appropriately with peers;
- to learn how to be patient, slow down his speech and communicate;
- to behave in a socially-appropriate way.

Observation of Quentin's programme confirmed that his group mentoring was monitored by Patricia's intuition rather than set assessments (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.2). Meeting targets was a long-term aim, as Quentin had already undertaken this programme for two years during the research period. In Table 5.4.2b I present the details of Quentin's group learning mentor programme: turn-taking by mentees seated in a circle, talking about a theme and activity which were selected and modelled by Patricia (for instance, 'healthy eating'). Through this she instilled the concepts of fairness, reassurance, and group affiliation and, for Quentin, use of imagination.

Patricia adopted two Circle Time topics in each observed session, relating to health, school 'news' themes, and current issues. The mentees could defer a reply if they wished, which gave them confidence and the group was self-reprimanding after a while, working with certainty to ensure that everyone played fairly. Quentin showed his lack of imagination in this game: when the sentence starter was 'I wish I was' Quentin sat looking down and, when it was his turn, said 'I don't wish'.

Table 5.4.2b <u>Strategies observed in Patricia's group-mentoring programme</u>
<u>for Quentin</u>

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
• Modelling appropriate speech and opinions; taking turns; opportunities for listening; do not interrupt others. • Rules were explained: they could only speak when holding a teddy. • Current affairs.	Turn-taking circle time on the topic of healthy eating. The group took turns responding by explaining their own choices of pictures of two types of food they liked. Discussion of a basket of foods – which were healthy? General discussion about topical issues. Setting: group of 9 mentees.	Turn-taking; fairness; reassurance; group affiliation (by rules). Awareness of the world around us.
• Questioning; turn-taking; following rules; suggesting; imaginative description; reasoning; memory game. • A memory game	A turn-taking circle game which related to personal development and emotions, using imagination 'I feel happy/hate/wish I was…'; 'If I was an animal/a famous person, I would be…' I went shopping and I bought...' Setting: group of 10 mentees.	Group dynamics and social acceptance; patience; your opinion is important to me. Listening to others; concentration; taking turns
• An opportunity to share news in turn. • Circle games, relating work to healthy eating, and relating to socialising. • Role-play scenarios.	Reporting news and discussion about this. Socialising game. This involved taking turns to speak about what food is good for you; by deciding on a food, and then constructing a sentence about your choice. 'Sticky situations' – a game resulting in pretend scenarios in pairs e.g. Quentin had not returned his	You can listen and take a turn; everyone will take a turn. Everyone can have a turn; you can choose anyone to play; being the exception to the group is safe and can be fun; you can follow the rules of the game. Turn-taking with consequences. We can act appropriately; problems can be discussed and solved.

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
• A 'party game'.	(continued) homework and his head teacher was to telephone his parent. A game of 'Wink, Murder'. Setting: group of 9 mentees.	Eliciting answers by verbal questioning; use of body language to elicit meaning.

The third section of each session was a game, following a brief reminder by Patricia of what the group had played the previous week. Quentin found memory and role play games difficult. For instance, when he had to role-play why he had not done his homework, he could only refer to an actual occasion: 'Mum says, every day, take lights out, television and lock the door'. Similarly, in a game of 'Wink, Murder', he had no concept of deception in order to foil 'the detective' and thus win the game, not understanding why this was humorous to other group members.

5.4.3   Relationships between the participants involved with Quentin's mentoring

Quentin was 'a loner' at school. Staff members encountered difficulty in engaging him in learning and maintaining his concentration on a task, particularly in a classroom situation. Despite her best intentions, understanding him continued to be a problem for class teacher, Tricia, even after he had been a member of her class for a year (see Chapter Six, subsection 6.2.4). His individual learning mentor, Teresa, said he just had minimal speech problems and refused to find him difficult. Similarly, Patricia could understand what he said, most of the time. Observations indicated that he did not slow his speech in mentoring sessions, so perhaps familiarity by the learning mentors aided their understanding of his speech. Even one-to-one I, as observer, could not understand some of his words and it was very difficult to engage him in interview. Much of his time appeared to be spent in his own silent world; indeed, he talked often about what was 'in his head'.

There was weak interaction between participants on behalf of Quentin, each forming their own ideas about him. His mother reported that all the school staff 'loved' him and took care of him, though direct contact between herself and the school was at the head teacher's instigation, not the mentor's.

5.4.4 The participants' perceptions of the role of learning mentors

Teresa appeared to be acting as a 'champion' for Quentin within the school setting, Patricia a provider of friendship (sixty per-cent[41] friendship and forty per-cent dealing with discipline). Perceptions of the learning mentor role by other participants in Quentin's case are presented next.

The mentee, Quentin

It was not possible to engage Quentin in drawing a learning mentor. He did not show understanding of the mentors' roles although, at the end of the research period, he commented that the mentors had been trying to help him to learn.

Quentin's mother

Quentin's mother was uncertain about the learning mentor role and could not name her child's mentors in interview. Quentin had not relayed information to her about his programme and she stated that she did not have as much contact with the Junior school as she had previously experienced with the Infant School. She valued the individual and small group work which mentoring afforded Quentin, saying 'he's better in a small group and that. With more one-to-one, the better he is'. She said that he 'shows off' to an audience,

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[41] It was difficult for participants to evaluate a level of change in a mentee. Numerical perceptions were accepted in data for this thesis as one means by which all participants could attempt to specify an opinion. These were accepted because they were undertaken by the participants as a result of experience, training, and/or interactions, of which those observing did not have the benefit.

and would produce more work if other children were not present. She hoped that the learning mentoring would serve to provide him with help in reading and writing.

The class teacher, Tricia

Three pupils in Tricia's class were undertaking mentor programmes and feedback took place between Tricia and the learning mentors 'as and when required' (usually during coffee-break). Tricia perceived that a mentor was skilled in reacting appropriately to certain types of information, knowing what to do next. She likened this to 'social work', the mentor building a close relationship of trust with the mentee. Of the mentor, Tricia said:

> she supports the children who have got some sort of problem, it may be socially, you know, joining in with the others or emotionally at home or whatever, and she takes them out, either as a group or individually, to chat to them, and work around their problems, without directly saying.

Tricia had no definite idea of what happened during a mentoring session but understood the overall practice. She indicated that the mentor role included being both disciplinarian and friend, mainly the latter. She considered that learning mentors had to have considerable patience:

> I'm sure these really get inside children's heads and understand them and want to help them, you've just got to be a special person I suppose, who's got those qualities of listening and …you know just understanding.

5.5 Case 3 - Kieron's Story

The participants in this case were:

the mentee – Kieron;
the parent – Kieron's mother;
the learning mentor – Karen;
the class teacher – Lesley.

5.5.1 <u>The mentee and his needs</u>

Kieron entered Year Three of Bradley Junior School in September of the data-generating period. He was initially silent, only mouthing verbal responses towards adults in school, while being loud and aggressive towards children in the playground. Staff members quickly identified and initiated support for him, referring to learning mentoring under the criteria of aggression and selective mutism. His mentoring profile of support in Table 5.5.1 indicates that Kieron's problems were expected to be long-term.

Kieron's non-verbal participation was reported by mentors as 'challenging and tiring' for adults in school. His class teacher dealt with this by not recognising that he had a problem and always expecting speech from him. Kieron was mainly silent or whispering during my research interviews but he clearly responded with body language and facial expressions. To facilitate an accurate account of his opinions, I repeated his responses for his verification.

Table 5.5.1 <u>Tracking profile of Kieron's mentoring support</u>

2007		2008		
September	October	March, April	July	September
Year group 3				Year group 4
Need identified.	Selected for mentor programme, with individual classroom support, 30 minutes weekly. Work on socialising and learning. Support given to encourage participation in lessons. Positive play work also undertaken.	Assessed.	Assessed.	Programme to continue.
	Parents informed by head teacher about the start of his programme. Kieron kept his parents informed of activities and the progress of his programme.			

Kieron's mother stated that he was a happy boy, but he showed a temper (which had worsened since leaving infant school) if you said things he did not like or with which he did not agree. She stated that he had a poor attitude about his own skills, though he was 'good at Mathematics and Reading'. Contrary to this, however, school staff identified that he needed learning mentor support in Mathematics lessons (for instance, in spatial awareness). At home, Kieron enjoyed being outdoors and sharing activities with his older sister. His mother's main concerns were his speech and selective mutism, and his short attention span, being easily distracted. She said 'he 'takes things in' he shouldn't, like others (his age) do'.

5.5.2   <u>Kieron's programme</u>

Kieron attended a class of thirty-seven pupils, supported his learning mentor, Karen (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.2). In December, his class target was: to improve his handwriting. Kieron did not know any targets for his learning mentor programme but thought that he had all the help he needed in school. Karen explained that her one-to-one mentor sessions with Kieron included discussing school and his home. She taught concepts which he

found difficult through games (for example 'times-tables'). Strategies which she adopted in order to address Kieron's needs in his learning mentor programme are presented in Table 5.5.2. I observed strategies of: interpersonal; quiet talking; posing questions and giving instructions; suggesting; prompting; attempting to elicit knowledge; modelling work; and using reminders to keep the mentee on task. During Kieron's session in class, Karen supported the teacher's lesson objectives (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.2). When one-to-one with Kieron, Karen practised three aspects in a learning mentor session: a task, a follow-up, and a 'turn-taking game' of the child's choice.

Table 5.5.2   Strategies observed in Kieron's mentoring programme

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
• Questioning by suggesting and prompting; attempting to elicit knowledge; developing an understanding of child's ability; modelling work; and using reminders to keep him on task, using very quiet verbal support.	Karen talked to him in a class Mathematics lesson to help him respond with the class and to participate, as did the other children. Setting: a class Mathematics lesson.	Confidence-building; reassurance; empathy.
• Interpersonal quiet talking and posing questions; giving instructions with patience and calmness, despite clear pressure to complete the task quickly by two teaching assistants. • Listening intently to the mentee's whispered answers and then responding. Encouraging him to	Individual work making 'peppermint creams'.	Confidence-building; reassurance; empathy; to gain an understanding of his abilities. Karen insisted that Kieron should communicate with her and that he was enjoying the task.

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
(continued) participate in and verbally contribute to a discourse. Keen use of positive language.	Setting: one-to-one in a craft area.	
• Individual reading and handwriting practice for correct handwriting style and neatness. • Speaking and listening game.	Reading from a set reading book. Copying words on lined paper. A game which required listening, identification of objects by the mentee and verbalising their names for a score chart. The mentee selected a game of 'Guess Who?' to conclude the session. Setting: one-to-one in a designated craft area.	Improvement in literacy through practice. Positive results in the game. Talking audibly to staff in school.

5.5.3 Relationships between the participants involved with Kieron's mentoring

Kieron indicated that he liked meeting with his learning mentor and her support in class caused him no difficulties. Communication between the participants in his mentoring was considerable within school, including the learning mentor, the class teacher, Lesley, and the advisory Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) (see Chapter Four, Section 4.5.2). Liaison between Lesley and Karen was undertaken briefly at the end of lessons or: 'Karen pops in at break'. Lesley confirmed the role of the SENCo in monitoring the work of learning mentors and evaluating impact of the mentoring programmes for mentees (Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.3). Communication was limited, however, with outside agencies. This was stated by Kieron's mother. Perhaps she supported mentoring taking place in class

lessons, as she considered that his future help was needed in lesson time. She was, however, expecting specific information to be provided by the learning mentor about his programme which had not been forthcoming in the ten months of the research period and she had not sought it, but commented that her family had experienced some significant difficulties during that time which could have influenced Kieron at school.

5.5.4   The participants' perceptions of the role of a learning mentor

Karen exemplified her understanding of her role as 'a professional friend' (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.4) by talking to Kieron, raising his confidence, praising him and not using reprimand. Other participants in Kieron's case described the role of the learning mentor.

The mentee, Kieron

Kieron drew a learning mentor. Given his lack of verbal response, drawing was a reasonable means of communication for him at that time and this was effective in my developing an interaction with him. Kieron annotated his drawing (Figure 5.5.4) with descriptive words about learning mentors, suggesting that a learning mentor is kind and helped him 'with games; with work; make things; to cut out things'.

Figure 5.5.4   Kieron's drawing of a learning mentor
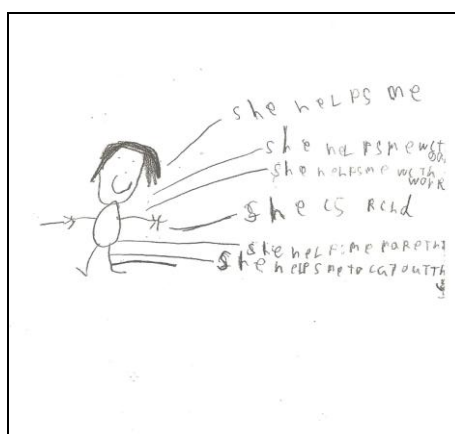
Kieron's perception of the learning mentor's role was as a help for his learning. Despite the work which she undertook with him to decrease his aggression he did not agree that she helped him with playing with other children but considered that she helped him with tasks, sitting with him and helping him in class.

Kieron's mother

Despite identifying a low level of contact with the school regarding learning mentoring, Kieron's mother had an understanding of the learning mentor programme. She believed that Kieron was happy with his learning mentor and expected that her role was to support her son: 'to 'bring him out of himself''. I hope he will participate more, to help him to concentrate and not 'get behind''. Perhaps mother's understanding of the mentoring role issued from the information about it which she regularly received from her son. This verbal communication at home reinforced the knowledge that his mutism was selective and suggested why, in interview, his mother did not identify his silence in school as a major cause for concern.

The class teacher, Lesley

Three mentees in Kieron's class were taught by the class teacher, Lesley. The mentor, Karen, stated that Lesley could always find pupils for her who were in need of mentoring support. Lesley agreed that Karen was half friend and half authority figure to Kieron because she corrected his behaviour in a quiet, discursive way.

The class teacher understood what took place in individual learning mentoring sessions and why, with games and turn-taking in a relaxed atmosphere, to enable the mentees to talk about their concerns. Lesley maintained a different perception to Karen, however, of how the inclusive practice in school worked

for learning mentors (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.4):

> if it's something that she (Karen) can't support him (Kieron) in class with, she'll take him out and do handwriting, if it's something that she can support him in class with, then she'll support him within the classroom.

Lesley perceived the learning mentor role to be to support the children who were just above the lower ability range in a class, who might have behavioural problems or problems at home, who 'need that little bit of extra help'. She considered that the purpose of learning mentoring was to improve attainment ('grasp 'the basics' of handwriting, spelling, times tables') and social skills. She said that mentees improved in these as they developed, became happier to talk to others and were more willing to 'have a go at things' because of increasing their confidence. She stated that the new integrated classroom practice had some positive effects and the mentor needed to have patience with this:

> to be able to fit into the classroom, be able to respond well to the children, be able to talk to the other children not just the child that they are working with 'cos obviously with a class of thirty-seven then there's more, you know if the learning mentor's there, then she does support others within the class if someone asks her to…

For Lesley, two factors were more important than training for mentors: having the 'right nature' and previously working in the school, with established relationships with the teachers.

5.6 Case Four – Zac's Story

The participants in this case were:

the mentee – Zac;
the parent – Zac's father;
the learning mentor – Margaret;
the class teacher – Zoe.

5.6.1 <u>The mentee and his needs</u>

Zac attended Year Four in Bradley Junior School. He had been identified as showing aggression towards his peers, needing help with appropriate behaviour and with friendships. These problems had started for Zac at a very young age, as indicated in his learning mentoring profile in Table 5.6.1. He had been diagnosed with attachment issues regarding his mother, who had been estranged from his household during his early childhood.

Table 5.6.1 <u>Tracking profile of mentee Zac's learning mentoring</u>

2004-2006	2006	2007			2008
	September	September	October	December	July
Year groups 1 and 2	Year group 3	Year group 4			
Transfer from Nursery disrupted him. Learning mentor support was provided in infant school as Zac tried to sort out problems for others which would result in fights.	Transfer from infants disrupted him. Admitted to Bradley Junior School.	Referred to Behaviour Support Service.	Mentoring programme started in Bradley Junior School.	Other agencies involved.	Assessment updated.

2004-2006	2006	2007			2008
Agencies were involved, other than education.		Parents were informed by the headteacher about Kieron's programme.	School and mentee kept his parents informed of activities and the progress of the programme.		

Zac was described by his father as not mature, interacting like a three-to- five-year-old at the time of the data-gathering, when he was nine years old, though also 'very out-going, a proper lad!' His father stated also that Zac was academically 'quite bright', good at art, physically well and athletic, with brilliant hand/eye coordination. He just did not understand when 'things had gone too far'. He had a tendency to dwell on negatives and not to appreciate approbation.

In school, Zac was a stubborn child who could manipulate others and found it difficult to accept change, for instance new teachers in the classroom. His class teacher thought that he would need long-term mentoring support.

5.6.2   Zac's programme

Zac experienced a weekly learning mentor session and he considered this adequate, in frequency and in length, stating ''cos it in't too much and it in't too, it in't too low', indicating his expressive language ability. Zac had been involved in the setting of his mentee targets. He understood well that a target was something he was 'aiming to improve at'. He used his written targets by reading them when he felt angry in class, a strategy his learning mentor had taught him and which his teacher supported. His targets were initially:

- to be able to say what a friend is;
- to play a game cooperatively with one or two children.

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The strategies used by learning mentor, Margaret, to address these targets are shown in Table 5.6.2. I observed Margaret stressing positive associations in her activities with Zac, areas with which Zac could identify. She adopted this strategy for discussion of what constituted acceptable social and emotional interactions in school, including therapeutic story-writing as a vehicle for communicating acceptable values and behaviour. Through this strategy and frequent turn-taking games, with questioning and reasoning, Margaret attempted to raise Zac's self-esteem. She considered that only when he achieved this would Zac develop an understanding of socially acceptable friendship 'rules'[42]. Activities were adopted to support Zac in Numeracy concepts and he was observed to be willing to participate with interest during a mentor/mentee session.

Within such socially acceptable constructs, Margaret sought to encourage Zac's logical reasoning. She addressed his emotional needs by conveying basic understandings, similar to those mentioned by Teresa (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.3) as being those which usually children learn at an earlier age: 'you have good things to be proud of; you can play a game with another person; you can make decisions within the restrictions set by others in authority; you can have confidence in your innate ability'.

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[42] Zac needed to understand how to interact with friends: for instance, comprehending that when they said something he did not like, it did not mean they did not like *him*; that he could have a friend and that friend could still play with someone else, he/she did not have to stay with him. 'You don't like me. Everyone hates me', he would say. When he had a problem like this he hid in the building so staff would go and find him. His father would then be contacted and the child would need 'calm down' time.

Table 5.6.2 <u>Strategies observed in Zac's mentoring programme</u>

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
• Identifying positives in his life;	Discussion of positives, favourite things with which Zac could identify – a fairground picture, write/draw what you like doing on the horses, good things that have happened to him.	You have good things of which to be proud. Following through of consequences.
• Use of imagination; creativity.	Writing a therapeutic story; discussion to support Zac in deciding what a story would include, written at his dictation.	You can identify appropriate ways of behaving, weaving this into a story.
• Turn-taking, using questioning and logical reasoning.	Playing a game of Ludo. Setting: one-to-one.	You can play a game with one other person.
• Imagination using acceptable social conventions.	Writing a social story; discussion to support Zac in deciding what a story would include, written at his dictation.	You can identify appropriate ways of behaving, weaving this into a story.
• Social encounter; use of patience; interaction with one other person following set rules.	Playing two turn-taking games - dominoes and card 'Snap'; constant discourse about how to play, following rules.	How to take turns in a game with one other person.
• Discussion extending from school.	Discourse about Christmas and Dad's birthday. Setting: one-to-one.	Zac can make decisions within the restrictions imposed by others in authority.
• Practicing times-tables using a familiar activity to raise attainment. Calm attitude, persisting despite Zac's attempts at discussing distractions.	Completion of a jigsaw with a picture of an astronaut, chosen by Zac. Correctly calculating the times-table sum on the reverse of each piece supplied the correct part of the picture on the front, thus enabling completion of the jigsaw. Setting: one-to-one.	Confidence in his innate mathematical ability.

Zac was observed to react appropriately towards Margaret during these sessions. He showed respect but attempted to engineer deviation by manipulating the conversation or activities. Margaret showed sensitivity towards him while maintaining that he did not 'set the agenda'. At the end of the data-gathering time, she considered that twenty five per-cent of his programme was aimed at improving learning, and seventy five per-cent at improving his behaviour. This academic learning was not reflected in his targets which, as indicated above, were both based on social skills.

5.6.3   Relationships between the participants involved with Zac's mentoring

Zac's class teacher, Zoe, confirmed the collegiate approach to mentoring in Bradley Junior School mentioned in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.2), with good liaison and frequent meetings (two or three weekly) for Zac between school staff (learning mentor, SENCo, head teacher, class teacher), agencies other than school (Behaviour Support, which was consulted when a child was at risk of exclusion from school) and Zac's father. This enabled the latter to achieve a clear understanding of Zac's needs in school and the unacceptable nature of the behaviour which Zac exhibited, considering that he was well informed by school staff members, whose actions he supported. Zac aided this by regularly informing his father about his learning mentor programme. As Zac's needs changed over three months of his programme, meetings were held less frequently. His father stated:

> in a group he is fine, social skills are needed. He gets
> embarrassed and this triggers his behaviour for attention, and
> then he storms out of class. He doesn't back down, no matter
> who instigates it. It is calming down quite a lot – fighting is not
> so much of an issue now, he just storms out.

Zoe was also the SENCo and in monitoring the effectiveness of Margaret's work, she relied on discussion with learning mentors rather than checking notes, written assessments and reports (confirming discussion reported in Chapter Four, Section 4.5). Zoe explained that she would coordinate the

ending of a programme with the learning mentor and then would continue to monitor the mentee.

5.6.4   The participants' perceptions of the role of a learning mentor

The Mentee, Zac

Margaret commented that her role was to effect a change in the child. Zac identified the role by the activities which he had undertaken in his programme, considering that a learning mentor smiled, played games and helped you write 'stories', with which he labelled his drawing in Figure 5.6.4.

Figure 5.6.4   Zac's drawing of a learning mentor
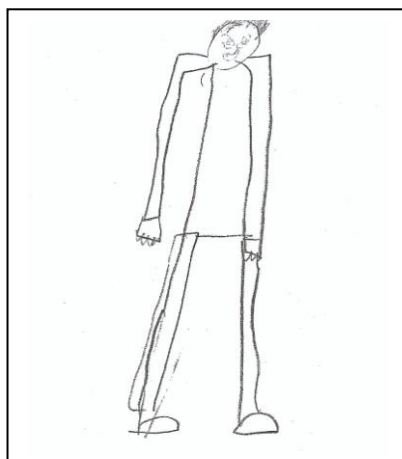
Zac stated that the learning mentor was helping him because he was not as clever as other children, although he clever at Mathematics and Science, and enjoyed adding up. He explained that Margaret played games with him and was helping him to write a 'special' story. He said 'sometimes we talk about how you're feeling and if you're angry or something'. He identified that he needed further help with learning as he wanted to improve his handwriting, which was 'a bit big'.

The parent, Zac's father

Zac's father was happy about Zac's learning mentor support but he was unsure about the content of the programme, not wishing to know what happened on a daily basis. He saw learning mentoring as part of a package of support provided by the school for his child, a package with which he was, to that date, pleased. He was clear about his expectations of the mentoring: to 'help him avoid flash-points and talk in a quiet voice; confide in someone; not to take all of the attention off the teacher; to have the pressure off'.

He mentioned in interview that, unless Zac could control his behaviour in school and become an acceptable pupil, he was likely to be excluded, a situation which he understood and accepted after ten months of learning mentor support. He was thinking forward two years to when Zac would attend the secondary school, worrying that Zac would encounter trouble there if his problems could not be sorted out during his primary school education. Zac's father did not link this concern to Margaret's role in preparing mentees for attending secondary school.

The class teacher, Zoe

The class teacher liaised with the learning mentor two or three times daily and explained to Margaret her expectations of her in the lesson in which Margaret would be involved, informing her if pupils were particularly upset that day. Zoe and Margaret talked more frequently about Zac because of his complex problems.

Zoe perceived the learning mentor role as offering a varied approach. She believed that learning mentors provided academic support in order to give the mentee confidence, to raise his self-esteem within the classroom. The mentors gained the mentees' trust to enable them to 'open up' to their problems. She considered that mentors supported curriculum work and social/emotional needs in equal measure. Mentors needed a certain level of

academic ability in order to help the mentees with their learning; they should be able to persuade mentees to do what was asked of them. She clearly had trust that Margaret's abilities encompassed these skills.

5.7 Case Five - Nicola's Story

The participants in this case were:

the mentee – Nicola;
the parent – Nicola's mother;
the learning mentor – Louise;
the class teacher – Lorraine.

5.7.1 <u>The mentee and her needs</u>

Nicola attended a class of twenty-three pupils when in Year Two in Caldwell Primary School. Traumatic home circumstances had occurred and Nicola was experiencing emotional difficulties. She had been selected for learning mentor support because of her lack of confidence at school, with a reticence to interact with staff and a reluctance to attend. Nicola received additional literacy support, her teacher and mentor liaising about her academic attainment, which was below that expected for her age. Nicola exhibited different demeanours at home and at school: dominating her mother and not accepting the boundaries which mother placed upon her behaviour. Her mentoring profile is presented in Table 5.7.1 which indicates that her learning mentoring engaged her family from the outset, her home situation being considered to be integral to the barrier to her learning.

Table 5.7.1   Tracking profile of Nicola's learning mentoring

2007		2008	
September	October	March	September
Year group 2			
Joined the school after a year of learning mentor support at a local Infant school.	Selected for learning mentor programme. Began one-to-one work with mentor and weekly sessions including mother. Working joint home/school targets and rewards system.	Mother helping in school. Transition work to be undertaken to support transfer from Year 2 to Year 3.	Support to continue.
Parents informed by learning mentor about a programme starting.	Mentee and mentor kept her parents informed throughout of activities and the progress of her programme.		

5.7.2   Nicola's programme

Nicola began her learning mentor programme near the start of the research period. Her targets were:

- to be comfortable in school;
- to speak appropriately with staff;
- to accept boundaries in the home.

To provide for the first two of these targets, a variety of staff in school were observed to contribute to Nicola's programme, so widening her speaking and listening opportunities. Nicola's programme provided for her targets in individual sessions through the adoption of logical thinking, socialisation, acceptance of boundaries and a healthy lifestyle, as indicated in Table 5.7.2, which specifies the data relating to three observed learning mentor sessions, each containing only one main activity.

Table 5.7.2   Strategies observed in Nicola's programme of mentoring

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
Creative crafts; discussion of appropriate health issues regarding food, eating, and sleep patterns; questioning; suggesting; eliciting knowledge; logical reasoning; advising.	Mother and Nicola participated together in a practical activity to make a box-model of Nicola's bedroom - making the wool and cardboard doll of Nicola. Setting: Individual + mother.	Understanding of the mentee; confirmation of boundaries in, and relevant targets set for, the home; reassurance; empathy;
Questioning; suggesting; eliciting knowledge; imaginative description; reasoning; understanding of child; eliciting identification of a problem.	Sentence construction; writing a story-book about a character which clearly was a pseudonym for Nicola. The character behaved in the appropriate way which Nicola needed to replicate. Setting: one-to-one.	Confidence; reassurance; empathy; addressing fear; proper sleeping habits for attainment at school and health; identification of problems and possible solutions.
Reassurance; praise; modelling language to express attitudes and ideas; linking with home; enjoyment; social skills.	A board game with counters, dice, cards to collect to complete a teddy jigsaw. Setting: one-to-one.	Acceptable relationships and gave opportunities for talk, decision-making, and relating opinions.

5.7.3   Relationships between the participants involved with Nicola's learning
mentoring

Nicola showed a willingness to interact with mentor Louise, frequently smiling and clearly enjoying the observed mentor sessions. Her lack of communicating decreased over time. Nicola's mother understood Nicola's complex personality very well: she was socially shy and sensitive; she was quite popular and would interact with children but was controlling of friends and 'abusive' (mother's word) with mother and brother. Nicola became stressed when mother was absent from the home. Her mother queried that

Nicola had an underlying medical condition and expected Nicola to 'struggle' in school. Many parents provide help at home for children learning to read but this was not initially an easy task for Nicola's family because of Nicola's behaviour towards her mother. Mother said that 'bringing homework home is impossible. I'm trying to help'.

Louise considered that an effective relationship between herself, mentee and mother was vital to the success of Nicola's learning mentor programme. Mother greatly appreciated Louise's support, for herself and for Nicola. She believed that her daughter was receiving all necessary help that school could provide: 'school is very, very approachable'. Mother had no concerns about the programme and wanted to continue to be kept informed. She knew that Louise also liaised with other agencies, when necessary, on Nicola's behalf. Nicola liked working with her learning mentor: 'she loves her, talks about her, tells her granny. She talks more to her learning mentor when I'm not there – her eyes go down when I'm there' (Stage One Interview).

Nicola's class teacher, Lorraine, reported good liaison with mentor Louise. They agreed on timetable issues and Lorraine was flexible in her approach within this. Lorraine had previous experience of liaising with Louise for mentees in her class. She thought that all staff in the school had 'good relationships with the learning mentor. I can take any problem to her for the children'. At the end of the academic year, both mother and Nicola were introduced to Nicola's next teacher, and a reward 'star chart' was set up in aid of transferring to her new class, which exemplified good liaison amongst the school staff members.

5.7.4   The participants' perceptions of the role of a learning mentor

The mentee, Nicola

Learning mentor, Louise, identified her role as being a mentee's 'voice', a whole-hearted friend in the school setting (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.4). When asked what she perceived to be a learning mentor's role, Nicola

could not express this in words. Her drawing of a learning mentor depicted the head teacher, who was included in her programme and often talked with her in an understanding and individual way, similar to the way in which learning mentor, Louise, spoke with her.

Figure 5.7.4   Nicola's drawing of a learning mentor

Nicola did not know why she had a learning mentor. Sometimes they both met with her mother, which she liked doing, and she knew that Louise also met with other children. Nicola identified the learning mentor's role by describing the activities they had completed together: making a model bedroom; making doll-boxes; inventing stories. She agreed that they 'talked about things' and this helped her. She thought they did not meet together every week (Louise clarified that they did; perhaps Nicola had not yet formed an accurate concept of time).

Nicola was reticent during her first interview. Her mentor time would make things change for her but she could not explain in what way. After five months of the programme, during her second interview, she reported that 'things' had improved. She clearly found it difficult to verbalise her perceptions. She thought she was getting better at Mathematics and at Reading ''cos I changed my (reading) book'.

Nicola's mother

Nicola's mother also described learning mentor support in terms of the activities which she had experienced. She was aware of the activities chosen by the learning mentor and of why her child was undertaking a programme. She understood her own role in helping Nicola to progress towards her targets and blamed herself for Nicola's emotional and social situation: 'I've spoilt her!'

The class teacher, Lorraine

Teacher, Lorraine, understood that the criteria for accessing learning mentor support and explained the learning mentor role as: 'to support the children and teacher. The children know who they can go to. They have a card; they take it to the teacher. I radio and she comes'. This description suggested that the learning mentor was a provider of emergency aid, to be called upon in a crisis. Lorraine stated that 'the learning mentor backs the teacher up and takes things further. All teachers need it (a learning mentor's support)'.

Lorraine considered that it was appropriate for a learning mentor to attend training courses which helped her deal with challenging pupils (Attachment Disorder; behaviour strategies; anger management; how to calm children). Lorraine had experienced mentees undertaking learning mentor programmes, observing a change in how they coped socially and emotionally. She considered that this was indicated through their amended behaviour:

> every child has seen a positive - it varies in the degree of impact.
> It helps children to settle in, to cope with rules and boundaries.
> They don't want to 'kick off' and stand out but they don't know
> how to deal with it and fit in.

5.8   Case Six – Timothy's Story

The participants in this case were:

the mentee – Timothy;

the learning mentor – Louise

the parent – Timothy's mother;

the class teacher – Lorraine.

5.8.1   <u>The Mentee and his Needs</u>

Timothy shared the same class teacher and learning mentor as Nicola, in Case Five, and I have pursued a lack of repetition of information regarding these participants in presenting specific data relating to Timothy in this subsection.

Timothy was self-confident, self-reliant and wanted to lead others. Louise, was very aware of his personality and capabilities: he appeared to be intelligent and could spell his name, taking pleasure in directing others in the intricacies of this. He was skilled in building models – his mother said he could be a perfectionist. She provided a description of an energetic but frustrated and socially and emotionally isolated little boy. Timothy had been referred for assessment at health agencies at a very young age. Mother stated:

> He's had issues since starting nursery – fighting, hitting for no reason...He doesn't bond with people like a normal child should. That's where the learning mentor programme kicks in. Another child only has to say 'no' or look at him wrong and he'll fly. We have to build up a relationship and get to the bottom of his 'bottling-up'.

Timothy's journey in learning mentoring is presented in Table 5.8.1. It indicates the long-term nature of his behavioural difficulties. Effective liaison between nursery staff and the main school staff helped Timothy transfer into

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the main school. Louise facilitated this, and then continued as his learning mentor when he was referred to the mentoring project.

Table 5.8.1   Tracking profile of Timothy's mentoring programme

2005 -06	2006	2007		2008		
	September	September	October	January	April	May
	Reception Year Group	Year Group 1				
Timothy was identified in Nursery as showing aggressive behaviour. Liaison into Reception class.	Liaison into mixed class by Louise		Learning mentor programme began.	Review of mentoring programme.	Review of mentoring programme. Monitoring programme began.	Monitoring continued for a month. Mentoring programme then recommenced.
		Parents were informed of his mentoring by the learning mentor.		Learning mentor continued to liaise with parent during the progress of Timothy's programme.		

Timothy's programme was reviewed after three and six months. At the second review (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.2) Louise decided, in liaison with his mother, to transfer him from an 'active' programme to 'monitoring'. Louise recommended one-to-one mentoring support for the last two months of the academic year and supported transition to his next class, following deterioration in his behaviour.

5.8.2   Timothy's programme

Timothy knew he had targets for learning mentoring, explaining that this was because: 'I don't like people'. His targets were:

- to not hurt others;

- to respond appropriately to others;

- to become socially acceptable and make friends.

He knew the details of his targets, for instance to think before taking action in situations. The strategies which were adopted to enable him to meet his targets are described in Table 5.8.2, the third relating to discourse between Louise and Timothy about his progress as he was then being monitored.

Table 5.8.2 indicates that Timothy's programme consisted mainly of practical craft activities of which Timothy had ownership. Three booklets provided evidence ('Myself'; 'When mummy goes to hospital'; 'I am special'). The target 'to refrain from hurting others' pervaded his programme. Timothy responded well to an activity which entailed logical reasoning.

Table 5.8.2   Strategies observed in Timothy's mentoring programme

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
Constant discussion; frequent encouragement of a 'can do' attitude; praise; discussion of emotions.	Drawings and booklet-making. Discussions about how the mentee could express himself in an acceptable way; how to use hands and feet in a kind way. Setting: one-to-one.	Feeling good and bad is ok. You don't have to hurt others.
Constant discussion; frequent encouragement of a 'can do' attitude; praise; discussion of emotions.	Making puppets showing different emotions on the faces, examining different words for expressing emotions. Using the puppets to make a 'table of situations', for instance - worried, upset, surprised feelings. Setting: one-to-one.	Good things are to be enjoyed. If you do things, others can be hurt. It is not good to hurt others.

The strategy (each row indicates one observed mentoring session)	The activities adopted in undertaking this strategy	Points conveyed by the learning mentor by adopting this strategy
Logical reasoning.	A drawing of 'Reasoning Box'. Explanation of how to rethink a situation, because Timothy had punched a child. Louise decorated around the drawing of the box with 'What if?' ideas.	It is alright to talk about how we feel.
Modelling appropriate social behaviour in interactions.	Discussion of how the mentor behaved; how others feel; how others behave appropriately. Setting: one-to-one.	To widen Timothy's emotional vocabulary.

5.8.3 Relationships between the participants involved with Timothy's learning mentoring

Timothy was observed to respond willingly to Louise. He appeared to like her and cooperated during mentoring, although with short concentration span and a little impatience, perhaps consistent with his young age. He perceived Louise as his friend, stating: 'she doesn't tell me off'. Timothy's mother exemplified her good liaison with the mentor by describing a procedure which had been instigated by the learning mentor to enable Timothy to handle social situations acceptably and so prevent being reprimanded: 'children pick on him and then tell the teacher before he gets there – instead of arguing with the teachers, he has to ask to speak to Louise. He's done it a few times'.

Louise related happenings at school to his mother without Timothy's knowledge as he could respond negatively to this liaison. Perhaps this helped his mother to develop confidence in Louise, believing that Louise would pursue whatever she suggested in Timothy's best interests, even when other agencies were involved: 'he likes the one-to-one; he has a friend'. Class

teacher, Lorraine, exemplified her positive relationship with Louise in trusting her to appropriately undertake day-to-day contact with her pupils' parents.

5.8.4   The Participants' Perceptions of the Role of a Learning Mentor

The Mentee, Timothy

Timothy enjoyed drawing a learning mentor, his picture including the resources which she used in mentoring sessions. Each of these items was represented by a shape[43] which Timothy identified in detail.

Figure 5.8.4   Timothy's drawing of a learning mentor

Timothy said that Louise helped him 'because she helps me think to not hurt people'. He saw her every week and it made him feel happy. He was not specific about what she did as a learning mentor, but he knew it was to help him learn about good things 'err yeah good stuff, bad stuff and we have learning being all sorts of stuff'.

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[43] Timothy's drawing illustrated a lady, smiling. On her right was the table at which she sat for mentoring work. On this were: the clock by which she timed the sessions; her paper on which she wrote and made booklets; and her prepared resources. To her left were her pile of books and folders; her pens; a snowman toy; and her 'sticker box' from which mentees chose a sticker as a treat at the end of successful sessions (referred to in Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.2).

Timothy's mother

From the start of the programme, Timothy's mother understood that the mentor was 'to build up a friendship' with Timothy, which agreed with Louise's understanding of her role (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.4). His mother had expectations of the mentoring:

> long term, his behaviour may start to improve. He was good last week, he's 'star' this week – he said 'a star couldn't be ill'. It should sort his behaviour out – get to *why* he does things….

After just a month of mentoring, she identified that Timothy was starting to settle down in school. She preferred him to be learning in class rather than be removed for mentoring sessions, but she realised that his behaviour necessitated this. She had high expectations of her son: 'when she (Louise) sorts his behaviour, academically he will get better. Academically he is brilliant'.

Next I evaluate the findings by comparing and contrasting participants' perceptions of the role of learning mentors and considering the effect of personal characteristics of mentors within the interpersonal relationships identified.

5.9   Comparing the Cases

Some commonalities of the mentees were: their class composition; the frequency and duration of their learning mentor sessions; and the long-term nature of their programmes. The length of all programmes was strikingly different to what was expected for this type of intervention (see Chapter One, Section 1.3) as all mentees would have undertaken programmes of at least two years' duration during their primary school education. Five significant

areas of discussion existed between the cases, which I explore in this section:

- the personal characteristics of the mentees;
- the relationships developed with and around each mentee;
- the strategies and targets adopted in each individual programme;
- perceptions regarding learning mentoring held by those closely involved with the programmes;
- participants' perceptions of the characteristics of learning mentors.

5.9.1 Comparing the mentees

The mentees[44] differed in age, ability, attitude, attributes and personal characteristics, and in their social, emotional and educational needs. Despite this, a similarity existed in their criteria for referral to learning mentoring: lack of social skills (four pupils); communication skills (half of the mentees); showing aggression towards peers (half of mentees). Social difficulties encountered were low social confidence (both girl mentees) and low self-esteem associated with speech problems (Quentin and Kieron). One unexpected finding was that those mentees who exhibited poor concentration were also described by their parents as 'wanting their own way with things'. One mentee was of above-average intelligence, the remainder was assessed as below average ability.

I suggest that within the cultural setting of the school community, the child with difficulties such as these is at a disadvantage without additional support, particularly when the problems are compounded by unclear speech, an area of communication which cannot be hidden. These factors are given further consideration in relation to the impact of mentoring in Chapter Six.

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[44] Information regarding the mentees and their personal characteristics, much being derived from comments provided by parents, is provided in Appendix 5, Table 5.9.1.

5.9.2 Relationships developed with and around each mentee

Relationships involving each mentee sustained individual features in two aspects: the interactions involved in the mentoring process and the depth of relationship fostered.

First, parents had expectations of the relationship between their child and the learning mentor. Most parents expressed confidence in the learning mentor and effective liaison was established between parents and learning mentors when parents shared a high level of knowledge of their children's mentoring programmes. Two parents were highly interactive with their child's mentoring process, two were informed only when school initiated this, and schools maintained weak contact with parents in two cases. None of these examples were school-specific. Weak communication, particularly between teachers and parents, accompanied weak parental confidence in the learning mentor and, for one mentee, a less than positive interaction with mentoring. It may be reasonable to imply from this that keeping parents informed of mentoring procedure and practice facilitates the establishment of an effective interaction between those closely involved with the child mentee, however it may also relate to the mentee's own perceptions and lack of anxiety in interacting with mentoring.

When the interaction between teacher and mentor was frequent and accessibility of the mentor's support was guaranteed for the teacher, parents of mentees were well-informed and the teacher relied upon the learning mentor for undertaking liaison with them, which only occurred in Caldwell School. Specific planned interaction between the wider school staff and mentoring was undertaken only in Bradley Junior School, where the SENCo was involved in creating and monitoring the learning mentor programmes. It is possible that the perceptions and level of involvement of teachers in mentoring may not be a 'menu from which teachers can pick', but is a factor of the culture of the school setting. This is further considered in relation to the impact of mentoring and discussion, in Chapters Six and Seven.

Second, in considering the depth of relationship fostered, I mentioned above that five of the six mentees responded willingly to their learning mentors and four of these reported to their parents that they enjoyed working with their mentors. The unwilling mentee was the only child for whom a teacher did not describe the relationship between learning mentor and mentee as informal.

There was a consensus of understanding between all mentees that their learning mentor acted as a friend and help to them. I considered whether all groups of participants agreed with this. The learning mentors did so, explaining that they acted as the 'champions' or 'friends' of these children when the culture of the school permitted or encouraged this (at Anton and Caldwell Schools). This type of relationship between mentor and mentee was also identified and valued by some parents. For half the mentees all participants agreed with this perception, a learning mentor and teacher differing with this, the teacher perceiving her as mainly a figure of status (Case 2). In some cases the school staff (mentor and teacher) agreed that the child's mentor was 'half friend, half authority-figure' in contrast to the perception of the mentee. The disagreement did not appear to relate to the depth of interaction with parents, relationships with the parent were weak in one case group (3) but strong in another (4).

5.9.3 Comparing the learning mentor programmes

It was significant that all the boys in the sample were involved with other intervention strategies as well as learning mentoring. Furthermore, half of the learning mentor programmes included direct contact with the child's home and involved the mentees' parents in mentoring support (cases 4, 5 and 6) and these were also the programmes which included agencies other than education (referred to further in Chapter Six, Sections 6.4 and 6.6, and Chapter Seven, Section 7.4.2).

Different strategies were selected by learning mentors in relation to the age, intellectual abilities and personal needs of the mentees even when mentees

shared the same criteria of need (see Appendix 5, Table A5.9.3). For some criteria commonalities of strategy were identified. For instance, the strategy of 'Suggestion' was adopted for three mentees who shared the need to improve their communication (Quentin, Kieron and Nicola). I suggest, from the activities selected, that the mentors applied this strategy with the intention of developing in the mentees a positive mind-set towards interaction with others. Two mentees who were referred for 'social skills' (Catherine and Quentin) shared four identical strategies: 'Describing', 'Imagining', use of 'Logical Reasoning' and 'Suggestion'. By the use of these strategies, the mentors intended to foster socialisation through raising the mentees' understandings of 'cause and effect', modelling interactions and through positive imaging.

The participants in the study noted that three boys were quick to rise to an angry state and become aggressive. 'Positive thinking' was a common strategy practised for these mentees (Kieron, Zac and Timothy). It appeared that when mentees knew their targets they worked with them to address their aggression (see subsections 5.6.2 and 5.8.2). In comparing the targets devised for these boys with the intention of reducing aggression, however, it was clear that each set of targets differed. Zac's target directly referred to gaining an understanding of friendship, while Timothy's could be termed 'action and response' in friendship situations. It could be suggested that the difference related to the difference in ages of the two mentees, Zac being two years older than Timothy, however the mentor did not consider Zac to be particularly capable of using reasoning skills while Timothy displayed good logical thinking in interview. The difference in targets therefore related to individuality.

Transferring from an 'active' to a 'monitoring' stage in the programmes was a policy operated in all schools, but during the research period was adopted in only two cases Its application was specific to a mentee's need, as indicated by the length of active programme (fifteen months for Catherine, compared with only six months for Timothy). The shorter active programme proved to be less

effective on this occasion, as Timothy's behaviour deteriorated when undertaking monitoring and he quickly was returned to active support.

5.9.4   Perceptions of learning mentor roles

In all cases, the mentees and their parents differed in their perceptions of the learning mentor role. Parents held clear expectations of mentors, but comparison of their expectations to the mentors' *intentions* indicated that these were not complementary when mentors were expected to help mentees with learning[45]. Attainment-related expectations were commonly held by mentees who were self-willed and maintained poor concentration, including those who did not profess to enjoy their mentee sessions. This accompanied a lack of confidence in the learning mentors by the parents of these mentees.

The class teachers' perceptions of mentoring were not school-specific. The teachers of Quentin, Kieron and Zac indicated an understanding of the role of the learning mentors which concurred with that of their learning mentors. Two teachers expressed confusion over the learning mentor role (Brian and Lorraine). The reason for their confusions differed. Brian exhibited the least understanding of the teachers in the study, with weak liaison and interaction with mentoring. Lorraine's confusion was related to her expectation that the mentor's role was to support her as teacher (see subsection 5.7.4). These examples provided further evidence for the specificity of individual mentee/mentor relationships.

5.9.5   Characteristics of learning mentors

The participants knew few learning mentors and this appeared to limit their perceptions of an effective learning mentor role, relating this to their understandings of the personal characteristics of their learning mentors (see Appendix 5, Table A5.9.5). Similar to their difference in understanding of the mentor role, when asked for their definition of the characteristics of a learning

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[45] These participants were Quentin, Kieron and their mothers, and Zac.

mentor there was a difference in understanding between the child, the parent and the teacher. The mentees mainly described emotive attributes for learning mentors: caring; kind; helpful; patient; smiling. At Bradley Junior School, their indication that the mentor supported their progress in learning was consistent with the intentions of learning mentoring at that school. They also explained her character by describing the activities which she had led. In Caldwell Primary School, Timothy identified a learning mentor by her resources, which was understandable as, at his young age, conceptualisation might best involve concrete examples. Half of the mentees described a mentor as an informal friend who did not chastise them, which was consistent with the mentors' intended approach.

The parents' understanding was focused on the trust and capability inspired by the learning mentor. Their comprehension of the mentors' characteristics may have been restricted by the extent to which they were involved in the mentoring programme, its organisation or its detail. For instance, two parents considered that they did not have sufficient information about mentoring for them to comment or infer a response, whereas when mentors and parents maintained a dialogue about the mentees' programme and progress, these parents understood that the mentor was trying to effect a change in their child and so were in a position to identify a change in their children at the end of the data-gathering period.

Despite the difference in perceptions between teachers and mentees regarding the role of the mentor explained above, three of the five class teachers agreed with the mentees of Caldwell School that the ability to elicit progress or change in the mentees was necessary, the teachers recognising this as a skill promoted by an effective learning mentor. While mainly agreeing with the parents' opinions, class teachers extended their definition of a learning mentor wider than the mentors with whom they interacted. All teachers selected 'professional' descriptors of the learning mentor's character and acknowledged the importance of her skills: she needed to be trustworthy;

capable in her role and in developing good relationships with pupils; intelligent; persistent; and skilled through training.

As well as professional descriptors, teachers identified personal descriptors of learning mentors, similar to those suggested by the mentees. The mentor should be: 'an informal friend' (one teacher); a 'people person' or 'personable', as shown by being capable of responding to all children and staff; friendly and approachable; patient, calm and caring; an applicant of good listening skills.

Research has previously suggested that such attributes are to be expected in learning mentors (Hobson and Kington, 2002). As a consequence of being involved with these learning mentors over the duration of the data-gathering, it was evident to me that all five mentors needed, and showed, these attributes. Their relationships with the mentees were effective, although, with the mentees at Bradley Junior School, this was slow in developing as a consequence of the style of mentoring pursued.

5.10 Conclusion and Summary

In this Chapter, I have presented an analysis of the data findings relating to each of the six mentees in the sample for this research regarding:

- the mentees' individual needs;
- the specific programmes which were developed to meet these needs;
- how the participants in each case interacted with each other;
- how participants perceived the role of the learning mentor.

The data generated from my observations verified claims made by parents and teachers in interview. I have compared and contrasted the findings presented in this chapter for the mentee cases, indicating some commonalities and many differences in the:

- age, ability, attitude, attributes and personal characteristics of the mentees;
- relationships of the participants within each case, their understandings of the role of the person providing the support and their expectations of the learning mentors;
- specific targets for each mentee, with strategies selected for their potential for fulfilling these;
- length of 'active' programmes and the subsequent use of 'monitoring';
- participants' perceptions of the characteristics of learning mentors.

Analysis of the transcripts of part-structured interviews, and of the observation fieldwork, showed a strongly shared commitment by the participant mentors to provide effective care and provision for these primary age children, and for the success of their programmes. I suggest that the part played by affective factors in learning mentoring cannot be ignored. These have been shown to be: the cultural settings within which the schools practice learning mentoring, the home situations of the mentees and their parents, and the characteristics of both mentors and mentees. Differences in perceptions of participants regarding the characteristics which aid learning mentors in their roles were:

- the mentees defined only emotional descriptors;
- the parents identified trust and capability, half also perceiving 'change';
- the teachers agreed with both the mentees and the parents, providing a wider range of 'professional' descriptors, such as the mentor's ability to forge good relationships with pupils, being intelligent and possessing appropriate skills.

It is necessary to consider these conclusions in the light of the perceived overall effectiveness of the programmes. In Chapter Six I discuss the impact of the learning mentor programmes, comparing the participants' perceptions of impact across the three school settings and presenting my interpretation of the impact gained.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT OF LEARNING MENTORING

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I consider the implications of the findings detailed in the
previous two chapters.

In Section 6.2, I interpret the perceptions of impact of mentoring by each
group of participants in turn: the mentees; the parents; the learning mentors;
and the teachers (see Appendix 6 for Tables relating to these). In Section 6.3,
I relate the targets for improvement to the impact attained. In Section 6.4, I
discuss factors I suggest from this analysis may be influential in the
effectiveness of learning mentoring. In Section 6.5, I suggest factors which are
most likely to prompt impact.

**6.2 Interpreting the Impact of Learning Mentor Work as Perceived by
the Participants**

6.2.1 <u>The mentees</u>

Three indicators suggest the mentees' perceptions of the impact of the
mentoring programme: experiencing difficulties during the mentoring
programmes; the change experienced during the programme, and thus the
possibility of continuing learning mentoring support.

Despite perceiving that she had undergone no change during learning
mentoring, Catherine's demeanour was observed to change between Stage
One and Two interviews. She appeared more relaxed, not quite so intense,
was more talkative and more confident about the future (also acknowledged
by the teacher, see Section 6.2.4). Her school work had become more difficult
for her and she had started to seek help from her friend and from the teacher,

no longer referring to the learning mentor as a source of support. If she needed help when Standard Assessment Tests approached, she would: 'probably talk to my mum about it'. She had changed in two ways: a less confident attitude towards learning and a newly gained confidence in social situations. It can only be conjectured as to whether these changes related to her support, her maturity (as suggested by her teacher) or to her experiences in her new class, and I consider this further in Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.4.

In common with Catherine, Quentin did not perceive a change, although he had increased in confidence by the end of the research period (also acknowledged by his mother, see Chapter Five, subsection 5.4.2). He appeared to be uncomfortable during mentoring sessions:

> *Mentee : Only looked at mentor mainly. Curled up feet on chair most of time. Spoke softly and in mentor's ear. (Observation transcript, 05.11.07, 2.45-3.20).*

but was more confident in a later observation:

> *14.30 Quentin spoke in incomplete sentences – the endings of his words were not clear consonants. He was happy about coming to school...He kept posing questions and putting forward his own logic in reply. His speech was difficult to understand but Teresa kept focussed on him, intently listening. (Observation transcript 29.11.07).*

This assertiveness had become excessive in school, as indicated by his perception that the learning mentors had been trying to help him learn 'but I already know'.

Contrary to the above two mentees, all other mentees were positive about experiencing changes during their period of learning mentor support. Kieron's preference to be supported in class lessons rather than individually may

reflect his mother's expectation that mentoring would help him to learn better (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.5.4). Zac's perceptions exemplified the impact of effective interaction in the school between professionals as he explained how he had been enabled to recognise change in his behaviour through the teacher's reward system. Peer-encouragement had also been influential, resulting in 'less 'strops' and everything' and a 'star of the week' celebration (another class reward for good behaviour). Zac knew that he needed to stop initiating fights and his friends helped him in this, or 'Miss (teacher) would 'break it up' and tell me off'.

So Zac's improvement could not be attributed solely to his mentor support. He identified a change in his learning and behaviour ('seven out of ten'). If he wanted to talk about anything in school, he said he would talk to 'some of the teachers'; he did not confide in his learning mentor, although he considered that learning mentoring had been a helpful channel for discussing his feelings and had made him feel 'really nice inside'. He did not, however, identify learning mentoring as the way forward for his behavioural progress.

In Caldwell Primary School, Nicola similarly recognised affective, emotional support through learning mentoring, although she continued to have difficulty in expressing herself to adults. Her relationship with her mother improved over the research period. She appeared to thrive through her mentor/mentee relationship of 'a good help' who was 'always there' for her. She was the only mentee who reported a negative effect of mentoring, as sometimes she missed class lessons when undertaking individual sessions. Timothy identified a successful impact of his learning mentoring, commenting that he was having more fun, had 'more friends' (the success of one of his learning mentor targets, see Chapter Five, subsection 5.8.2). He considered that he had changed over the data-gathering period ('six out of ten') and knew that he could still make further improvement. He and Nicola were the only mentees who expected to continue with learning mentor support.

6.2.2 <u>The parents</u>

In examining 'difficulties and change' again, relating to the future needs of the children, no parent attributed difficulties to mentoring. Catherine's mother had wanted her 'to take things less personally' (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.3.3) and after receiving mentoring support for a further year she considered that this had been achieved, stating: 'yes, it's had an impact – working one to one or in smaller group-work helps, she knows what to say when she needs to'. She also appreciated the role of the teacher in encouraging Catherine, recognising success in the provision of an appropriate curriculum for her daughter, despite acknowledging the shock of changing classes (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.3.2), considered by mother to be a consequence of different teaching styles of the two class teachers

Similarly, Quentin's mother stated that she thought the mentoring had been successful by focusing on his academic progress (Chapter Five, subsection 5.4.1). School staff had informed her of this, but not about Quentin's mentoring programme, nor how it had progressed. She explained that 'school don't tell me that much', Quentin also did not enlighten her. In her experience, he continued to show no confidence with other children and had not forged friendships: 'the children wind him up, he is an easy target' she said. She knew that his speech had slowed down at school, and he was more easily understood than previously.

In Bradley Junior School, mentee Kieron's mother had been informed by school about progress in his learning and his behaviour, but not about the progress of his mentoring programme and so was unsure about its impact. She considered that his main need in school was for continued help to improve confidence in his learning, rather than his speech difficulty (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.5.1) but did not identify learning mentoring as this support, stating: 'his main problem is his low attention span. He messes about, prods people, he gets bored quickly. He needs someone there for this'.

Zac's father recognised an impact of the learning mentor programme in Zac's improved attitude at home, and improved behaviour at school.

At Caldwell Primary School, Nicola's mother spoke of the 'real' impact of learning mentoring: 'it's an amazing scheme, Nicola would have 'slipped through the cracks'- she's got a chance now of doing well and going on to further education'. I also identified evidence of the wider positive impact of learning mentoring, as she stated:

> It's had a big impact on the whole family. It's given me
> confidence… You just need someone to talk to when things are
> hard. Now I can be proud of my family.

Identifying this impact led Nicola and her mother to be adamant to continue with learning mentor support. Timothy's mother also identified positive impact in his improved attitude to learning, when her son left active mentoring (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.8.1):

> he has got on brilliantly. There have been a few incidents, now
> he's off the programme. He's less reactive, now more like a 'normal'
> six year old. He follows the crowd, what six year old doesn't?
> He has changed; there's not the same number of incidents.

The importance of good communication was seen in this case, as Timothy's mother considered that the subsequent regression in his behaviour may have been prevented if communication from the learning mentor had been forthcoming at a critical time for the family.

I identified minimal impact on the mentees' learning where parents showed little confidence in the role of the learning mentor and considered continuation of learning mentoring not to be vital for their children (see Section 6.6). Parents agreed with the learning mentors' decisions to continue mentoring in the next academic year, disagreeing when parents preferred to focus on

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specific help with learning for their children rather than mentoring targets. Parents and mentees did not always agree about the need for further support, for instance contrary to Zac's opinion (see Section 6.2.1), Zac's father knew that further learning mentoring was needed in order to help Zac to reach his goals.

6.2.3 Learning mentors

As with the parents, learning mentors did not consider that learning mentoring caused the mentees difficulties. All mentors still supporting mentees at the end of the data-generating period considered that the mentoring programmes should continue. All learning mentors perceived that the programmes had a positive impact on their mentees. This was perhaps to be expected, as they had expended months of hard work and patience working towards the targets for these pupils and they were committed to their roles (see Chapter Four, Section 4.7).

The learning mentors' perceptions of change in mentees were individually specific. Teresa and Patricia identified impact as a consequence of multiple factors: for Catherine, mentoring and the contribution towards personal development by 'the rest of school life'; for Quentin, mentoring, Speech Therapy and Special Needs (see Chapter Five, subsections 5.3.1 and 5.4.1) as his behaviour and communication were inter-related. Patricia considered that he was meeting his group mentor targets because his speech was improving and the more he spoke, the clearer his speech would become. Being understood better than at the beginning of the programme, and more accepted by peers, had not distracted from his appearance as 'in a world of his own' (Patricia's description). Patricia recommended further activities to help him improve by talking about home and school issues. It must be queried as to whether more of the same 'cocktail' of support could enable further impact.

Contrary to mother's opinion, (see Section 6.3) she considered that Quentin had become more confident in approaching adults and his peers, as I observed in my third observation of his group mentoring, but he still needed to develop social skills:

> *Quentin sat next to Patricia. He referred to her a lot but contributed*
> *to the group, taking more of a role than previously...*
> *The group needed Patricia to interpret what Quentin said and she*
> *still repeated his words, to check that she had understood him*
> *correctly. She seemed to protect him less than in previous sessions.*
> *She wanted the mentees to describe one thing that is good for you*
> *to eat and to say why. Quentin said 'lettuce', speaking in a rambling*
> *way about how he had some in the garden at nana's house,*
> *controlling the group and continuing although his turn had passed.*
> *He increased his volume to prevent mentee K from taking his turn.*
> *(Observation transcription 09.06.08, 14-45-15.20).*

In common with Teresa and Patricia, at Bradley Junior School Karen identified that the mentee's improvement was not a consequence of learning mentoring alone but that impact was supported by Positive-Play work. Impact was difficult to identify as she perceived that Kieron made significant progress in his speech and interaction with adults but these were not the total of his difficulties. Perhaps progress towards his behaviour target was weak because, as identified in Karen's Stage Two interview, she had worked the majority of the time on his learning needs. Despite this, the impact on his class target of his learning ('improving handwriting') was also minimal. I suggest that concentration on learning targets had prevented the mentor from directing effort towards correction of the mentee's aggressive tendencies. His behaviour in class had not consistently improved, exemplifying improved behaviour when Karen was present in a lesson but not at other times.

Learning mentor Margaret stressed that impact on Zac over the data-gathering period was very slow, sometimes progressing in his targets,

sometimes regressing. She estimated that Zac was over half way towards the change which he needed to achieve. He had commenced shouting rather than throwing chairs when annoyed. This indicated that he was more aware of the consistently applied acceptable boundaries, but he could still not restrict his behaviour fully to meet such boundaries. Emotionally, he had progressed a little in one-to-one situations. He continued to 'throw tantrums' if he could not complete work or behave as he wished to do in class, and had verbal outbursts towards staff, although the frequency and severity of unacceptable incidents were decreasing.

In Caldwell Primary School, mentor Louise considered that Nicola was changing, citing evidence of her becoming more talkative and more audible, which I observed in the third observation session, when a dice and card game was being played:

> *Louise: Throws a 6. '6, a 'Feelings' card. How do you think your*
> *teacher feels?'*
> *(Louise gives her lots of encouragement. She pretends to sneeze)*
> *L: 'How would you find out how she feels? What would you say?*
> *'How are you today Miss M?''*
> *Nicola: Practices asking her teacher this in an audible voice (without*
> *encouragement this time). (Observation transcript 12.06.08).*

Louise's mentoring of Timothy exemplified how she worked flexibly according to her assessment of the mentee's progress and continually evaluated his need (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.8.1). His future in learning mentoring depended upon the degree to which he could control his behaviour in the future.

6.2.4   The teachers

The majority of teachers agreed with learning mentors that learning mentoring had an impact on the mentees and should be continued. Previous experience

of working with a learning mentor appeared to help teachers to understand mentoring:

> every child has seen a positive change, it varies in the degree of impact. It helps children to settle in, to cope with rules and boundaries. They don't want to 'kick off' and 'stand out' but they don't know how to deal with it and fit in (Lorraine, Stage Two interview).

I identified conflicting perceptions between these colleagues regarding the impact of mentoring. In Anton Junior School, all three teachers disagreed with the learning mentors, though Brian and learning mentors agreed that teachers should support the learning mentor in her work by ensuring that the mentor/mentee sessions were undertaken as planned. In contradiction of the learning mentor, Teresa's, assessment that Catherine made full progress in her learning mentor programme (Chapter Five, subsection 5.3.2) teacher Nerys identified that Catherine had made about 'half of the progress' towards social change that she had needed to make after a year of her programme. She reported that Catherine continued to find receiving constructive criticism difficult, avoiding socialising and preferring to stay with the same small group of children: if her special friend was absent from school she would be 'at a bit of a loss'.

Lastly, contrary to Teresa, teacher Tricia reported that Quentin had not succeeded in fully overcoming his trauma. Tricia commented that he had become 'more stubborn over time' and still had much to learn in handling his temper and behaviour, and even more to learn of appropriate social skills. His academic improvement was similarly slow. Tricia relied upon his verbal communication as an indication of his progress and reported at the end of the research period that she still sometimes did not understand Quentin and just 'gave up' on conversation with him: 'I just let him 'go on''.

This differed from Patricia's perception of Quentin's verbal and social abilities, Tricia noting that his intransigence was increasing in line with the frequency

with which he used speech and attempted social conversations. This had a negative impact on his socialising, thus limiting his attainment towards one of his learning mentor targets. Tricia said:

> I think he does find it difficult still to socialise. He is very different
> from the other children in many ways. He's sort of, very immature
> and he still needs to understand how to mix with peers, really.
> He seems to want to have his way and that's the way *he's* doing it.
> And then he goes into this stubborn mode if he doesn't get what he
> wants. Yes, he still finds it very difficult to work in a group, and
> very difficult to play with others.

This characteristic of Quentin affected his relationships in school and with his teacher: 'there's no relationship, there's no give and take'. She wondered whether having the mentor support had contributed to the decline in his attitude in school: 'he sort of sees it as his right to do this rather than something that's helping him'. This was the only school where teachers perceived that mentoring was causing problems for the mentees. The outcome of 'over-confidence' was experienced by these mentees over the same period of time, which may have related to the policies and practices of learning mentoring at that particular school. Such an outcome, however, cannot be interpreted by this research but would require further study.

At Bradley Junior School a teacher also disagreed with the learning mentor about the degree of impact on the child. Teacher Lesley suggested that Karen's indirect way of working with him in lessons and on his 'issues' had helped Kieron to increase in confidence, which had then improved his handwriting. Lesley considered that Kieron had accomplished only about a third of the change in his behaviour which was needed but had improved twice as much as this in his attitude to learning. She disagreed with his parent's opinion that Kieron did not continue to need support to help him understand acceptable behaviour.

Teacher Zoe identified impact of mentoring through the factors of confidence, self-esteem and 'appropriate bearing' within the class, She recognised some progress in Zac's behaviour, hence the return of his limited playtime privileges and an extension of the time period between meetings about him. Zoe commented that Zac's support was mainly for behaviour, not learning, and that he had improved this only about half as much as was necessary . All involved adults agreed that Zac's support would continue.

In Caldwell Primary School, Lorraine attributed Nicola's improvements to mentor Louise's concentration on behaviour, social support and learning. Lorraine stated: 'she has come on, she has more confidence, she's willing to speak in class'. At the end of the data-generating period, Lorraine was in agreement with all closely involved with Nicola's mentoring that it was important for the school to maintain Nicola's individual programme, focusing on independence in Nicola's future transition to the junior department.

In summary, progress in mentoring and change in a pupil is child-specific. The professionals and para-professionals (teachers and mentors) involved with every case agreed about the future direction of mentoring for the children; parents and mentees also agreed except at Bradley Junior School. In Caldwell Primary School all adults who were closely involved in a mentee's mentoring agreed that the mentoring had been a success but all also agreed that the programmes would continue. This school was the only school in which all informed participants did not agree that a level of positive change had occurred. The learning mentor programmes were successful to the point of being appropriately ended in only one case. I therefore considered the targets which the programmes were intended to attain, which I explain next.

6.3 Relating the Targets for Improvement to the Impact of Mentoring

I examined the *type* of changes involved in impact. Changes were mainly related to the intentions of the mentors but parents sought different outcomes, when a lack of communication existed between school and the parent about

the intention and progress of mentoring. This was not specific to one school in my study.

In identifying different factors of change for these children[46], I found that the mentees' targets were key indicators of the success of mentoring and of the future direction of the mentoring programmes, as discussed above, but the targets did not always relate to the participants' understanding of intended change. All participants could identify the intentions in relation to improvement in combinations of behaviour and social skills, or learning. This information is presented in Table 6.3 in which I interpret the impact of mentoring (in italics) while recognising that the situations were more complex than can be indicated by such a summary.

One factor which Table 6.3 shows is that impact was considered to be achieved in areas *other than* those targeted by learning mentors. Perhaps such impact was to be expected, as factors other than learning mentoring could affect the child. For instance, a change in home circumstances was shown to affect Timothy (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.9.3). Many of these mentees also undertook multiple interventions which could have influenced them, whether or not this related to a targeted change (see 5.9.3). These factors increased the difficulty of attributing a particular change in the social, emotional or behavioural state of a child specifically to the intervention of learning mentoring. Insightful mentors also amended targets in response to changes over time in the child or his/her circumstances (Kieron, Section 6.2.3 and Nicola, Observation 07.02.08) therefore it is sometimes difficult to track the effect of mentoring on a particular target.

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[46] See Chapter Five, subsections .2 of Sections 5.3 to 5.8 for the strategies adopted by mentors to address these targets.

Table 6.3   <u>Summary of impact on each mentee</u>

Case	Targets	Perceived intention of mentoring	Identified success
Case 1 **Catherine**	1 To improve social skills. 2 To encourage wider friendships. 3 To ensure school is challenging.	Mentee-social/ learning Parent Mentor – social/ Learning Teacher – social	Mentee - enjoyed mentoring (5.3.4). Parent – increased confidence in social situations. appropriate curriculum assured (6.2.2). Mentor – appeared less intense, met targets in line with culture of school. Teacher – improvement did not transfer to year 2 of mentoring (6.2.4); appeared to become more assertive (5.3.4).
The parent and learning mentor identified aspects of success which relate to each of the three target areas. The difference in perceived level of success between these participants and the teacher reflects a disagreement about the level of confidence achieved. The teacher perceived that over-confidence in the mentee reduced the positive impact of mentoring.			
Case 2 **Quentin**	Targets relating to group work: 1 To interact properly; 2 To learn to be patient, speak slowly; 3 To behave in a socially appropriate way.	Behaviour and Social	Mentee – none. Parent – increased confidence; evidence of improved learning (6.2.2). Mentor – observed improved speech in line with two other interventions and increased confidence levels (5.4.2; 6.2.3). Teacher – had not overcome trauma; mentee became more assertive and stubborn; speech remained incomprehensible to peers and to staff; little improvement in literacy and mathematics (6.2.4).
Parent and learning mentor perceived success related to confidence, and the learning mentor identified improved speech. The teacher offered a different judgment, perceiving over-confidence combined with limited speech improvement in the mentee. The learning mentor and teacher agreed a level of success, though relating to different aspects of the programme.			
Case 3 **Kieron**	1 To improve handwriting (target from class teacher).	Learning (by all involved) Behaviour (by teacher)	Mentee - little improvement in learning (6.2.1). Parent – unsure (6.2.2). Mentor- spoke more audibly in line with Positive- Play work; evidence of slight improvement in handwriting (6.2.3).

Case	Targets	Perceived intention of mentoring	Identified success
Kieron continued			(continued) Teacher – attitude to learning improved; handwriting improved (6.2.4).

There was a consensus of opinion among participants that the impact of the learning mentoring programme was minimal and that any success was through improved learning. The parents felt constrained from contributing to judgment of impact due to limited awareness of the programme.

Case	Targets	Perceived intention of mentoring	Identified success
Case 4 **Zac**	1 To be able to say what is a friend. 2 To play a game cooperatively with 1 or 2 children.	Behaviour (by all involved) Social (by the mentee) Learning (by his parent)	Mentee – able to discuss feelings (6.2.1); some improvement in class, behaviour and learning (6.2.1). Parent – improved attitude at home and improved behaviour at school (6.2.2). Mentor – improved little emotionally; decreased number and severity of unacceptable incidents. Teacher – some improvement in behaviour; aggression continued (6.2.4).

Although targets set at the start of the intervention were not met, the mentee, parent and mentor all perceived that mentoring had been partially successful. Improved behaviour at home is likely to have influenced the parent's perception of the child, whereas the teacher continued to observe aggressive tendencies in the school setting, but also acknowledged an overall improvement in his behaviour.

Case	Targets	Perceived intention of mentoring	Identified success
Case 5 **Nicola**	1 To be comfortable in school. 2 To speak appropriately to staff. 3 To accept rules at home.	Behaviour and social (by all involved) Learning (by her teacher)	Mentee – enjoyed mentoring sessions (6.2.1). Parent – positive impact on family as mother more confident, calmer and 'in control' (6.2.2). Mentor - mentee spoke more to adults in school; spoke more audibly (6.2.3). Teacher – observed increased confidence in classroom; mentee speaks more in class; progressed in reading (6.2.4).

There was consensus between the adult participants that the mentee had made progress towards the behaviour and social targets set at the start of the programme. The impact on the family clearly influenced the parent's perception of the impact of mentoring on the child.

Case	Targets	Perceived intention of mentoring	Identified success
Case 6 **Timothy**	1 To not hurt others. 2 To respond appropriately to others. 3 To become socially acceptable/ make friends.	Behaviour (by all involved) Learning (by parent and teacher)	Mentee – gained more friends (6.2.1). Parent – decreased number of unacceptable incidents; less reactive towards others (6.2.2); improvement in learning and behaviour. Mentor – appeared more settled after a month of mentoring; improved behaviour and relationships with others (6.2.4). Teacher – met his targets of socialising and making friends.
There was consensus between the child and teacher that progress had been made in establishing friendships, thereby indicating a positive impact of the learning mentoring programme. As the parent received information from the mentor, it was unsurprising that she similarly reported a perceived improvement in the mentee's behaviour.			

Discussion of the influence of factors other than mentoring does not explain why, despite the targets set by the learning mentors, participants identified the intentions of mentoring differently, and also identified the success and level of success in individual ways (Table 6.3, columns three, four and five). My interaction with these participants led me to deduce that their perceptions were formed as a consequence of each participant relating in a different way with a mentee within the culture of the school. Many participants were unaware of the mentees' targets and perhaps when knowledge is incomplete a wide description, that is 'behaviour' or 'socialising', was considered by non-mentor participants to be an acceptable definition of need.

This research has shown that the culture in school can affect the impact of mentoring in two ways. First, the situation of a child in class, for instance Catherine's outlook changed as she transferred from one class to the next, the teacher considering that this change was in response to the altered composition of the class members. Nerys said that this would recur in her next class: 'her world will come back to the world she prefers' (Interview 2, 03.07.08). Second, the child's peer group and staff members other than mentors helped a child to achieve, improving towards behaviour targets (for

Zac, see subsection 6.2.1). Furthermore, I suggest that the level of impact should be identified in relation to the personal characteristics of each mentee. For instance, mentor Karen indicated that Kieron's full change' was 'not a full change that would equate to that of a *normal* boy' (Karen's words).

Further to these factors, perhaps the impact of learning mentoring cannot be directly attributed to the targets set. I have identified that the mentoring programmes were to some extent transient and effective mentors amended targets and strategies intermittently in response to the child's situation. For example, mentor Louise adapted Nicola's target 'to accept rules at home' to include 'to go to bed and sleep earlier' as a consequence of information gained during a session which I observed. The level of success which Louise identified (see Table 6.3) was a result of such amendments:

> 9.45 Development of activity – *inventing a social story and writing*
> *a book continued, after a conversation about why the princess in the*
> *story needed to get sufficient sleep.*
> Louise – *(Reading) 'Princess Nicola was often tired at school.'*
> *What would mum be saying to Princess Nicola? If she was worried?*
> *Would she want to help her, because that's what mums and dads do?*
> Nicola nodded.
> Louise continued her scribing – *'We must help Princess Nicola to*
> *sleep better' said the queen. 'I have an idea', said the king'....*
> *(Observation transcription 07.02.08, 9.35-10.05).*

The session continued with Louise perceiving an as yet undisclosed problem for Nicola:

> 9.50 L scribed – *'so Princess Nicola...'*
> N, playing on the floor – *'sees shadows and thinks it's stuff like that'*
> L *Is she frightened? (Nicola nods) Have you told your mum?*
> N *Yes*
> L *We could do some work with shadows puppets...shadows are*

only cast by the light…they're not real, won't hurt because they disappear, shadows can be good fun.

I addressed this skill of perception with Louise after the observation. The disclosure of the problem with shadows seemed to be an important breakthrough for Nicola which Louise would discuss with mother. The explanation of the shadows and the idea of the puppets were clearly helpful and may have been initiated by what Louise would have invented to help her own children with this type of problem.

6.4   Factors Influencing the Impact of Learning Mentoring

In this section I compare the school settings and interpret four factors which facilitated or inhibited successful impact of mentoring. These factors were: relationships; time; undertaking multiple roles; and the expectations of the wider school staff regarding mentoring.

6.4.1   The influence of relationships

The learning mentors and teachers shared similar expectations of the relationship between the mentors and mentees, with specific differences in how that relationship was fostered in different schools. In Anton Junior School, the learning mentors identified themselves essentially as informal supporters of the mentees within the school environment. They fostered a non-authoritarian manner, as a 'critical' or 'professional friend' (Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.4). Teresa took charge of her own situation and identified the criticality of her relationship with mentees: 'I did have one child that we just couldn't get a relationship going so I had to pass that on to someone else'.

When learning mentoring was situated within relationships of 'half friend, half authority-figure' at Bradley Junior School, relationships between learning mentors and mentees developed slowly and the mentor's role was preventative of unacceptable behaviour, rather than reprimanding of the child.

Undertaking the majority of a mentor's time in lessons with a mentee also hindered the development of their relationships and the impact of mentoring (see subsection 6.4.4).

In this school there was agreement, between mentors about the level of friendship between mentor and mentee. Margaret said 'it's just being able to talk to them and feel that whatever they say is important, that it's not 'rubbished''. In one instance she was challenged to help a child to change his attitude:

> *Margaret explained that Zac's criterion was how to talk to friends. When they say something you don't like, it doesn't mean they don't like you. He says 'You don't like me. Everyone hates me'...*
> *To get Zac to see what friendship is... he needs to know he can have a friend and that friend can still play with someone else, he doesn't have to stay with* him *(field-notes, 21.11.07).*

Relationships were strained at times, not as a consequence of the type of relationship fostered, but specific to the character and perceptions of the mentee. For instance, Margaret appeared to be wary of Zac who had a history of exhibiting aggression when confronted. She was careful to avoid such confrontation, while maintaining charge of the mentor sessions. This restricted her mentoring; she could not suggest his inadequacies because 'it puts him in a mood'. This did not prevent her from persisting in building Zac's confidence and calmly insisting that he should complete tasks which she had provided, perhaps as a consequence of recognising that she had the confidence of teacher, Zoe, from whom Margaret 'took a lead' (see Chapter Four, Section 4.5). Zoe commented that Zac relied greatly upon his learning mentor and accepted her help, although at times he had 'been nasty to her' (an example of which I observed: 05.12.07).

Strong relationships between mentor Louise and her mentees at Caldwell Primary School facilitated success in mentoring. For example, Louise's good

relationship with Timothy enabled her to anticipate that an event which happened in his family would reflect upon him in school and to be pro-active in her response. This facilitated an improvement, Timothy reporting that he enjoyed school for the first time.

A second relationship which afforded success in learning mentoring was between the learning mentor and the parent. When mentoring programmes extended beyond the mentees to actively include their parents, the relationship with parents was integral to the mentor/mentee relationship and impact reached into the families of the mentees, as exemplified in Nicola's programme (Chapter Four, Section 4.6). Louise stated:

> I've seen a massive change in Mum from September, where she was quiet, she was really lacking in confidence and she was very, very low, depressed and so on, but now she's more determined to deal with things and she's facing it head on.

This increased self-esteem in the mother, leading to her feeling valued by the school, attending school to help with activities, and undertaking a parenting course. She agreed with Louise that their relationship was vital to the success of the mentoring programme.

I identified evidence of the impact of the good relationships gained from mentoring being extended to other relationships within school, from the mentee to his class teacher and his peers and, by discussions, to the support of other agencies. For Timothy, this was in response to his improved self-control, social attitudes and skills, his teacher, Lorraine, stating 'his behaviour is more controlled. It really is good to see how he has improved socially'.

In the relationship between the learning mentors and class teachers, unplanned discussion of the mentees' progress was practiced between the learning mentors and the class teachers at Anton and Bradley Junior Schools (see Chapter Five, subsection 5.3.4) which affected the potential impact of mentoring by providing implicit approbation of the mentoring programme.

Brian exemplified this: 'we talk a lot, you know, when we get chance. It's busy but we chat in passing. She [Teresa] knows where she's going with Catherine'. This did not, however, suggest that the teacher was involved with monitoring the mentor's work but related to the socio-cultural settings of the schools (see subsection 6.4.4). Teachers at Bradley Junior School, identified that communication with learning mentors was an aspect of practice which was capable of being developed, suggesting that it became positive with familiarity of colleagues over time. I suggest, however, that this relationship related to the work which the teacher required the mentor to complete as the mentor did not consider that she could voice her opinions to the teacher, thus I identified a contradiction in the setting of targets for the mentee[47]. These factors suggested that the relationship between the mentor and the teacher in that setting was hierarchical.

6.4.2   The effect of time limitations

The restrictions of time hindered the work of learning mentors, experienced in different ways in the three school settings. In Anton Junior School, learning mentor Teresa easily identified time constraint as a hindrance to her learning mentor success, as a consequence of available time 'dictating' the number of potential mentees who she could support. One way in which this became evident was the increase in the number of mentees attending Patricia's group sessions, from nine to twelve pupils over a period of four months as more children met the criteria for mentor help. Despite Patricia addressing this effectively by the careful introduction of new members to the group, analysis of the data generated indicated that, each time a child was added, the group dynamics altered. I observed as the increase in the size of the mentoring group restricted the frequency of opportunities for each mentee to contribute to a discussion, decreasing each mentee's potential interaction with the learning mentor, thus limiting his potential development towards targets for improvement and hence the impact of the learning mentoring.

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[47] Karen believed that he still needed to learn to print correctly, when Lesley, the class teacher, had given him a target of using 'joined-writing'.

In Bradley Junior School time affected mentoring in two ways: the flexible length of a mentee's programme and the length of a mentor/mentee session within the parameters of the school's new organisation of learning mentoring (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.4). The learning mentors considered that such continuation of programmes facilitated success in individual mentoring while identifying that this restricted the effectiveness of the overall mentoring project, as it limited the inclusion of new mentees.

Although time allocations were strictly adhered to, the learning mentors showed an ability to flexibly organise, accommodating the mentees' needs in order to create success. When a learning mentor occasionally considered that a child needed more than one weekly mentoring session, this was arranged. The change in the practice of their mentoring role at the school brought into question for the mentors the effective use of time (see Chapter Four, Section 4.7). Adapting to this change became mentor Karen's main challenge which, she considered, would 'take time', though the future success of mentoring in the school relied upon such adaptation by the learning mentors.

When unexpected alteration of the class timetable happened, mentors would miss a session with a mentee, undertaking the session at a later time only if another child was absent. Margaret explained:

> the only drawback I've ever had, it's because we now support
> them in class, sometimes the times alter for the child - we go and
> the teacher might have used that half an hour for talking to the children,
> so then by the time the child comes to do the work, we're actually
> going to another child. So sometimes we don't always feel as if
> we're actually doing what we can to help that child…

The learning mentors were thoughtful in analysing their own efficiency in an attempt to improve their effectiveness when working in class lessons. This

sometimes resulted in timetables being adjusted to meet the mentee's needs, an example of which I observed[48].

Karen identified a need to 'see through to an end result' of a lesson for her mentee, suggesting increasing the mentoring session time allocation for each mentee to one hour weekly, or meeting with each mentee more than once weekly, for an intense period of six weeks. Margaret also suggested that longer sessions could be undertaken for individual mentees. If this suggestion were to be adopted, fewer children could simultaneously undertake mentoring programmes within the, then current, number of mentoring hours at the school. Teachers and mentors recognised the constant waiting list containing many names of children who were in need of a mentor programme, therefore limitations of time already caused mentors to be 'pushed to the limit' (Margaret's phrase).

The above discussion suggests that managing time for learning mentor programmes was a struggle for the learning mentors in Anton and Bradley Junior Schools, and they believed that it had an effect on their efficiency. In Caldwell Primary School, the learning mentor, Louise, undertook many more hours in her role than did the learning mentors in the other schools, working in that role nearly all day, every day of the school week, unlike the other learning mentors in the sample. She organised her own timetable, including planned mentoring sessions as well as any emergency interruptions, and appointments with personnel from other agencies. As with the other learning mentors, she was always busy and rushed from one meeting to another. Due to her efficient personal organisation, however, she considered that time did not hinder her role, only commenting that an increased allocation of time would have enabled her to help more children.

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[48] For some time, Zac worked individually with his learning mentor during the lunch breaks (see Chapter Five, Section 5.6). This was to aid his socialising and to help him learn to keep his temper. He was allowed to share activities (mainly football) with one friend at these times, if he behaved appropriately in the morning lessons.

6.4.3   The effect of mentors undertaking multiple roles

Analysis indicated that in the two schools where time was a limitation on their work, the learning mentors undertook more than one role. In Anton Junior School, Teresa frequently received requests to undertake general teaching assistant duties during her allocated learning mentor time and believed that staff colleagues and pupils were potentially confused as a result of her undertaking more than one role in school (see Chapter Six, subsection 6.4.4) which impacted on her mentoring. The learning mentors at Anton Junior School were employed initially as General Teaching Assistants, whereas the roles of the other learning mentors in the sample did not include, and had not included in the past, being a General Teaching Assistant. Conversely, Patricia did not consider that her three multiple roles supporting pupils with additional needs reflected detrimentally in the effectiveness of her learning mentor role. In fact, she considered that it provided the following three potential advantages to her learning mentoring.

First, her multiple roles helped her to cope with the limitations of her learning mentor time allowance, as she used time inter-changeably for different supportive interventions for her mentees. Second, in her role as Special Needs Teaching Assistant she was comfortable in liaising with non-educational agencies on behalf of the mentee. This was shown to provide Patricia with a channel for a high profile within the school community and as an important link between the school and 'outside agencies', which had the potential to reflect positively upon her learning mentor role within the school. Third, when learning mentoring a large group of children, with only thirty minutes of support time, once weekly, she experienced difficulty in forging a relationship with a particular mentee and her other roles aided this development. Supporting mentees in her different roles enabled her to forge positive relationships with them, thus facilitating effective learning mentor work.

The small number of hours which Patricia was allocated for her mentoring role, however, caused her to rely, to some extent, on her other roles as she successfully rushed her mentoring work in an effort to complete everything she considered necessary for the mentees. Often a child would mention a problem in a group session which Patricia identified as being inappropriate for group discussion, so she talked with the child individually later in the day, 'stealing' time from one of her other duties in school (observed: 19.11.07). This indicated that, for Patricia as for Teresa, time was considered to be a restriction upon her mentor work: with more time, mentees would have received more support.

Learning mentors at Bradley Junior School shared Patricia's positive experience as they undertook more than one role in support of the same child. Karen and Margaret perceived that this effectively doubled their weekly opportunities for providing support. To some extent, Margaret appeared to see the two roles as interchangeable, stating: 'there is another child I've got on learning mentor who is also on Positive-Play, because I see him for both so really he's getting two sessions'. These mentors did not consider that their multiple roles[49] in school caused them, or their mentees, any confusion.

Further to this, Louise in Caldwell Primary School explained that she adopted Positive-Play work as an integrated part of her learning mentor role, for instance, for Timothy. Although she stated that learning mentor was her only role, by assimilating Positive-Play as a strategy it may be considered that Louise had 'hidden' the role of Positive-Play Worker inside her learning mentor role. In comparison with the other sample mentors, perhaps she also undertook more than one role in the school but under the 'umbrella' title of learning mentor.

In this subsection I have discussed how learning mentors perceived that the common practice of undertaking multiple roles had an effect upon their

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[49] These roles were described in Chapter Four, Section 4.3. They were learning mentor, Positive- Play Worker, and also Special Needs Teaching Assistant for Karen.

efficiency, to varying degrees. Perhaps the difference in interpreting this in individual school settings related to the difference in perceptions of the learning mentor roles by staff members in the wider school community and culture, which is discussed next.

6.4.4   <u>The effect of the expectations of the wider school staff</u>

Learning mentors in each school shared similar perceptions of how they and their staff colleagues interrelated with the learning mentor role. Where the role of the learning mentor was not clear (Anton Junior School, see Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.4) the subtle atmosphere of the school permitted monitoring of mentees through informal collegiality (see subsection 6.4.1). Staff held differing expectations of the learning mentoring role, and the learning mentors were granted sole responsibility for decision-making regarding the support of the mentees; it was 'left to them'. Accompanying this responsibility was an acceptance that the learning mentor was a constantly accessible staff colleague, who rushed from one job to another, 'shoe-horning' work with mentees at every opportunity. Patricia suggested that all staff could have provided help for mentees and implied that they should offer such help.

This accessibility of learning mentors was appreciated by the wider school staff members. It was noted by class teacher, Tricia, that their willingness to help at any time helped to make them effective in school. She considered that this was placed at risk by the part-time nature of the mentor job: 'I mean Teresa's not here all the time or it would be, could be dealt with a little quicker but, I mean if it's a major issue, then it will be dealt with by a number of people'.

Tricia's comment implied that Teresa was considered by some colleagues to be the school's learning mentor, despite the weekly mentoring work undertaken by Patricia. Teresa considered that the lack of agreed definition of the mentoring role among the school staff was a result of all Teaching Assistants undertaking 'a caring pastoral role' and Positive-Play work. She

perceived learning mentoring as an extension of this and was sensitive to General Teaching Assistants thinking that she was 'taking their job off them'. Teresa suggested that the informality of her relationships with mentees caused disquiet amongst the Teaching Assistants at the school. She was aware, however, that if Teaching Assistants identified an area of need in a child with which they did not want to deal, they handed this over to the learning mentor, sometimes particularly quickly, as happened when a child attended school with personal hygiene problems (interview transcript, 15.06.07).

This conflict of expectations resulted in Teresa's resignation from her non-learning mentor roles before the end of the data-generating period. Unexpectedly, she then did not experience the increase in the staff members' understanding of her role for which she had hoped. Furthermore, her interaction with them was now restricted by two new factors: she was not present in school for as many hours each week; and she felt distanced from the day-to-day workings of the school. An example of her difficulty was that, on some occasions, she was not informed by colleagues of recent changes to the school timetable and, as in Bradley Junior School, this hindered her work.

The teachers at Anton Junior School considered the overall effect of learning mentoring within the school organisation within an ethos which appeared to be relaxed and flexible. Brian said that 'having a good person at the head' of the learning mentor project helped it to thrive, because it ensured 'the support of management'. Teacher Tricia recognised a change in some pupils after a learning mentor programme: 'they like the time, they like the group and just giving them that importance really for themselves, you know, to feel that mentoring is something special'. She perceived that it was necessary for 'the school' to provide the time and place for 'creating the atmosphere' in which mentoring could work, making it 'a special thing'. A whole-school agreement regarding the role of learning mentoring would perhaps have helped facilitate this.

Although much work had been expended in redefining the learning mentor role at Bradley Junior School, my analysis of the data suggests that this was another school in which the role lacked a consensus of definition. A lack of empathy was perhaps indicative of busy jobs rather than of a wish on the part of the teachers not to become involved in learning mentor support and relationships. Indeed, there was evidence of whole-school involvement in the mentoring programmes (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.4) but a discrepancy between perceptions of the learning mentors and those of teachers. For instance Margaret's clarity that she was expected to liaise with the SENCo before consulting 'outside agencies' (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.5) about a mentee was refuted by the SENCo, Zoe, stating that such consultation was undertaken only out of courtesy. It was clear that decisions about mentees were taken by teaching staff and the head teacher, to whom the learning mentors referred regularly, but unwritten policies were operating. The learning mentor's role within the wider school community was a key factor in the mentors' perceptions of success of the new inclusive practice for learning mentoring in Bradley Junior School. Both learning mentors at the school separately stated that the teachers had no time to 'empathise' with children and 'the emotional side' of learning. This was confirmed by teacher Lesley, who stated that the mentees had 'specific learning directed at them and time for one-to-one chat, which obviously in a class of thirty seven you don't get that much time for'.

Three limitations to the impact of mentoring could be inferred to have issued from the new practices in relation to wider school issues. First, although there was an understanding among staff that children could be brought out of class if they needed to talk about something that was upsetting them, in practice mentors clearly did not want to be noticed practising this. As with the liaison issue mentioned above, it could be deduced that unidentified pressure from the wider school staff had a bearing on this, issuing from a desire of the learning mentors to follow the school leadership's directive. Karen pointed out that the practice of the new system restricted the development of relationships (see 6.4.1) because a child would not 'open up in the first place' if she, as

mentor, had not already forged a relationship with him, which could not be developed in lesson time, therefore initial individual support time was essential. Her reference for this was that mentor sessions, before the change of mentoring practice at this school, had been keenly concerned with the child's needs each day, sorting out even small problems which were upsetting him. Karen felt comfortable with this and clearly considered that she had worked well within the previous, flexible arrangement.

The second limiting factor for mentoring relating to the wider school was that mentees reacted differently in different situations. Kieron exemplified this, reacting differently to a mentor within a class setting as opposed to a paired out-of-class situation. Karen said 'he's not putting a show on for other children. With other children around him, I sometimes feel that puts a barrier between us'.

Third, the practice of including learning mentor session time within lesson time persisted as an on-going hindrance to the school ethos. Even after a year of working with the new organisation, Karen was not certain in which lesson her mentoring would take place. Her comments indicated that she could not rely on staff colleagues to help her solve this problem (see subsection 6.4.1). Both mentors at Bradley School felt unprepared for the significant alteration in their practice which had taken place. The school leaders and teachers had not recognised the potential barrier to mentor/mentee relationships which it posed, as indicated to mentors by there was no offer of training to support learning mentors in this. This contributed to a perception that the mentor now had to 'fit into the classroom' (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.5.4) This highlighted the importance of liaison between staff, not just about incidental meetings (which took place in all sample schools) but about discussion of the organisation and how their roles could be practised in the best possible way.

It was clear that the teachers identified the role and positive impact of learning mentoring but maintained a different view of mentoring at this school; I interpret this in two aspects. First, the teachers recognised that the school

could create successful learning mentoring through all staff members working together as a team, with the mentor building good relationships with the children and teachers, and all staff seeing mentoring as an important part of school life and a part of everyone's work. Lesley recognised that all staff members were adjusting to the change in the offered curriculum in school, but the hindrance this had been to the learning mentors in executing their roles. Teachers also recognised the difficulty that coordinating the many adults who participated in one mentee's programme could cause mentors (evident in Margaret frequently attending meetings for a mentee in an unpaid capacity).

Second, the teachers claimed that certain factors were necessary for effective learning mentoring, which the mentors perceived to be absent from the school. These were: good communication and liaison in talking together with staff about the mentees' needs and the use of resources; appropriate school training with the rest of the staff, this relating to intervention support skills for social and emotional needs; and the further embedding of the learning mentor roles within the school organisation. Zoe clearly acknowledged learning mentoring as part of the overall provision of additional needs at the school but I inferred that the mentors did not consider that they were 'equal partners' in this.

It may be reasonable to conclude that, at Anton and Bradley Junior Schools, the learning mentors 'fitted-in' with the teaching staff. At Caldwell Primary School, however, it appeared that the staff members 'fitted-in' with the learning mentor, as staff inter-relationships were different. Although Louise's attention was 'just a walkie-talkie message away' for all staff (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.4) she did not appear to be merely responding to staff in her role. It was clearly important to her that the staff working together facilitated her mentoring work. She stated:

> if anybody knows I'm working with a child and have got a concern
> they'll come and see me and say `I'm a bit worried about him today
> because they've come [to school] a bit upset. Will you take them

out and have a chat?' So there's a lot of positive communication with staff, we have a really good relationship.

Teacher Lorraine identified this effectiveness firmly as the result of the mentor's presence, organisation and style of work within school, the children knowing she was available for them to access at all times. With this practice, colleagues showed that they were aware of the parameters of the mentor's role, for instance, the administrative staff furnished her with leaflets about what they considered to be suitable training courses. Reciprocally, Louise was active in providing support and training for one department of the school staff which she had personally identified as requiring a more positive relationship with the children. Her role definitely extended beyond the mentees in her care. All mentors liaised with staff from the local secondary schools for transition but Louise also engaged them in interactive projects aimed at enhancing personal development in pupils. The teacher valued the links with families and 'home impact' which Louise had developed. Using her own ideas and initiatives, Louise's organisation directly affected the wider school staff and pupils, parents and the staff members of agencies outside the school.

6.5 Factors Most Likely to Prompt Impact

My findings suggest that certain factors are most likely to prompt effective impact in mentoring, of which I propose four. In this Section I discuss these with reference to a number of sources referred to in Chapter Two.

- The formation of 'a social world' between the mentor and the mentee, within the culture of the mentoring setting.

The mentoring relationship is vital in effecting change in the mentee and the factors discussed in Section 6.4 indicate the influence of the cultural setting in which mentoring is undertaken. The policies and practices within the social construct of the staff culture, their expectations of learning mentors within their roles, are limiting factors relating to the impact of learning mentoring. Lave

and Wenger (1991) identified how learning and change are 'situated' in the cultural environment in which the learning is undertaken. A supportive school culture involves specific liaison between professionals about mentees and their progress but also between the school and the family. Learning mentoring is supported by being child-centred and by maintaining a focus on the outcomes of learning mentoring (Davies and Thurston, 2005).This is because 'learning is a social process' (Cruddas, 2005).

- A mentor who has sufficient autonomy to individually construct her role in her setting, using appropriate skills, gained from training undertaken, with self-evaluation and networks established with other mentors.

When sufficient autonomy is not provided by the school leadership, it is very difficult for mentors to effect change in the mentee (as shown in Bradley School). Mentors construct their roles by applying previous experience and learned skills and abilities. The mentoring of Kieron and Zac indicated that, as Cruddas (op. cit.) suggested, the learning mentor role should be based on mentoring experiences, skills and knowledge and should enable the mentee without imposing external goals. Other school factors can also affect the mentor's ability to apply her skills, for instance social friction within the school staff members can result from mentoring being practised (evidenced in Anton School) as suggested by Golden and Sims (1997).

- Effective communication between professionals and parents about the content and intention of learning mentoring, providing frequent up-dates regarding the mentee's progress towards the targets set.

When appropriate communication is afforded and parents are involved in the mentoring, parents can appropriately assess mentor intentions and any subsequent impact, their assessments aligning with those of the professional participants, especially the learning mentors (seen in Caldwell School). A consensus can exist between the perceptions of the mentees, parents and learning mentors, regarding intentions and impact of the mentoring (exemplified in Bradley and Caldwell School; mentees Zac, Nicola and

Timothy).This was indicated by Cruddas (op. cit) who defined the relationship as a 'working alliance of all involved'. Learning mentoring can influence not just the mentee but also his family (Rose and Doveston, 2008; Jekielek et al, 2002). I suggest that when sufficient information is not afforded, parents assess the impact of learning mentoring by what they are used to discussing with school, that is, the child's learning and academic attainment.

- A wide range of resources enable a wide range of strategies to be employed in the mentoring process.

The mentors in this research employed a range of resources in implementing their strategies to encourage mentees to meet their targets (see observation activities, Chapter Five). When children are monitored for their skills and competencies in social and emotional aspects, mentors provide appropriate support and challenge in order to effect change. They discuss with children and reconstruct situations, not just reflecting on them (Day, 2003) and 'educate' children as decision-makers. The mentoring processes and strategies relate to the change achieved in the mentees. Impact for the mentees in this study were mainly social and emotional, and Rose et al. (2006) also found that mentoring 'outcomes' were likely to be affective and emotional changes. For instance, two of the mentees in this study improved their confidence so that this was identified by all closely involved with their mentoring (Catherine and Quentin). These children became more assertive and Cruddas suggests that the goal of mentoring would be empowerment and personal growth. Egan also (2002) indicated that through situated learning mentees can attain management of their problems.

- The involvement of mentees with targets.

In all three school settings young children encountered difficulty in accurately assessing their own progress in learning mentoring. The participating mentees undertook mentoring sessions which were focused and well-planned, however this was not sufficient organisation to encourage best impact (Chapter Two,

Section 2.3; OfSTED, 2005). The mentees in this study were not involved with planning or monitoring their progress towards their targets, and impact was slow. Perhaps with increased interaction between mentors and mentees on the targets and strategies being suggested or implemented, impact could have been improved (Davies and Thurston, 2005).

6.6   Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter, I have established the impact of learning mentoring on mentees by analysing the perceptions of different groups of participants from interview data, field-notes and scrutinising the transcripts of observations of mentoring sessions. I have then compared the impact across the three school settings and identified four factors that facilitate or hinder the learning mentor process (relationships; time; undertaking multiple roles; and the socio-cultural setting of the wider school community).

Changes in the mentees' emotional, social and learning responses and capabilities have been effected over the course of a learning mentor programme, to differing degrees for different children. It was clear that each participant viewed the learning mentoring from the aspect of their own understanding and situation. Some commonalities were found across the different schools in the sample.

It was difficult to assign the impact of mentoring when pupils undertook other intervention strategies as well as learning mentor programmes. A programme was shown to be concluded satisfactorily only when the child was educationally able and had a stable and supportive home background. I have further suggested that the success of a programme can be directly related to the child's home circumstances and when the home was included in the mentee's programme, support agencies other than education were also supporting the child.

I have identified five factors which were likely to prompt impact from the practice of learning mentoring. In the next chapter I consider the extent to which this research answers my four research questions, examining how my findings support or challenge previous literature in indicating 'best practice' in primary schools.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present and discuss the conclusions of my research. In Section 7.2, I recognise limitations of this study. I consider the extent to which my research answers my four initial questions in Section 7.3, contextualising my work within published research and discussing the extent to which my findings support or challenge this. In Section 7.4 I explain the originality of my research, drawing implications from my thesis for policy and practice in learning mentoring. I suggest what may best support the practice of learning mentoring in primary schools and make recommendations for further research in this field.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

I identify five limitations in relation to my research. The first concerns the sample size, which was bounded by the limitations of time (see Chapter Three, subsection 3.10.1[50]). It might be suggested that a larger sample size should be adopted in order to enable generalisation of the findings to other contexts and participants (Bryman, 2008). I accepted the restriction on sample size which direct observation makes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) in order to take advantage of a less quantitative methodology. My robust interpretive, qualitative approach was not intended to be appropriate for generalisation of the findings to other learning mentors or even to mentees in the same settings. This was a consequence of my socio-constructionist approach, understanding the specificity of the interaction between individual experiences relating to the individual characteristics of mentees and mentors. Orland (2001) suggested that there was considerable value in the unique

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[50] I refer from this point to numerical designations of chapter and sections only, to facilitate ease of reading.

interaction between individual learning mentors and their mentees. I suggest that the depth of observational evidence generated provided richness in my data to enable me to have identified aspects which were 'sufficiently congruent' (Lincoln and Guba, 2000) of actual mentoring sessions.

The limited sample size created some difficulties in the analysis of the data in that at times it was difficult to categorise the themes, each mentee fitting a different category of need. The inclusion of a variety of mentees' needs in this research brought strength to the study, however, enabled multiple categories of mentee need to be included within the sample. Indeed, I query whether or not the needs of individual mentees could ever be classed as 'similar'. The restricted sample size enabled me to consider data in depth and with detailed comparisons of the mentee cases, adding to the trustworthiness of the findings.

A second limitation concerned the prior knowledge of the professionals in this study. As a consequence of their training and experiences, the learning mentors and teachers could be deemed to understand what this research study was investigating. One might argue that this may have influenced their responses (Cohen et al., 2000). I addressed this by my careful explanations to prospective participants without emphasis or favour (see 3.5). By triangulation of the data generated I enabled the professional participants to provide perceptions which were as trustworthy as possible. For example, I confirmed aspects of their perceptions by cross-checking the data generated in interviews and observations with the information which I identified in collected documentation.

Third, my sample only included female learning mentors. A range of research into disadvantaged children has suggested that the absence of a male role model can affect children detrimentally and that employing more male adults in schools could redress this balance (Burn, 2001; OfSTED, 2008). It has been suggested that such a gender difference can affect the impact of mentoring (Younger and Warrington, 2009) and that male learning mentors

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may fulfil a role of empathy and support left by absent fathers for children in some family circumstances (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2010).

My selection of female mentors was a consequence of there not being any employed or voluntary male learning mentors practising in the EC in which the research was undertaken. Evidence of the gender of a mentor being a factor in effective mentoring is scarce (Daloz, 1999) and a large proportion of research has not considered this in their considerations of learning mentoring, the characteristics of mentors perhaps being considered to be more important than their gender (Hobson and Kington, 2002).

A fourth limitation related to the age of the sample children, as it proved difficult for these young mentees to express their perceptions at times and to perceive their progress in mentoring. This aligned with the findings of Rose and Doveston (2008) that it is difficult for young children to differentiate between the roles of staff members. The inclusion in the study of children with speech and language problems furthered this limitation. This may have related to the intention of learning mentoring, which is frequently sought through social or emotional targets, and it is perhaps easier for a young child to appreciate what s/he has learnt in numeracy or reading ('look which book I can read now!') than to identify improvement in affective areas. In suggesting this I am drawing upon my wealth of professional experience as a primary head teacher.

I minimised this limitation by the use of drawings, gestures and repeated checks on the mentees' opinions. Although the speech difficulties of three of the mentees might have hindered the quality of some data generated, I consider that the inclusion of these children in the research was justifiable as, on enquiring of local head teachers, I found that my sample was representative as speech and communication difficulties featured highly in primary children entering schools and undertaking learning mentoring at that time.

Finally, one of the difficulties which can be encountered when undertaking this type of interpretive qualitative research is the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As I was a serving head teacher in a school in the local area as well as being researcher, it was possible that a 'power' issue could have influenced the responses of the participants. I was colleague to the line managers of the staff members in the sample schools therefore I could have appeared as 'teacher figure' to the pupils and 'head teacher figure' to the teachers and mentors. Throughout the study I was aware of the need to keep a balanced relationship with my participants in order to limit this possible disadvantage. I maintained a certain distance from my participants as effectively as may be considered possible.

Notwithstanding the limitations set out above, I would like to highlight the value to the study of the adoption of multiple research instruments. Through the adoption of multiple methods a thorough 'picture' of a social situation could be built. A key strength of my methods was the triangulation of evidence which they afforded.

I conducted part-structured interviews in two stages with all participants of this study, being aware of strengths and weaknesses in the use of interviews and observations (see Chapter Three). The first wave of interviews proved to be an effective means of eliciting initial perceptions about the learning mentors and learning mentor processes and in building rapport with, and trust in, the participants and the questions I asked enabled the generation of ample data. The second interviews facilitated the examination of change in the perceptions of the participants as well as clarifying any queries raised by my observations of mentoring sessions and regarding the impact of mentoring.

As expected, the recorded observations yielded valuable data related to learning mentor and mentee behaviour, which could not have been obtained by other means (Whyte, 1981). As the observations were carried out three times in the research period with most mentees, it was possible to detect

changes in mentoring behaviours and practice and to relate these to the perceptions which learning mentors and mentees related in interviews. I was able to comprehend the types of relationships within the roles of learning mentors and the strategies which they adopted. Post-session reflection with the mentors provided effective cross-checks to the data generated. Nasen and Golding (1998) suggested that any change in a learning situation is a potential intrusion and I comprehended that my presence as observer of a mentoring session was capable of influencing the behaviour of both learning mentor and mentee (Gillam, 2000). That said, undertaking such a lengthy research could reduce this potential effect (Gillam, op. cit.). Minimal disruption was also facilitated by the appropriate behaviour of the learning mentors. My adopted methods demonstrated the value of qualitative research in offering information of what actually happens in real situations and facilitated the undertaking of a worthwhile study of the role of learning mentoring.

7.3 Key Findings

In this section I discuss the extent to which I met my four research aims.

7.3.1 What is the role of primary school learning mentor?

Policy statements regarding the role of learning mentors have remained unchanged in recent years (Hayward, 2001). My research indicated that the eight principles of learning mentoring (LECP/DfES, 2005) were not being practiced with equal competency. The role of learning mentor in some schools was still not clarified in some settings, which concurred with O'Donnell and Golden (2003). Perhaps this was because systems and procedures of learning mentoring were in line with recommended practices (LECP/DfES, op. cit.) but differed as they reflected the culture of each school setting.

Cruddas (2005) suggested that the role of learning mentoring integrated equality and democracy, it being a working alliance of all involved. Within this the mentor should accept problems as opportunities and mentor Louise

exemplified these aspects (see Chapter Four, Section 4.6). I found that mentors provided *support* and *structure* in mentoring with *professionalism*, as researchers had identified in mentors of teacher trainees (Yeomans and Sampson, 1994). My study provided further exemplification of the individually constructed role of the mentor, including the skills being employed, training undertaken (Hawkey, 1998; and Hobson et al, 2008) self-evaluation and networks established with other mentors (Hobson and Kington, 2002).

Second, this study exemplified the mentors 'positioning' their work within the culture of the school (Hollway, 1984) 'reading' the situation (Orland, 2001) and inducting the children into the acceptable norms and values of behaviour of the school setting. I disagree with Colley's (2003) assertion the adoption by the child of social definitions upheld by the mentor is a situation of risk. The social and emotional understandings which mentors introduce to mentees are aspects of social modelling in which they attempt to aid the child to socialise effectively within the culture of the school. In this way mentors in this study reduced the risk of 'the few' individual pupils affecting 'the whole' school community adversely (see Chapter Two, 2.8), my experience suggesting that the unacceptable behaviour of a small group of pupils can be a perceived difficulty for all in a school in challenging circumstances. I have identified the participatory approach of three communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Laluvein, 2010) in action but I have indicated that the mentor as 'interface' between the child, school and family triangle of influence (see Chapter Two, 2.4.1) is not exemplified in some schools, contrary to Rose et al. (2006).

In research literature, there is suggestion that the role of learning mentoring is to help pupils to improve their attendance, behaviour and attitude to schooling (for instance Rose and Doveston, 2008; Reid, 2007; Fair, Hopkins and Decker, 2011). In contrast, this study found that parents, mentors and teachers stressed behaviour and attitude rather than attendance as part of the mentoring role (Reid, op. cit.). This was quite surprising as the data for the sample schools indicated that attendance was below national expectations

(EC statistics). It may have been a consequence of the complex difficulties of each child taking precedence over whether or not they attended school, or merely that improving attendance was not a high priority for these pupils as they were not frequent absentees.

Behaviour was seen to improve through the application of strategies adopted by the learning mentors, although those children at risk of exclusion remained so when undertaking a mentoring programme, as also indicated by Rose et al. (2006). Contrary to the findings of OfSTED (2004) attainment was not highlighted as an improvement for this sample of mentees, even for the mentees who were targeting improved attainment. OfSTED's (2005) evidence for claiming the sweeping generalisation that attainment improves through the vehicle of learning mentoring was unconvincing. Their findings suggested that the lack of integration of learning mentoring within schools may have been a consequence of teachers not taking account of the targets set by learning mentors, and my research suggested that this may indeed have been the case for my sample, with weak discussion of mentoring strategies and progress of the mentees (see Chapter Six). My findings reflected my research design and the duration of my study could be considered to not provide sufficient time for impact on attainment to be revealed. I also point out that lack of evidence of impact on attainment does not signify that impact has not, nor will not, be attained.

7.3.2 What types of relationships can be identified within learning mentor roles?

My research indicated that mentoring differed according to the relationships between the mentor and mentee. I suggest that this was a factor of learning being a social process (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Cruddas, 2005) as each participant viewed learning mentoring from the aspect of their own understanding and situation, so learning mentoring can be qualitatively different in different schools. Social collaboration facilitates mentoring (Rose

and Doveston, 2008) as exemplified by the mentoring relationship of Louise, for instance, compared with Teresa (see Chapter Four).

The personal characteristics of each mentor and mentee affected the relationships, which I discuss further in 7.3.4. Groups of participants described learning mentor characteristics according to their involvement with mentoring. This meant that teachers used professional descriptors relating to training and skills (trustworthiness, intelligence, capabilities), mentees used emotional terms (caring, helpful) while parents focused on trust and capability, as may relate to someone in a professional position, towards whom their children may feel respectful. The one-to-one mentoring relationship was valued, seen to aid development of self-confidence in the mentee which linked to progress towards learning mentor targets, perhaps because many targets related to socialisation. The mentors (four out of five) in this study were described as non-critical, persistent and the mentees trusted them. Relationships were slow in developing between mentor and mentee when learning mentors did not have the freedom to practise mentoring outside of curriculum lessons. This situation perturbed mentors, perhaps because they saw their role as having time for the mentees, which had to change when mentoring was undertaken in lesson time. Teachers identified that learning mentors had time to empathise with children, which teachers did not (Cruddas, 2005).

Further outcomes of my study regarding relationships are that parents valued their child having a 'friend' in school. Mentors developed a role as friend to the mentee while four of the five in this study identified their role as a mix of friend and a hierarchical relationship. I suggest that this was because the relationships which a mentor fostered was a response to the characteristics and needs of each mentee, rather than to the mentor's personal characteristics. Friendship could be said to be a mentor's strategy (Yeomans and Sampson, 1994) the mentor being sometimes the 'champion' for the child (CUREE, 2005). I do, however, challenge the findings of Ellis et al (2001) Ayalon (2007) and Colley (2003) that, in order to be successful, mentoring should be practised through a role of friendship (see Chapter Two, 2.7). I base

this assertion on the findings that when mentoring included a percentage of hierarchical relationship the length of programme was similar to when mentoring was based on friendship. Mentors demonstrated through their 'championing' of the mentee (Teresa especially, see Chapter Four, 4.4) that they provided a 'legacy of care', as suggested by Reed et al. (2002).

My research agrees with previous studies that certain personal qualities and attributes of the mentor are necessary in order to facilitate an effective mentoring role (Rogers and Frieberg, 1994; Coleman, 1995; Johnson and Ridley, 2004; Morley, 2007). This was shown through their use of initiative in devising programmes and organising their time[51]. I found that certain characteristics, attributes and styles were enablers of successful mentoring and that an effective match of mentee to mentor was important (Hobson, 2003; Hobson et al., 2009). I concur with O'Donnell and Golden (2003) regarding some likely characteristics of mentees, their probable low ability levels (see Chapter Five, 5.9.1) and the potential for social friction between mentors and other staff members, perhaps related to the mentor 'championing' the mentee and a lack of understanding by staff members of the mentor's role. I also indicated that mentoring related to the status or autonomy provided to the mentor, so mentoring styles can differ in the level of hierarchical stance between mentor and mentee (Gay and Stephenson, 1998; Bush, Coleman, Wall, West-Burnham, 1996) in disagreement of Daloz (1999).

There is consensus that the ability to elicit change in the mentee is vital to mentoring (Schon, 1983; Yeomans and Sampson, 1994; Daloz, 1999) and this was confirmed for learning mentoring by teachers and parents in this study. I discuss further in 7.4 why mentors and mentees did not focus their attentions on change despite much discussion resulting in skill transfer. Comparing intentions with the impact of learning mentoring led me to question whether the relationships formed between the mentor and mentee were paramount to the impact of mentoring attained over time. Rather, it could be that the type of

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[51] See Teresa compared with Parveen regarding monitoring of the child's progress, Chapter Four, 4.4.2.

need which brought the child to become a mentee was more strongly a factor of possible improvement towards change in the child. This is not to say that relationships were not vital. This contribution may relate only to the context of primary schools and research into practice in primary schools has been limited to date.

7.3.3   What strategies do learning mentors adopt?

In common with individual learning mentor/mentee relationships, the learning mentor programme was unique to each mentee's needs, created by the mentor to seek to reduce the child's own barriers to learning (see Chapter Five). The most commonly adopted strategies I designated as *descriptions* of incidents; *logical reasoning* (common to all mentee programmes) and *suggestion* (modelling of acceptable behaviours by the mentor). I considered that strategies were implemented appropriately in addressing the targets set. Mentors did not identify their own strategies, however. Even for mentees with similar criteria of need, targets, strategies and length of programme can differ. My explanation of this is that each mentor had limitations accorded by her school policies and practices and the resources to which she had access. Strategies which helped mentees develop imagining, descriptive skills and logical reasoning were similarly applied, however, when addressing improvement in social skills. Certain strategies did not appear to be adopted when children with behavioural difficulties were being mentored (*advising, eliciting knowledge, listening, prompting*).

Mentors adopted effective targets for mentees within the capabilities of the child. They did this by observing and analysing the child's skills and competencies in order to provide appropriate support and challenge to enable the mentee to develop what skills the learning mentor considered to be necessary (although this related to specific school ethos, documentation scrutinised for this study and discussion with mentors about training courses suggested that mentors shared common acceptable social and behavioural standards). In agreement with Yeomans and Sampson (1994) and Schon

(1983) I suggest that discussion was the means of transfer of skills from mentor to mentee. I support the conclusions of Jarowski (1993), Schon (1983) and Hobson et al. (2009) that reflectivity was important to the mentoring role, as each mentor practiced reflection in relation to the child's responses and in respect of their own success (LECP/DfES, op. cit.; Schmidt, Marks and Derrico, 2004). Mentors actively listened to children and helped them to cope with negative experiences, developing trust, discussing and reconstructing situations with pupils, not just reflecting upon them, and modelling acceptable behaviour. They encouraged and 'educated' for decision-making, to enable the mentee to challenge her then current assumptions of her abilities, and to make appropriate independent choices for the future (LECP/DfES, op.cit.).

While I have indicated that aspects of recommended procedures for practising learning mentoring were being followed, others were not, for instance being a target-negotiator (Davies and Thurston, 2005, I discuss this further in 7.4). It is for conjecture whether or not impact could have been speeded if the mentees in this study were aware of, and possibly involved in deciding, their own mentoring targets, as was suggested by Davies and Thurston (op. cit.) especially as the length of the programmes in this study greatly exceeded the expectations of learning mentor directives. If the omissions identified in this small sample of programmes are indicative of practices on a general scale, then work should be undertaken to prompt learning mentors about these aspects of their role.

Some sample mentees were expected to work towards curricular targets as well as mentoring targets (Cruddas, 2005). Targets which *holistically* met the child's needs appeared to be more pertinent to the training, aptitudes and role of these learning mentors. In other words, affective, social, pastoral and emotional change were more likely to be encouraged through learning mentoring than other types of change (Boydell, 1994; Ellis, Small-McGinley and De Fabrizio, 2001; Jones, Doveston and Rose, 2009). This may be because the learning mentors in this study set the wider requirements of the

child above attainment targets, as found by Cruddas (op. cit.) even when school leaders suggested the opposite.

7.3.4   What facilitates or inhibits their successful impact on barriers to children's learning?

My research indicated that all participating mentors contributed towards a change in their mentee but such progress was slow in all cases and was unique to each child. In considering Matusov's suggestion that interventions should be evaluated against the process of change 'of or in participants' (2005), this thesis suggests six factors affected impact.

First, the potential implications of the cultural settings in which schools exist are well-documented in educational literature (Harris, 1992; O'Neill, 1994; Morgan, 1997) particularly with reference to the effect of mentoring (Hayes, 1998). My research confirmed conclusions from previous similar studies of learning mentoring in primary schools (Cruddas, 2005; Rose et al., 2006; Rose and Doveston, 2008; and Davies and Thurston, 2005) that the realities of different situations may influence the impact resulting from mentoring and that learning mentoring should be person-focused (also Laluvein, 2010). For instance, Case Five (see 5.7) exemplified how young children may not differentiate the learning mentor role from other adult roles in schools. Rhodes (2006) suggested that findings should be compared in different school cultures, which is what I have done in this thesis.

Second, researchers have suggested that the pairing of mentor to mentee by appropriate characteristics was a condition of effective mentoring of adults (Bush and Coleman, 1995; Hobson and Kington, 2002). I found that this was not always possible in primary schools as there may only be one learning mentor in employment. Analysis indicated that effectiveness of mentoring related to the characteristics and adopted mentoring style of the mentor.

Third, the personal characteristics of learning mentors affect mentoring, and the participants of my study agreed regarding the traits they expected them to

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possess. These were similar to those identified by head teachers in previous research, including empathy, the ability to listen and communicate (Hobson and Kington, 2002) and also being 'right' for their role, being calm and caring, of positive demeanour and with a placid, patient, 'personable' nature (Hobson et al., 2009).

Fourth, even with appropriate characteristics and 'unconditional positive regard' (Gartrell, 1994) for the mentees, the efficacy of mentoring appeared to be constrained by the particular culture. How each person was allowed or expected to act as mentor within each school setting, the degree of autonomy afforded to her in making decisions and liaising with families and agencies, and interaction with the wider staff members were additional important factors in encouraging the effectiveness of learning mentoring. This latter factor was a consequence of the level of cooperation which staff members afforded the mentors, as mentors can feel a sense of isolation within the staff culture as a consequence of their roles (Hobson et al., 2009), exemplified by Teresa. This link between ethos and impact has been suggested by previous researchers (Smith and West-Burnham, 1993; Moyles et al., 1999; Hobson et al., 2009), the mentee forming a personal 'social world' within these settings.

Hobson et al. (op. cit.) also suggested that impact can be hindered if mentees lacked cooperation in mentoring. My findings suggested that pupils were willing to participate but a hindrance was likely to be encountered from their level of understanding of *why* they were participating. Although working as part of and within the socio-constructed school setting, learning mentors are hindered when not provided with clearly defined responsibilities within the school culture and so strive to forge out their roles (Jones, Doveston and Rose, 2009). Mentoring was not hindered when the culture of the school, as seen in policies, practices and ethos, supported mentoring. When mentoring was teacher-led, focusing on curricular learning, it was difficult to forge mentoring relationships and frequent discussions between staff did not accelerate the impact of mentoring in compensation for this.

Fifth, multiplicity of roles was a common practice in the sample schools which had an effect on the efficiency of learning mentoring. When a learning mentor's second role was General Teaching Assistant her learning mentor work was hindered. Undertaking a second role as Special Needs Teaching Assistant (SNTA) however, was not seen as a hindrance. I suggest that this may have been because both learning mentor and SNTA are similarly one-to-one roles, subject to the considerations of time-tabling for each child. In conjunction with undertaking multiple roles, I identified time as a further limiting factor to learning mentoring. Previous research has not examined this aspect of the mentoring of children, although it has been identified as a limiting factor with adult mentees (Hobson and Sharp, 2005; Hobson et al., 2009).

One of the eight principles of learning mentoring namely 'liaising with families and staff' (LECP/DfES, 2005) was not practiced by some participating mentors and I suggest that they were prevented by the limitations of time from undertaking actions which were specified in two further principles: 'working with individual caseloads which are 'reasonable' and 'allowing time for networking, home visits, administration and training' (LECP/DfES, op. cit.). I suggest that this was because mentors were allocated time for their role but restrictions were placed on their timetables by school leaders, policies and practices relating to the school curriculum and general day-to-day amendments to diaries. It was relevant for amendments to be kept to a minimum if the effect on the impact of mentoring was to be reduced. Again this related to the culture in the school, however the learning mentors and teachers in this study considered that they were inactive in changing the status quo to improve the impact of time restriction on mentees. In this I contribute to the discussion of the purpose of mentoring and agree with the suggestions of Cruddas (2005) that the learning mentor's task is to facilitate the mentee's learning through motivation rather than to teach. That is, to 'empower' children (Davies and Thurston, 2005, Egan 1990) for personal growth (Cruddas, op. cit.). The impact of learning mentoring evidenced in this study certainly empowered two mentees (Catherine and Quentin).

Finally, Ayalon (2007) and Hobson and Kington (2002) suggested that the involvement of parents in mentoring can aid its success (see 2.7; 6.5). My findings, however, indicated that involving parents in learning mentoring did not necessarily *speed the progress* of successful mentoring. Similarly, while the practice of ensuring that frequent verbal communication was undertaken between mentors and class teachers, this did not always coincide with an accelerated impact of learning mentoring, contrary to the findings of Schagen, Blenkinsop, Braun et al. (2003). In other words my study revealed that the progress of mentees was a point of discussion between school staff but that discussion and progress towards improvement did not coincide.

7.4 Originality of the Study and Implications for Policy and Practice of Learning Mentoring

This study has built on previous studies into the perceptions and practices of learning mentors to make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the practice of learning mentoring within the triangle of influence which includes the child. I have identified three substantial claims to knowledge from this thesis.

7.4.1 Methods adopted

The originality of this study is significant because of my choice of research methods and procedures. I adopted multiple methods in order to provide 'cross-method validity-raising' (Hobson, 2000). To my knowledge, no other study has applied the combination of these instruments in the way in which I have used them to study learning mentoring. Each method which I applied supported the interpretation gained from other methods used. For instance, observation helped me to build a rapport with the participants, and thus increased the trustworthiness of data correlated with interviews and documentary evidence.

I applied a case study approach in a style defined by Bassey (1999). At two stages of interviews, learning mentors were encouraged to consider their perceptions of their role and to elaborate their responses with specific discourse (see 3. 7). Teachers and parents were also challenged to identify their understandings of learning mentoring, which served to raise questions in their minds and spurred some into seeking information which they had not previously understood. Research adopting multiple cases with extensive data generation can aid understanding from a small sample (Hammersley, 1992; Stake, 1994) and I consider that I have adopted a successful multiple method for enquiring into the reality of learning mentoring (to the extent that it may be considered possible for any study to describe the reality of others in a social situation). Moreover, use of observations, post-session reflection, transcription checks and stimulated recall interviews involved participants in exploring their beliefs and practices related to learning mentoring in *primary* schools, which is a setting not widely examined in regard to learning mentoring.

7.4.2   Influences on learning mentoring

This thesis shows evidence of the triangle of influence (2.4.1) in action in primary schooling. I have identified that the effect of the combined relationship of school, child and home on learning mentoring did not relate just to the style of mentoring adopted but was participant-specific (see Appendix 5). Although all mentees progressed towards their targets, involvement of the home in the learning mentoring process appeared to accompany success. I indicated in 6.4.1 that the role of parents in enabling successful learning mentoring cannot be underestimated (Laluvein, 2010). I suggest that parents can understand the intentions and impact of mentoring in line with professionals, and make appropriate assessments of progress when they are provided with relevant information from which to formulate their understandings. When parents were fully involved in learning mentoring, effective liaison also was undertaken with other agencies (Cases Four and Five). The adoption of an effective

understanding of the mentoring role by parents, however, did not accompany them being more involved with learning mentoring than other parents.

These conclusions do not lead me to claim that interaction between school and parents guarantees that learning mentor programmes will reach a satisfactory conclusion, with all targets met, nor does it suggest that parents always agree with their children in what they would look for in a mentor. Indeed, parents can use academic attainment as their sole measure of the impact of learning mentoring, or relate it to the age of the child or his progress in other programmes for additional needs (for instance, Positive Play). They do, however, indicate that parental support and interaction 'greases the wheels' of the learning mentor process, to the advantage of the child, mentor and school. Home circumstances have indicated the vulnerability of these mentees to their socially constructed worlds. I suggest that schools should be transparent with parents regarding children's capabilities and needs, and work with them in the practice of learning mentoring.

7.4.3   Redefining learning mentoring

Third, I have indicated how learning mentoring can best be practiced in primary schools. I have recognised that many factors impact on the effectiveness of learning mentoring, while identifying that certain specific areas should be addressed by school leaders in an attempt to attain maximum impact. In the light of this research, much of my working definition captures the essence of mentoring, this being:

- a culturally-situated hierarchical relationship ;
- a programme of nurture and challenge, emotional support, acceptable values, skills and attitudes, with reflection by the mentor and appropriate experiences offered;
- to encourage change in identified areas;
- for agreed purposes, defined and time-related targets, with monitoring for impact.

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In respect of *learning* mentoring, however, I recommend further consideration, as follows.

A culturally-situated hierarchical relationship

My findings substantially suggest that this aspect of mentoring was also found in learning mentoring. The cultural factors of school policy and practices, staff interaction, and leadership differed and school ethos had an effect on the impact of mentoring.

Learning mentoring is hierarchical as mentors are adults in a position of responsibility for children. Although some mentors tried hard to be perceived as a friend of the mentee, parents still recognised the status of the mentors, and teachers respected them as para-professionals.

A programme of nurture and challenge, emotional support, acceptable values, skills and attitudes, with reflection and appropriate experiences

Aspects of learning mentor programmes indicated nurture and challenge (5.3.4). I did not include 'teaching' or 'counselling' in my working definition of mentoring and this was appropriate in relating the definition to learning mentoring. Although Cruddas (2005) suggested that learning mentors were 'facilitators of learning', this did not imply that they taught. Learning mentors modelled acceptable behaviours and attitudes which the mentees adopted (see 5.6.2).

I suggest the *type* of skills and attitudes being encouraged by *learning* mentors should feature in the definition, as the majority of skills conveyed by the learning mentors could be defined under the umbrella term of 'social' (see 5.6.2). The strategies employed by the mentors were situated in appropriate experiences for the mentees, with appropriate reflection regarding the child's needs. As Cruddas (2005) stated, learning mentoring is subject to the mentor's experience, skills and knowledge.

To encourage change in identified areas

Encouragement of change was evidenced as mentors strived to help mentees develop and improve, through strategies in the mentoring programmes (5.3.2 to 5.8.2). Change was not, however, achieved by the strategies adopted and completion of targets in most of the examples of mentoring in my study.

I have considered why these well-meaning mentors did not facilitate a swift change for the children. This may partly have been influenced by the lack of understanding by the mentees of the change which the mentor had identified as being necessary. Furthermore, the barriers to learning of these six mentees, which the mentors were attempting to address, were outside the realm of the mentors' influence. For all mentees I have identified difficulties emanating from their homes (see Chapter Five) and although the mentors could develop effective liaison with parents they could not prevent family circumstances from being a barrier to learning. This brings into question the efficacy of learning mentoring being specifically introduced as an intervention into schools in geographical areas where families may experience factors which inhibit their support for their child's learning, as suggested by Goodman and Gregg (2010). Furthermore, where speech and language is a barrier to learning, the mentor is to some extent restricted by the suggestions for support made by external agencies such as Speech Therapy teachers, and thus relies upon interaction with them and the level of their skills in helping the child to develop effective communication. Despite this, however, I make some suggestions next which could be adopted in order to aid progress for mentees.

Agreed purposes, defined and time-related, with monitoring for impact

In devising my working definition of mentoring, I intended that the phrase 'agreed purpose' would relate to all closely involved with mentoring, and I found that this was not being practiced with any degree of thoroughness in learning mentoring. Not only should purposes be agreed but the targets issuing from these should be *mutually* agreed by mentor and mentee

(LECP/DfES, op. cit.; Davies and Thurston, op. cit.). The inclusion of children in designing their mentoring programmes and identifying their own progress towards these appeared to be a low priority for the learning mentors in the study.

It may seem elementary that mentors should talk to mentees about their needs and how these could be addressed, especially at a time when the importance of 'pupil voice' is being promoted in education by school leaders, as seeking the perceptions of children is an effective aspect of school self-evaluation (OfSTED, 2008). My study suggests that there were factors which served to prevent effective discussions between mentors and mentees, which could otherwise extend the mentees' understanding of the intervention support which they received. These factors included the intricacies of mentoring relationships, limitations of time, mentors undertaking multiple roles and varied expectations of the staff members in the wider school ethos and culture (6.4) and a key factor was the omission of effective discussion of purposes, targets and strategies. Although the sample mentees were young and some had communication difficulties, they each understood and could converse about a range of school and non-school subjects and I found nothing in interaction with them which suggested that they could not have been assisted in acquiring a deeper understanding of the mentor's role in supporting them.

Change and purposes are key factors in learning mentoring relating to the length of programmes, which in this study greatly exceeded the expectations of learning mentor directives (Hayward, 2001). This may have been a consequence of the monitoring of mentoring being undertaken but appeared to relate little to mentees' targets. Furthermore, the mentors reflected on their practice but an opportunity was missed when the strategies which they adopted, through which improvement would have been encouraged, were not explicitly identified by the mentors nor monitored for their effectiveness. It is for conjecture whether or not impact could have been speeded if the mentees in this study were aware of, and possibly involved in deciding, their own mentoring targets.

If the omissions identified in this small sample of programmes are indicative of practices on a general scale, then work should be undertaken to prompt learning mentors about these aspects of their role. Mentoring should be instigated with the end in mind (Davies and Thurston, op. cit.). For the participating mentors, the longevity of their programmes was not of concern. It may be pertinent to question whether or not such long-term learning mentoring, is an appropriate intervention strategy for encouraging change in disadvantaged primary age children.

From my considerations in this Section, I would revise my working definition of mentoring by the addition of four aspects in order to define effective *learning* mentoring. My refined definition of mentoring, which includes learning mentoring, is:

> *an* autonomous *culturally-situated hierarchical relationship,*
> *offering a programme of nurturing with challenge, and emotional*
> *support, which encourages the development of appropriate*
> *values, attitudes* and social *skills. The mentor guides the mentee*
> *through reflection and appropriate experiences to bring about*
> *changes in identified areas. The indicators requiring change*
> *are* mutually *agreed, defined and targets set between mentor and*
> *mentee, undertaken over an* agreed and specified duration*. The*
> *extent to which desired changes are brought about is monitored*
> *and (is sometimes required to be evaluated) for its impact.*

This revised definition is illustrated in Figure 7.4.3, indicating the key aspects which provide best conditions for the practice of learning mentoring (effective relationship accepted). These factors are the culture or ethos of the school, as identified in leadership and cultural attitude towards learning mentoring; the programme adopted by the learning mentor, relying as it does on the mentor's capabilities, character, skills, and willingness to involve others in the mentor/mentee interaction; and the targets for change.

Figure 7.4.3 <u>Conditions which encourage best practice in learning mentoring</u>

CULTURE AND ETHOS are most effective when:

the learning mentor has a high profile in school;

leadership allows delegation of organisation and procedures to the learning mentor (autonomy);

leadership keeps in touch with the mentor system in school;

school 'fits in' with the mentor rather than the mentor 'fitting in' with the school;

the mentor does not undertake general teaching assistant duties, as this complicates the role definition for mentors;

timetable sessions are adhered to.

Culture, programmes and targets inter-link

PROGRAMMES are most effective when:

parents are fully informed and interact well with the learning mentor process;

learning mentors encourage a joy and capability in learning in the mentee, with resilience in social and emotional skills and abilities;

the child's criteria of need directs the impact;

the child is involved in creating the programme.

TARGETS effect change best when:
they are mutually agreed between the mentor and mentee;

the mentor adopts a mentee-centred style;
interventions other than learning mentoring are undertaken in tandem by the mentee;

a positive 1:1 relationship is encouraged as this develops the mentee's self-confidence;

other agencies are involved within the mentoring programme.

7.4.4 Learning mentoring styles and school leadership

In this discussion I have built on previous work regarding the role and practices of learning mentoring and have confirmed that the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and the mentee is vital. Each mentee brought individual needs to the mentoring situation, each mentor provided for these in a unique way. I further suggest that relationships were developed in line with different mentoring styles adopted by mentors. Each of the identified styles encouraged change in the mentee (including support, help, reflection, a personally-constructed programme, modelling of behaviours, and encouragement, forming new ideas, modelling strategies). Similarities and differences in the school organisation, procedures, social construction of expectations and relationships related to the styles adopted, and so to the overall effectiveness of learning mentor programmes. By this I mean that styles adopted by learning mentors related to their characteristics but also to the culture of the school setting. I identified three approaches in the mentors' organisation of mentoring, these being *mentor-, curriculum- and mentee-centred*.

Despite the individualities of the circumstances, personal characteristics, criteria of need of each mentee and disparate programmes, I identified commonalities in the mentees' lack of social skills, self-esteem and confidence prior to the programmes, and in the different levels of impact of mentoring on these social/emotional traits. I did not find any significant difference in benefit to the impact for mentees from the three different approaches to learning mentoring, contrary to Reicher (2010) who linked success in social and emotional learning to mentoring specifically through a person-centred approach.

By interpretation of the data concerning the organisation of mentoring in policy and practice and the leadership of the mentors, it appears that leadership styles in each school related to mentoring styles, as each mentor's hierarchical practice was experienced in the level of autonomy as afforded to

her mentoring role by the school leadership. Leadership which directs the mentor with dependency can serve, implicitly, to constrain the impact of the mentor's work.

Previous literature[52] suggests that there is a relationship between leadership style, the social culture prevalent in a school, the ethos created and therefore, I suggest, the decisions made regarding a child's needs and the support systems then employed, for instance, learning mentoring. The leadership styles which I identified in this research were: hierarchical leadership; leadership distributed within the school culture; and delegated leadership (see 4.7). The mentoring styles which I identified correspond to these leadership styles. I recognise that these are simplifications and each style may include elements of these or indeed of other styles which have not been identified in this thesis. I present these styles in Figure 7.4.4 below.

Figure 7.4.4   <u>Differences in organisation of the process of learning mentoring</u>

Curriculum-centred Mentoring

Mentor-centred mentoring

Mentee-centred mentoring

'Managed mentoring' leadership

'Top-down' leadership

'Mentor-managed' leadership

School leaders lead practice of learning mentoring

Learning mentors lead practice of learning mentoring

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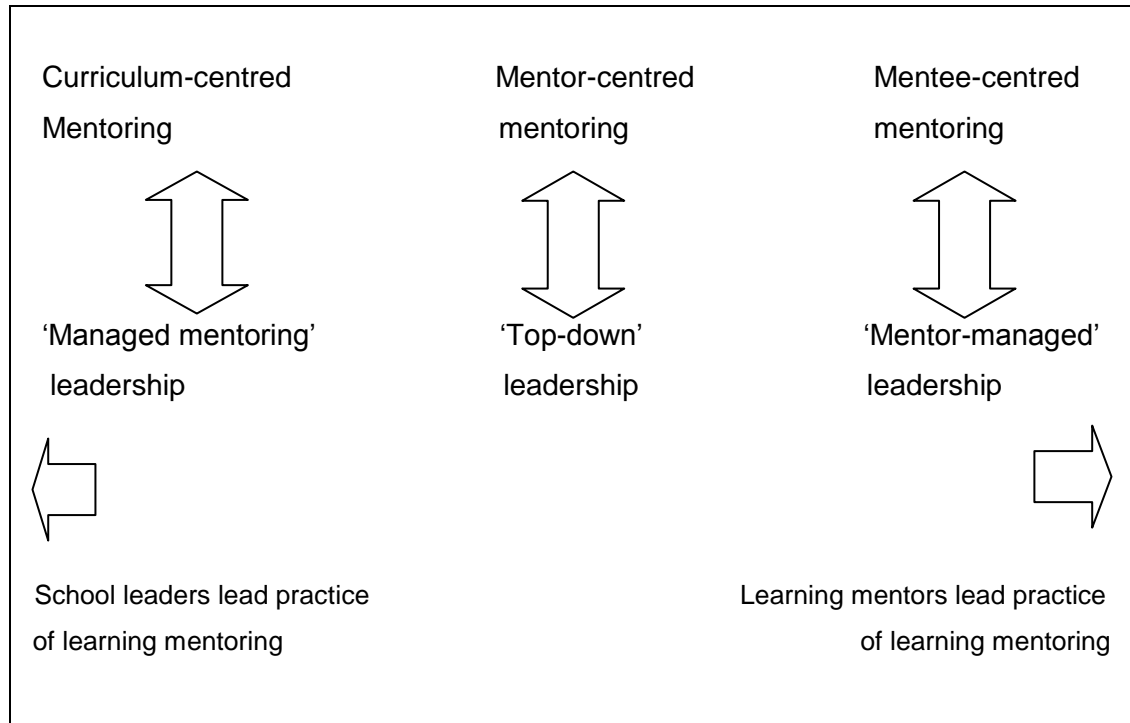
[52] For instance, Harris, 1992; Fullan, 1992; Caldwell and Spinks, 1992; Hayes, 1998; Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001; Harris and Chapman, 2002.

My thesis suggests that these three approaches may encompass the following factors. I propose that mentor-centred mentoring is undertaken within '*top-down*' leadership, where the head teacher leads the mentoring process by policy, deciding on a child's entry to mentoring, and the mentor relies on the accuracy of this and then becomes the 'gatekeeper' to the mentoring programmes, leading practice. Mentees' needs are identified by the mentors intuitively and timing of the sessions is flexible. The learning mentor has the authority to apply friendship or discipline, according to the needs of each mentee. Learning mentoring has a behaviour and social focus, though the role is somewhat unclear and alters from child to child. Description, imagining and suggestion are common strategies adopted by learning mentors using this approach (see Appendix 5, Table A5.9.3).

Curriculum-centred mentoring involves '*managed mentoring'*, in which school leaders direct learning mentor process and practice. Teachers and the SENCo identify the mentoring needs by agreement with the mentors, with entry criteria being followed by the mentors' intuitive evaluation of the mentees' needs. Timing of the sessions is erratic due to the main importance of the school being identified as curriculum-related. In this style of mentoring the mentor is half-friend, half-disciplinarian. Learning mentoring is an intervention adopted by leaders as an approach to coping with difficult pupil behaviour but is understood to be a vehicle for improving learning. Parents are included when leaders refer to outside agencies. It is clear that some mentees in this situation expect learning mentoring to provide them with support for learning rather than with social/emotional support. There is not one definitive role of mentor in such a scenario as different participants experience the role in different ways. The use of positive language and open questioning are strategies which typify this style of mentoring (though this could relate to the shared criteria of need of the mentees in the exemplar school, which was behavioural).

Mentee-centred mentoring is '*mentor-managed',* with learning mentors receiving more responsibility and autonomy than in the previous two styles and leading mentoring practice within a collaborative culture (Boydell, 1994, indicated that this style could encourage affective as well as cognitive gains). The school staff members maintain a strong commitment to learning mentoring and to supporting the mentor in her role, perhaps partly because she is pro-active around school and explicitly supportive of staff (see 4.6). Teachers can identify that mentoring success depends on the adoption of this style of mentoring. Mentee's needs are identified by the learning mentor and sessions are undertaken regularly and to a timetable. There is close agreement between participants regarding the role and purpose of learning mentoring. The focus of learning mentoring is understood to be behavioural and social, not learning, though attainment is recognised by the mentor. The mentor appears as a friend to the mentee, and parents, family and outside agencies are fully included as in support of the mentoring process. When adopting this style of mentoring, strategies of description, logical reasoning and praise are prevalent.

7.4.5   Implications from this thesis

From my findings on this research journey I consider that I have gained as a researcher. I have practiced interview techniques and appreciated the benefits gained, through helpful responses. I have also honed my skills in non-participant observation and remain privileged to have undertaken glimpses into the reality of others. I have developed my skills in organising research 'in the field' and tracking by a field-log, in order to keep a tight monitoring of my own progress as the research developed. If I were to repeat this study, or become involved with a similar research study again, I would again use an informal approach. I have found that it is important to retain close contact with the mentors in relation to the timing of the observations during the data generating period, in order to remain informed of developments over time in individual programmes. Considering a wider view from my position as head

teacher as well as researcher, this study has implications for policy, practice and further research of learning mentoring.

Implications for Policy

The national policy for implementing learning mentoring has remained unchanged since its inception. Currently this policy is not being followed closely in the practice of learning mentoring in some primary schools. A principle of learning mentoring remains that it is preferably a short-term intervention. While learning mentors are clear about their role as directed by their training, this role is being implemented as a long-term solution to children's difficulties. It is understandable that there is no 'quick fix' to removing multiple behavioural, emotional and social problems if they are barriers to primary pupils' learning. I recommend that policy-makers should revisit the advised time-frame of learning mentor programmes and school leaders should consider whether or not learning mentoring, as it is presented currently, is the best intervention for facilitating change in pupils with complex difficulties. In examining the effectiveness of available intervention strategies in raising attainment of pupils, recently published data (Higgins, Kokotsaki, and Coe, 2011) support my findings that the use of para-professionals does not provide high impact, yet encompasses high financial costs. I suggest that, rather than para-professionals, some learning mentors may best be described as 'para-mums' as their emphasis is on continuous support and care rather than the child gaining appropriate independence. It may be prudent for school leaders to consider other intervention initiatives rather than learning mentoring if pupils are to be supported more than affectively, and for sustainable improvement after support is ceased. For instance, effective feedback from qualified teachers has been found to provide very high impact for low cost (Higgins et al., op. cit.) and direct teaching support is recommended by further recent literature (Goodman and Gregg, 2010).

Implications for further research

Comparison of the existing evidence base of learning mentoring in secondary schools with that of primary schools brings me to suggest that more research into primary schools is required. The current knowledge of learning mentoring could benefit from further research into primary school projects, possibly the undertaking of a follow-up study with child mentees in the same age range as this study, with a further sample of learning mentors. Consideration could also be given to undertaking longitudinal research into whether the impact gained during learning mentoring is sustained over time.

This research was undertaken in schools in challenging circumstances situated in geographical areas considered as disadvantaged. I have shown that in these schools some children experience multiple interventions in the quest by school leaders to provide best support for each child. For this sample of mentees, the relationships between mentor and mentee were important but also the criteria of their needs appeared to be significant in encouraging impact in mentoring. The type of need for mentees is an area which has not been identified by previous research and a future study could be undertaken into the typicality of learning mentor mentees who present multiple needs, with scrutiny of how widely the criteria of need are indicative of success in learning mentoring. This may involve examining the level of success of the combination of intervention programmes in facilitating the removal of the child's barriers to learning. The conclusion of such a study could enable school leaders to make the decisions which might be necessary for changes in practice to be undertaken.

Implications for practice

Learning mentoring is practised as an intervention with the goal of addressing the needs of 'vulnerable' pupils in schools and so to help educators to narrow the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and others. If the policy of learning mentoring is reconsidered then practice of

mentoring, as currently experienced in schools, may change or learning mentors may feel more confident in practising support of long duration for mentees. An aspect of practice which should be considered by school leaders is the situating of learning mentoring within the day-to-day workings of the school, identifying the practice of learning mentoring which is prevalent in their school and examining this against the policy and principles of learning mentoring and the level of success attained. If the practice which they wish their school to promote is learning mentoring then they should reconsider aspects which make this most effective: the time allocated to mentors in relation to quantity of mentees; clarity of the role and training of all staff members in an accurate description of this; the way in which the school involves and promotes the family in the mentoring triangle; the appropriate characteristics of mentor staff; the types of need presented by the children. If, however, the principles of learning mentoring are not what school leaders consider that the school requires, then this should be acknowledged and some new type of intervention be provided. This may be particularly pertinent in the light of the changes to educational policy agenda in England, issuing from the new government of May 2010, which has removed specified funding for learning mentoring from school budgets. The potential for this action was a concern of the learning mentors in this study at the time of data-generation, as it placed the future of learning mentoring in schools 'in the balance'.

These considerations have implications for my own practice as head teacher of a primary school. In company with many other school leaders (2.3) I experienced difficulties during the initial introduction of a learning mentor project (1.3). Having undertaken this research I now consider that my future leadership of the organisation of learning mentoring will change. It is clear that providing a learning mentor who is also employed as a Teaching Assistant in a mentee's class will not provide the best conditions for mentoring. I intend to provide a separate mentor with specific time allocated for, and 'precious to', mentoring sessions and with time allocated for liaison with the class teacher and parents of each mentee. In this way communication will be most effective and all closely involved with a mentee's programme will be afforded an

improved chance of understanding the targets set, the content of the mentoring programme, and the time-frame within which it is expected that impact will be achieved and learning mentoring will cease. I will maintain the supportive culture in our school regarding the benefit which learning mentoring provides to its culture, as staff members have experienced over recent years the positive change which learning mentoring has encouraged in the social and emotional skills and behaviour of a few individual children, and the positive effect which this has had on the ethos of the school as a whole. When practised to best effect, learning mentors have a great potential to help reduce the barriers to learning for some children.

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Excellence Cluster project criteria list for becoming a mentee in learning

mentoring

- Low attendance;
- poor social skills and emotional intelligence;
- poor attitude and behaviour;
- low expectations and aspirations/attainment;
- undertaking transition between schools;
- experiencing a temporary personal difficulty (for instance, a close family bereavement).

Table A1.3   Analysis of data outcomes relating to learning mentoring early in
the implementation of an Excellence Cluster

Factor involved >	Attendance	Unauthorised absence*	Fixed-term exclusions
Data monitored	Summer 2005	Summer 2005	Summer 2005
Overall Excellence Cluster	2.85%	1.01% decrease	0.06%
One'family' of schools in this Custer	3.03%	0.32% decrease	0.07%
One primary school in this family (43 pupils)	5.0%	0	0.06% decrease
Was the Excellence Cluster base-line improved upon by the above school?	Yes	Yes	No

(*negative figure implies a reduction in unauthorised absence ie an improvement in attendance. (Shaded figures show an increase in data above the baseline set for each factor)

Table A1.3 shows the analysis of the data collected from schools for each of three factors which were identified by the EC as indicators of learning mentoring effectiveness. The table indicates improving attendance and decreasing unauthorised absence above the baseline figures, therefore the targets for improving attendance had been met for that term. It was found that this was part of a trend, with the analysis indicating similar outcomes each school term. Fixed term exclusion figures had hardly altered from those of the baseline for the particular school specified, its family of schools and the EC overall.

APPENDIX 2

Intervention strategies and projects implemented in primary schools

As available initiatives are too numerous to be included within the remit of this thesis, I have restricted this information to some of those available to primary schools since the year 2000. I recognise that initiatives for secondary schools are more numerous as most of the generous funding provided for initiatives in schools since 2000 has been provided through, and mainly for, secondary schools, for instance 'Connexions' (Teaching Assistants for 14 to 16 year olds). Financial support for primaries has mainly been provided as a result of primary schools being included in networks with secondary schools. Primary school initiatives are:

- support for children with designated and identified Special Needs, which includes support from teaching assistants, external agencies working in multi-agency teams, providing advice and guidance to school and to parents, especially for children with statements of Special Needs, and also for children on School Action Plus, that is, providing school support with support from other agencies;

- short-term interventions aimed at addressing underachievement in learning, such as Early Literacy Support, Additional Literacy Support Key Stage One and Two pupils respectively, Springboard Maths for Key Stage Two pupils;

- the 'Every Child Counts' programme of 'catch-up' numeracy, one-to-one support by teachers, for Year One/Two pupils;

- the 'Every Child a Reader' project of Reading Recovery (Clay, 1991) for up to four children at any one time in one Reading Recovery teacher's programme, teaching underachieving Year One pupils;

- the 'Every Child a Writer' programme, for underachieving Years Three and Four pupils, with lesson support and teachers undertaking one-to-one tuition for selected pupils;

- the 'One-to-One provision' (piloted and developed into a national support in 2009) for pupils underachieving in numeracy and literacy at Key Stage Two, with support undertaken out of school lesson time, by qualified teachers.

Many school-centred initiatives supporting pupils with additional needs involve agencies other than education. A selection of these agencies is:

- Behaviour Support Services, Pupil Referral Units, educational psychologists, School Medical Officers and Children and Adolescents' Mental Health, Education Welfare Officers;

- 'Family Resource Workers' who are employed in most secondary schools and their 'feeder' primaries, as part of the Extended Schools initiative, providing home/school links, helping parents regarding pupil attendance and links with other agencies, for instance school health;

- the 'Excellence' initiatives, 'in Cities' and in 'Clusters' of schools, providing monetary support for staffing and resources for supporting Able, Gifted and Talented children, and learning mentors;

- the 'Behaviour Improvement Programme' (BIP) which was introduced in 2002, providing further funded support to help schools provide staff, resources and initiatives/projects to reduce truancy, exclusions in school, and criminal behaviour, and to improve attendance.

'BIP' schools were selected by the DCSF where statistics suggested that communities indicated high truancy and crime figures. The foci of the BIP initiative were the use of pupil referral units, behaviour teaching assistants, and the creation of leadership in schools by a named Lead Behaviour

Professional. A key strand of BIP, however, was the use of learning mentors, as it was intended that BIP would further the work of Extended Schools in providing positive outcomes for pupils and their families.

A 'toolkit to improve learning' was provided by Higgins, Kokotsaki and Coe (2011). This is aimed at helping schools consider cost effective intervention strategies by which leaders can apply Pupil Premium funding to address the 'attainment gap' between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils.

APPENDIX 3

Ethical statement

1 The focus of this investigation is the use of the learning mentor support mechanism in primary schools. The new initiatives from the government have provided for Excellence in Cities, now Excellence Clusters, and have funded learning mentors as a means of supporting children in areas of challenging circumstances, to help them overcome barriers to learning.

The aim of this research is to examine the introduction of learning mentors in one Excellence Cluster, set against the background of the national agenda and local initiatives. It sets out to answer the question 'what constitutes an effective learning mentor?' It does this by finding out from a sample of three schools:

What do mentors believe their role to be?

How do mentors fulfil their role?

What enables them to be successful?

Do the teachers and pupils agree?

Does this have any implications for mentor recruitment and retention?

I propose to conduct this investigation by case studies of the mentoring in three schools. This will involve interviewing the mentors, with use of an informal interview schedule, also class teachers, the mentees and their parents, before and after the mentor programmes. I will also observe three mentor/mentee sessions in each school by direct observation, talk to mentee pupils try to gain an explanation of their perceptions of the mentor/mentee situation. This may be by analysis of drawings about mentors. In analysis of the interviews and observations, I will look for indicators of answers to my research questions. I will compare this to previous literature on the subject, and identify recommendations for the future in this support area.

2 <u>Letters to request access to prospective research participants were agreed with the research ethics department.</u>

Letters were sent to those head teachers/head of department who had verbally expressed an interest in being involved, all of whom were known to me professionally.

3 <u>Proposed participant information sheet and consent form for participants in the research were agreed with the ethics department.</u>
(Pupil forms were simplified for their comprehension).

<u>Appendix 3.9</u>   <u>Examples of field-notes</u>

15.11.07   Feedback to mother of Quentin following transcribing telephone interview. No amendments requested. Stressed he is 'like any child'. She was happy for information to be used.

01.02.08 Feedback to teacher . No alterations made to transcript. Discussion – Kieron is doing well now…. The corridor was awash with brightly coloured lanterns, Chinese dragon, soft toys…the children were more motivated – can spend all day on an art activity.

03.07.08 Discussion with teacher Zoe. Zac maths – poor effort. Reading is really good, writing not very good, below average and he has not progressed much because of his behavior. Need to get behavior right first, then he will 'come on'. He has a behavior and friendship laminated target sheet for learning mentoring – other learning targets also.

Data-trail timetable

June 2006	Initial visits to head teachers in eleven primary schools.
January to March 2007	Pilot of interviews undertaken with parents, learning mentor, mentees and observations of mentoring sessions. Agreed participating schools.
June 2007	Forms issued and agreements made at Anton Junior School. Stage 1 interviews - Case 1.
July 2007	First and second observations undertaken - Case 1. Forms issued and agreements made for Caldwell Primary School.
October 2007	Forms issued and agreements made at Bradley Junior School. Forms issued and Stage 1 interviews - Case 2, teacher.
November 2007	Third observation - Case 1. First and second observations - Case 2. Stage 1 mentee interview. Stage 1 interviews – mentors in Cases 3, 4, 6; parents in Cases 2 and 6; and all participants except teacher in 5. First observation – Cases 3, 4 and 5. Stage 1 feedback completed to interviewees at Anton Junior School. Documents were collected from Caldwell Primary School.
December 2007	Stage 1 interview – mentee and mentor Case 2; teacher in Cases 5 and 6; mentees, teachers and parents in Cases 3 and 4. Second observations – Cases 3, 4 and 6. Stage 1 feedback completed to interviewees at Bradley Junior School.
January 2008	Stage 1 feedback completed to interviewees at Caldwell Primary School. Documents collected from Bradley Junior School.

February 2008	Second observation – Case 5. Feedback to teachers at Bradley Junior School.
March 2008	Stage 1 interview – Case 5 mentee.
June 2008	Third observation discussions - Case 2/Teresa; Case 6. Third observation – Case 2/Patricia; Case 3, 4 and 5. Stage 2 interview – teacher Cases 5 and 6.
July 2008	Stage 2 interviews and feedback for Cases 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

PRO-FORMA FOR FACT-FINDING FOR SELECTION OF SAMPLE SCHOOLS

School _____ Date _____

Interview with _____ Role _____

1 Number of learning mentors in school?_____

Organisation?

Any comments?

2 Usual time period of a programme?

3 Do children roll on to next time period? Y/N

 If so, why?

4 Criteria list for selection of pupils to the programme (please attach).

5 Numbers of pupils on programme over time: NOR_____

	2004 Autumn	2005 Spring	2005 Summer	2005 Autumn	2006 Spring	2006 Summer
Number of pupils						
Number of LMs						
Number by type of criteria						

6 The referral sheet :

Which is used? Ex Cluster/own/_____

Who completes it?_____

What happens to it? _____

Can I see one/them? Y/N

7 I will select 2 pupils in each of 3 schools, talking with the LM, class teacher, pupil, parents (if possible) and sitting- in on an LM session. Are you interested in helping with my research? Y/N.

8 Could a pupil selected by any criteria be chosen - Y/N -

or do you have a preference for the criteria of need used?

If so, which? _____

9 Any comments?

20 minutes 9 seconds recorded   (Researcher speech in bold print)

1 Learning mentor role and skills

1.1 **I am interested in how you became a learning mentor, could you tell me a little about that?**

It was when (coordinator) came into the school and asked (head teacher) if she had got anybody that she wanted to send on the five day National Training, and myself and (other mentor) were chosen because we were qualified TAs so (head teacher) thought we might benefit from it.

Probe: **Qualified would be?**

I have got a BTec National Certificate in Child Care and Education

Probe: **Did you enjoy the training**?

The mentor training? No!

'Right' - what would you say was difficult or not enjoyable about the training?

It was geared towards people who had never worked in a school and who had come from university into a mentoring post so there was a lot of repetition of what I already knew and it was a paper chasing exercise, you had to collect copies of all the policies you didn't have to prove you understood them or that you followed them. It was a pointless exercise.

1.2 **Can you tell me about your learning mentor role?**

Within the school I don't spend as much time mentoring as I would like to, which we are hoping to remedy with a change in hours next year.

It starts with an early morning meet and greet, where I am out on the yard making sure a) that children behave themselves b) that there are no problems, nobody has come to school in a bad mood or had an argument with Mum. You can generally pick them up and take them aside if you need to.

I have created a cosy corner within the school where we can sit and have quiet chats away from the learning environment and it is also very calming

I do an awful lot of conflict resolution especially with the Y6s.

Trying to work on a no blame policy doesn't always work.

I have worked with bereaved children; children who have got relatives in hospital or who are ill.

I have just started working with GandT children and I have just initiated a system for children that start school mid-term - it's like an induction for them to meet the staff to find their way around the school.

1.3   Details of role

And you do how many hours a week?

In theory five. But I have got a very good teacher who lets me nip out and expand the hours.

And your number of mentees?

At the moment it is down to about ten but next week I am starting a Y6 transition group which will have about twelve.

And the age range?

 I have not got anybody in Y3 at the moment I have Y4,Y5 and Y6.

1.4   Organisation of the role

And in a typical week how does that go for the learning mentor's side? Set times or..?

I try to have set times but children got disappointed, if I said you know, 'I always see you on a Wednesday at two' and something had come up that took priority and it would be..'I am supposed to see you at two and you didn't come for me', so I now have to have a more flexible routine where I try and stick to a certain day but I have always explained to them first that I can't guarantee that it will be then and if I know I won't be seeing them that day then I tell them 'I won't be seeing you but I will try and see you tomorrow'.

1.5 **Who sets what you will be doing with the children?**

I do. They are generally referred from or via (head teacher), sometimes I have had teachers and TAs refer direct to me and depending on what they say they're referring them for is what I start out doing. Quite often, especially the

Y6s, they get referred to me and I get out the anger management pack and you do your initial assessments and realise it is not anger management at all. They have got problems at home or something's bugging them.

2   Impact

2.1 **What do you think, what currently helps or hinders you in your role**?
The hinder is lack of time and lack to a certain extent lack of me being organised and the fact that I am doing two jobs within the same school. So, if I am busy doing TA work I don't always get the mentoring done and sometimes children don't know which role I am in at the time, 'cause as a mentor you are more of a friend whereas, as a TA you are slightly more authoritative.

Probe: **And do you think that is a difficulty for you or for the child or for the teacher?**
I think it is a difficulty for all of us, `cos sometimes I am confused as to which role I am actually in and I think if I am confused then it must also be confusing for children and other staff and especially if staff come through and see me sat on the beanbag chatting to a child in the cosy corner and having a giggle and they think why is she sat there not working? But I am working.

Probe: **So is it expectations some of it? What's expected of your role?**
Possibly, I think when I first became a learning mentor I didn't know what was expected and I still don't think we have got a very clear definition within the school because all the TAs take on a caring pastoral role.

All the TA s undertake positive play. So, as a learning mentor it is an extension of that and I wouldn't want anyone to think that I was taking their job off them. Although they are starting mostly if it's subjects they don't fancy broaching them themselves they tend to pass them on to me. Er, we had a Y 6 girl with personal hygiene problems and everybody was aware of her problems but nobody was prepared to actually sit down and talk to her so it was 'ah, there's the learning mentor!'

<u>Probe:</u> **From the point of view of what could help them are you thinking perhaps a clarity of expectations might help?**

I think in September when I will arrange it that I am purely learning mentor I think it will make a big difference because for a start I won't be juggling so many tasks. And everybody else will know where I am at and I will then be able to define my role more clearly. Say, you know, 'I am a learning mentor, this is what I do'. And 'no, actually that's not my job', which at the moment I can't do that.

2.2 **What do you think is important in making your work effective?**

That's a deep one. Erm.

Planning, target setting, evaluation, feedback. I know at the moment I don't get feedback from the children but I am in the process of making a form to address that because I know that I want the feedback myself. And also that it will act to show which bits are useful and which bits aren't. I think also you have to be able to build a good relationship with the child I did have one child that we just couldn't get a relationship going so I had to pass that on to somebody else.

2.3 **What are the main challenges you have faced, as a learning mentor?**

Ooh! That sounds like one of them!

It takes you out of your comfort zone because it gives you challenges, you know, that that you probably wouldn't chose to do.

Having to sit down with a seven year old child whose father was murdered. It's what do you say?

<u>Probe:</u> **You have mentioned the time restraints and the problems that can cause, and within the school you said there could be differences in expectations. Do they create any challenges or is it easily sorted out?**

Er, I think the challenge there is me to be clearer with myself as to who I am at that time and make it clean to other people. There is also the conflict of roles in that if I am working with a group of children in class and I am having to be

TA and keep a firm lid on things, you see, but then I take one of those children out to mentor them and I take on a more relaxed role. I think sometimes they might find it confusing.

2.4 You've mentioned what could help you achieve success in the future. That was going to be my next question - is there anything else that would help you? If you are looking to September time.

I think with doing the NVQ at the moment that's making me realise there are ways I could change my practice and improve it.

Probe: **Is that NVQ level 3 or 4?**

It's NVQ level 3.

In?

It's LDSS . It's basically learning mentoring it has a really long title which I can't remember.

Is this the one (the coordinator)`s assessing?

Yes!

3   Training

3.1   **Well the next one I was going to ask 'was any specific training for your learning mentor role' and you said that you did the National Training.**

I did the five day national training and also a lot of the TA training.

Pauses: **...Oh, 'right'.**

I have done bereavement training as a TA, so that obviously covers over into mentoring. I have also, it was a training course which was for TAs and mentors on depression in children which I found quite interesting and countless circles of training.

Probe: **So, there has been other training that isn't specifically for learning mentor but that you feel has helped you in that role as well?**

Yes.

3.2 **Do you meet with any other learning mentors?**

We have cluster meetings. Usually once every half term.

Prompt: **Do you find that useful?**

It's brilliant because we get to share good practice and sometimes you can say 'Look you know I'm really beating my head here, I don't know what to do' and sometimes they come up with ideas and you think 'no, that won't work,' other times you think, 'what a brilliant idea, it's so obvious. Why didn't I think of it?'

Sometimes they come out with ideas and you think I' can't see that working' and it does. But it's nice to know that other people experience and feel the same things.

4   Programme and evaluation

4.1 **I wanted to know a bit about your pupils and you've said how they're referred to you. Is there a process of referral?**

It's usually quite an informal 'Ooh we have got a problem with so and so can you pick them up?'

I will see them once and have a chat to them and if I think they are suitable for mentoring then I fill in what I know on a referral form and give it back to who referred them to me for them to fill in all the details so I have got all background information on them. From that I fill in an action plan so I can set targets and then I'm just working on those targets, assessing them. I was told initially that we should be assessing them every six weeks, but realistically you are just so bogged down with paperwork that you would never get to see the children. I now do it three times a year, unless it is a child who is new to the school in which case it would be such a short term intervention anyway.

4.2 **Do you think there is such a thing as a typical learning mentor session?**

No.

4.3 Thinking about the programme, the action plan that you set and the targets that you set can you just tell me what it might look like for a child and give an example.

Erm very often more than ninety per cent the targets, the concern areas are social skills. (I) set out usually about three, no more than three, things we are addressing at once or it becomes unmanageable.

So we would do role play, play games, turn taking the basic things that they should have been taught but much younger – it's okay to lose at a game.

It's the mothering, nurturing thing.

4.4 Do you have any input in attendance?

I don't, we have one child that we have worked with on punctuality because he was persistently late through his own dawdling but actual attendance I don't deal with as we have a clerk who does the first day response.

4.5 What about other agencies? If they are involved with the child, would you have a role there?

Yes but it would all go via the head teacher. I don't deal direct. The only people I deal directly with are other learning mentors, either at schools where children have come from or where they are going to in a transition. Other than that it all goes through the head teacher.

Probe: **And you are going to be doing the transition for the Y6?**
Yes

4.6 Can you tell me about ending the programme for the child?

I have just discovered that I should be doing more than I am with the ending. At the moment it sort of 'peters off' and it's kind of, ah I don't want to see them but talking to other learning mentors it seems that really we should be saying 'you know you have come on so far now you have met all your targets', so that is something I am in the process of looking, at how I can change it.

Probe: **Is there a set time for a child's mentor programme?**

Not really, no, it goes on until they don't need it, which quite often is as long as they are in school, unless like I say it's a transition, it's a child who has come to school mid term then that's usually three weeks to four weeks but other than that it's usually on going. And they dip in and out as well you get someone who you think you've finished with and six months later they are back again.

5 <u>And finally</u>

5 **Is there anything else you would like to add, about your role or the project itself?**

It's difficult because learning mentors are new, when I first became a learning mentor nobody really knew what the role was. And talking to other learning mentors, it's different in every school. Every school has adapted it to what they want. Some learning mentors are almost social workers. They go to the house, the parents have got problems, they deal with the doctor on the parents' behalf and that's not where I see my role. My role is with the children. I will liaise with parents, if they are willing, I am quite happy to do that but I am not there for helping the parents' problems. I am there for helping the children.

Thank you very much for your time and opinions. They will be useful, I can assure you.

APPENDIX 4

Appendix 4.4.1   <u>EC form for admission to learning mentor programme</u>

<u>Excellence Cluster – Pupil Referral Sheet</u>

Name............................   Year......   Date of Birth......................   Age.........
School.....................   Referral by............................   Teacher..................

<u>Information</u>

<u>Reason for Referral</u>

<u>Family Situation</u>

<u>History</u>

<u>Notes (ie details of support/IEP)</u>

Appendix 4.4.2   <u>EC form for self-evaluation by the mentee</u>

Learning Mentor Programme
Pupil Assessment Sheet

Name…………………………………   Date……………………

How well do you think you do in the following subjects?

	Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Very Good
Literacy	1	2	3	4	5
Numeracy	1	2	3	4	5
Science	1	2	3	4	5
Reading	1	2	3	4	5
IT	1	2	3	4	5
History	1	2	3	4	5
Geography	1	2	3	4	5
Music	1	2	3	4	5
PE	1	2	3	4	5
Art / Design	1	2	3	4	5
RE	1	2	3	4	5

How well do you think you behave in the following situations?

	Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Very Good
Break-times	1	2	3	4	5
Lunchtimes	1	2	3	4	5
Registration	1	2	3	4	5
Assembly	1	2	3	4	5
Written Work	1	2	3	4	5
Group Work	1	2	3	4	5
Storytime	1	2	3	4	5
Music	1	2	3	4	5
PE	1	2	3	4	5
Art / Design	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 4.5.2   <u>Teacher rating evaluation form (used at Bradley Junior</u>

School)

Learning Mentor Programme
Pupil Assessment Sheet – Teacher Assessment

Name………………………………   Date……………..

Teacher…………………   Before / After Mentoring Programme
(please circle)

Please could you circle the appropriate score for this pupil

	Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Very Good
Behaviour and attitude to peers.	1	2	3	4	5
Behaviour and attitude to staff.	1	2	3	4	5
Level of confidence / self – esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
Work rate in class.	1	2	3	4	5
Evidence of completed homework.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
Attendance.	1	2	3	4	5
Punctuality.	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to work in a group.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 4.6.2   Pupil evaluation form (Caldwell Primary School)

Pupil Evaluation

Have you enjoyed working with the learning mentor?   Yes   No

Do you understand why you see the learning mentor?   Yes   No

Has the learning mentor been kind and friendly towards you? Yes   No

Do you find it easy to talk to her?   Yes   No

What has been the most

helpful?...

....

....

What has been least

helpful?...

....

....

Have you ever been to lunch club?   Yes

        No

Did you enjoy it?   Yes   No

Why?...

....

....

....

Would you go again?   Yes

        No

Is there anything that you would like to do in lunch

club?...

....

....

APPENDIX 5

Table A5.9.1   Personal characteristics of the mentees

Mentee	Attitude	Attributes	Character	Total mentoring time	Criteria for selection as a mentee
Catherine 9/10 years old Year 4/5	Compliant; a good student.	Highly intelligent in mathematics; alert.	Pleasant; caring; lacked social confidence; self-reliant; enjoyed company.	15 months 'active', 7 months monitored: total 22 months.	Gifted and Talented; social skills.
Quentin 9 years old Year 4	Appeared to 'live in his own world'.	Low self-esteem; literal thinker; isolate.	Could be charming.	Infant school, 22 months at Junior school +6 months of individual support.	Communication; social skills.
Kieron 8 years old Year 3	Poor opinion of his own skills; 'wanted his own way'; easily distracted.	Below average ability (supported in Mathematics); chose not to speak to adults in school; low self-esteem.	Happy unless you disagreed with him (had a temper).	10 months.	Communication (selective mute); aggression towards peers.
Zac 9 years old Year 4	Liked to be in control.	Young in his understanding; good at art; athletic.	'A lad'; outgoing; dwelled on negatives; stubborn; manipulative.	Infant school. 10 months at Junior school.	Aggression towards peers [social]
Nicola 6 years old Year 2	Abusive of mum; controlling of friends.	Popular; smiled a lot.	Complex personality; shy, lacked confidence at school.	9 months.	Communication (confidence at school); interaction at home.

Mentee	Attitude	Attributes	Character	Total mentoring time	Criteria for selection as a mentee
Timothy 6 years Y2	Isolated socially; tried to direct others; offended by what children said or how they looked at him.	Quite intelligent; energetic; poor concentration.	Self-confident; self-reliant; 'bottled things up'; perfectionist.	9 and 6 months active (review every 3 months) + 2 months being monitored +1 month returned to active programme.	Aggression towards peers; hyperactivity.

Table 5.9.3 Targets in each mentee programme

Case	Targets	Strategies used (coded)
Case 1 Catherine	1 To improve social skills. 2 To encourage wider friendships. 3 To ensure school is challenging.	Q, S, EK, LR, AB, A, I, D.
Case 2 Quentin	Group work targets 1 To interact properly. 2 To help learn to be patient, speak slowly. 3 To behave in a socially appropriate way. 1-to-1 mentoring targets Speech was modelled, with encouragement to express feelings and thoughts.	M, T, L, S, I, D, LR, M, CT. Mod, T, L, I, S.
Case 3 Kieron	1 To improve handwriting (target from class teacher).	Q, S, P, EK, Ab, M, L, E, En, Pos.
Case 4 Zac	1 To be able to say what a friend is. 2 To play a game cooperatively with 1 or 2 children.	Pos, I, Mod, T Q, R.
Case 5 Nicola	1 To be comfortable in school. 2 To speak appropriately to staff. 3 To accept rules at home.	Q, S, K, LR, A, I, D, Ab, Mod, Re, Pr, E.
Case 6 Timothy	1 To not hurt others. 2 To respond appropriately to others. 3 To become socially acceptable/make friends.	D, E, Pos, Pr, LR, Mod.

Key for the coded strategies used in Table 5.9.3:
Advise, Ability is understood, Describe, Circle Time, Enjoyment, Encouragement, Elicit Knowledge, Imagine, listening to follow Rules, Logical Reasoning, Memory, Modelling (eg speech), Prompting, Positives, Praise, Questioning, Reassurance, Suggestion, Turn-taking

Table A5.9.5   Characteristics of learning mentors

Child	Mentees understood a learning mentor to be:	Parents understanding of a learning mentor	Class teachers understood a learning mentor to be:
Catherine	A listener; interested in the mentee; kind; caring; open to suggestion; trusting; helpful; a leader of fun/games.	*A learning mentor is capable of achieving change in her child. The school is competent.	Capable; trusted; *related well to staff when known for some years.
Quentin	(No information provided).	*The learning mentor is busy with the child and knows little of his home circumstances and of mother's problems.	A special person; a listener; talkative.
Kieron	Kind; helpful with your school- work; a maker and she cuts out things with you.	The learning mentor did not provide on-going information to mother, which she would have liked to have.	Able to talk to all children in class, who are happy to talk to her; responsive to children; helpful in developing children's progress in attainment and in social skills; able to create a relaxed atmosphere.
Zac	Smiling; playing games; helping to write stories (he explained his ideas against the tasks selected by the mentor).	*The father had full trust in the school and in the learning mentor. It would take a long time to change his son.	Caring; trustworthy; friendly; intelligent; persuasive.
Nicola	Informal; smiling; talkative.	The learning mentor had a real impact, taught mother how to make 'boundaries' work for her child at home. She has given mother confidence in herself and Nicola confidence in school.	*Always available; responsive to varied needs; responsive to teachers' needs; patient; calm; capable of dealing with danger; a good listener; trained in mentoring and in a variety of linked courses.

Child	Mentees understood a learning mentor to be:	Parents understanding of a learning mentor	Class teachers understood a learning mentor to be:
Timothy	A friend, who does not reprimand (he identified her by her resources).	*The learning mentor informs parents and maintains a dialogue with mother, even when the situation is difficult.	Capable of eliciting a change in the mentee, in social, emotional areas, as expressed in the child's behaviour; helpful to enable children to 'fit into' school.

Key: * Information gained by inference or deduction.

APPENDIX 6

Table A6.1   Impact – comparing the opinions of participants

Anton Junior School

	Friend-disciplinarian 0-10	Behaviour-learning 0-10	Change 0-10	Support required
Mentee: Catherine	Friend.	'not much'.	3	No more help needed.
Parent	60/40	(0) – social.	Yes	
Learning mentor	1	0 – social.	5	No more help needed.
Teacher	Megan 0-1.	0 – social.	5	Not from learning mentor.
Mentee: Quentin	No explanation given.	No explanation given.	Nothing changed.	Nothing to change – no more help needed.
Parent	(Did not know much about it)	(Did not know much about it)	Yes, improved reading. Still weak in confidence.	With handwriting.
Learning mentor	Patricia -60/40 Professional friend Teacher - critical friend.	Patricia – 0 - learn to be patient, social interaction, control behaviour.	7.5 yes	More help needed.
Teacher	20/80	(2)	8 behaviour 4 learning 6 social change.	More help needed.

Bradley Junior School

	Friend-disciplinarian 0-10	Behaviour-learning 0-10	Change 0-10	Support required
Mentee: **Kieron**		10	No further help needed.	Still needs to meet with her.
Parent	Did not know.	Did not know.	Not sure, was told behaviour was improving.	More help needed.
Learning mentor	50/50 Professional friend.	7	10 for him, not for 'normal boy'.	Much further to go.
Teacher	50/50	5	3 behaviour 6 attitude to learning and work.	More of the same needed.
Mentee: **Zac**		Behaviour, learning, getting on with people (social).	6,7or8	No further help required.
Parent		Concentrate on behaviour.	Yes but still some way to go.	Continue
Learning mentor	50/50	2-3 , 75/25	6	More of same needed.
Teacher	50/50	Mainly behaviour.	Lots of ways 5 for behaviour.	More of same needed, learning mentor +Positive Play.

Caldwell Primary School

	Friend-disciplinarian 0-10	Behaviour-learning 0-10	Change 0-10	Support required
Mentee: **Nicola**	Enjoyed	Speech At school At home.	Improved speaking in school. Happy.	Adamant to carry on. No other help required.
Parent	(friend)	(behaviour and social)	Improved friends Improved responses at home.	Wants to carry on.
Learning mentor	100 friend.	0	Still below average of peers, academically.	More support needed.
Teacher	100 friend.	5	6	More of same needed.
Mentee: **Timothy**	Kind, helpful, enjoyed	People helping me, with problems (0)	Been helped with problems.	Sometimes learning new things.
Parent	No information given.	Behaviour (0?)	Yes improved in work. Decreased incidents while on programme.	Transition work
Learning mentor	100 friend	0	8 Slight academic improvement.	Continuing in group, put back on if needed.
Teacher	100 friend	3	10	Continue monitoring or put back on for more of the same type of support.

Table A6.2.1   Summary of impact of learning mentoring as perceived by
mentees

Mentee	A change in the child was perceived	Mentoring was perceived to cause problems	Mentoring should be continued
Catherine, case 1	No	No	No
Quentin, case 2	No	No	No
Kieron, case 3	Yes	No	No
Zac, case 4	Yes	No	No
Nicola, case 5	Yes	Yes	Yes
Timothy, case 6	Yes	No	Yes

Table A6.2.2   Impact of learning mentoring as perceived by parents

Mentee	A change was perceived	Mentoring was seen to cause problems	Mentoring should be continued
Catherine, case 1	Yes	No	No (for transition later)
Quentin, case 2	Yes (in learning)	No information	No (1-to-1 help for learning)
Kieron, case 3	Uncertain	Uncertain	No (1 to1 help for learning)
Zac, case 4	Yes	No	Yes
Nicola, case 5	Yes	No	Yes
Timothy, case 6	Yes	No	Yes

Table A6.2.3   Impact of learning mentoring as perceived by learning mentors

Mentee	A change was perceived	Mentoring was seen to cause problems	Mentoring should be continued
Catherine, case 1	Yes (with other factors)	No	Yes (for transition only)
Quentin, case 2	Yes (with other factors)	No	No (mentor Teresa) Yes (mentor Patricia)
Kieron, case 3	Yes (with other factors)	No	Yes
Zac, case 4	Yes	No	Yes
Nicola, case 5	Yes	No	Yes
Timothy, case 6	Yes	No	Yes

Table A6.2.4   Impact of learning mentoring as perceived by teachers

Mentee	A change was perceived	Mentoring was seen to cause problems	Mentoring should be continued
Catherine, case 1	Unsure Yes	No Yes	Yes (Brian) No (Nerys)
Quentin, case 2	No	Yes	Yes
Kieron, case 3	Yes	No	Yes
Zac, case 4	Yes	No	Yes (plus other interventions)
Nicola, case 5	Yes	No	Yes
Timothy, case 6	Yes	No	Yes