After Ofsted Failure:

The Emotional Journeys of Head Teachers

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Chapter 1: **Introduction**

1.1 **Opening Remarks**

In April 2015, an article appeared in the Times Educational Supplement, written by Geoff Barton, a serving head teacher. It began:

> This article is not about me. Instead it is both about – and for – those school leaders who have given their professional lives to troubled schools, often in challenging circumstances and then too often paid a devastating personal price.
>
> It is about a group of people too easily unnoticed and forgotten: head teachers who ended up losing their self-esteem, their health or their livelihoods.
>
> It is a story that goes largely untold because these school leaders – vilified or humiliated or simply no longer able to cope with the unrelenting pressure – retreat via ill-health or a surreptitious legal agreement negotiated by their union that binds them to silence.
>
> It is a story about Ofsted.
>
> (Times Educational Supplement, 8th June 2015)

The article went on to describe the traumatic experience of an Ofsted inspection which had judged the writer's school, and his leadership, to be 'Inadequate'. He had been at the school for 13 weeks when the inspection took place and, according to his account, the inspectors agreed that there was nothing he could have done to have turned this around. However, it is clear that the emotional impact on him was considerable.

At the end of the article, the editors invited others to contribute their own stories. Dozens of head teachers, both current and former, teachers, governors and inspectors responded. Each had their own individual experiences, but all recognised a common thread – the emotional toll of inspection, particularly inspections with difficult judgements, and their career and life-changing impact.

The experiences described in the article reflected the results of the case studies that formed the substance of my research. This research has been borne out of two areas of passionate interest in my professional career. Firstly, it comes as no great revelation to discover the evidence that schools are emotional arenas and that good school leadership is dependent on understanding, acknowledging and acting in accordance with this emotional dimension (Crawford, 2009; Blackmore, 2004; Harris, 2007). When I reflect on the qualities of head teachers who have had considerable success over a sustained period of time and whom I admire, their emotional

skills are apparent, both in the way they display their own emotional intelligence and in the way that they manage the emotional temperature of the school. Without doubt, successful head teachers need a high level of emotional understanding if they are not only to survive but also succeed. If it sometimes goes unnoticed, I believe it is because it appears so obvious, and the link between effective leadership and emotional regulation is well-established in all arenas of work.

The second area of interest is the impact of Ofsted inspection. In my professional life as a Local Authority Adviser, School Improvement Partner, head teacher and registered Ofsted inspector, the importance of Ofsted inspection has always been apparent. I have had personal experience of Ofsted inspections as a Head teacher on eleven occasions, and in the interest of transparency, I should declare that I am currently Executive Head teacher of two schools, both of which are currently in Category 2 – Good.

Over the last three decades, the increasing dominance of a neoliberal agenda in the delivery of public services has profoundly changed the way that education in many countries including England is delivered, managed and evaluated. The rise of performativity has defined success for schools and head teachers, and led to the construction of a complex and powerful

machinery of inspection and evaluation. As the OECD report 'Governing Education in a Complex World' (2016) describes:

> Accountability has been used as a central vehicle for improvement since the broad school improvement initiatives of the 1990s. This is based on the assumption that holding schools accountable for attaining high standards will, in fact, motivate schools to improve their quality. (OECD, 2016, p 94).

Since its creation in 1992, Ofsted has exerted a powerful influence on educational culture and school improvement. Along with the rise in statutory assessment, it provides the key external measure of a school, publicly available and widely reported. In the majority of cases, this process, whilst time-consuming and occasionally bruising, becomes a staging post in the school's journey, providing a detailed evaluation of progress, benchmarked against other schools, and identifying key issues. As the system has changed, schools have adapted their own procedures in response. Many aspects of current practice in schools, such as development planning, subject leader roles and classroom monitoring, have been influenced by the Ofsted agenda.

There are some schools, however, for whom the role of Ofsted has proved to be something more than a staging post in their development.

Approximately 2% of schools each year have been placed in the lowest Ofsted category of Special Measures – the judgement that the school is providing an inadequate standard of education and does not have the internal capacity to improve.

The process that follows once a school has had a judgement of Special Measures is intense and relentless. The school's progress is monitored both by the LA (for maintained schools) and by a designated Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), with a public report following each visit. A change in leadership is extremely common, often facilitated by the LA or Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Board, and is often seen as a necessary prerequisite for improvement. *From Failure to Success'* (1997), an Ofsted study into schools in Special Measures reports that:

> In all but a few cases the head teacher is new to the school either just before or just after the inspection. The change of head teacher has given the school the impetus needed to develop and improve the quality of education provided for the pupils. (Ofsted, 1997, p10)

The same report is very clear that, in the main, schools placed into Special Measures make rapid progress, and a succession of Ofsted annual reports has emphasised the success of the process in securing improvement. Although some schools, particularly those in challenging contexts, do not

make sustained progress following the initial impact (and the significant increase in support and resources), the majority of schools do demonstrate improved pupil outcomes over time, a convincing rationale for the whole process (Ofsted 1997, 1999, 2008).

Although not as damning a judgement on the surface, the second-tier level of Ofsted failure, the issuing of a 'Notice to Improve' (previously 'Serious Weaknesses') can have just as devastating an impact, is equally as public, and places the school under almost the same level of scrutiny as Special Measures. It guarantees at least one monitoring visit within 6-8 months to measure progress, accompanied by a public report, followed by a full inspection, at which time the school has to demonstrate considerable progress to avoid the imposition of Special Measures.

In recent years, the stakes have been raised by the introduction of the new category of 'Requires Improvement' now replacing Satisfactory, bringing many new schools into the 'not good enough' category (currently there are approximately 10% of primary schools and 22% of secondary schools that are in the 'Requires Improvement' or Inadequate category, [HMCI Annual Report, Dec 2016, Ofsted]), and potentially widening the group of head teachers who may have similar experiences to the head teachers in the case studies.

There are, however, other factors to take into account when considering the impact, some of which may not be apparent in the experience of one school, but may have a systemic effect. In my own experience, as a head teacher taking over a school in Special Measures, and as an LA adviser working very closely with schools that were placed into the category, I have seen the profound impact it makes on the whole school community, but particularly on the staff and leadership. The public nature of the process, the clear identification of culpability and the intense pressure to improve can have an impact on the self-esteem and confidence of teachers, governors, even pupils and parents (Ofsted reports will often comment on the educational support provided to children from home and the context provided by the local community). This is most pronounced, of course, in the case of Head teachers, who by the very definition of Special Measures, have been failing in their duty.

The personal impetus for this research initially came from an experience in my professional life. Assigned to provide LA support for a school immediately following a judgment of Special Measures, I had my first meeting with the head teacher. A couple of days later (coincidentally, I hope) he took sick leave on grounds of stress, and a compromise agreement was negotiated between his professional association, the governors of the school and the LA. He formally left his job a matter of 3

weeks after the inspection. A new head teacher was appointed, standards improved, and within 15 months, Special Measures were removed and the school was graded 'Good' by Ofsted.

As I found out more about the school and about the head teacher in particular, a number of things interested me. Firstly, in a career spanning 30 years, including two previous successful Headships, (he had been publicly recognized as successful in the past, both nationally and locally), and a number of Ofsted inspections, the factors that led him to fail at this point had not been identified. Secondly, over the period of time that the school was in 'Special Measures', the culpability that the initial report shared across school leadership, governance and teaching seemed to become his alone. Thirdly, following the school's removal from category, when I asked an Assistant Head if she would now be looking for Headships, replied, "After what happened to X, you must be joking!" Finally, as a head teacher, I could not avoid feelings of empathy towards him, despite being able to see the shortcomings that had led to the situation. The most common explanation was that he 'took his eye off the ball', although he was uniformly recognized as caring and hardworking. This led me to wonder whether, within the apparently successful process, there had been some negative impacts that had not been calculated, particularly the loss of potentially valuable experience and expertise, and secondly, the impact of

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the process on future head teacher recruitment. As Louis Coiffait of the National Association of Head teachers said: 'It's time to be frank, we're facing a recruitment crisis at all stages of the education system. Until we address it at each of those stages, there's no chance that we'll have the quantity or quality of head teachers we need in the future.' (Quoted in the Daily Telegraph, May 2015)

The key outcomes focused on by Ofsted are pupil outcomes and the result of subsequent inspections. It is not my intention to argue that these are not important measures. However, I would also like to consider more affective outcomes, in particular the emotional impact on the school and the school leader.

It is important to consider what this means for the schools and the children who attend them. How were they served by the inspection and its impact, both emotionally and on the career narrative and professional identity of the head teacher; and what has been gained or lost by the education system as a result of the impact of this event on the head teachers studied?

It should be borne in mind that the experiences described in the case studies are no longer unusual. Hundreds of schools fail Ofsted each year, and in a norm-referenced framework, it is reasonable to assume this will

continue. Head teachers embark on their careers knowing there is a risk that they will be in this situation. As Thomson put it as long ago as 1999:

> Being a head was now a risky business. As a group and as individuals we are increasingly placed in situations where we have to make difficult choices, where we have to manage multiple agendas and communities and where there are often no easy, quick or right solutions. (Thomson, 1999, p3)

1.2   Research Context

In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline the focus of the research and give a brief introduction to the cases. I will set out the theoretical basis of the research and the broad policy context in which the schools were operating. I will define key terms and identify the research questions.

This research is based upon the study of four head teachers who led schools that received a Category 4 judgement from Ofsted – Inadequate. Three of the schools were given a Notice to Improve, and the other was placed into Special Measures. All of the head teachers remained employed by the school at least until the next full Ofsted inspection, and all were interviewed several times over an extended period during which they dealt with the immediate aftermath of the inspection and put improvement plans in place.

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During this period, the head teachers were operating in a highly charged emotional arena, and the success in leading their schools through a profoundly challenging process depended to a considerable extent upon their success in managing this emotional journey.

All English schools now operate in a policy context of increased accountability, and this is particularly marked in the context of Ofsted. When a head teacher has led the school into an inspection with a negative outcome, this context is heightened and the pressure and day to day impact becomes more acute. Figure 1 summarises the internal and external context and the competing pressures that face the head teacher as he or she leads the school following a failed inspection.
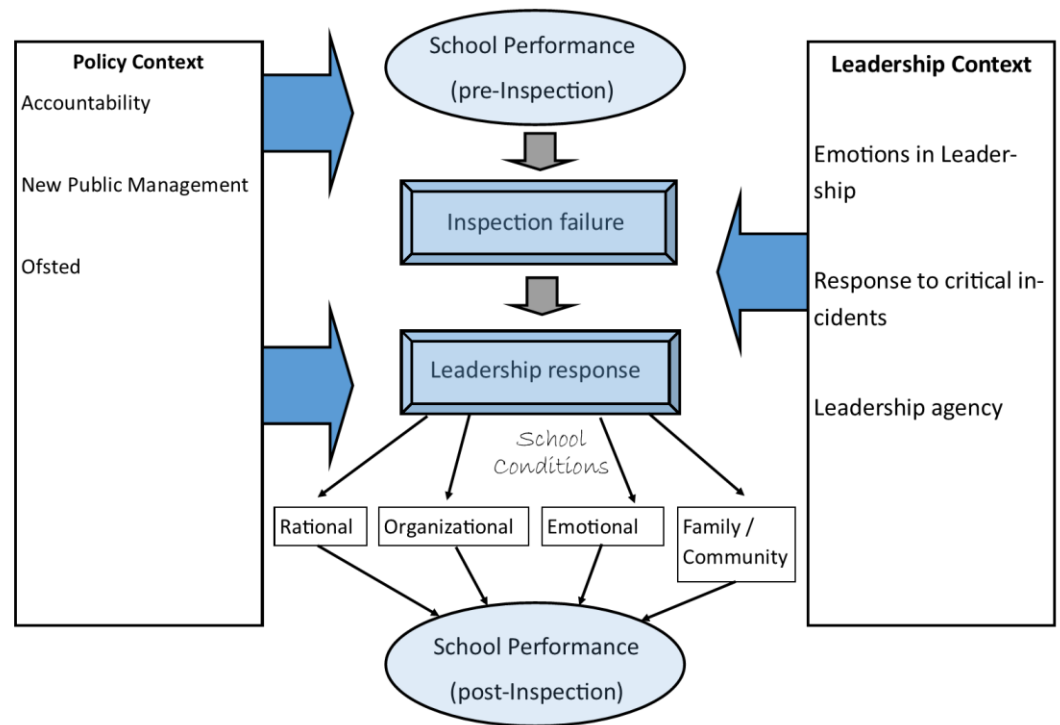
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

At this point, the external accountability structure exists alongside the internal leadership context, into which a number of factors come to play. I will particularly focus on the emotional factors, and how the head teacher manages the emotional impact of this 'critical incident' in the life of the school through their own actions and leadership, whilst at the same time driving improvement across a range of school conditions, all the time operating in a policy context of acute accountability. I believe that this is crucial to understanding the impact of the inspection process, and the steps

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that schools and head teachers must take to survive it in the short term, and thrive in the longer term.

This research study is therefore rooted in the relationship between the context of accountability, particularly as enacted through Ofsted inspections and the influence of the emotional regulation of the head teacher in shaping behaviour, specifically the behaviour of school leaders following failure in Ofsted inspections. The conceptual framework for this study lies at the interaction between two competing pressures, one representing the external accountability structures within which the school operates, and one representing the agency of the head teacher in driving school improvement and managing the school's academic, social and emotional journey from the experience of inspection failure. It explores:

> the tension which is at the heart of social life between structure and agency, between the external directives to institutions which shape the social space and the individual's capacity to choose; to be self-determining. (Broadfoot, 2002, p5)

The increasing contractual **accountability** that exists in schools is currently enacted in large part through the system of Ofsted inspection, and provides the structure within which all of the case study head teachers operated. I will examine the developing role of Ofsted within this policy

framework, reflecting on the extent to which Ofsted is 'closely associated with a series of rational, highly-engineered frameworks that reflect the neo-liberal project.' (Baxter, 2014, p4)

This locates Ofsted and the development of accountability within the overarching context of neoliberalism. **Neoliberalism**, is defined by Harvey (2005) as '…a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.' (Harvey, 2005, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, p64). It is associated with the rise of the right-wing market-driven governments exemplified by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Through the enactment of these policies, a new style of organization grew up, particularly in relation to the management of public services.

The research focus is theoretically informed by the concept of **New Public Management** (NPM). NPM was brought together through the empirical observation of economic and political trends that gathered pace in the 1980s and 1990s in neo-liberal democracies, notably (but not only) the UK and the US. The collection of concepts was brought together and given

definition by Hood (1994) in 'A Public Management for all Seasons', at the same time as other writers were beginning to develop similar ideas, notably Osborne and Gaebler (1993) in the US. Green (2011) critiques the impact of NPM, and the market-driven accountability which has emerged as a key driver of policy, and argues that it undermines professional judgement and long-term sustainable success. She writes:

> NPM, through its various 'managerial' modes of accountability, has the potential to distort, systematically, *the structure of practical reasons of agents* (her italics) precisely when it is needed: those moments in practice when wise decisions and judgements are called for. (Green, 2011. p2)

Within this overarching context of accountability, I will examine the **emotional leadership** of head teachers following an unsuccessful inspection. In the next chapter, I will discuss the definition of emotions, but there are a number of concepts referred to in the literature which reference emotions, many of which overlap. Key areas include emotional intelligence, emotional regulation and emotional labour. **Emotional intelligence,** (EI) developed by Goleman (1995) is the capability of individuals 'to recognize their own, and other people's emotions, to discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, and to manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt

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environments or achieve one's goal(s).' (Goleman, 1995, p23). Despite criticisms that Goleman's original thesis overstated the importance of EI (e.g. Hunt & Fitzgerald, 2013), the concept has gained currency as a way of describing an individual's capacity to manage emotions.

Emotional regulation (Crawford 2006, Oatley & Jenkins 2003) describes the way that emotions are enacted by leaders within a specific context – 'managing self and managing others' (Crawford, 2006). Leaders take on a role, which can be seen at one extreme as carrying out a performance, in order to achieve goals, employing the 'effort, planning, and control needed to express organisationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions'. (Morris and Feldman, 1996, p. 987). This links with the concept of **emotional labour**, originally defined by Hochschild (1983), as the process of managing feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job, a task which is sold for a wage. I will explore these concepts in more depth within the literature review.

The study examines the extent to which the head teachers retain agency in the light of a traumatic critical incident in the school. Yamamoto et al (2014) describe the experiences of school leaders who have to manage such incidents which provoke an emotional response, and identify key themes in the way that the leaders process emotions and integrate them into their leadership practice.

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The authors suggest a four-stage model of the processing of emotion following a negative critical incident:

My view of myself, my world – critical incidents arousing emotion shook leaders' confidence and forced a change in action or beliefs;

Fragmentation – a sense of loss of control and a gap between understanding what was needed and how the leader would bridge the gap;

Reintegration and reinvention of self – creating paths to regain wholeness by finding ways to match who they were with what they did;

Relationship with self and others affirmed – sense-making and reconnecting with trusted others.

These themes provide a useful theoretical tool which I will use to analyse the post-Ofsted emotional journeys of the head teachers. It is clear that the success with which they manage this aspect of their leadership is of huge importance for the wider success of the school and the extent to which they maintain agency. As Cliffe writes: 'the strength or weakness of a leaders' emotional intelligence is demonstrated through those they manage and their subsequent success.' (Cliffe, 2011, p206)

The relationship between emotional resilience and agency is highlighted by Steward (2014):

At its simplest, emotional resilience is the ability to sustain activity involving emotional connection without being overwhelmed. Energy…must be purposefully directed so a sense of agency is required… Energy and agency are thus in a mutually supportive and strengthening relationship which in turn strengthen, and are strengthened by, emotional resilience. (Steward, 2014, p59)

The ability of head teachers to manage the emotional dimension of their role is developed to a greater or lesser extent throughout their career. Inextricably linked to the ability of the head teacher to demonstrate effective emotional leadership is the impact of their career narrative, particularly in the context of increased accountability. Emotion and identity are linked. As Crow et al (2016, p269) write: 'principals are likely to experience a range of sometimes contrasting, competing and fluctuating emotions which sometimes challenge their abilities to construct and sustain stable identities.' In the context of Ofsted failure, when head teachers require both emotional intelligence and resilience, the way that these have been developed over the course of their career is pivotal.

Within these competing contexts, the head teacher has to address the key factors and conditions associated with driving **school improvement** from a position of underperformance. I will use an existing framework from the literature to provide an analysis of the effectiveness of this work.

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In 'Leading School Turnaround' (2010) Leithwood, Harris and Strauss argue that there is a repertoire of core leadership practices that leaders rely on to bring about improvements in previously underperforming schools. Successful leaders use the practices that meet the needs of their school at any particular moment in time. In order to improve, it is necessary to diagnose and understand the causes of the initial poor performance, since each of these causes is 'the negative state of a more general and potentially positive condition (leadership, culture, instruction, and relationships, for example)' (Leithwood et al, 2010, p231). That is to say that according to the authors, underperformance is not brought about by a completely different set of leadership practices than turnaround or exceptional performance, but that it is the same leadership practices carried out ineffectively. As the authors write:

> The main task of leaders is to constantly monitor the status of the internal conditions in the school that influence student learning and improve the status of those conditions that are most need of improvement and most likely to improve student learning. (Leithwood et al, 2010, p236)

In the final chapter of the book, the authors propose a four-fold classification of school conditions that have important consequences on student learning. Each category contains distinct variables, which can be

influenced by leadership practices and which the authors assert are the 'main routes to improving student learning outcomes.'
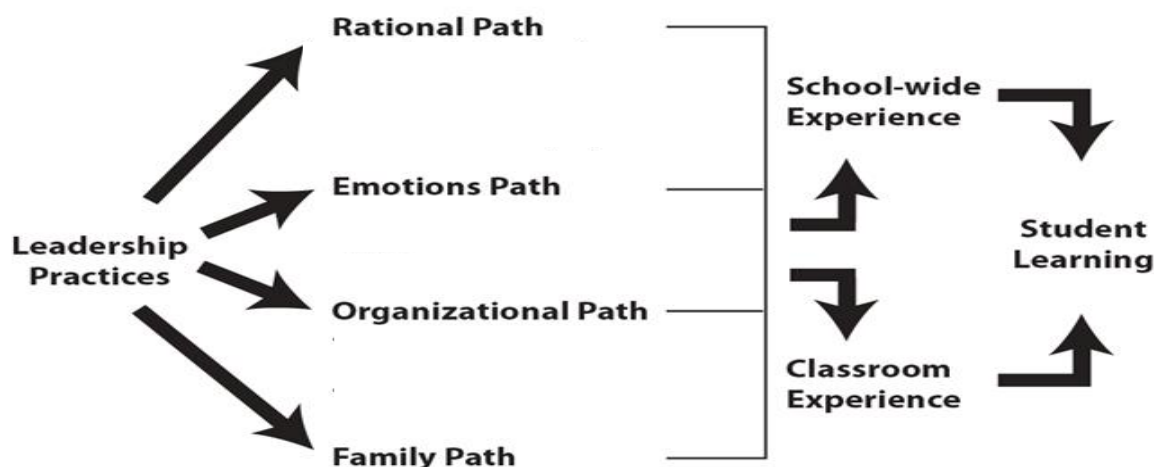
Figure 2: Four sets of School Conditions to Improve in Order to Influence Student Learning (Leithwood et al, 2010, p237)

This categorisation provides a framework for analysing how school leaders create the conditions for school improvement, and also for the analysis of how some leaders fail to create these conditions, leading to poor student learning outcomes, and in the case of the head teachers who are the subject of this research, failure in Ofsted inspection. I have applied this framework to my analysis of the performance of the case study head teachers as they move on from their inspections.

1.3   Defining the research questions

The fact that there is a significant emotional impact on the head of a failing school is not surprising and indeed it can be argued that this is a necessary evil where failure has the potential to have a detrimental impact on children's lives and prospects. The heads in the case studies were not a homogenous group – they came with a range of experiences and successes, they led schools in different contexts, they responded and reacted in different ways. However, there were consistencies in the experience they went through.

The 'jolt' to their career narrative had a profound impact on all, whether or not they were personally implicated in the criticism of the inspection. All reported that they underwent significant emotional turmoil, which affected their personal and professional identity, and their home and family life.

All reported that their career narrative was affected – in some cases, it had been interrupted or delayed, in others it provided a setback from which they did not recover. All asserted that they were capable of leading the school to improvement, had the skills and capabilities and had identified issues and ways to improve.

The four heads in the case studies had been at the sharp end of accountability, and had to demonstrate resilience and emotional fortitude,

which they had done to varying degrees. I believe that their experiences give a key insight into the nature of headship under the microscope in the most challenging of professional circumstances.

The key research questions that I have pursued through this study are:

- To what extent is the head teacher able to maintain agency in the light of a negative professional event, specifically a 'failed' Ofsted, and the accountability pressures it invites?

- What is the long-term impact of Ofsted failure on the career and future effectiveness of the head teacher?

- How important is the ability of the head teacher to manage the emotional dimension of a professionally traumatic event?

- What are the key leadership practices that enable successful head teachers to recover from a failed inspection and move the school forward?

1.4 Antecedents to this research

The emotional impact of the Ofsted Special Measures and Notice to Improve categories on the head teacher is an area that is not widely considered within the literature. Much of the 'research' has been carried out by Ofsted itself or has been in the context of research on schools in challenging contexts. In particular, the focus of almost all of the research that specifically references Special Measures has been on how schools

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manage the process of moving out of the category. A number of small-scale action research projects have been undertaken in conjunction with the then National College for School Leadership (NCSL), the majority focussing on identifying the important stages in the improvement journey. 'The impact of OFSTED Inspections: the experience of special measures schools' (Scanlon, 2001) is one example of a study that explores the impact of OFSTED inspections, and highlights the key issues for schools and staff labelled as 'failing'. However, this is considered in the context of the implications for school improvement, and for making a success of the Ofsted process, and only briefly considers the emotional impact of Special Measures. The Ofsted report on schools emerging from Special Measures, 'Sustaining improvement: the journey from special measures' (Ofsted 2008), lists ten key findings, of which at least 7 are clearly related to the emotional dimension of school leadership, but the impact that the inspection process has had on this is not readily acknowledged.

In a broader context, the importance of the emotional dimension in schools and in school leadership has been increasingly highlighted by researchers in recent years (e.g. West-Burnham: 2002, Fullan: 2008, Sugrue: 2005 and Sergiovanni: 2000). Leithwood et al (1999) argue that all structures in school can only be fully interpreted through the emotions, beliefs, values and behaviours of the people involved. Blackmore (2004) highlights the

tension between managing the 'emotional and messy' work of teaching and learning, whilst operating in a climate of high accountability. This tension is likely to be more pronounced during the highly-charged emotional aftermath of an unsuccessful inspection. It is the intention of this research to examine the dynamics of this particular, but not uncommon, situation.

With this in mind, I will consider the emotional impact of the inspections on the head teachers and the staff in the context of the policy led performativity agenda that dominates school life.

1.5   Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 sets out the theoretical basis for this study, and provides the broad economic and social policy contexts in which the cases are considered. It also gives a rationale for the focus on leadership emotions in this context. Finally, it sets out the analytical framework that I have used to examine the cases.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature relating to the key themes set out in Chapter 1

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and gives details of the research design and process. It also considers the ethical and practical issues encountered.

Chapters 4 - 7 describe the 4 individual case studies that form the basis of the study, and use the analytical framework to examine the key outcomes.

Chapter 8 provides a discussion of the findings from the study and relates them to the key themes.

Chapter 9 sets out conclusions drawn from the findings and suggests the key implications of the study.

Chapter 2:   A Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I will summarise the literature in the areas highlighted in the previous chapter and set out in Figure 1 (reprinted below), which gives the research context for the study. In line with the figure, I will discuss the policy context, starting from the wider accountability agenda and the impact of New Public Management before examining the role of accountability in education and the institution of Ofsted in particular. I will then consider the literature relating to the leadership context, with a focus on the emotional dimension of school leadership, before considering the performance context in the light of the pathways specified by Leithwood et al (2010).
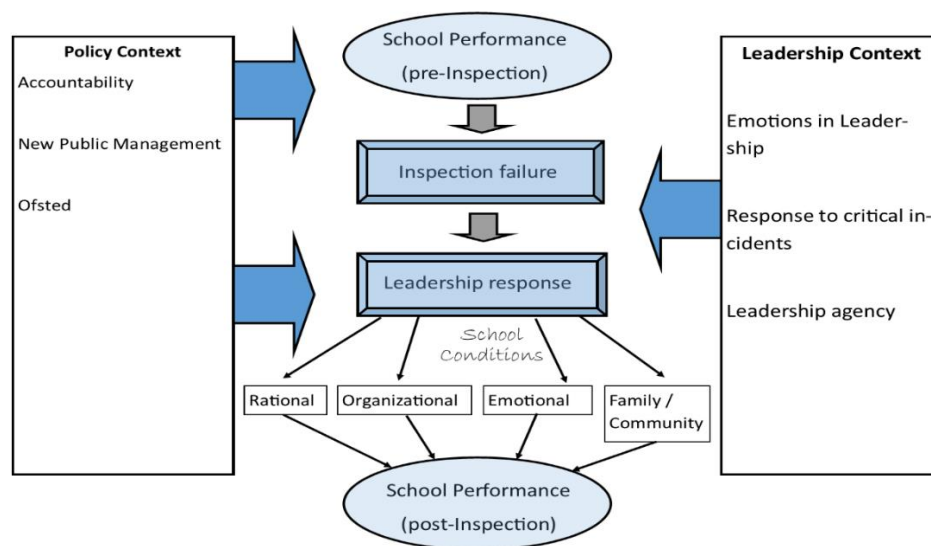
Figure 1 (reprinted): Conceptual Framework

2.1 The Policy Context: The rise of Accountability

2.1.1 New Public Management and the rise of Accountability

For most of the 20th century, an orthodoxy existed in western democracies that governed the operation of public services. Firstly, public services were managed by a central professional bureaucracy, staffed with career civil servants. It was assumed that these people would act in accordance with the best interests of the population. Secondly, there was an intention to maintain a clear separation between politics and administration – this would prevent corruption, provide oversight and increase efficiency and long-term planning. Thirdly, there was a clear hierarchy, with expertise and knowledge concentrated at the centre and disseminated down the 'chain' for implementation (Tolofari, 2005).

The huge political and economic changes of the late 1970s and 1980s presented a fundamental challenge to this orthodoxy. The 1980s saw the rise of neoliberal governments, notably the administrations of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US which were built on a belief in the power of the market. When applied to public service delivery this removed the driving force of government control as the key theoretical element and underpinned the move to ever-more sophisticated and intrusive accountability frameworks.

The historical context for the development of increased accountability of public services in western liberal democracies varies from country to country. However, the growing momentum at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s towards a new way of configuring and managing services was clear. James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976 (in Eason, 2005) and the 1983 'A Nation At Risk' report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) in the United States, demonstrated an increasing willingness to question the success and effectiveness of the agencies that delivered public policy in general, and education in particular. In the UK, a series of global comparisons seemed to indicate that measureable performance of students was falling well below the level which had been assumed, and that the professionals were responsible not only for the decline in standards, but for refusing to acknowledge existing problems (Hansen and Vignoles, 2005). The response of the Conservative government, which was sympathetic to this hypothesis, was the Education Reform Act of 1988, setting the template for reforms to come by introducing the National Curriculum and accompanying assessment framework, and local management of schools (LMS):

Not only did it (the ERA) significantly change the education system of England and Wales, but in doing so it cut a swathe through existing 'progressive' practices and those who had used them. The 'dinosaurs'

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of the post war generation were systematically slaughtered or put out to pasture as new policies for the entitlement of all children and public accountability of schools and teachers were developed. (Day, 2005, p396)

Wilcox and Gray (1996) outline the way that the 'Charter' policy of John Major's government of the early nineties extended the principles of accountability:

A key role was to be played by inspectorates. They were to… check that the professional services are delivered in the most effective way possible and genuinely meet the needs of those whom they serve. (Wilcox and Gray, 1996, p29)

The strength of these forces can be seen in the way that the discourse of government became aligned with this new relationship between government, public, and public service managers and professionals. Bailey (2013) makes a direct connection between neoliberalism, governmentality and the 'technologies of performativity':

Government …is not only the governing of conduct by the state, but also includes the myriad of agencies and, if you like, dispositifs which are able to direct and manipulate the conduct of others. (Bailey, 2013, p816)

This movement was not limited to the UK and the US. Nikos (2000) writes that: 'a remarkable revolution swept most countries of the world… it seems that not only in Europe but all around the world public administration is being changed or reinvented' (Nikos, 2000, p39).

In 'A Public Management for All Seasons' (1994), Hood defined this loose collection of concepts and conditions as '**New Public Management'**. This description of the movement and its impacts encompass a wide range of ideas to define this clear trend. As Dunleavey and Hood wrote in 1994:

> The term New Public Management (NPM)… is used mainly as a handy shorthand, a summary description of a way of reorganising public sector bodies to bring their management, reporting and accounting approaches closer to… business methods …making the public sector less distinctive as a unit from the private sector. (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994, p9)

New Public Management stressed the importance of management and 'production engineering' in public service delivery (Hood 1988). Using themes and ideas that had until then been confined to the private sector, it stressed the importance of managerialism, a lack of bureaucracy, payment by results, and autonomy in return for direct accountability. It focused on performance, and used directly observable performance criteria. It has led

to a 'performativity' culture, described by Ball (2003) as 'a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of control, attrition and change.' (Ball, 2003, p216).

It is important to bear in mind that NPM is not so much an ideological position as an attempt to explain an observable phenomenon. It combines the **economic** theories of free-market neoliberals, the **political** arguments of the desirability of limiting government influence on the lives of individual citizens, and the organizational theories of '**managerialism**', based on modes of accountability (Burnham and Horton, 2013; Tolofari, 2005).

The **economic** theories of the free-market, underpinned by a lack of regulation and state intervention, assume that by acting in their own self-interest, individuals will bring about the greatest societal good through the promotion of efficiency. The laissez-faire philosophies of Adam Smith, developed in the twentieth century by Hayek (1939) and Friedman (1980), posited that the incentives provided by the market will drive efficiency. Conversely, traditional public service delivery promotes inefficiency by motivating organizations to 'over-supply', to maintain costs high and to increase the size of the bureaucracy.

During the 1980s, the pace of globalization increased the tendency for governments to view the performance of education systems through the

lens of economic competitiveness, and this led to the conclusion that inefficient systems were potentially harming the economic future of the country, leading to a strong economic argument for change, and a challenge to the assumptions that had underpinned traditional models of public service delivery.

The **political** basis for NPM has its roots in the changing nature of the relationship between government and people in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The role of government as the patrician provider, accountable to itself, was increasingly challenged. First articulated in the UK by Thatcherite Conservatives, the movement continued under New Labour. Indeed, according to Exley and Ball (2014) 'New Labour took Conservative market reforms and gave them 'meat and teeth''. This change was seen in many iterations, from the establishment of an increasing number of arms-length 'quangos', to massively increased access to information, to the use of private sector bodies to provide services previously seen as the sole preserve of the state (from the operation of prisons to the introduction of computer systems). The trend established by the mass privatizations and council house sales of the 1980s, has developed and was seen in PFI initiatives under New Labour, David Cameron's 'Big Society', and most recently in Teresa May's 'Shared

Society'. Furthermore, the movement towards decentralization can be seen as providing further political underpinning of the principles of NPM.

The third element informing the developing theories of NPM is the role of the manager, and managerial forms of accountability. Not only does he or she provide operational efficiency, but by operating within the accountability framework, they will raise standards and drive through politically-mandated reforms.

Green (2011) highlights the symbiotic relationship between neo-liberalism and managerialism, and…

> …how, together, these two 'isms' have been instrumental in shaping new meanings of professionalism and accountability. In particular… anyone involved with education, whether in a teaching or non-teaching capacity, has no option but to be recruited into the ideas, ideals and ideologies of managerial principles and practices. (Green, 2011 p40)

Of all branches of public services, education has been one of the key drivers of accountability, and can be seen as a service that is easily adapted to it. As McDermott (2011) writes:

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Education was a natural field for the expansion of performance accountability because, unlike in other policy areas, a way of measuring results was in place before anybody thought of basing an accountability system on it. (McDermott, 2011, p4)

2.1.2   NPM, Accountability and Education

Politicians and policy makers want to make school systems, schools, teachers, and students more accountable. The assumption is (that) holding school systems, schools, teachers, and students more accountable by assessing their performance can and will trigger a change in expectations and actions that leads to improvement. (Rhoten, Carnoy, Chabran and Elmore, 2003, p14-15)

This increasing level of accountability in education is a recognised phenomenon across many nations, including the US, Australia, northern Europe and the UK. The notion has become a fundamental part of the educational landscape, despite only taking hold over the last twenty years. From individual teachers' performance to that of whole systems, performative norms have been set out (and frequently changed and contested), judgements made and either rewards received or consequences suffered. Table 1 below, whilst not exhaustive, gives a

sense of the extent and range of accountability measures that currently

exist from an English perspective:

Level	Accountability Method	What is being judged?	Possible rewards	Possible sanctions
Class Teacher	Class assessments	Progress of pupils	Promotion	Lack of promotion
	Standardized Tests	Attainment of pupils	Enhanced pay	Withholding of pay increases
Department / Phase	Public examinations		Promotion / Enhanced pay	
	Teaching observation	Quality of teaching		Dismissal
			Additional resources	
School / Head teacher	Ofsted inspection	Pupil Achievement	Possibility of promotion	Dismissal
	Regional Schools Commissioner	Value for money	Increased responsibility / kudos	Loss of school autonomy
	School league tables	Pupil outcomes, including behaviour and safeguarding		Reduction in resources
	Local Media reports		Enhanced pay	
	Parents' Groups		Increased autonomy	Withholding of pay increases
Local Authority	School inspection	Pupil Achievement	Electoral advantage	Electoral disadvantage
	LA inspection	Relative LA performance	Increased autonomy influence	Loss of autonomy / influence
	LA league tables			
National Government	Comparison studies (PISA MLA)	Pupil achievement	Electoral advantage	Electoral disadvantage
	Media / public perception	Economic impact	Economic gain	Economic cost

Table 1: Accountability Measures in English Schools

NPM is predicated upon accountability, and this in turn depends upon the

existence of agreed ways of measuring performance, and transparency in

the way performance is reported.

It is also predicated upon the free-market principles of incentives for high levels of performance, and disincentives for poor performance. For schools, this may be seen in reputation, influencing student and staff recruitment and retention, budget impact and so on. For individual school leaders and managers, this may be in the form of kudos and pay increases on the one hand, and additional pressure and job insecurity on the other.

Accountability, therefore, does not sit outside the school operation as an external 'event' or series of events, but in the operation of NPM, it is an integral part of day-to-day management, and of the fundamental direction and leadership of the school. As Elmore (2003) writes:

> External accountability systems work not by exerting direction and control over schools, but by mobilizing and focusing the capacity of schools in particular ways. (Elmore, in Carnoy et al, 2003, p196)

The relationship between accountability and policy is strong, although complex. Cotter (2000) sees it as 'the engine of policy', and it has certainly been used by governments both to provide the yardstick for judging educational improvement, but also to provide a strong direction for the intended improvement. As the OECD (2001) pointed out, 'Procedures for setting a central curriculum, for inspecting schools or for assessing pupils

and publishing results at a school level are all pressures that encourage school managers to conform to a well-defined set of norms.'

Governments will often make a direct connection between the performance of their education systems against accountability frameworks and perceived future economic performance. At the very least, rankings at whatever level, are a source of pride at one extreme or shame and recrimination at the other.

Another significant pressure in the development of accountability frameworks is the desire to open up the field of education to market pressures, in the hope that this will lead to increased competition, better performance and higher standards.

As Mulford (2005) writes:

> Part of the logic for these developments is linked to exposing education to the market. In a market, people need, it is argued, evidence on which to make their choices. In England, for example, parents have been encouraged to choose schools on the basis of their examination results. School funding, in turn, is dependent on per pupil grants, meaning they must improve their recruitment strategies to survive. (Mulford, 2005, p281)

Tolofari (2005) describes the way that market mechanisms and 'demand and supply' became an integral part of the discourse:

> …education should be seen not as a social service but as a commodity. The objectives and the mechanisms were the same – the introduction of managerialism, i.e. to 'manage' education instead of administering education. Management would be devolved to schools and education professionals would have less influence. Alternatives would be provided through public-private partnerships, and parents and businesses would have power….heads and teachers would be held accountable for quality, which would be measured and inspected using numerous instruments and organs. (Tolofari, 2005, p84)

In the UK, this process, already well established, has been significantly accelerated in recent times. Michael Gove, the UK Secretary of State for education from May 2010 until July 2014, was absolutely clear that performance of schools against accountability measures will have a crucial and swift bearing on their future, and this policy has continued apace under his successors. So, for example, a school that has an Outstanding judgement in Ofsted will be exempt from future inspections (subject to some limited conditions), and will automatically be granted Academy status if desired. The school and head teacher will be able to take on leadership roles within the system (e.g. National Leader of Education, Teaching

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Schools) which are likely to lead to additional revenue, improved reputation and professional advancement. On the other hand, recent policy changes and announcements by the Department for Education (DfE) have made it clear that schools that fall below government-set attainment thresholds will be compelled to convert to Academy status, under the control of an Academy sponsor which may be an existing Ofsted 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school. The consequence of this is likely to be loss of autonomy for the head teacher and the Governing Body, loss of status and potential loss of revenue.

Although the impact of increased accountability is widely recognised, the extent to which this has proved beneficial is contested, and often depends unsurprisingly on the perspective of the individual. A key criticism is the fact that accountability measures can only be useful on a large scale if they are simple and easily understood by all stakeholders, and this leads to a simplistic and reductionist view of school performance, based on a limited range of outcomes. Tyack and Cuban (1995) argue that this leads to the use of one main measure – test scores – to the exclusion of all others, and fatally underestimates the complexity of the schooling process. As Mulford (2005) argues:

> Uniformity of education systems in aims, standards, and methods of assessment is a complexity-reducing mechanism. It is far tidier to

have a single set of aims for all, a single set of standards for all, and a single array of tests for all than to have locally developed approaches to school improvement. Yet, homogeneity of outcome for the future of our society is not necessarily the highest good, and may be impossible to achieve. (Mulford, 2005, p284-5)

It can be argued, however, that the use of limited measures of accountability is extremely attractive to politicians and policy makers, and allows them to bring very effective, highly targeted pressure to bear. Schools respond to accountability measures despite the fact that new policies and new incumbents can often lead to a 'moving of the goalposts'. For example, over the last decade, the key government measure of attainment for secondary schools, used to compile performance tables and to set the agenda for inspection, has changed several times, from average number of higher grade (A*-C) GCSEs per student, to the proportion of students achieving a minimum of 5 such GCSEs, then to the proportion of students achieving this measure including English and Maths, to the recent introduction of the English Baccalaureate, which specifies which GCSEs should be attained (English, Maths, Science, Humanities and a Foreign Language) to achieve the nationally recognised measure, and most recently to the introduction of 'Progress 8' and 'Attainment 8', which consider performance in a 'basket' of prescribed subjects.

However, many researchers and practitioners have argued that the use of test and examination performance as the dominant measure can have negative consequences. Keddie (2014, p6) points out that 'a well-recognised concern about this performative environment in relation to teachers and teaching is its capacity to undermine the quality of curriculum and pedagogy.' Leithwood (2005) points out that the consequences of this approach can be disastrous:

> For students, such consequences may include, minimising their individual differences, narrowing curriculum to which they are exposed, diverting enormous amounts of time from instruction to test preparation, and negatively influencing schools' willingness to accept students with weak academic records. … [The] consequences for teachers, include the creation of incentives for cheating, feelings of shame, guilt and anger, and a sense of dissonance and alienation … [and] to the atrophy of teachers' instructional repertoires. (Leithwood, 2005, p450)

Green (2011) argues that this process also undermines the professional identity of teachers and school leaders:

> There is now growing evidence of … not always acting *professionally!* Teachers, for instance are 'teaching to the test' to ensure the

reputation of their school in 'performance' league tables and inadvertently narrowing the curriculum against their better judgement. (Green, 2011, p5)

There is a danger that leaders and managers become constrained by this discourse and see their role as ensuring compliance. At its worst, this can lead to 'managerialism' defined by Hoyle and Wallace (2005) as 'management to excess, management as an ideology embodying the view that not only *can* everything be managed but that everything *should* be managed.'

When this takes root, it appears to not only be inimical to the emotional agency of the Head teacher (Boddy, 2012), but also sits outside the leadership formation through an individual's personal and professional life (as described by Gronn, 1999).

Whilst NPM discourses have identified and applied the conditions for and means by which schools may be held more directly accountable for student performance outcomes, it is the consequences on their internal management and cultures, for which heads are primarily responsible, which indicate not merely compliance and enactment in terms of policy dictates but changes in their mindsets and practices which have in many schools become the new 'norms' (Green 2011; Perryman 2009). Even

leaders of high achieving schools feel pressure to 'fabricate an identity around its performative demands' (Keddie, 2014). Green (2009) sets out the way this operates:

> Normalisation, which can be defined as the modification of behaviour to come within socially acceptable standards, is a powerful mechanism of power which is achieved through the hegemonic internalisation of discourses of control. In an inspection context, normalisation describes the process by which schools operate within the accepted norms of an 'effective school'. (Perryman, 2009, p614)

This process echoes the work of Foucault who in the 1970s introduced the concept of governmentality to redefine the way that power was exercised by neo-liberal democracies, not simply through a top-down structure, but also through forms of social control in disciplinary institutions.

According to Foucault, individuals working in institutions internalize and act according to the knowledge and discourse disseminated by the state and wider society. The actors in this context therefore play a key part in their own self-government and regulation, and assume a high level of accountability. The 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1977) are established within society, and provide the parameters for discourse, enabling government to ensure that citizens act within these parameters.

The role, therefore, of 'specific governmental apparatuses' (Foucault, 1992) in monitoring and shining a light on services and in holding to account those charged with their delivery is an intrinsic part of the exercise of this new relationship. Accountability is woven through Foucault's 'art of government'.

The concept of performativity which has been developed by Deleuze (2006), Ball (2003, 2010) and others, through the development of ever-more sophisticated and powerful methods of monitoring with a clear disciplinary framework support Foucault's emphasis on the nature of power and the way it is exercised. Viewed through this lens, a head teacher coping with an Ofsted failure is under intense pressure to perform within performativity norms.

2.1.3   Ofsted and Accountability

The rapid development of accountability frameworks over the last 20 years has led to high levels of uncertainty. Professionals in school talk of 'moving the goalposts', politicians and some commentators prefer to describe it as 'raising the bar'. Whatever the interpretation, accountability systems now provide a framework that is understood by both professionals and public to define success and failure, and Ofsted is a powerful and influential element of this framework. Woods et al (1997) quotes a head following a successful

inspection, who clearly feels that this external validation is far more important than his own judgement, not just for the audience outside the school, but for his own self-analysis:

> 'I'm thrilled! ...what a sense of relief it was to know we're all going in the right direction…I am doing my job.' (Woods et al, 1997, p133)

Since the 1990s and the new era of accountability, a system in which schools were not open to high levels of scrutiny and critical analysis now seems impossible to contemplate. As Christine Gilbert, former HMCI, asserts: 'It is hard to imagine any discussion of educational reform amongst policymakers or professionals where the word 'accountability' would not be used.' (Gilbert, 2012). Over the last 20 years a number of strands of accountability have developed, some of which may be considered as largely benevolent and uncontroversial, but all of which have increased the level of scrutiny that schools face. They include:

• Greater transparency and increased personal responsibility of Governance – alongside a significant increase in the powers and autonomy of Governors;

• Publication of a range of school management data, including data relating to financial performance, exclusions and attendance;

- National tests and examination results, referenced against a national curriculum and published in performance tables;

- A national Inspection system – Ofsted.

Although inspection of schools in England did not begin with Ofsted, the advent of the organization in 1993 led to a dramatic change in its impact on schools and teachers. Since then, the impact has grown as Ofsted has become a firmly-established part of the educational establishment. With each new framework and political development, the influence of Ofsted becomes more ingrained and life without inspection has become unthinkable, particularly for the generation of teachers who have known no other reality.

For most of the twentieth century, school inspection was carried out either at a local level, by LEAs, or by the relatively small team of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Inspection was generally uncontroversial and collaborative, reports were not widely published and tended to be developmental in nature. The majority of teachers could expect to go through their career without experiencing an inspection. This began to change when the Thatcher government, through the Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, turned its attention to fundamental reform of education. The 1988 Education Reform Act gave additional powers to LEAs to inspect, alongside many other measures that had a far higher profile at the time,

such as the introduction of the National Curriculum, and Local management of Schools. By 1992, frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm shown by Local Authorities to exercise their new powers, the new Secretary of State, John Patten, decided to strengthen and extend the role of HMI, established the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and appointed Chris Woodhead as the new Chief Inspector to put in place a totally new style of inspection apparatus.

From the outset, it was clear that the decision to introduce Ofsted was significant. The 1988 Act had been expressly designed to address a perceived crisis in schools, with huge swathes considered to be underperforming, badly-managed, not meeting the needs of the country's economy, and fatally resistant to change. The educational 'establishment' was also considered to be infected by left-leaning attitudes, in thrall to unions and unresponsive to parents. The new inspection regime was intended to shine a light on this underperformance so that it could be addressed and corrected. A key feature of the new system was the formal grading of schools and the communication of that grading to the wider public.

Case et al (2000) conclude their brief history of Ofsted with the following conclusions:

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, teachers were demoralised by a system of inspection that claimed to concern itself with raising the standards pupils were required to meet, because—regardless of the impact of the teacher—school funding was determined by the achievements of pupils. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the determination to ensure that pupils' achievements are once again centre stage, many teachers feel equally undermined by the inspection system. While claiming to be robust, it has become bureaucratic. While purporting to make rigorous judgements that, in turn, have far-reaching consequences, it is perceived to be punitive and to base its assessments on far too narrow a set of evidence. (Case et al, 2000, p.12)

The presence of Ofsted inspections has been a cornerstone of educational policy and school improvement efforts, providing a monitoring framework, an instrument of ensuring policy enactment and compliance, and a public affirmation, or condemnation, of the school and the school leader. As Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) write:

…in England, the state gives over the precise implementation of policy to semi-independent bodies such as Ofsted which, whilst accountable to government ministers, override existing forms of accountability. In this model, the inspection process itself becomes

the means by which schools comply with government policy… Such an approach has given rise to concerns that educational discourse has increasingly been dominated by a vocabulary that is itself dominated by government inspection agencies such as Ofsted. (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011, p23)

The fact that a proportion of schools 'fail' Ofsted inspections is an inevitable and essential component of the system, particularly in a norm-referenced inspection framework, where 'the inspection process itself becomes the means by which schools comply with government policy' (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). School leaders who intend to demonstrate fidelity to government policy are forced to accept this, which is easily done whilst the school, and therefore their leadership, is performing well against the inspection criteria, but can cause major conflict if the result is negative.

The burden of enacting this policy falls to a large extent on the head teacher. Throughout the recent history of Inspection and increased general accountability, the effectiveness of the school leader has been seen as increasingly crucial. (OFSTED, 2008; Brundett and Rhodes, 2011)

Two relatively recent policy shifts have hugely raised the stakes in this area. Firstly, from 2012, the category of Satisfactory was reclassified. Schools that are placed in Category 3 are deemed to be 'Requiring

Improvement' and are subject to monitoring visits by HMI and re-inspection within 2 years. The reason given for this change is to address the issue of 'coasting' schools – schools that have remained satisfactory through several inspections without moving to Good. As Prime Minister David Cameron said in January 2012:

> This is not some small bureaucratic change. It marks a massive shift in attitude. I don't want the word 'satisfactory' to exist in our education system. 'Just good enough' is frankly not good enough.

The shift in attitude is profound. The expectations and pressures placed on schools that require improvement are far closer to those expected of previous Notice to Improve schools, a fact undisputed by both opponents and supporters of the move. As a result, the number of schools that are operating in this context has jumped hugely from approximately 6% of schools to about 20% - in other words, an increase of about 3,500 schools across the country. It is reasonable to assume that the emotional journeys that I will describe in the case studies are being repeated in a similar format in many hundreds of schools across the country, far more than would have been the case a few years ago.

The second significant policy shift has come about as a result of the changes in governance and management of schools, and the move from

Local Authority influence and control to Academies and Multi Academy Trusts, with over 6,000 Academies and 2,700 Trusts now in existence (DfE, March 2017). The previous model for supporting schools was for a Local Authority team to work with the existing school set up to bring about improvement through advice, support and challenge. In the vast majority of cases, the governing body would remain and in most cases, the Head teacher would stay in place.

This model is now rare. In a very large majority of cases, an inadequate judgement by Ofsted will lead to a change in either governance or leadership, or both – if this is not the case, the Regional Schools Commissioner has powers to intervene and remove the governing body. High-performing academies and academy chains are encouraged to play a leading role in this process, to take over failing schools, and impose their own model – the stakes are raised. As Exley and Ball (2011, p6) describe: 'A leaner state is planned, but strong surveillance remains, with 'no notice' Ofsted inspections for lower performing schools and continued takeovers and privatisations for the 'very worst' schools.'

Ofsted is not, and does not claim to be, a dispassionate observer of the education system. It is clear that it has a role in improving schools, not just reporting on them. As Clarke and Baxter (2014, p484) remark: 'Ofsted language is dominated by the discourse of progress or, more specifically,

the new managerialist language of progress as continuous improvement in organizational performance.' To use the words from Ofsted's own website: 'Our goal is to achieve excellence in education and skills for learners of all ages, and in the care of children and young people.'

The impact of Ofsted inspection on the overall reform agenda remains unclear. This is partly because government, media and commentators often view the role of Ofsted as an objective auditing body, and its place in the public evaluation, analysis and research of schools is usually as part of the evidence set rather than a key actor in the daily process of school activity. It is common for politicians and commentators to refer to the number of 'good' schools or 'failing' teachers based on Ofsted data, and then to draw conclusions and construct arguments on the basis of this information.

Baxter (2014) questions this notional independence of Ofsted. She asserts that although successful regulation depends upon political distance between regulatory bodies and government, this has been questioned by teachers since its inception. For example, regarding the change from 'satisfactory' to 'requires improvement':

> …in the eyes of the public, teaching profession and press, this placed
>
> the agency not only in very close alignment with government policy

but in uncomfortably close proximity to right-wing political agendas. (Baxter, 2014, p24)

That Ofsted has an impact is generally accepted. Altrichter and Kemethofer (2015) compare a range of European inspection systems, and conclude that the more 'accountability pressure' that exists, (with the English system the strongest example of this), the more development activity that takes place. However, they caution that 'quantitative increase of development activity need not necessarily include quality gains'. Whilst Ofsted studies make a link between inspection and subsequent performance (Ofsted, 1999; Ofsted, 2008), others have concluded that there is no clear link between schools being inspected and their subsequent performance, and that 'when and how inspection makes a difference depends on context and circumstance' (Macbeath et al, 2007). Steven J Courtney's study 'Head teachers' experiences of school inspection under Ofsted's January 2012 framework' (2013) reports that Heads speak of a 'climate of fear'. He contends that the fear of Ofsted has a detrimental effect overall. He cites the example of community cohesion, a key part of the preceding framework which was removed from the 2012 framework:

The 64 per cent of leaders who intend to spend less time developing links with their community, seemingly because Ofsted no longer inspects it, will do so in defiance of Chapman and Harris' (2004)

findings these are vital in improving schools facing challenging circumstances. Rather than improving the validity of inspections by broadening their terms, validity here is improved instead by school leaders' narrowing their curriculum to suit the inspection model at the expense of providing a rich learning experience. (Courtney 2013, p17)

Failure in Ofsted inspection heightens hugely the 'accountability pressure'. Indeed, as early as 1999, in the report entitled 'Lessons learned from Special Measures', Ofsted itself recognised the potential impact of a negative inspection:

Once special measures are applied, handling the label of 'failure' is the first priority of the head teacher and staff. Teachers – and in some cases the pupils themselves – are left with negative feelings about their own worth. Governors also often react with shock, followed by anger. Restoring individuals' self-confidence, particularly among teachers and pupils, is crucial. Schools which recognise that they may experience emotions akin to grieving and take steps to cope with their feelings of bereavement have taken the first actions that will help to secure the school's rebirth…Feelings of anger and resentment slow the process of recovery unless they are dissipated quickly. Morale

can be damaged for a long time if the staff indulge in retrospective apportioning of blame. (Ofsted 1999:6)

In 'Inspection – What's in it for schools?' Learmonth (2000) discusses the profound effect that Ofsted failure has on the emotional lives of teachers, and likens the situation to a bereavement. He points out that if the situation exists whereby they have misgivings about the accuracy of the verdict, or the role of Ofsted itself, then the impact may be greater, and the recovery may be very difficult. He concludes:

Finally, whatever the justification for the emotional distress which the Ofsted process may cause, there is something unsatisfactory about a procedure which may cause so much distress and then leaves someone else (LEA, consultant, families?) to rebuild and sustain the emotional resilience which it originally undermined. (Learmonth, 2000, p78)

Perryman (2007) describes the experience of inspection (regardless of the outcome) with the term 'panoptic performativity' – teachers under a relentless scrutiny, compelled to conform to external expectations:

Although many inspections end with a positive report, the fear of the dire consequences of failing in schools which are less successful can lead to stress and negative emotions of fear, panic and loss of self.

Under inspection, teachers may experience their greatest crisis of true self. All work they do is dictated by the requirements of the inspection process, and despite being exhausted and sometimes fearful they must continue to perform for the inspectors. (Perryman, 2007, 6-7)

Her research focuses on a case study of a school in special measures which she follows through the inspection that removed special measures and the following, successful inspection. In many ways, therefore, her time coincided with a successful Ofsted experience. However, the emotional impact was profound. The phrases used by staff include 'punch-drunk', 'hysteria', 'fear' and 'a living hell'. The teachers commonly use words that relate to extreme emotional responses. They talk of the guilt they felt because of the way their families were suffering, and the dread of the potential shame they would bring on themselves and others. She concludes that:

The emotional impact of inspection, with its fear and loss of control and a sense of self can in the worst cases lead to teachers being unable to continue their work….This perhaps calls into question the whole issue of seeking school improvement by way of a system which creates such a negative emotional impact… the emotional impact of

the inspection led to disaffection, and teachers starting to rethink their careers. (Perryman, 2007, 25-26)

Although they observe similar effects, Case et al (2000) go further, and conclude from their case studies of schools undergoing inspection that the negative impact of inspection is an essential characteristic of the system:

Understood as an act of signification, OFSTED's existence depends substantially on exploiting and, in turn, contributing to a complex nexus of 'victimisation' of the teaching profession. The rhetoric of OFSTED *qua* 'accountability cipher' by necessity must obfuscate, disguise and selectively disregard certain aspects of its affects on educational practice. To be a positive vehicle of discipline, OFSTED must accentuate the negative. Above all else, it must show it's working. (Case et al, 2000, p620)

2.2 The Leadership Context: The Emotional Dimension of School Leadership

The importance of emotions in all aspects of society, including school life, has been increasingly recognised in recent years, and has frequently been a specific focus for consideration and research (e.g. Damasio, 1999; Hochschild, 1983, Crawford, 2009). A large body of research evidence has built up since the 1980s which recognises the importance of the emotional

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dimension of social relationships in the workplace and leads to the conclusion that a meaningful understanding of the consequences of a significant event such as a negative Ofsted judgement can only take place when the emotional dimension is recognised and included. It is central to the task of school leaders to manage these emotional demands and ensure that they do not adversely affect the ability of the school to progress. As Mills and Niesche (2014) write:

> There is an increasing recognition that leadership within schools, especially within times of change, involves emotional demands on the part of all. (Mills and Niesche, 2014, p121)

Crawford (2009) specifically links the emotional dimension to Ofsted and accountability:

> Why then is emotion so important, and why should it be important to headteachers in particular? The English school leader is held very accountable for the success and failure of their school through such markers as Ofsted and league tables…This accountability can be felt…as a very personal responsibility. (Crawford, 2009, p5)

The role of emotions in all organisations has been explored by many authors. In the context of those who work in commercial organisations, Hochschild (1983) explored the concept of 'emotional labour'. She defined

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emotional labour as: 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value' (Hochschild, 1983 p7). She found that there was a dynamic relationship between an individual's emotional state, their responses, and their position in the power relationships inherent within their work contexts. The public role of the head teacher, observed by the multiple audiences of staff, parents and external professionals such as inspectors and advisers, adds a layer of complexity to this relationship. Understanding their actions depends on understanding their emotions. As Denzin (1984) writes: "People are their emotions. To understand who a person is, it is necessary to understand emotion." (Denzin, 1984, p1)

The growing interest in this area was given a framework in Goleman's influential description of Emotional Intelligence (1995), which provided a structure to the way individuals manage their own emotions and the emotions of those around them and brought the concept of emotional intelligence into the mainstream. He asserted that through the application of intelligence to emotion, we can improve our lives immeasurably and that emotions are habits which can undermine our best intentions. The link between emotional intelligence and values is strong, since emotions are based on the individual sense of identity. In making the link between emotional life and ethics, Goleman notes that if a person cannot control

and manage their impulsiveness, damage will be done to their deepest sense of self; control of impulse '...is the base of will and character' he says. Compassion is enabled by the ability to appreciate what others are feeling and thinking. These two elements are basic to emotional intelligence, and therefore basic attributes of the moral person.

There is a strong link between this concept of emotional intelligence and effectiveness of leadership. In 'Emotion in Organizations' (2000), Fineman discusses both the fact that all organizations are emotional entities and the fact that leadership is therefore emotional work, both in the sense that it is dependent on and makes demands upon the leader's own emotional capacity, and that it is concerned with the emotional life of others and the organization as a whole. The implications for this are clear:

> What do organizations look like if we view them as emotional arenas? Emotions make and break relationships, underpin organizational changes, reflect and shape the culture and politics of organizations, yet are often discounted as aberrations or interferences to smooth organizing. (Fineman, 2000, p9)

Leaders of organizations therefore bear a particularly strong burden when negotiating the emotional aspect of their role, as they need to consider how the regulation of their own emotions impacts upon the feelings and

emotions of others, and therefore the whole organization. As Fineman (2003) writes:

> Leaders perform on a stage where their emotional performance is under scrutiny…. Reflecting and expressing the joy, dejection or despair of followers, without appearing trite or condescending, requires a degree of empathy and emotional sensitivity not often credited to the technical specialists who achieve high office. The emotional labours of such leadership can be…very real. What is often under-appreciated is that the leader's ability to 'get the job done' requires more than just good business knowledge. It also requires emotional knowledge and sensitivity. (Fineman, 2003, p90-91)

Despite this growing interest in the emotional dimension, both within an educational context and beyond, there is no clear shared definition of emotion, or accepted understanding of its boundaries. Van Veen and Lasky (2005) point out that the definition of emotion is to a large extent dependent on the researcher's theoretical framework, and that the range of theoretical perspectives can include the 'physiological, philosophical, historical, sociological, feminist, organizational, anthropological and psychological'. Oatley and Jenkins (2003) suggest that emotions have two parts – an informational, conscious part and a second controlling part and together

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these parts enable us to react (hopefully) appropriately to events and people around us:

> Emotions, then, mark the junctures in our actions. Something has happened that is important to us. Emotions are the processes that allow us to focus on any problem that has arisen and to change course if necessary. (Oatley and Jenkins, 2003, p133)

Fineman (2003) identifies four broad types of perspectives on the study or analysis of emotion, all of which offer insights:

Emotion as biological: the perspective that our basic emotional responses are present as part of our biological heritage, and that there are universal emotional responses; *Emotion as early experiences*: the psychodynamic view that the shadows of early-learning experiences are present in our current emotional existence. This concept can find echoes within organizations, where the unconscious agendas of its members lead to childlike behaviour or social defences; *Emotion as cognitive appraisal:* the perspective that emotion does not exist meaningfully until we appraise or try to make sense of what we see or hear; and *Emotion as social:* emphasising the effects of different cultural experiences and social expectations, emotion roles, language and interpretation. Feelings are socially constructed and emotions are socially enacted. We conform to

external expectations of emotional behaviours as well as internalised, but socially constructed 'feeling-rules', and feel shame or embarrassment when we contravene them. Thus, the Head of a school undergoing a difficult Ofsted inspection does not have an unlimited emotional palette to draw from.

If the definition of emotions is so complex and multi-layered, understanding and analysing how they are enacted in an already complex situation such as school leadership clearly presents potential difficulties. In an attempt to summarise the emotional arena, and provide a way of bringing together the 'richness and multiplicity of emotion and educational leadership' Crawford (2009) develops the concept of emotional 'textures', each of which reveals 'something typical and distinctive about something complex'. They are:

- emotion regulation in educational leadership

- emotion-weighted decision-making in educational leadership

- emotional context in educational leadership.

(Crawford, 2009, p20)

This approach draws on the wider understanding of the importance of emotions and applies it specifically to school leadership. Schools are emotional arenas (e.g. Gronn, 2003, James and Connolly, 2000). In the same way as the teacher is often seen as the manager of emotions in the

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classroom, the head teacher is the manager of the emotions of those they lead and manage. However, they are also emotional beings, and they must understand, respond to and manage their own emotions. How successfully they are able to do so is key to their success. As Wang et al (2016, p468) write: 'Research suggests that insight gained from emotional awareness is an essential component and integral to transformational change and leadership effectiveness.'

The understanding of the school as an emotional arena, and its importance within the context of educational research is now well-established (e.g. Pekrun and Schutz, 2007). A debate was sparked by a special issue of the Cambridge Journal of Education (Nias, 1996) which focussed on the role of emotions in the professional lives of teachers. Since then, this role has been explored in relation to a range of separate but interrelated aspects related to schools. These include the impact of emotions on teaching and learning, the impact on the professional lives of teachers, the impact on the nature of school leadership and the impact on the institution as a whole. Some common themes emerge – firstly, the notion of professional identity and the way that an individual's emotional outlook influences their professional role. Secondly, the way that the relationship with external agents, such as Ofsted or the media, can impact on the emotional identity of the school or individual. Thirdly, the way that the business of change is

inter-related with emotional meaning. What emerged was a view that almost all important aspects of school life can only be fully considered by including the significance of the emotional development.

The fact that emotions are so important in the daily lives of teachers and, by extension, schools, is not in itself surprising. The classroom is the 'site for their (teachers) self-esteem and fulfilment, and so too for their vulnerability.' (Nias, 1996, p.297). Others (e,g, Leithwood et al, 1999) argue that all structures in school can only be fully interpreted through the emotions, beliefs, values and behaviours of the people involved. All teaching is 'inextricably emotional, either by design or default.' (Hargreaves, 2001, p1057)

A special issue of 'Teaching and Teacher Education' (ed. Van Veen and Lasky, 2005) considered emotion as 'a lens to explore teacher identity and change'. In one of the papers, Hargreaves (2005) highlights the importance of teachers' own emotional skills in responding to the emotions of others:

> Teaching, learning and leading all draw upon emotional understanding as people reach into the past store of their own emotional experience to interpret and unravel, instantaneously, at-a-glance, the emotional experiences and responses of others. (Hargreaves, 2005, p968)

Day (2004) talks of the 'passion' for teaching, celebrating the 'various forms of intellectual, physical, emotional and in particular, passionate endeavour in which teachers at their best engage.' He makes four key observations based on literature and research evidence:

1. Emotional intelligence is at the heart of good professional practice (Goleman, 1995).

2. Emotions are indispensable to rational decision-making (Damasio, 1994; Sylwester, 1995; Damasio, 2000).

3. Emotional health is crucial to effective teaching over a career.

4. Emotional and cognitive health are affected by personal biography, career, social context (of work and home) and external (policy) factors.

(Day, 2004, p37)

In the light of these, the fact that the external change and reform agenda can have a profound impact on the emotional state of teachers and school leaders means that this impact should be considered if reform is to be successful and meet its objectives. Hargreaves' concludes that when teachers feel overwhelmed by the pace of change 'those who invest themselves most heavily in the emotional labour of the work are likely to

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become racked by guilt, feeling that they are hurting those for whom they care' (Hargreaves, 1997, p19). The scrutiny that comes alongside accountability has emotional consequences:

Teachers find themselves challenged to answer the question "Am I still a good teacher?" and this has the potential to lead to intense emotional reactions. (Kelchtermans et al, 2009, p218)

The implications for change and reform are echoed by Reio (2005). He asserts that no matter how well-intentioned a reform, it will not be successful unless due consideration is paid to the effect it will have on teachers:

The reform effort must take into account that teachers have natural emotional reactions to change that have both positive and negative influences on the construction of their professional and personal identity. All too often, unfortunately, change evokes negative emotions due to insufficient information and vague perceptions of unnecessary loss. (Reio, 2005, p992)

As discussed earlier, the emotional dimension has a particular importance when applied to leadership (e.g. Crawford, 2014), never more so than leadership in a context of high accountability. In English schools, accountability is at its sharpest in Inspection, which is a highly-charged

emotional event, with significant impact for the career narrative of the head teacher – I would suggest that the vast majority of head teachers would recognise that as axiomatic. What the case studies in this research have in common, however, is the fact that they place these elements in the context of a very public failure. Accountability is at its most demanding in the context of failure; the career of a head teacher is under severe threat when they have been at the helm of a school that has been publicly judged as failing. Carrying the responsibility for leading a failing institution and supporting all of those who are dependent on it – pupils, staff, parents, governors – is a hugely challenging emotional task:

> It is important to recognise that building successful leadership takes time and depends upon the principal establishing vision, hope and optimism, high expectations and acting with integrity in order to nurture, broaden and deepen individual, relational and organizational trust. (Day, 2011, p106)

Where their schools are publicly categorized as failing in some way, where time is limited, where vision, hope and optimism is drained, and where trust is hugely conditional how much harder is it for head teachers to build success?

Harris (2007) cites the case of a head teacher taking over a school that had recently had a 'Serious Weaknesses' Ofsted judgement, and the emotional work she faced in picking up the pieces and moving the school forward:

> A collective form of low self-esteem and hopelessness pervaded the school, draining energy and joy from relationships and from the process of learning….Conscious of their collective sense of shame and related defensiveness, Pat recognized that developing 'emotional fitness' would be the first stepping stone on a long journey. (Harris, 2007, p31)

Where 'Pat' had the advantage over the head teachers in this research was that she could observe and deal with the 'shame and defensiveness' but was not obliged to share it – the shame was not her own. All of the case study head teachers had to cope with their own emotional response – shame, grief, anger, and so on – whilst ensuring that the rest of the community were able to move forward. There is a tension between managing the 'emotional and messy' work of teaching and learning, whilst operating in a climate of high accountability (Blackmore, 2004). It is likely that this will have a cost, and have implications for leadership sustainability.

Within the emotional arena of the school, the impact of an unsuccessful inspection event is considerable. The role of school leaders in managing

the emotional impact and leading the response to a negative judgement is among the most important tasks at this point in the school's development, but occurs at precisely the point that the head teacher's emotional reserves and resilience are most tested. This appears to represent an extreme example of emotional labour, the public management of individual emotions to colleagues and clients. The emotional health of leaders is 'a scarce environmental resource' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p8).

What is notable however, is that as the role of emotion, and related concepts such as passion, have become more prevalent in the way that researchers understand and analyse the work of teachers and school leaders, this is not reflected in the policy agenda. As Harris (2007) states:

> …whilst politicians claim success for education reforms, they refuse to acknowledge or engage with the deep-seated negative effects of relentless change on the psychological health of schools and communities…. The instrumental and accountability driven approach to system-wide reform has created more disturbing and challenging problems for society and schools to grapple with. (Harris, 2007, p1)

Leaders' emotional capacity is affected by the context in which they operate. The irony is that it is in precisely those situations that put the greatest stress on the emotional abilities of the school community that

emotionally-literate leadership (and followership) is both most needed and least likely to be present. This additional emotional stress can come from a range of inter-linked factors, or a combination of them, some of which are listed below:

- A school that is working in an environmental context that is challenging, for example in an area of low socio-economic status, or high levels of pupil mobility. In addition to the day-to-day challenges that are faced by such schools, they face a much higher incidence of factors that add to the emotional demands on the school;

- A school that is undergoing a significant period of turbulence. This could be as a result of changes of leadership or significant staff movement or restructuring, or as a result of merging or relocation;

- A school that is going through a period of rapid change. This may be imposed change by government or local authorities, or may be instigated by the school. In many cases, the change might take place deliberately, and for positive reasons related to school improvement. However, the fact that the change might be invited (by the school leadership at least) does not necessarily lessen the emotional impact;

- A school that is in a position of significant additional external scrutiny and accountability and feels a lack of control over the potential outcomes;

- A school that has undergone a trauma, either collectively or to significant individuals. This could be linked to bereavement or ill-health, a traumatic event in the school community, or something that generates negative publicity and media attention.

All of these potential scenarios are capable of placing significant emotional demands on school communities and school leaders. When they are combined therefore, the demands can be multiplied. As Harris (2007) describes:

> The emotional landscapes of teaching are shaped by social, political and institutional realities, which interact for better or worse with the love, passion and sense of moral purpose that motivate teachers' work. (Harris, 2007, p33)

Schools that have been placed into an Ofsted Special Measures category can often be subjected to all of the factors listed above in a concentrated period of time, with all the attendant implications for the emotional needs of the school and the lack of emotional capacity to meet them.

The variety of school contexts present a range of emotional demands. There are particular aspects of the Primary Head teacher's role, relevant to the case study schools, which emphasise the importance of emotions. As Crawford (2006) writes:

In particular, because of the often intimate, small-scale nature of primary schooling, the primary head teacher is particularly close to leadership situations where his / her emotion is a crucial element. Emotion is crucial to the primary school head teacher in the daily enactment of their role. Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries, handling difficult emotional events (e.g. bereavement, family issues) and managing the emotional responses of themselves and others are often experienced within a setting where they are the most visible person to stakeholders. Interpretation is a key aspect of leadership and emotion, and a head teacher copes daily with situations that have an emotional component. (Crawford, 2006, p25)

Despite these challenges, it is imperative that the head teacher manages successfully. Effective leadership is connected to emotional capacity and emotional capability. Day et al (2000) conclude that 'the empirical evidence… clearly endorses emotional intelligence as a legitimate part of effective leadership.' (Day et al, 2000, p175)

In 'Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change', (2007), Day and Leithwood's account of the research undertaken during the first stage of the International Successful School Principal Project highlights the striking similarity of 'values, aspirations, qualities, achievements and ways of achieving and sustaining success' across a wide range of educational

contexts. Across these contexts, five 'themes of similarity' for successful school leadership are identified:

1. sustaining passionate commitment and personal accountability;

2. maintaining moral purpose and managing tension and dilemmas;

3. being other centred and focussing on learning and development;

4. making emotional and rational investment;

5. emphasising the personal and the functional.

Theme no. 4 deals explicitly with the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between emotional-led *and* rational-led behaviours. This theme includes 'emotional understanding; empathy; trust; being courageous; staying close to the action; interacting on both cognitive and emotional levels with key stakeholder groups; creating safe teaching and learning environments; being innovative.' However, it is apparent that within all of these themes, there is an emotional dimension. As the authors conclude:

> These (themes) suggest that successful principalship requires a combination of cognitive and emotional understandings allied to clear sets of standards and values, the differential application of a cluster

of key strategies, and the abiding presence of a passion for people and education. (Day and Leithwood, 2007, p172)

Reflecting on the importance of emotional leadership, Boddy (2012) gives an account of his journey from a business background into headship. He defines his own headship experience as an emotional journey and concludes by identifying seven emotional intelligence principles that enabled him to achieve success.

Effective school leadership, therefore, depends on a head teacher who can manage the emotional dimension effectively, particularly under duress. As Harris (2007) describes:

> (The school) …requires leadership that focuses on the emotional well being of the school as a priority. It requires an emotionally attuned leader to create conditions of emotional safety, inclusiveness and care in which staff feel valued and supported to be creative and brave in their learning and teaching, and in which young people feel it is acceptable to learn. (Harris, 2007, p15)

2.3   The Performance Context: Evaluating Head Teacher Effectiveness

As set out in the previous chapter, the research context for this study is located in the interaction between the emotional dimension of school leadership and the climate of high accountability in schools, enacted through a failed Ofsted inspection. The fact that the latter has an impact on the former is unremarkable, but the examination of the extent of this impact, and perhaps more importantly, the success of the strategies employed by the head teachers to mitigate it, has the potential to provide insights that may be of wider interest and value. In order to make these judgements, it is necessary to consider how these strategies might be evaluated. In this section, I will consider this in three ways – firstly, the extent to which head teachers can retain agency in a situation of high pressure and challenge, secondly, the impact at this critical juncture of the life and career history of the head teacher, and thirdly, I will consider a framework for the analysis of the performance of the head teacher as he or she attempts to move forward following a failed inspection.

Head teachers carry a large burden of responsibility to effect positive change following a 'critical incident' and to do this they need to retain **agency** in the light of external pressure.

In this context, agency can be defined as the capacity to act, constrained to a greater or lesser extent by external drivers and inhibitors. Priestley (2015) identifies three temporal dimensions of agency;

> First, agency is rooted in past experience; and individuals with a wide repertoire of experience may achieve agency more readily than those without. Secondly, agency is always oriented to the future through the setting of goals and the ability to envisage future possibilities… Third, agency is always acted on in the present, shaped by both what is actually possible given existing resources and constraints and judgements about what is possible. (Priestley, 2015, p135)

In the post failed-inspection context, these three dimensions come sharply into focus, as a result of the overwhelming imperative to secure rapid and substantial improvement. The first and second are largely dependent upon the life and career histories of individual headteachers and the third upon the range and effectiveness of strategies employed as they strive to 'turn around' performance.

The role of professional agency is increasingly seen as a key capability in improving schools, both for teachers and school leaders. The ability and opportunity to influence and reshape the professional environment can support innovation and flexibility. The idea that schools and school leaders

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have the power to innovate and redefine their professional environment has been cited as the reason for academisation and free schools. As the then Education Secretary Michael Gove said in a 2012 speech:

> The principle of autonomy-driven improvement is solidly backed by rigorous international evidence. The best academic studies clearly demonstrate the effect of empowering the frontline. Trust professionals and they will exceed your expectations. (Michael Gove, 4 Jan 2012, Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College, London)

This concept of agency implies independence of thought and analysis, leading to autonomous decision-making, and is increasingly recognised as an important element in the work of the effective school leader. It seems likely, however, that the position of the head teacher in the failing school, is likely to inhibit their ability to exercise this. In the introduction to the special edition of 'Teachers and Teaching' (2015) Toom, PyHalto and Rust write:

> Although agency is more easily recognized in situations where teachers criticize, challenge or resist dominant discourses, norms and practices, or external demands and regulations, it is also manifested in actions in line with them. Both personal and contextual or structural factors shape, facilitate, support or restrict teachers' action and

agency in the different professional contexts of classroom, school or community. (Toom et al, 2015, p616)

The overwhelming importance of leadership and the agency located in the role of head teacher is clearly recognized by researchers, particularly where autonomy and responsibility have been transferred to the role progressively over three decades. It is impossible to consider the life of the school in any depth without considering the head teacher. Sugrue (2005) writes:

School leaders are positioned centrally in the intersection of continuity and change, where they are required to find continuity and stability, to 'keep a particular narrative going' while simultaneously devising alternative scripts both for their professional selves and the communities in which they toil. (Sugrue, 2005, p20)

Whatever the circumstances or contextual variations, head teachers in schools that suffer inspection failure have to cope with the burden of leading their school in a period where rapid improvement is demanded, and publicly monitored, at the same time as their professional and personal reserves were most tested. The levels of emotional resilience demanded of head teachers in this situation are exceptionally high.

In their chapter, 'Sustaining Resilience' in Davies (2007) Day and Schmidt identify the contribution that resilience in the face of setbacks makes to successful head teachers, and refer to the 'persistent and potentially eroding challenges of personal, professional and organizational, social and demographic change over time in varying personal, professional and organizational circumstances.' (Day and Schmidt, 2007, p65).

How much more important and difficult must it be for head teachers who are not able to define themselves as successful, either intrinsically or externally, to demonstrate this resilience in the face of setbacks? In many cases Ofsted failure is not a contextual factor that has to be dealt with by an unfortunate head teacher, but seen as an inevitable consequence of poor performance. An inadequate Ofsted judgement is among the most significant career events experienced by head teachers, and can trigger a seismic shift in a career narrative that had been successful to this point, both in terms of the external judgement and also the individual's self-evaluation.

The examination of the life and career histories of school leaders has increasingly been recognised as a way of understanding the depth of issues that we encounter in school. The analysis of the success and failure of school leaders is strengthened through an understanding of the events that have led the individual to that point, the range and quality of

experiences they draw upon and the values and beliefs that sustain and define them. Gunter, Smith and Tomlinson, in Living Headship' (1999) used the experience of head teachers to frame a conceptualisation of school leadership:

> This book … presents the stories and struggles of head teachers today as being both a legitimate methodology and an alternative, richer understanding than the essentially conservative and debilitating notion of the all-powerful visionary leader. (Gunter, Smith and Tomlinson, 1999, pxi)

Gronn (1999) attempted to understand leadership through an understanding of the process of 'leader formation' and 'leader accession'. The model for leader formation clearly displays the importance that Gronn places on the life history and professional history of the individual in shaping the leader. Although the relevance of the factors identified by Gronn is clear, the developing role of accountability and its impact on conceptions of self, as previously discussed, which may lead to potential impact on agency, is not fully reflected in the model.

Stage 1: Formation

An individual candidate's passage through Socialization agency

FAMILY   SCHOOL

And contact with Reference groups

PEERS   FRIENDS   MENTORS   CONSCIOUSNESS –

                                                 SHAPING MEDIA

Generates a conception of

                    SELF

And lays the basis of a

          STYLE   and   OUTLOOK

                    LEADERSHIP CHARACTER
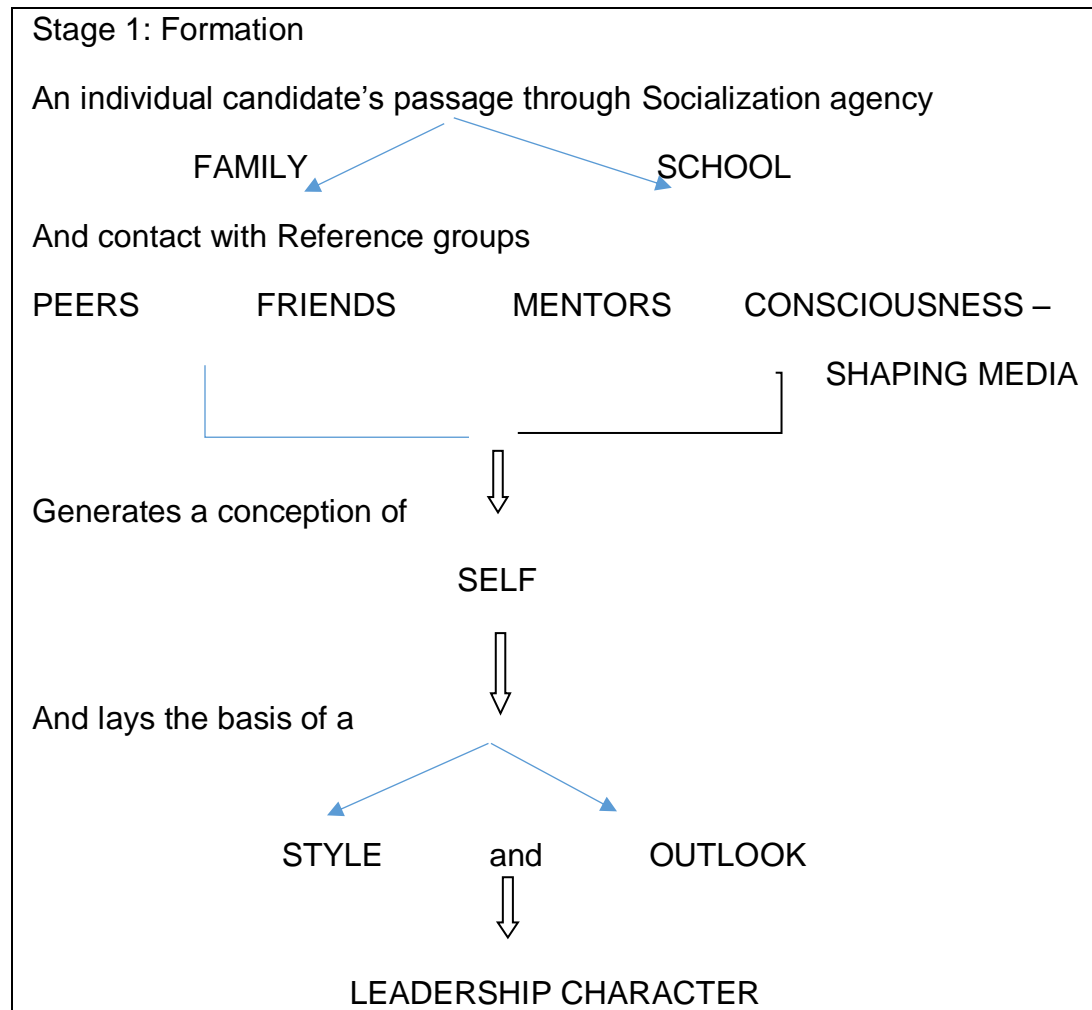
Figure 3: The Making of Educational Leaders, Gronn, 1999, p.35

Nonetheless, this framework has become an important tool for researchers in analysing the professional lives of school leaders, (e.g. Mackenzie-Batterbury, 2012; Ribbins and Sherratt, 2016). As Gronn (1999) writes:

The most powerful reason why biographies of leaders are worthy of consideration is that they take students of leadership to the very heart of an argument at the centre of social theory…This concerns the

nature and constitution of what used to be known as free will or voluntarism…but which now goes by the label of human agency. (Gronn, 1999, p21)

Sugrue (2005) makes a powerful plea that the voice of school leaders should be central to both research and policy-making, in order to preserve agency in difficult times:

…principals have been engaged in ongoing 'fire-fighting', trench warfare, or occupying the swampy lowlands where dangers and hazards continuously lurk in the shadows of everyday life in schools…. In such circumstances, all too frequently, the 'voices' of principals are drowned out or silenced by a cacophony of other, frequently more powerful and influential, 'authorities' who are all too ready to prescribe for the ills of society various 'remedies' that become the responsibility of principals to administer as part of the 'official' curriculum. Thus, prescriptive solutions handed down to principals tie their hands in several respects and leave them little room for either negotiation or professional judgement while autonomy becomes something of a romanticised distant memory (Sugrue, 2005, p4)

This concern is shared by Goodson (2003) who attempts to raise the profile of teachers' life and work histories in educational research, and argues that in a profession in crisis due to increased pressure and change, the voice of practitioners has been neglected, and 'new prescriptions and educational changes that are being legislated work against the history and context of the teacher's work and life.' (Goodson, 2003, p55)

The complex mix of values, identity and experience are placed into a context where the boundaries are increasingly defined through the accountability framework and judged through fealty to central policy. Thus the notion of the head teacher or school leader as autonomous agent is greatly mitigated by his or her role in policy enactment, described by Ball et al (2003) as '… a dynamic and non-linear aspect of the whole complex that makes up the policy process, of which policy in school is just one part'. The complex web of contextual factors in which policy is enacted by the head teacher includes their own professional identity and emotional fitness, as well as the raft of external factors. School leadership is 'an inevitable and important dimension of policy enactment.' (Gu et al, 2014)

However, policy enactment comes with significant challenges for many Heads. A survey of Head teachers by Earley et al (2012) showed that a significant minority of Heads felt that their schools did not have the capacity to work with current policy to support the aims and values of their schools,

and changes to the Inspection framework were viewed with 'general scepticism'.

Moreover, many writers have noted that head teachers are often in the role of enacting the policy in the light of scepticism or hostility from colleagues in school. In the first years of Inspection, Earley (1998) identified a very different attitude towards inspection between teachers and middle managers on the one hand, and heads and senior leaders on the other, with the latter asserting its positive impact on school improvement. Where a school is potentially vulnerable to a negative inspection, the head teacher shoulders the burden of this vulnerability, whilst often feeling unable to admit to it in the presence of colleagues, pupils or other stakeholders. As Harris (2007) says: 'For many leaders feeling vulnerable is an everyday occurrence'. She quotes Clarkson (1994):

> Their sense of competence feels as if it is built on sand, always subject to threat, to exposure, to shame and to public humiliation. When the performance is over, there is only the relief that 'This time I've not been found out. What a lucky break – I've been able to hide the shortfall between what people have come to expect of me and what I feel I can actually deliver'. (Clarkson, 1994, p6)

Whilst many head teachers and teachers would not deny the importance of change and improvement across the education system, in the light of an Ofsted failure, this negative judgement is not so much implied as broadcast to the wider world.

It follows, therefore, that without a professional identity that is simultaneously strong enough to provide constancy and subtle enough to respond appropriately to changes in environmental context, the head teacher (and the school they lead) is exceptionally vulnerable to environmental factors such as a difficult Ofsted Inspection.

In order to understand how effective the head teacher's response is, and the extent to which it is influenced by the accountability structure and the agency, it is necessary to form an understanding of successful leadership practices, particularly in the context of a school in which rapid improvement is required. Many writers have proposed frameworks to aid the understanding and effective analysis of school leadership. (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999; Bush and Glover, 2002; Davies 2004; Bush, 2011). Murphy and Meyers (2008) summarise some of the many analytic frameworks to examine organizational turnaround – Ross and Kami (1973), Goodman (1982), Crandall (1995) Schumann and White (1995), Slater (1999), Zimmerman (1991), Khandwalla (1983) and others. Fullan (2008) suggests strategies and behaviour that he has identified as leading to

positive change in schools, Day et al (2016) point out that a combination of transformational and instructional leadership is necessary to bring about long-term improvement, and school effectiveness literature has a range of other possible frameworks.

In the previous chapter, I outlined the model suggested by Leithwood et al (2010) as a framework for analysing the effectiveness of school leadership in the case study schools, which is the framework that I will use for analysis of the leadership of the case study head teachers. I consider that it is well suited for the context of this study due firstly to the presence of a specific 'Emotions' path, and the focus on sustained 'turnaround' of performance. Developed in response to the study of 'turnaround' schools, the authors make it clear that the absence or ineffectiveness of leadership within the four paths described – rational, emotions, organizational and family / community – will not only inhibit improvement, but will also lead to decline. As they conclude:

> Without attention to the rational, emotional, organizational, and community conditions that affect every school, any change will be short-lived. Any gains in performance will be temporary, and another false dawn of recovery will demoralize and disappoint those who have worked hard and long to achieve it. (Leithwood et al, 2010, p255)

Rational School Conditions refer to a school's routine organization, and relate closely to curriculum, teaching and learning. There is strong evidence (Hattie 2009, Elmore and Fuhrman, 2001) that a focus on instruction and a relentless pursuit of academic improvement at the centre of a clear vision is key to improving student outcomes, through the employment of leadership practices that are most likely to improve academic conditions - developing and communicating shared goals, establishing high expectations, and helping to clarify shared goals about academic achievement. Instructional leadership is 'essential' (Bush and Glover, 2014) As Barber and Mourshed concluded in the McKinsey and Company report 'How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top' (2007):

> The top performing school systems recognized that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction; they understood which interventions were effective to improve instruction – coaching, practical teacher training, developing stronger school leaders, and enabling teachers to learn from each other – and then found ways to deliver those interventions across their school systems. (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p26)

School leaders that are performing well in this area, therefore, are those that have a clear picture of teaching and learning, which is communicated

to the staff along with an unambiguous articulation of high expectations. They prioritise the professional development of the staff and embody this focus through their own leadership behaviours.

However, despite the importance of these strategies and leadership practices, this is only one strand of the model in which all are necessary.

As discussed earlier, **Emotional School Conditions** have a profound effect on leadership and school performance. Slater (1999) identifies 'the centrality of trust, positive relationships, and supportive cultures as a prerequisite of improved and, ultimately, exceptional performance.' Successful school leaders create a 'shared sense of direction' by securing emotional commitment.

> Effective leaders know that the work of turning around a school and taking it to the highest level of performance is predominantly emotional work. The need to win hearts and minds is critical for substantial change to take place. (Leithwood et al, 2010, p243)

'Hearts and minds' work sits alongside practical considerations. **Organizational conditions** relate to teachers' working conditions – structures, culture, policies and standard operating procedures. Harris (2009) argues that the development of an effective organizational culture

sustains improvement, and effective organizational conditions enable staff to work collaboratively and share practice.

Southworth (2009) argues that the focus on learning-centred leadership is dependent upon effective school structures and systems. In this respect, he is echoing the need for two of the four conditions to be intertwined. As he writes:

> The contribution of organizational structures and systems is that they create and sustain the conditions for staff and students to work effectively and fairly. (They) are not inert policies; they are active processes which are used by all staff and which create a sense of coherence and consistency. (Southworth, in Davies et al, 2009, p101)

Organizational conditions must enable the school to cope successfully with inevitable change. Schlecty (2007) warns of the dangers of schools which do not have the organizational capacity to cope well with 'disruptive innovations'. As Law and Glover (2000) write: 'For an agreed vision and shared vision to have any value or meaning, it is essential that the organizational atmosphere is conducive to participation and consultation.'

Moos and Kofod, in 'How School Principals sustain success over time' (ed. Moos, Johansson and Day, 2011) describe the way that systems and policies support teacher collaboration through meeting structures,

communication systems and policy development. Thus organizational conditions are entwined with rational conditions, and will help develop the trust highlighted within emotional conditions.

The fourth path, **Family and Community Conditions,** relates to the fact that up to 50% of variation in student achievement can be accounted for by external factors (Harris, Allen & Goodall, 2008) but recognizes that schools are able to have an influence on these factors. Schools that engage with the wider community, particularly parents, and establish a strong connection can use this lever to bring about improvement. This is particularly effective when the focus links to instruction, giving parents the opportunity to influence their child's progress, but also relates to communication, especially detailed feedback on how their child is doing. The school leader is the key driver if this work is to be effective.

Many studies have identified the importance of parental involvement (e.g. Jeynes, 2005; Middlewood, 1999). Writing in the 'International Guide to School Achievement' (ed. Hattie and Anderman, 2013) Martin identifies what constitutes successful home-school partnerships:

> It seems partnerships focussed on learning and behaviour yield more significant effects, as do partnerships aimed at increasing parents' expectations for their children… Research also suggests the

importance of genuine partnerships between school and family…
being mindful of the key differentiation between parent attendance (a
low form of engagement) and parent participation (a rich form of
engagement). (Martin, in (ed) Hattie and Anderman, 2013, p100)

Despite the difficulties there may be in engaging with parents in an
atmosphere of trust following a difficult inspection event, the importance of
this dimension in securing effective improvement suggests that it cannot
be neglected.

Leithwood et al conclude their description of their framework by stressing
that whilst all four conditions are essential in their own right, all are
interrelated, and the **alignment of conditions** is necessary. A failure to
realise this will limit the ability to improve performance. They identify three
phases of school turnaround:

Stage 1: Declining Performance; Stage 2: An early turnaround or crisis
stabilization; Stage 3: A late turnaround or sustaining and improving
performance.

They argue that unless school leaders pay attention to all four sets of
conditions and the strategies that can achieve success within them, they
will not deliver sustained performance.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, I will set out the focus of my research, the methodology used in the research design, and describe the way in which data was collected and analysed. I will also consider issues of trustworthiness and ethics.

3.1 Research Focus

As an inexperienced researcher, who has spent his professional life working in a large number of schools, I was strongly motivated by the desire to understand phenomena that I have encountered regularly in schools. Why do some schools and school leaders cope so well with difficult circumstances, finding them stimulating and motivating, and others find them traumatic and dispiriting? Why is the self-perception of some head teachers so subject to events? How do some head teachers find the resilience to cope with exceptionally challenging circumstances and events, and can they 'pass on' this skill to others? Almost every encounter with schools will raise this sort of question, and many others, questions that encourage one to dig deeper and find out more about the circumstances in that particular 'case' that shed light on the question.

The purpose of this research is to explore the emotional journeys of head teachers in the context of Ofsted failure. It is intended to explore the

emotional impact on the individual, and whether that impact is sustained and permanent. It is also intended to shed light on the impact of the performativity culture that has taken root in English schools, and particularly where schools and individuals in schools are judged to have failed within that culture.

The key questions I wish to address through this research are as follows:

- To what extent is the head teacher able to maintain agency in the light of a negative professional event, specifically a 'failed' Ofsted, and the accountability pressures it invites?

- What is the long-term impact of Ofsted failure on the career and future effectiveness of the head teacher?

- How important is the ability of the head teacher to manage the emotional dimension of a professionally traumatic event?

- What are the key leadership practices that enable successful head teachers to recover from a failed inspection and move the school forward?

3.2 Research paradigms

Having identified the key questions sparked by my interest in the topic and my belief in the importance of the subject, I have considered the nature of the research and the range of methods that would provide evidence of sufficient depth, quantity and quality. In order to do this, it was first

necessary to understand the underlying assumptions that informed my research perspective.

Cohen et al (2005) identify 'two conceptions of social reality' that face researchers at the outset of their study, and within these contrasting conceptions there lie a range of logical assumptions – ontological, epistemological and methodological. The researcher's own view of the nature of reality (ontology) inevitably influences the relationship between the researcher and their knowledge (epistemology), in turn influencing the way that the knowledge is acquired (methodology).

These two conceptions can be characterised as objectivist (or positivist) on the one hand, and subjectivist (or interpretivist) on the other. Burrell and Morgan (1979) defined the difference between the two perspectives:

> Thus, we can identify perspectives in social science which entail a view of human beings responding in a mechanistic or even deterministic fashion to the situations encountered in their external world. This view tends to be one in which human beings and their experiences are regarded as products of the environment: one in which humans are conditioned by their external circumstances. This extreme perspective can be contrasted with one which attributes to human beings a much more creative role: with a perspective where

'free will' occupies the centre of the stage: where man is regarded as the creator of his environment, the controller as opposed to the controlled, the master rather than the marionette. (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p2)

Guba and Lincoln (1998) label these broad competing paradigms as Positivism and Constructionism respectively. Positivism is grounded in the scientific model of investigation, postulating that experimentation, observation and reason based on experience provide the basis for understanding human behaviour. Constructionism is an attempt to understand the subjective world of human experience and to interpret what the subject is thinking, and the meaning they are making within their own context.

The research in this study is located within a constructionist epistemology and an interpretivist theoretical perspective. The focus on individual head teachers, and how their emotional responses to a situation of professional crisis enabled them to make sense and respond to it provide a compelling argument that meaning is constructed by the participants themselves. My concern is 'with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself' (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2005, p7).

In making this judgement, it is necessary to recognise the limitations of the interpretivist stance. The fact that the experience gathered is often from a small number of people within a particular context makes it very difficult to generalize to other situations, which potentially undermines the value of the research. As Giddens (1976) writes:

> No specific person can possess detailed knowledge of anything more than the particular sector of society in which he participates, so that there still remains the task of making into an explicit and comprehensive body of knowledge that which is only known in a partial way by lay actors themselves. (Giddens, 1976, in Cohen et al, 2005, p27)

Cohen et al (2005) draw attention to the argument that a social situation cannot be simply regarded in isolation, independent of external structures, which have an impact, and this would seem to be the case in schools and classrooms as much as anywhere, where there are influences beyond the immediate arena. Moreover, the influence of the researcher can be very strong, and can have a distorting influence on the subject matter and on the way it is interpreted and presented.

There are also potential issues regarding the methodologies that are commonly employed by interpretivist researchers, some of which relate to

practicalities. For example, the fact that collecting and analysing data is very time consuming and can be problematic. Moreover, the lack of generalizability of the research can make it more difficult to engage policy makers and administrators.

Nonetheless, despite the criticisms, there are strengths in the Interpretivist epistemology that are particularly relevant to this study. Many writers, such as Fullan (1997) have described the complexity of educational institutions, and others have drawn attention to the importance of understanding the views of the participants. It is also the case that it has not always been easy to understand the reasons for variation in the performance and behaviour of schools. Interpretivist research is able to provide in depth information about complex situations, which has due reference to the perspective and experience of the participants. Since the research is not limited to the testing of a particular hypothesis, it is possible to discover and pursue other factors that may be important. The researcher is able to provide a detailed in-depth account that encompasses an understanding of the experiences of people and groups, and identifies and describes contextual factors. This ability to understand the complexity of human interaction and organization and place it in a wider context is described by Bryman (2004):

> …when the social scientist adopts an interpretative stance, he or she
> is not simply laying bare how members of a social group interpret the

world around them. The social scientist will almost certainly be aiming to place the interpretations that have been elicited into a social scientific frame. There is a double interpretation going on: the researcher is providing an interpretation of others' interpretations. (Bryman, 2004, p15)

It is also possible to identify wider dimensions such as developments over time, or responses to changes in circumstances and context, and to use these to increase our understanding, rather than seeing them as a variable that has to be accounted for to ensure that research is valid. Indeed, it is possible to shift the focus of research during the course of a study in response to such developments. This freedom from the constraints of the scientific method which requires data to be collected to test a pre-formed hypothesis, enables the Interpretivist researcher to explore how and why phenomena occur, and to explore the causes and consequences.

There are also methodological advantages to Interpretivist research. Data can be collected in naturalistic settings, and small-scale studies have validity. The actors in the social situation are also participants and contributors, and the process can have a beneficial impact on them and increase their own understanding.

Finally, there is a value-led and ethical dimension. The values inherent in Interpretivist research are crucial. To exclude values, according to Guba and Lincoln (1998) would:

> …not be countenanced. To do so would be inimical to the interests of the powerless and of 'at-risk' audiences, whose original (emic) constructions deserve equal consideration with those of other, more powerful audiences and of the enquirer (etic). (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p214)

The impact of these values gives a strong ethical dimension to the practice of Interpretivist research, where research is carried out openly and with the knowledge and involvement of the subject.

3.3   Methodology – Why Case Study?

There are a number of reasons why I have chosen to use a case study approach to address these questions. Not least among them is the fact that, as Otley and Berry (1994) point out, circumstances sometimes give a researcher an opportunity where access is given to examine a particular phenomenon, and I found myself in this fortunate position. Moreover, I was able to examine the phenomenon of head teachers' emotional journeys in a particular context, namely the specific context of failure in Ofsted, and the broader context of the accountability culture. This meets one of Yin's

(1994) key characteristics of case study research, namely that it aims not only to explore certain phenomena, but to understand them within a certain context.

I have used Bassey's (1999) definition of Case study:

An educational case study is an empirical enquiry which is:

- conducted within a localised boundary of space and time (ie a singularity),

- into *interesting* aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system,

- mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons,

- in order to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy makers or of theoreticians who are working to these ends, and

- such that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able:

a) to explore *significant* features of the case,

b) to create *plausible* interpretations of what is found,

c) to test for the *trustworthiness* of these interpretations,

d) to construct a *worthwhile* argument or story,

e) to relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature,

f) to convey *convincingly* to an audience this argument or story, and

g) to provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments.

(Bassey, 1999, p22)

It is particularly suited to satisfy 'the desire to comprehend social phenomena in both their complexity and 'natural' context.' (Miller and Brewer, 2003, or when 'the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context' (Burns, 2000).

Yin (2004) defines case study as 'an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident….' However, it will have the 'singularity' that Bassey refers to, described by Burns (2000) as a 'bounded system', and will usually focus on a location and a defined period of time.

In selecting a case study approach, it is important to consider aspects that are potentially problematic. Firstly, the charge can be made that case study is a term that has insufficiently clarity to be useful, and covers a broad range of research practice, a 'catch-all category' (Burns, 2000). Secondly,

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the case study researcher has to establish that their methods and findings have rigour and credibility. As Burns points out, 'case study accounts can be decried as subjective, biased, impressionistic, and lacking in precision. There are dangers in 'going native' and thereby losing perspective.' (Burns, 2000, p477). I felt particularly wary of this charge given that my professional history has placed me as an actor in similar situations on a number of occasions, from a number of different perspectives.

A third issue is the extent to which the outcomes of case studies are generalizable. Miller and Brewer (2003) write that 'one case study provides an observation that can be generalised to a general theory', but Bryman (2004) raises the question:

> How can a single case possibly be representative so that it might yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases? The answer, of course, is that they cannot. It is important to appreciate that case study researchers do not delude themselves that it is possible to identify typical cases that can be used to represent a certain class of objects… (Bryman, 2004, p70)

Case Study can be seen as an organic process that develops as the researcher defines and refines the initial research question or hypothesis, analyses the evidence and refocuses the research. This refining, and

readjusting process continues throughout the research, representing, in the words of Bassey (1999) an 'iterative process'.

Yin (2004) identifies this interaction between data collection, data analysis and ongoing research design as the aspect of case study which provides for 'huge differences' from other research methods, and it is in this that perhaps the greatest strength of case study research lies, giving the flexibility to cope with, and respond to, the unexpected results that are thrown up by complex situations. Stake (1995) acknowledges the place of the central research question, but because the boundaries of the research are set by the boundaries of the case rather than the question, new issues can emerge and be incorporated and explored, and the question can be reframed or a new question be set.

The triangulation that is provided by the use of multiple sources of evidence is also important when issues of validity and reliability are considered, to the point where the use of a range of evidence is, by definition, part of case study. As Burns (2000) writes: 'It is a poor study that uses only one source of evidence…. The use of multiple sources is the major strength of the case study approach.' In my research, despite the fact that the head teachers clearly provided the dominant voice, the evidence from Inspection reports and other external data about the schools provided an essential backdrop to the main interviews with the head teachers.

The case study provides the ideal opportunity for Geertz's (1988) 'thick description', a description of a human behaviour that explains not just the behaviour, but its context as well, such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider. There is an opportunity, indeed an expectation, that a case study researcher will provide a rich, detailed account of the case, and present it in such a way that the reader can understand the way that the actors interact with the context and one another, and can therefore make their own judgements about the relevance of the study to other settings, i.e. its generalisability.

Case studies strive towards a 'holistic understanding of cultural systems in action' and the research is usually presented in order to reflect this, with an emphasis on narrative, chronological accounts, often with an autobiographical element. This provides a greater opportunity for 'thick description' as the researcher has a greater element of freedom in some respects. As Yin (2004) writes: '…because the report does not have to follow any particular form, the opportunity to compose case studies can be more exciting and call on greater creativity than reporting about research that has been based on most other methods.'

Miller and Brewer (2003) point out that 'It is at the point of determining the criteria for judging the success of the case study analysis that the case study method encounters most criticism'. It is certainly true that the

outcome is unlikely to be a clear-cut conclusion that brooks no further argument, but this is not, of course, the purpose of case study. Rather it is likely to be a 'rich descriptive real-life holistic account … that offers insights and illuminates meanings which may in turn become tentative hypotheses for further research, possibly in a more quantitative mode.' (Miller and Brewer, 2003)

To return to Yin's (2004) purposes, the completed case study will either describe, explain or illuminate, or some combination of the three, in such a way as to be of some further use, and allow the reader to make their own interpretation:

> You need to present the evidence in your case study with sufficient clarity to allow the reader to judge independently your interpretation of the data.. (Yin, 2004, p16)

Linked to the issue of interpretation bias is the issue of generalization, as Yin cautions: 'One of the most common misconceptions for you to overcome is believing that case studies are to represent a formal "sample" from some larger universe,' (Yin, 2004). However, Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) recognize the need for an element of common-sense reasoning to bring about 'naturalistic generalization'.

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Finally, case study research can give the opportunity to deal with issues of great complexity, by incorporating a wide range of evidence, without allegiance to any strict methodological paradigm, and examining it in great detail. Burgess (1984) identified the fact that case studies can emphasize 'the importance of the circumstantial and irrational alongside the logical and systematic, and portray the disorderly relationship between theory and method.'

In short, the case study is not designed to produce neat answers, because it is employed in a complex situation where neat answers do not exist, rather it provides illumination for the observer and the reader to enable their understanding to grow. This was the challenge facing me in my research. I will return to how I have addressed some of these issues in section 3.6 – Trustworthiness.

3.4   The Cases

The four head teachers in my study all found themselves leading schools that received a Category 4 judgement from Ofsted – Inadequate. Three of the schools were given a Notice to Improve, and the other was placed in Special Measures.

There were some similarities in the career patterns of all four heads in the case studies. Despite coming to headship from a range of experiences,

none had developed their ambition for headship from an early stage, and all had almost stumbled into it as a result of their promotion through a variety of increasingly senior roles. Even when headship had been recognised as a possibility, it had not been a major aspect of their preferred professional identity, defined as 'an amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence, and institutional values, which may change according to role and circumstance.' (Day, 2004, p46). For example, of the four, the one who had developed their ambition for Headship at the earliest point in their career had come to an agreement with their spouse that the first one to achieve headship would be supported by the other, so had embraced the possibility that it might not be their destiny. In the early part of their careers, none of them saw themselves explicitly as future heads and their professional identity was not predicated upon their eventual accession to headship.

All the head teachers in the case studies identified reasons why their school had failed the Inspection. However, prior to the Inspection the negative judgement had not been fully expected, and in two of the four cases, the outcome came as a surprise. In discussing the reasons for failure, they all pointed to key events during the Inspection, most of which were beyond their immediate control – senior members of staff delivering inadequate lessons, administrative staff making 'Safeguarding' errors etc.

In the months and years following the inspection, although there were inevitable differences between the experiences of the schools and the head teachers, the events surrounding the inspection and its aftermath continued to exert an influence.

One of the Head teachers is no longer working in education – he remained at the school for almost three years following the inspection and led it through a series of monitoring visits, receiving a mixed set of reports, including another full inspection at which the school was formally taken out of special measures, and given a judgement of satisfactory (Grade 3). Despite the improvement, it was clear that concerns remained, particularly around the quality of leadership. At the next full inspection almost two years later, the school remained in category 3, now defined as Requiring Improvement. He retired almost immediately following that inspection and an interim Head is now in place. It was not possible to contact him to arrange a follow up interview.

Two of the heads were still in post in the same schools. One school received a judgement of Good at the next inspection, a significant (and unusual) leap forward. The Head in this school was the most experienced and well-established of all the Heads, and was the one who disagreed most vehemently with the picture that the inspection outcome painted of her school, despite accepting that the inspectors had technically applied the

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framework correctly. From the beginning, she felt that the school remained a good school that had fallen foul of one aspect of Ofsted policy, and remained adamant that the fundamental course of the school was unchanged by the inspection. However, the ramifications of the inspection for herself, the school community as a whole and for some individual members of staff were significant, and led to a period of turmoil and considerable upheaval.

The other head who remained in post has also received a judgement of 'Good', although this followed a period during which the school was judged to be requiring improvement, reflecting a steady improvement over time. As the least experienced of the case study heads, she was also the one who most clearly recognized the picture of the school in the report, and accepted the inadequacies it exposed. She appeared to have undergone the most significant change, and identified the most profound effects of the process. The school is now in a strong position and stakeholders are very willing to acknowledge the changes that she has brought about.

The final head in the case study schools had also overseen the journey from Ofsted Inadequate to Satisfactory, and left shortly afterwards for another headship post in a newly-opened, much smaller school in a different area of the country. Her new school was judged to be Good in its first inspection. Her former school was also judged to be Good in December

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2013. Her experience of leading a school through Ofsted 'failure' and out the other side (so to speak) appeared to have been a profoundly unpleasant and unsatisfying one, although she was able to recognize the purpose and broad impact of the experience.

3.5   Research Design

As described above, the research has taken the form of a small number of case studies of head teachers in schools that recently had an Ofsted inspection, and received an overall Inadequate judgement, either Notice to Improve or Special Measures. Research began at the earliest possible point after the inspection and continued in detail during the following school year and beyond. The research set out to answer the key questions outlined earlier (p98), by examining evidence from the cases. Each of the questions focusses on the head teacher, and relates both to their effectiveness and their emotional responses. The key source of research evidence therefore was semi-structured interviews with the head teachers at key points during the process. This enabled me to gain valuable insights into their own perspective on events as they unfolded over time. Given the nature of the events and the emotional dimension of the response, it was important to use other sources of evidence to contextualise the head teachers' experience. I therefore gathered a range of evidence (detailed below, p122-124) in the form of Ofsted and HMI monitoring and inspection

reports, interviews with other stakeholders and available school data, such as attainment outcomes.

In order to compare the extent to which the head teacher is influenced by both their career narrative and the nature of the inspection, it was helpful to compare schools that are broadly similar in size, nature and context. Despite their unique aspects, all 4 schools are medium-size maintained primary schools with above average indices of deprivation, but not in the highest categories of socio-economic need. All are located in towns rather than cities and have not previously been in Ofsted Category 4. I contacted the schools when the reports appeared on the Ofsted website. This inevitably led to a time delay of up to 6 weeks from the Inspection before my first contact. I was fortunate that all of the head teachers were willing to share their experiences so generously.

The head teachers appeared to respond with openness and honesty, particularly as time went on in the process, and to value the fact that they were able to express their views anonymously. However, despite trusting their integrity, I was aware that it can be difficult to be completely honest in situations where emotional self-analysis is called upon, even with oneself.

> As tools for uncovering the truth they (accounts of situations in which individuals are deeply entrenched) have decided limitations…when

required to test their theories laypeople do so in a selective fashion, often choosing only that evidence that is consistent with their hunches and ignoring that which is counter to them. (Cohen and Morrison, 2005, p182)

Therefore, it was important to use the evidence that gave a broader picture. In this case, the Ofsted reports gave a particular perspective, acting as both a central driver in the story but also a key external source of evidence, alongside school achievement data, discussions with the wider school team and evidence from wider school information, such as websites and parents' letters.

The key source of evidence arose from the semi-structured interviews carried out with all head teachers. I carried out a pilot interview with a head teacher colleague from the Local Authority I was working with. He had been the head of a school which had had a negative inspection, although it was not the most recent one. Following this interview, I restructured some questions to make the interview more open-ended and to encourage the head teachers to be open and discursive, particularly about their emotional responses, although I found that this developed over subsequent interviews.

The following table indicates the timeline of interviews:

	Time from Inspection
Report published on Ofsted website	4 weeks
First contact with head teacher	6 weeks
First interview	8 weeks
Second interview	1 – 1 ½ terms
Third Interview	1 year – 15 months
Fourth Interview (two head teachers only)	2 ½ years

Table 2: Timeline of Interviews

- **Interview 1:** This took place as soon as possible after the report had been published, within four weeks in all cases. However, when schools are placed into a Category 4, the report is usually delayed to allow for careful checking, any appeals and so on. In practice, this interview took place within 8 - 10 weeks of the inspection itself. In this interview, the questions primarily focussed on the head teacher giving an account of the Inspection experience.

I used open-ended questions to encourage the head teachers to share their experiences in their own way, and to enable them to feel comfortable with the process. I also left myself room to adapt the questions and add supplementary questions as the interviews progressed. The initial questions are printed below:

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Describe briefly your career to date

At what point have you been happiest in your career? Least happy?

At what point have you been most / least effective?

How would you describe yourself as a leader?

Briefly describe your experience of the last inspection that you had (before the most recent one).

How did you feel in the run-up to the recent inspection?

Describe when you heard about this inspection. How did you feel?

Describe the first contact with the lead inspector. How did you feel?

Can you describe your own personal experience of the inspection?

Do you think your experience was different from other people in the school? If so, in what way?

How did you feel about the way that you were treated by the inspection process?

How did you feel about the overall judgements?

At this point, what do you think the impact of the inspection on the school will be?

At this point, what do you think the impact of the inspection on you personally will be?

Describe how you felt during the inspection.

Describe how you felt during the feedback.

Describe how you have felt since the inspection.

What has changed for you as a result of the inspection process?

How does your experience of inspection compare to other experiences in your professional life? In your life outside work? Can you draw comparisons with other experiences you have had?

What has been the impact of the inspection on the people around you? (both at work and at home).

What progress has the school made since the Inspection? Are you happy with the rate of progress?

Where do you see yourself in 5 years time? How has the experience of this inspection affected that?

- **Interview 2:** This took place in the following term. At this point, there had been formal involvement from a Local Authority adviser, and the school had formally submitted an Action Plan. 3 head teachers had attended an Ofsted seminar for Category 4 schools. The purpose of the seminar was to give advice on the Action Plan and the evidence required at the next inspection. The remaining school did not receive an invite to a similar event, but no reason was given. In this interview, there was a greater emphasis on the career and life history of the head teacher, and their future plans.

The initial question was an invitation for the head teacher to update of progress and key events, followed by a discussion of their own emotional journey during this time, and I ended the interview by asking them about their expectations for the future, both for the school and themselves.

- **Interview 3:** This took place between 12 and 15 months after the inspection. At this point none of the schools had received their follow-up inspection, but all had a new set of results. We discussed their career histories in detail. The main focus was on the progress that the school had made since the inspection, and the strengths and weaknesses at this point. As in interview 2, the discussions began with a recap since the previous meeting and ended with their expectations for the future, on both an institutional and a personal level.

- **Interview 4**: I was able to interview two of the Head teachers a further 18 months after Interview 3, one in person and one by telephone – the other two had left their posts and I was unable to speak to them. Although I took notes, these interviews were not recorded. This was a brief retrospective conversation, which gave them the opportunity to reflect upon their experience overall.

I used a recording device during the interviews, and the interviews were then professionally transcribed.

I used a process of 'open coding' as I reviewed and analysed the data – identifying and revising emerging themes. The outcomes of this analysis helped structure the questions for subsequent interviews.

Through this process I attempted to reflect the experiences of the head teachers as they went through the process of inspection and its impact over time. In particular, I highlighted key aspects of their leadership practices as they emerged from the interviews.

In addition to the interviews with the head teachers, I also used a range of other sources of evidence. These varied depending on the context of each school and the availability of evidence.

In all schools, end of Key Stage 2 attainment data was gathered. This is publicly available in the DfE performance tables. I used the proportion of pupils who achieved Level 4 and above in English and Maths as the key measure for comparison, and to judge progress.

The Ofsted report had been published shortly before my first visit to the school and represented a key source of evidence. All schools had a subsequent inspection within two years. Although this did not take place until after my final visit to the schools, it provided a useful review of progress.

I reviewed the school websites and communication available from the school to parents and the community. This was particularly useful to gauge the effectiveness of progress in the family / community 'path'.

In my first visits to the schools, I interviewed a number of other stakeholders, and asked them to give their account of the inspection experience, in particular the impact it had had on them and their colleagues. I did not ask direct questions about the head teacher, or invite them to comment on the effectiveness of the school, either in general or in the context of the inspection. I did ask them for their view about the future. In School A, I interviewed the Deputy Head and a class teacher. Both had

left the school by the time of my second visit, the Deputy to take early retirement, the teacher resigned when she left to have a baby.

In School B, I interviewed the school administrator, who had been a key actor during the inspection, particularly because of her safeguarding role in the school. In School C, I interviewed the Chair of Governors, who also worked at the school, and in School D, I interviewed the Deputy Head, who also left teaching shortly after the inspection.

As described earlier, I used the model of school leadership set out by Leithwood et al (2010) to frame the analysis of the cases. The four sets of school conditions, set out in four 'paths', give a model of leadership effectiveness that has enabled me to make judgements about the leadership evident in each case, leading up to, during and following the inspection. As the authors write; 'working on the conditions in each of the four categories can improve the quality of students' school and classroom experiences and can lead to more effective learning plus higher organizational performance.' (Leithwood et al, 2010, p236)

Within each of the paths, I used the key questions below as prompts to gauge leadership effectiveness, to form the basis of my analysis.

Rational School Conditions

- How effectively does the head teacher diagnose strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning?

- How effectively is the development of teaching and learning?

- To what extent is the head teacher a recognised 'expert' in pedagogy, or calls upon expert support within the leadership team?

- How effectively has the school promoted the professional development of teachers, and the development of a professional learning community?

- How clearly has the head teacher articulated their vision and values 'relating to high expectations for all students?'

Emotional School Conditions

- How successfully has the head teacher embedded a high-risk / high-trust culture?

- How well has the head teacher developed and nurtured 'trusting and authentic relationships'?

- How well has the head teacher developed a supportive culture, taking into account staff vulnerabilities and personal needs?

- How effectively has the head teacher managed their own emotional needs to ensure a positive impact on performance?

Organizational School Conditions

- How well does the school infrastructure make it easy for staff to support improvement efforts?

- How well do schools' organizational conditions support teacher collegiality and collaboration?

- What evidence is there of teacher collaboration to share practice and improve performance?

- How well do timetables, structures and administrative practices support student learning and teacher performance?

Family and Community Conditions

- To what extent does the head teacher recognise the importance of family and community conditions?

- How has the school made a connection with their wider community?

- How did the school relate to their wider community during the experience of inspection?

3.6   Timeline and organization of data

Having identified Leithwood et al's (2010) Leadership Conditions as the analytical framework, as described above, I used these to develop matrices to structure my analysis of the data and to enable comparisons at different stages and across different schools. This approach enabled me to make the comparisons which form the basis of Chapter 8. The matrix in Table 3 enabled me to compare head teachers at the same point in time, and Table 4 enabled me to compare the responses of each head teacher over time. I have included summary matrices as an Appendix.

Before Inspection: Capacity / Priority				
School Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family Community Conditions
A / Cath				
B / Diane				
C / Karen				
D / Rob				

Table 3: Analytical matrix comparing head teachers at the same fixed point.

Head teacher:				
	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family Community Conditions
Interview 1				
Interview 2				
Interview 3				

Table 4: Analytical matrix to compare head teacher responses over time

3.7   Trustworthiness

In the overview of case study above, a number of potential issues were highlighted which, if not addressed, can cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the outcomes of this type of research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify four questions that researchers have traditionally posed to ensure that they can establish trustworthiness, and the criteria that is used to respond to them within the 'conventional' paradigm:

Truth Value – how can the researcher establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings – does the inquiry have **internal validity**?

Applicability – to what extent are the findings applicable in other contexts – does it have **external validity?**

Consistency – would the findings be repeated in the same (or similar) context – does it have **reliability?**

Neutrality – how can we be sure that findings are determined only by subjects and conditions of the inquiry – does it have **objectivity?**

For each of these criterion areas, the authors suggest refinements that are more appropriate for the naturalist paradigm, namely **credibility, transferability, dependability,** and **confirmability**. They outline a range of strategies to operationalize these criteria:

Credibility: three activities are identified for 'increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced…: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation'. In my research, I employed all three activities. Firstly, prolonged engagement – the active period of research lasted for at least eighteen months in all schools. During this period, I had the opportunity to build trust and to recognise personal distortions. It also gave me the opportunity to recognise the context in detail. Secondly, persistent observation – over the time I was engaged with the research, I was able to engage with the issues in depth, not least because of the extended nature of the interviews. This enabled me to identify the most relevant and important elements of the situation. Finally, triangulation – although the primary source of evidence was the account of the head

teacher, I used a range of other sources, including interviews with other actors, data, reports and school published material.

Transferability: Lincoln and Guba explicitly recognise the difficulty of establishing transferability through a case study, where context is vital, and the researcher can only know the context of the original study. It is enough for the researcher to provide 'thick' description so that the study can be compared to the situation in other contexts, to 'provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers.' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p316).

In order to address this issue, I have provided information about the context of each school and head teacher so that the reader can make their own judgement about the transferability to another context. I have used information from a range of sources as previously described. Within my interviews, I have also explored the careers to date of the head teachers, and the personal experiences that have influenced them.

Dependability: Some of the methods proposed by Lincoln and Guba to establish dependability are difficult to implement in a small-scale case study, carried out by a single researcher, for example the use of an inquiry audit, or the use of 'stepwise replication'. However, the argument that by demonstrating validity, the researcher has, in practice, established

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dependability is relevant here. Moreover, the analysis of four completely separate cases which take place in a similar context serves as an initial 'sense-check' of dependability. Although the nature of case study research allows for the cases to follow lines of enquiry that emerge during the collection of data, the similarities of context enabled me to make comparisons, and have confidence that the research has met this test.

Confirmability: Lincoln and Guba refer to two definitions of objectivity, firstly the 'quantitative' sense – do we have the perspective of a number of individuals; and secondly the 'qualitative' sense – is the data itself reliable and factual, and therefore confirmable. The key sources of data used in the case studies were interviews, which are recorded and fully transcribed, alongside publicly available information such as Ofsted reports and achievement data. Whilst it is not possible to remove the possibility of my own values and context having an impact on the analysis of the data, the research data is potentially subject to audit and challenge.

Although it is clear that the consideration of these factors identifies limitations in the methodology I have chosen, for example the difficulty in transferring the findings to another context, it also highlights the richness and depth of the data, and the value in understanding the story of the head teachers within their situation. This depth of understanding, vital to

addressing the research questions, is the key advantage of this methodology.

3.8   Ethics and Confidentiality

I have taken care to ensure that the research has been gathered in accordance with BERA's (2011) ethical guidelines. In addition to the general principles which govern ethical research, there were a number of specific ethical issues that required consideration. Firstly, by definition, this research was intended to examine the response of head teachers at a time when they were under severe emotional pressure, and this imposed a duty of care on me as the researcher. There were a number of occasions during the interviews when participants would become emotional, particularly when recalling key events. I ensured that all participants understood their right to withdraw at any time, both from an interview and the research as a whole, and to end interviews if they did not want to continue. On the occasions when they were describing an emotionally intense experience, I ensured that I was respectful and did not press them on issues that they did not want to discuss further.

Secondly, as a fellow practitioner, and particularly one who was working in an advisory capacity with schools during the time of the interviews, it was important to ensure that the limits of my specific role as a researcher were

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clear. Whilst I was able to empathise with much of their situation, I did not express personal opinions about the inspection process or their own role and performance. I did not give any advice regarding Ofsted or school improvement, or share specific examples from my own experience.

Thirdly, much of what emerged in the interviews had a high degree of sensitivity, particularly where head teachers had discussed performance and responsibility of others in the school, or who were linked to the school, often in a way that could be seen as critical or personal. As a result, the issue of confidentiality was paramount and it was vital that schools, head teachers and individuals could not be recognised from the descriptions of the cases. In writing the thesis, I have changed the name of each head teacher, identified the school only as School A-D, and withheld any specific details of the individual cases which were specific or distinctive to them and could have led to their identification. I have not quoted in detail from Ofsted reports or any other publicly available source that could be used to identify the schools or the head teacher.

All participants understood the process in which they took part, the purpose of the research, and the arrangements for publication. Prior to each interview, I recapped the purpose and process, I explained the need for honesty and openness, but assured them that confidentiality would be maintained.

I explained that the interviews would be transcribed by a third party, but that this person would not be known to them, or have any access to data. I have endeavoured at all times to ensure that my analysis and interpretation of the interviews is a fair representation of their comments.

Before I approached the individual head teachers, I contacted the local authority education services and informed them of my intentions. Where they raised concerns, either in relation to the authority as a whole or to individual schools, I did not approach the head teachers. In this way, it gave the opportunity for a professional who knew the school and the head teacher in an advisory capacity to intervene if they felt that participation would be inappropriate or unhelpful.

I secured written consent from all interviewees and ensured that they understood the nature, purpose and limits of the research.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings: Case Study A

4.1   School context

School A is a primary School situated in a former mining town on the edge of a large conurbation. It is a larger than average primary school, and most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Few have English as an additional language and the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. There is a Nursery and Reception class which form the Early Years Foundation Stage.

4.2   The Head teacher

Cath's background before entering teaching was an unconventional one. She left school with 2 O levels and her priority in life was to have a family. She married young, and had her family before she had considered going into teaching.

> I had five children in six years. Planned for. That was absolutely brilliant. I worked around the children. Not in teaching, and then when my youngest was a baby I went back and did my teaching qualification.

However, teaching was always her aim, and she had a strong ethos of public service, supported by her family. She comes from a teaching background and her husband is an Assistant Head in a local secondary school.

> I wanted to be a teacher from the age of 5. My dad was a teacher and it must have been quite embarrassing for him when his daughter came out with 2 'O' levels. I used to do a lot of voluntary work, and that used to take all my time, and I enjoyed that.

She started teaching at a challenging city junior school, and then moved to a deputy headship in a middle class suburb. Her initial time as deputy head was 'a very difficult experience' as a result of a bullying issue which led to her using the whistle blowing policy against the head. This led to a period of acting headship followed by a happy time back as deputy. Despite applying for the headship, and feeling confident that she would get the job, she considers her time with the new head as 'an absolutely fantastic year working together.'

> Yes, that wasn't the school for me. And the governors wanted a Headmaster (male) and it was quite funny because leading up to it, it was all 'it's your job, your job, and we appreciate everything that you have done', and then on the day X came in and was much better than

me and I know I don't do interviews very well. But he was right for that school because whilst I was there as a deputy, I only ever went there to get close to home and to prepare for being a head. It is probably the only school that I have worked at that I chose for different reasons than the job itself. I found it quite a well to do area. It didn't really suit me.

She speaks passionately of her love of teaching and enjoyment of being in the classroom. One impact of the schools Inspection and its aftermath, is that her time in the classroom has been limited, which has led to a feeling of loss as a result. Headship seems to have been something that was never particularly part of her ambition, and she had always framed her career vision in terms of the impact on the children rather than her own role or status:

It just happened really - I was an NQT in the City and again it was similar to some of the teachers here, there were teachers who couldn't be bothered, just doing it for a job, and had done it for say 30 years, and standards were really dropping, and I just feel that a child is entitled to a good quality education. Sometimes in these types of schools there is this 'Oh children can't do it', or even you get teachers that look to work in those schools because they think that they are not going to have the same expectation. And then, at one point, a position

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came up for a school leader and I applied for it - it was an hour's interview activity, so it kind of went from there really, I didn't plan it, but I was very passionate about what I was doing and enthusiastic.

Even when she had embarked on the leadership role, she did not see Headship as an inevitable destination:

Even when I went for the deputy post, I never imagined that I would be able to be a head teacher. I'd always thought it would be wonderful, but then never thought that I would be able to be a head teacher. When I went into my deputy post, and started to realise my capabilities, then I started to think about it then.

Despite the focus on her career and her role of head teacher, she maintains a life outside of school. Apart from her family, she has a passion for writing, particularly stories for children:

I sometimes do bits at home. I have got a box. I have got writings and things and I think one day I might possibly. I have written some children's stories. I have had some stories published in magazines, but nothing major.

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4.3   The Inspection process

Cath took up post as head teacher in September 2009. Although she had been briefed to expect weaknesses in the school which had led to underperformance in some areas, and gaps in the school's systems and procedures, she was shocked to discover the extent to which the school was not complying with requirements, particularly with regard to the Safeguarding. She discovered that nine members of staff had still to receive Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearances, in line with statutory obligations. She immediately began the necessary checks, but when the call came less than four weeks later informing her that the inspection would take place that week, results had still not arrived. She realised how vulnerable the school was, but knew that she was unable to do anything to rectify the situation in time:

> I think it's one of the only times in my career where the colour drained and you actually shake. I knew how much the school had got to get done and all I thought in September was please don't turn up yet because I know that I think if they had turned up in the summer term it would have been Special Measures and the previous head knew that as well. Had some very honest conversations with me indicating that they knew that there were issues in school with safeguarding. I had researched that and spent a long time in the summer organizing

things, I'd got the policies that were missing in place on the first day

of term. The first thing I did was to say 'Hi, I'm the new Head and I'm

going to do half a day child protection', so we ticked all those boxes

but CRB checks weren't back. So it didn't matter what I did, I couldn't

get those CRB checks back.

The initial phone call to the Lead Inspector confirmed her fears:

What I did when they phoned was raise it because they didn't have a

clue that there were issues with CRB which is why I mentioned it on

the phone and it changed the whole focus of the inspection, right from

the initial phone call. He just said this is a big concern and was asking

questions and then said that they were going to look at it differently

from the first time they came in. They started off straight away with

safeguarding, and then found out that the CRBs weren't in place by

probably about half past nine, and then it was just two days on the

phone after that.

Far from focusing on achieving a positive outcome, her attention was taken

by the possibility that inspectors might decide that the school would have

to close while CRBs were obtained:

They were talking about closing the school at that point and that's

probably when the nerves did start because I was saying there was

no way of closing the school because that's more of a safeguarding risk because some of the families the children go to don't have anyone at home.

From this point onward, Cath and the rest of the Leadership team felt that the judgment had been made and the remainder of the two days would make little difference to the overall outcome. However, the fact that the school was vulnerable overall was not unexpected, and had been something that she had communicated to staff:

I had been on to the staff. I had said to staff that I felt that we would have to work really hard for the inspection to get satisfactory, so was sort of pleading with staff, I kept an eye on everything and watched the children that they weren't using worksheets, looked at outcomes…

I had done it in a calm way but had been honest and said at this stage I can't guarantee that we are going to get through with satisfactory based on what I found in school. The staff were pretty much in that same mind anyway when I started here....I was hoping satisfactory, but sceptical whether we could get it. I was more concerned about teaching and learning because I knew that there was some teaching that was inadequate.

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The tone was set for the inspection, and Cath felt that her role was to manage the situation rather than influence the decision. This left her feeling ineffective and isolated:

The day comes and you feel pretty useless, they wanted me – because I used to walk around the school, liked to see how the children were doing by popping into classrooms – but they were saying we might need you so if you just base yourself in the room that you have been in so I was sitting in there for most of the day. They said don't walk round the school just in case we need to ask you something. So I felt pretty useless on that day. I also had staffing issues before they came in with the deputy. I didn't have a deputy that I could fall back on for one thing.

Other members of staff were aware that the inspection was likely to be difficult, but had little knowledge of the mechanics of the process as it unfolded and no time to build their relationship with the new head teacher. The initial reaction was one of acute anxiety, as Linda, the Acting Deputy describes:

We were all nervous and absolutely paranoid really. We were all very, very scared. The whole staff were. It was distressing really. It meant

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very long hours for us and my health isn't very good. It's had a terrific impact on my life.

Cath saw the impact on her colleagues as the Inspection unfolded and the outcome became clearer, and detected a sense of powerlessness and de-professionalisation:

> I saw young teachers crying. Absolutely paranoid the day before Ofsted came in, trying to plan lessons and link it. I said it had to be a good lesson. They said it's got to be topic based. I said no it hasn't, it's just got to be good teaching. People were panicking really, staying up late, staying in school late.

As a result, she feels that staff did not perform as well as they might have done:

> We weren't particularly on top form. People were just shattered. Stayed up so late and then got up at 3 o'clock in the morning to make sure everything was prepared, and so it's just a case of going through it in a fog really, absolutely exhausted.

As the Inspection unfolded, Cath felt compelled to be as positive and supportive as possible around the school, despite the growing realization

of the likely outcome. She kept her emotional response under reasonably strict control, until she returned home at the end of the first day:

> There were a few tears actually. I was talking to my children and my husband and he was an Acting Deputy in a secondary school just talking about how I understand what Ofsted are saying and why they are doing it but I just wish they had given me a bit longer because I can see how my workload is going to go when I've gone down – that was the first night. On the second night when I got home and the decision had been made I was just numb really because I was just thinking that I will have Local Authority going in and I'm going to have to do an action plan and have to keep meeting them and I've got to – the parents were my biggest concern because I thought as soon as that was out there the parents were just going to see that the school wasn't safe and I have had quite a few of those. It was just thinking about what's around the corner really.

Although it had been apparent to Cath that the school was going to be placed into a category, that knowledge was not shared with the rest of the staff until the end of the Inspection:

> At that point they were just getting on with their job really so I didn't get much feedback but then I met them at the end of the inspection

and gave them what was probable and there was just an absolute silent staffroom. They just all looked totally gutted really.

Linda (Acting Deputy) vividly remembers the meeting and the staff reaction:

> Cath told us. She got the staff together and she told us. People were crying and awful and very resentful of the previous Head because she hadn't set up the safeguarding. It seemed ridiculous really that you were being judged for 2 minutes on your teaching so to speak, and yet it was all safeguarding, which is important but to me the safeguarding ought to be a separate issue and then there ought to be an Ofsted looking at teaching and learning and what we are doing in the classroom. There did not seem to me to be enough of that. That is very unfair. Absolutely.

The outcome was a Notice to Improve, which by the end of the inspection, was the best that Cath was hoping for. The report stated that the school was performing significantly worse that could reasonably be expected, and drew attention to the particular issue of meeting statutory safeguarding requirements.

4.4   Post-Inspection

On the surface, the fact that she was so new to the post meant that Cath did not necessarily feel responsibility for the outcome, and her first reaction was that she felt that it was not a significant issue for her personally:

> Straight after when everyone was saying, 'Oh, you're a new Head so it doesn't matter', because the good thing about the Ofsted inspection was that the things I had identified where really along the same lines. For a couple of days afterwards I was thinking 'I can do the job, I do know what I am doing', but just the enormity afterwards of the paperwork really got to me.

> But as soon as the report went out I probably had half a dozen parents – because we have got some quite rough parents here – it's when things go wrong with school they'll just say well you're not a safe school anyway. There was a fight in the playground with two mums and I had to deal with that and I went down and this mum shouted out at younger parents. One came in and said 'I'm moving the children because this school's not safe. I know it's before your time but even so', so she moved her children, but no they don't really understand. I think the nature of some of the parents here they just see the school's not safe. In fact one of the children in year 6 said to one of the

teachers last week 'Hey have you seen our school's website miss, it says that our school's dangerous and it's got loads of germs.'

The action that was taken immediately following the inspection, whereby a team of people from outside the school was put in place to guide the school, including another more experienced local head teacher, further undermined her own sense of ownership, control and authority:

When you have got another head teacher saying you should do it that way, one of the things she said was you need a monitoring and evaluation timescale, well I had one within the first two weeks, I end up going I've got one, here it is, so you end up listening to that sort of meeting, so I'm finding that a bit difficult, … I all of a sudden felt in that meeting I might take myself out of it because I've got no control of the situation - it's got the school improvement partner, the lead educator head, and it was just too much.

The public nature of the judgement, without the context, was difficult, particularly as she was attempting to establish herself with a new group of more experienced colleagues in the locality:

(*At meetings*)… It felt like you've got a flashing light over your head. I went with my deputy to a 'narrowing the gap' briefing of Heads and Leaders and they said 'We've only got one school in the County within

the notice to improve category', and she was absolutely horrified. Yes it seemed extremely bad, and the family of schools, I think it affected that, I think it affects that relationship negatively because I felt like it enabled a bit of competition with the schools around that didn't get put into category.

Those relationships, at least from her point of view may have been permanently damaged before they were ever properly established:

I've kind of backed off from the family of Heads, I thought working as a group you'd work together but there was a lot of underlying competition there.

There have been wider impacts within the staff as well. Apart from two members of staff who have been the subject of capability procedures, two others have left, citing the impact of the Inspection. Linda (Acting Deputy) is retiring through ill health, as a result of a condition that she describes as 'stress induced'. She laments the 'tremendous' impact the Inspection has had on her life outside school and on her family, after a long career in teaching.

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4.5   Follow-up Inspection

The school received a formal Monitoring visit approximately 6 months after the inspection from an HMI, a significant milestone in the journey towards the full Inspection. The visit was broadly positive, and confirmed the LA and the school's own view that the school was making satisfactory progress.

The follow-up Inspection took place a year after the original one. At this point the stakes were high. A negative outcome would certainly lead to undermining of the Heads position, and trigger radical action from the Local Authority or the Governing Body. A further judgement of Notice to Improve could not be given – the school would either 'pass' or be placed in Special Measures.

> I'd been waiting for the phone call every day, I'd still been working but I hadn't sort of, I'd been getting to work and doing a little bit, it's just that waiting. When he did phone, which was a week after half-term, I actually wasn't expecting it because I thought they were going to wait for Raise Online (school-level data analysis provided by the Department for Education) the following week because they hadn't been. So yes, very anxious. Lots of nightmares.

The announcement, despite being expected, triggered feelings of anxiety and stress.

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Well I thought it would be relief but actually, I just felt panic. It's one of the worst phone calls that you can ever take, certainly the worst phone call in your career. And also my anxiety has rubbed off on my very calm office lady, because she just literally went like that – what – what – Ofsted, I said it's OK, it's OK.

When I got the call I panicked, and thought how can I find all this evidence? I left here at 1am the night before and I was back at 6.30am and the Inspector came in at 7.45am, I think that was most nervous part. It was very scary, because I just thought well if it goes into Special Measures I'll be marched out of the building.

In the event, the outcome of the Inspection was that the school was given a judgement of Satisfactory. It was recognised that the school had made many improvements during the last year and Cath was described as 'effective and motivating', and her staff as 'committed to raising quality'.

4.6 Emotional Impact

The fact that she was so new to Headship added to the sense of isolation, without a strong group of supportive colleagues, either inside or outside school:

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I felt extremely isolated, and it's just knowing who to talk to and also as a new head you have not built up your network of heads either and you have this defensive feeling where you don't want to look like a terrible head so I ended up talking to nobody really.

The sense of isolation was compounded by a feeling of powerlessness at exactly the time when she was trying to establish herself in the role of head teacher. The emotional labour of her role had become intense, as she was having to establish relationships with staff, children and parents, take swift and decisive action in response to the Inspection report, including action that had effectively been decided by others, and also begin the learning process involved with any first time headship.

Heather (school administrator) said to me once it's a shame the staff haven't been able to see the person that you are like I have, because you are actually quite a nice person.

The level of conflict within the school was an unwelcome surprise, particularly when it happened as a result of challenges she felt were inevitable following the Inspection. This led to a high level of frustration as staff resented and resisted her efforts to improve:

I think quite often you do become unpopular just because you are the head teacher. I am battling with that because in my eyes, if you are a

good head teacher then you will be a popular head teacher. So that is not kind of working out here.

There was a strong feeling that she was carrying the emotional weight of the Inspection failure, as well as the responsibility for changing things, and did not receive the right level of support or understanding, particularly where difficult decisions are concerned:

> I do feel quite disappointed with what has happened this year. One of the things that I am really frustrated about is that I'm being whacked on the back of the head because of low teaching and learning, and yet when I try to tackle it you get bombarded with Unions and I am putting in loads of reports and from that respect I think there should be somebody that comes in and really supports the head teacher completely, in saying 'right, that teacher is not doing well, they've had the support, you've been able to do this, and it's still not shown progress', but instead HR keep saying just give them another option, and we are going on for another year now. That I get really cross about when I get home.

Having been involved with such an intense process, the shadow of the inevitable future inspections looms large. Her response to Ofsted, even the

discussion of Ofsted in a fairly abstract context is highly emotionally charged:

> I suppose my view of the inspection was it was quite scary really. A tick in the box and it could go either way, depending on what they see on that day. I view it with fear actually.

> I am very worried that I might get another team that aren't as nice as the team that we had. You hear these horror stories. I mean I heard one last week where they were shouting at the head teacher and they put her in a category, something to do with safeguarding. I just think 'No, I don't want that team to come here'.

> I am still waking up with panic attacks during the night, terrible nightmares, very jumpy around school. I also feel that I have been here a while now so whatever they find is my fault.

There remains a strong sense of emotional labour in Cath's role, seemingly as a result of the relationship with the school community established during those first traumatic weeks. She does not feel able to be open with the staff, and feels that she has to maintain a persona:

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You have to think about that as Head, and be protective. I don't want them to see me as weak, and I certainly don't want the staff to get anxious that there is somebody not capable running the school.

Although she maintains a core self-belief in her own ability to do the job, her plans for the future have been significantly affected by the experience:

I thought I would probably just stay here but I think it's ended up not being as positive here and I am never going to be able to get away from the negative start that I have had. It might be that I move schools sooner than I had planned to. Maybe three years? I definitely feel attached to the school but I just feel that I possibly will never be accepted by the community here - a difficult community anyway – because of that Ofsted report.

This ambivalence is demonstrated in practical decisions, and could potentially undermine her effectiveness in the role:

I'm just deciding at the moment whether to have my name put on the new school sign. There is this sort of rumour around that I'm leaving the school because so many people have left and the Authority are going to get me something. But I have had some parents coming up to me and asking is this true? And I'm like no 'no it's not true, not that I know anyway'. So I thought right, well I'll have my name put on the

sign, but I'm now thinking I don't know if I want to leave that for three years. I don't know if I want three years here.

There has been a large impact on her life outside the school, and her family life has been significantly affected:

Yes, it has really. I kind of forget to talk about anything else. I mean, my husband understands because he is a leader in a secondary school, but you can get a bit fed up sometimes. And the hours I put in. I sometimes stay quite late.

She describes her work life balance as being 'non-existent' and leading occasionally to conflicts at home, as she brings home a large amount of work, and needs emotional support that she is not able to find in school.

Well I got told off yesterday by my husband for talking about school again. He said can you stop talking about school for 5 minutes. I walked out on the football half way through. Yes, it is all consuming really.

She describes herself as a different person in school compared to out of school, but feels unable to let her natural personality come out at school. Particularly if it might be interpreted as a weakness:

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I have got a bit of a scatty side. Organization, paperwork and things. I am much scattier at home. As soon as I get home I am quite a dependant person really, on my husband.

This aspect of her personality is just one that she feels she has to suppress in school:

I think it is just a different part of the personality and also I feel that it is my role. I have got to look after everybody, and got to make sure everywhere is safe. Actually I am in charge of school to make sure that everybody makes progress, so yes I think it's part of the role but also you just go to automatic.

This desire to keep up appearances in school rather than display weakness extends to her health, which has suffered, possibly as a result of the stress of her role:

I do have some health issues so I kind of tend to reach the end of the day and I can be quite ill when I am at home at night. I have got lots of allergies and I can sometimes have quite a bad allergic reaction and I have had that for a long time. Staff here don't really know.

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She is able to rationalise the fact that the Ofsted process plays an important role and can have a positive impact overall, but remains unhappy about the impact it has:

> Yes, Ofsted can be beneficial if you're not taking people's lives into account. From a personal point of view, it's terrible really.

Although the immediate emotional trauma of the failed Inspection process has faded, there have been some longer-lasting effects:

> I think it's temporary but now they've gone I'm kind of still quite highly stressed, because I think I've got into that habit and also, everything that I do is about work now and it didn't used to be like that so I've got to try and get that back a bit. Because I go home late and I say to the children, I'm really sorry I'm late tonight, oh it's alright it's about the same time as last night. So a lot of bad habits have come.

The experience has changed the way she feels about her long-term career plans, and she has become aware of the potential impact on her health. She cannot envisage carrying on in Headship until the end of her career:

> Not until I'm 65 I don't think my health could sustain that. I kind of think that maybe 10 years – 15 years.

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Cath describes herself as an emotional person 'unfortunately', both at school and at home and is conscious that this has consequences for her ability to cope with the responsibilities of her role:

> I think it's generally a positive thing (being emotional) but it can be a negative as well. Especially when you cry in front of the HMI inspector. So in the meeting, when it was a four (Notice to Improve) all of a sudden I just couldn't hold it together, so I went outside and said I just need to get a tissue, composed myself then I came back.

Fundamentally, however, there remains an element of hope, based on her motivation to do the job in the first place, and it is this that sustains her, and has enabled her to prevail:

> The ability to be able to make a difference for the children. And the community as well. I have had quite a negative community here, because of what has happened, and also because some changes the parents don't understand because a lot of the things that they thought before were useful things, so they are just starting, there is a little bit of a wave of change in the parents at the minute. We are trying to do some community events that look good out there and let's get them on board quickly, and things are starting to happen. I just think that the ability to make a difference to these children is the main thing

really, because for some of the children, school here is the only constant that they have got.

She is finally able to see a light at the end of the tunnel, and to give in to some optimism. However, this feeling can be fragile:

I do have days where I am not (confident about the future), but not all times. This last couple of weeks I have felt a bit wobbly. I haven't told anybody. But I think it's because it's the end of term and everybody is getting stressed. I am confident but it is the timescale that is causing me stress, which is Ofsted coming back in the future.

4.7   Long Term Impact

To a large extent, Cath's fears proved unfounded, and she can be seen as a success story, both in respect of her own life and career, and also from the point of view of the school.

Since the Inspection, outcomes have improved, although there have been some significant issues to overcome, including changes in the management team. However, in 2014, results were extremely good, with 100% of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Maths and Writing, and 95% in Reading. This improvement was recognised with a judgement of Good in the most recent Ofsted inspection. The report commented on her

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'relentless drive' and 'high expectations', and the way they had contributed to school improvement. It also recognised that her leadership team had become 'increasingly effective'.

When she reflects on the whole experience, she can do so with some detachment, now that the school has the judgement of Good:

> It seems unreal really. I can't quite believe that I went through all of that and I stuck it out. I think it definitely made me into a stronger character, and hardened me, but it had a massive impact on my well-being and self-esteem that I don't think I will ever completely get over. I came so close to getting out, if I could have seen a way out of the situation, I would definitely have taken it.

There has been an impact on her future plans, and she has become less willing to take risks:

> I feel that I've got this school where I want it now, and this is my chance to enjoy it, not relax exactly, because I'm still working hard, but keep my head down and keep things working well.

She cannot see any prospect of taking on another school in a similar situation:

Never again. I couldn't do it to myself or my family. I don't think my health would stand it, just the idea of having to climb that hill all over again. I don't think anyone who has been through the same experience would ever do it again.

4.8   Analysis

4.8.1   Rational School Conditions

It is fair to say that the impact of Cath's leadership at the time of the Inspection is clearly mitigated by the limited amount of time she had been in post. It was her first Headship and although she had some leadership experience at her previous schools, including time as Acting Headship, the first 18 months of Headship, which coincided with the interviews, was a time of rapid learning through keen experience.

Cath did not frame her description of the inspection process and its aftermath as a journey of teaching and learning development. Her description of her early career conveys her love of teaching and being 'in the classroom' but her career development focussed on in-school leadership roles, with little apparent focus on engaging with wider pedagogical development. For example, when she describes receiving her first significant promotion, she accounts for her success by contrasting herself with a colleague who was 'really obstructive'. The sense of her as

someone who is supportive and collegial is far stronger through the development of her career than the sense of a leader of teaching and learning, or a model of good practice.

Likewise, her account of the Inspection is focussed on organizational conditions, which were in place when she arrived and could not be changed in time. Whilst a reading of the report would support the view that these factors were crucial, the key issues also include raising attainment in English and Maths at the end of Year 6 and raising the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils make consistent progress across the school.

Her own analysis of the subsequent improvement however, suggests that teaching and learning or rational school conditions, have become more central in the way that she has defined this improvement. Indeed, at the most recent inspection, inspector comments related to the leadership of teaching and learning relate to instructional leadership, praising rigorously applied procedures to improve teachers' effectiveness leading to teaching that is 'good, and sometimes outstanding.'

Measures taken have had a clear impact on teaching and learning. Leithwood et al highlight the importance of the leader promoting strong organizational conditions by establishing and sharing high expectations, and monitoring and providing feedback of teaching and student

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performance, ensuring an orderly environment. At the time of inspection, none of these was in place. However, Cath's account makes it clear that she had to pay attention to them. In the most recent inspection, the report commented on her 'relentless drive and high expectations.'

4.8.2   Emotional School Conditions

It is clear from the accounts that the inspection process was an emotionally charged one. She had just begun her headship, had little relationship with her Deputy or senior team, and levels of trust were low. Indeed, her reaction when discovering the gaps in procedures which were to ultimately prove so costly in the inspection, made that initial establishment of a trust culture to be very difficult. Relationships were already tense, and the arrival of the inspection team shone a light on the tension. Not only did the staff not trust their new head teacher who had arrived and immediately declared that the way the school was running was likely to lead to a failed inspection, but Cath did not trust the staff to perform effectively, and ultimately to have the capacity to improve.

Following the inspection, trust between Head and staff, if anything, deteriorated. Cath talks about her sense of isolation, her unpopularity, the fact that she couldn't let her staff see the real person she is. The process of building that took a great deal of time. Five staff left, which Cath attributes

to the inspection fallout and her efforts to raise expectations, and gradually, she began to recruit staff who did not share that experience of a breakdown in trust through the inspection.

The key point at which the building of emotional health and capacity took place was after the follow-up inspection. Cath's account of this event clearly indicates that Emotional School Conditions were still at a low point – she herself was struggling to manage her emotions, trust was still low, there was a sense of anxiety and panic. Clearly conditions were at a level to have enabled the school to make progress, but the sense of emotional strength was still low.

This returned gradually, with her leadership and emotional resilience as the key factor. The confidence to establish a high-trust and high-risk culture, as cited by Leithwood et al (2010), took some time to develop, and initially focussed on a small group of staff, particularly new appointees. This has built upon the initial improvement.

In Chapter 1, I described a model suggested by Yamamoto et al (2014) to conceptualize the processing of emotion by school leaders following a critical incident. This model described four stages: *My view of myself, my world* – shaking of confidence and a forced change in action or beliefs; *Fragmentation* – loss of control; *Reintegration and reinvention of self* –

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creating paths to regain wholeness; and *Relationship with self and others affirmed* – sense-making and reconnecting with trusted others. Cath demonstrates this journey well, and the stages appear to have a clear and distinct chronological sequence. Her ability to move beyond the initial shock and distress to become an effective leader in the long term was mirrored by her ability to manage her emotional journey. As Yamamoto et al conclude: 'Emotion has a vital role for making sense out of CIs (Critical Incidents) in the journey toward authentic leadership' (Yamamoto et al, 2014, p180).

4.8.3   Organizational Conditions

As a new head teacher with little opportunity to establish trusting emotionally-healthy relationships in the time available, Cath focussed on organizational conditions to make rapid progress and achieve 'quick wins'. She established robust systems of safeguarding checks, amended timetables to give greater focus on key areas, used the external threat of the returning inspectors to establish key working practices. In particular, she significantly tightened up assessment procedures and raised expectations of teachers to assess accurately and to accept accountability for pupils' outcomes through data analysis and pupil progress meetings.

The battle to make improvements was frustrated by bureaucratic strictures beyond her control, in particular the way that her attempts to tackle underperformance were blocked by HR procedures and union opposition. However, the fact that this was a 'battle I had to win' paradoxically led to a more rapid shift in culture and led to the dismantling of barriers. By working through the 'battles', she established her right to open up practice which has led to the creation of a more open and professional organizational culture, with less guarding of individual practice. As Leithwood et al (2010) write; 'The main task of leaders is to create the organizational conditions through redefinition and design, where a different way of working is not only possible but absolutely required because of the new organizational arrangements and associated set of expectations.'

4.8.4   Family and Community Conditions

Of all the case study head teachers, Cath was the one most conscious of the impact of the Inspection failure on her relationship with her parent body, and the importance of making sure that this was addressed. Perhaps because of her recent arrival at the school, she related occasions when she was directly challenged by parents, and the response she would have had as a parent if her own children's school had been in similar difficulties. In particular, she felt that the judgement that 'the school's not safe' was damning in the eyes of parents and the wider community.

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Cath made sure that she kept a high profile, and was visible and accessible to parents, partly to show support and leadership to staff. She established community events, parents meetings to discuss aspects of curriculum and teaching, and developed the school website and newsletter. At the point where she was discerning real improvements, she could also identify that the mood amongst parents was building, describing it cautiously as 'a little bit of a wave of change' in the parents. She explicitly recognised the fact that the nature of the community that the school served meant that there were parents who needed more support and attention to engage them with school and learning, and she made efforts to do this. Although this had limited success, where it had worked well it had made a difference.

Evidence of Cath's success in this area can be found on the Ofsted Parent View website, which gathers opinions from parents at the school. In response to the prompt 'This school is well led and managed' 100% of parents currently agree or strongly agree (Ofsted Parent View, Nov 2015).

Chapter 5: Presentation of findings: Case Study B

5.1   School context

Primary School B is located in a village near a large town in a former mining community. It is an average size primary school where the number of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage and none of the pupils speak English as an additional language. There is one class per year group, and a nursery. The school has had a long standing record of good performance and all previous inspections had positive outcomes. The school has a strong track record of a broad commitment to pupil welfare, beyond the formal curriculum, and this is recognized by the fact that it has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools Award, and The Anti-Bullying Commitment Scheme Excellence Award. However, staff absence and staffing instability had been a feature in the years leading up to the inspection.

5.2   The Head teacher

Diane had not always wanted to be a teacher, although the possibility was always there because of her family connections:

I sort of almost drifted into it, and I never really knew what I wanted to be. I suppose because I knew my great grandmother was a head teacher and my great aunt was a head teacher and my aunt was a head teacher. It was always what was there in the background and what I knew about. None of my friends are teachers.

Diane has had a long and varied career in education, and gained a wide range of experience before settling on primary headship. She started as a Maths teacher in a secondary school in the South of England. In her second school, she became interested in PSHE and special needs support alongside her maths teaching. She became head of the special needs department in a comprehensive school, a period she describes with enthusiasm and affection:

It was quite an interesting department because it didn't just do the SEN end, but G & T stuff as well. We felt we were breaking new ground and really making a difference to the children, but it was a considerable time ago, and quite different then.

She then resigned from her substantive post and had about two and a half years out of school to have her children. During that time she did some

supply work and worked again in a couple of very large comprehensives, and also worked in a middle school around the corner from where she lived.

> I worked as much as I could, I was on supply but would do any work that was available. I got a part time contract at a Middle School, which was a new experience, but was actually full time for a couple of terms, and then I was offered full time contract permanent, still in secondary years. By that time I had got used to other ages and I asked to work with the younger children because I felt I needed that bit of experience, and from there I got my first headship in a small school.

> We moved up here, and then I moved from a small school which was about 120 to here, which at the time had about 312 children on roll. It went up a bit and then stabilised. Everything was new for me really, where we lived, the age group of the children, the size of school, everything, but I enjoyed the change.

On entering teaching, headship had been a possibility she considered from an early stage in her career:

> I remember once having an interview with my Head and I had only been a teacher for 3 or 4 years at that point and she said to me 'where do you see yourself going?' and I said 'behind your desk'.

However, she also finds some frustration in being out of the classroom, something that has happened more frequently in recent years, and particularly since the Ofsted inspection:

I really love teaching so I still regularly teach and I don't go a whole year without being in the classroom because I actually believe that you should prove to your school what you are because I think that is really, really important that you can do it.

The desire to make a difference is a strong motivation for her:

Many years ago, I had a letter from a former pupil. I have no idea how this child learned where I was, but it was a child that I taught when I was in my first school and he wrote to me to say, thanking me for everything that I had done for him while he was at school, because he had all sorts of problems and now he was in the police force and doing well, because of what I'd done with him. I'll never forget that.

Although the events of recent years have had an impact on the way she thinks about her chosen profession, she believes that her fundamental love of teaching survives, and does not regret her choice of career:

The grass is always greener isn't it, that's the danger of that. I think I could have earned a lot more money elsewhere but the thing that I

really love about this job is that no two days are ever the same and you never know what you are going to face when you get out of the car in the morning. That is what I love about it. I love the lack of predictability. I like the flexibility so I wouldn't want to be in a job where I knew what was going to happen every single day. I think I would get very bored very quickly.

She describes with affection some of the people who have inspired her and acted as role models. One in particular stands out:

One, Richard, who was head at the middle school where I worked. He got the headship same time as I was there. Yes I thought highly of him. Why? It is difficult to say really. He was very approachable. He knew exactly what it was he wanted, but was prepared to get everybody involved as to how we were going to get there. He was very innovative and say, for example, we'll share planning, up until that time it had never happened. It was quite a revolutionary thing and staff were very unhappy about it, and someone came up with the idea that it would be much better for us to write a weekly review about how things had gone and what problems we had had and why, and he was quite happy to change that and to have a review instead of planning which worked much better for staff. I think that was a help for him because he learnt where all the problems were, but it was that sort of

relationship that he had with the staff where he would say I want this, but he would listen then and he would push things through. If things needed pushing through, then it would happen. He wasn't afraid of making a decision but you always felt that he had actually listened. Very good relationship with the children.

Despite the range of experience she had, and the success of her early career, there was still a sense that she was not fully prepared for headship:

I think I would have felt much more prepared for it if I had still been in the same authority, it was a new authority and I knew no-one and therefore I'd got no network of support and it was before the time of even Headlamp (training programme for new head teachers), no training, there was nothing. There was absolutely nothing whatsoever. I had two days with new heads in Derbyshire in my second half term here, and it wasn't until about 18 months into my first headship that I had any proper input. It was very much piecemeal and I did not know any different. It was a really huge learning curve.

Learning came through the day to day experience of the job:

I suppose I learnt the job through doing it really. Through not getting things right and then changing it. I never had any training at all. I don't

know whether that is a good thing or a bad thing. I think it's a bad thing. I think I missed out a lot and still I feel that I have missed out.

She finds it difficult to categorize her leadership style, perhaps a legacy of the lack of theoretical leadership training. Her style is closely related to her personality traits:

> I think you'd be better off asking other people really. I hope that I am very open. I would hope that I really encourage people to take risks. I try and do everything. My aim is that I know that some children will never have the opportunity that I was fortunate enough to have and the reason I had my opportunities was because my parents were open-minded and gave us what opportunities they could. Some children won't have that. What I try and aim to do and what I expect my staff to do, is to just provide the opportunity, to know that some children won't have had the chance but open those doors and let them see their future in a different way. I hope I'm not overbearing but I can be. My previous Chair of Governors described me as the iron hand in a velvet glove. But I am not sure that that is what I am. You should ask other people I think.

Despite the stresses that have come about as a result of the Inspection process and judgement, Diane believes that her beliefs and values have remained intact, and that she runs the school in accordance with them:

> I am not prepared to change what I believe because of what someone who doesn't know me, doesn't know my school says after a couple of days. I will never do that.

5.3   The Inspection Process

Although the school had received a Satisfactory grade overall at the previous Inspection, it had always been well regarded in the local community and standards were generally positive, particularly considering the nature of the intake. The school were therefore upbeat about the prospect of an inspection and were expecting a judgement of Good overall, an opinion backed up by the Local Authority.

> We knew that we would be on the borderline between satisfactory and good for teaching and learning, and for results, but we were very confident that when they saw the improvements we'd made in things like behaviour and assessment, we would have enough to be Good. In fact, we wanted them to come because we were so confident, so when we got the phone call, there was no panic.

As always before an inspection, frantic last-minute preparations took place to check pupil books, displays, prepare documentation and so on. However, in the business of the preparations, the incident took place that would cause the school major problems when inspectors arrived. There was an after-school activity planned, which the teacher cancelled so that she could prepare her classroom. Children were informed and the administrative staff were asked to let parents know. Through an oversight, the message was not passed on to parents. Although this was not an issue for most of the children involved, two children left school on their own and took advantage of their unexpected freedom rather than going home. When parents called to school to collect them a couple of hours later, they were then told that the activity had not taken place and no-one knew where the children were. Despite being found safe and sound after a frantic search, the parents were distressed and angry.

> Everything was going smoothly, we had a good meeting with inspectors and all the staff, they were impressed with the SEF (Self-Evaluation Form) and I had planned the first day with them. When I was going through our assessments with the Lead Inspector, the secretary knocked on the door and told me that the parents were in reception demanding to see the Inspector. I went down and tried to persuade them to see me later but they insisted – in the end I knew

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that if I tried to stop them it would just make it worse, so I told the Lead, and he went off to meet them.

From that point, the tone of the Inspection changed:

He came straight back to me and told me he would have to ring Ofsted to take some advice, but that it looked like a serious safeguarding issue. I tried to argue that it was human error, and not a fault with our systems or policies, but I knew that we were in trouble.

From Diane's perspective, by lunchtime on the first day the decision had been taken, and the rest of the Inspection became almost irrelevant.

By the end of the first day, I was being made to feel grateful that we were only going to have a Notice to Improve, rather than special measures. I'm convinced that everything else would have been given Good if it wasn't for the safeguarding, but we had mostly 3s, with the odd 2 thrown in.

The feeling at the end of the Inspection was one of anti-climax, that there was nothing that could have been done to change the outcome. At the feedback, staff felt aggrieved and angry at the outcome, and the substance of the report was almost ignored:

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There was a feeling of 'How dare they say we don't keep our children safe' and that all the work was for nothing.

The final report confirmed the Notice to Improve, concluding that the school was performing 'significantly less well than could reasonably be expected'. It drew attention to safeguarding issues in particular detail, citing the gaps in the school's single central record, relating to staff recruitment and vetting, and highlighted the 'inadequate' procedures for informing parents when activities are changed at short notice.

5.4   Post-Inspection

Despite the sense of anger and disappointment, Diane did not feel the need to fundamentally question what she or the school was doing:

I felt that it was wrong. All the curriculum side and teaching side was fine and I knew that area. I didn't feel that I had to change everything. I can sleep at night because I know that we were doing our job. So I don't feel that we should have changed. I can't see any reason, genuine reason. Perhaps we have been more cautious in terms of thinking about things which have happened since - How do we cope if this goes pear shaped? How do we ensure that we are actually covering this one? I think we've become much more cautious on that front, but it doesn't stop us doing it. And I know that other schools

don't even give it a second thought. We don't do that. We have a leisure afternoon and we make all the parents come in and we make them bring ID and I put an extra member of staff in there whose job is purely to observe and make sure.

Her feeling that the judgement was flawed seemed to be supported by the reaction of the Local Authority:

They haven't done a review. We have had our own. Our adviser has been in and given us support which is fine and I didn't have a problem with that, because it's their job to make sure things get better and I am fine with that. He and I do have done a lot of joint observations, which we would never have done before, but again that's something the authority wanted to do.

She asserts powerfully that they did not change tack following the inspection, that the work they were doing to develop teaching and learning continued exactly as it would have done if the inspection had not happened, and that the only impact was a review of safeguarding procedures.

We know we're on the right track and we know our children, so it would be silly to change.

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5.5   Follow Up Inspection

The monitoring visit took place a term and a half after the initial inspection. The outcome was positive, both in the judgement and in the tone of the letter. However, leading up to the visit Diane had felt far more anxious than before the initial inspection, because she knew that only a judgement of good progress would support their initial analysis of the inspection:

> I was very concerned, only in terms of looking at the safeguarding measures because that was the big thing and I talked to the HMI chap about the time of the next visit, if we wanted to make good progress, we would want it later rather than sooner. I thought that was quite an interesting point of view.

5.6   Emotional Impact

Initially, Diane is reluctant to acknowledge that her experience may have had an impact on her practice as a head teacher, still less her belief and values. However, the specific safeguarding issue has clearly had an effect:

> Maybe I've lost that felling of trust in my colleagues, that I don't need to check up on them. I think possibly, if I think about it, it has made me more cautious, that's a good thing really but yes probably it has. 'Have you done this? Prove it.' That's bad, isn't it?

Since becoming a Head, the job has come to dominate her life in a way that it never did before:

> It didn't before, certainly not when I was working in secondary. I would say since working in primary/middle schools it has taken on a much bigger role, and personally since becoming a Head it has taken on a bigger role. A lot of time, even if it's not time actually physically doing something, it's thinking things through and planning. By and large I don't mind, but sometimes it's too much. Last three weeks, I shut my office door at 6 in the evening and open it at 6 o'clock in the morning.

She recognises that as the Head, she carries the greatest burden and it is part of her role to shield her staff:

> I think I've got staff who get stressed and so I carry a lot of that as well. I know I'm very prepared, I want to make sure everything is reasonably ready. I always did that at this time (Summer term). I go through the reports and results for everybody. That was always a job for me. I used to quite enjoy it because I think I had got time to reflect and look and check them all. I haven't enjoyed it this term, it's just been a deadline, getting data sorted, and there's the notion that it has got to be done before the holiday. I think that puts a lot of pressure

on. So it's been tough the last few weeks, and yes I have felt the stress. But I don't normally do that.

Although she has had support from her family, this has not been unusual:

I think they are used to it. My husband is a teacher anyway, my daughter and my son are used to it, I think they just think it's part of normal life that somebody might watch the TV, but while they're marking books, or that they have to stay away because there is a school trip or whatever.

She found her husband's attitude to be a source of comfort and support:

Was he angry about it? Well, I don't think so. On the Thursday when I went home he just said to me, 'there's no point worrying about it. What will be will be. Just get on and do it and you can't do any more than that.' That is very much his philosophy on life, that you can only do your best, if it messes up for whatever reason just get on with it and at the end of the day they just come in and walk out, you are the one that has to explain to parents and staff. You've got nothing to worry about because you're not a bad Head. You know that's not the case.

Despite her confidence about the future, there have been some difficult times as a result of the inspection:

There were times when I was extremely concerned that we wouldn't be able to sort it, because some people were just not coping with the situation. I was extremely concerned at that point, and that would be up until half term, perhaps a bit longer than that. It was very, very difficult in school. X (the member of the admin staff who had the responsibility for contacting parents after the cancelled after-school club) was just mortified at what had happened. Then when I started to see it in detail and found a few more problems and a few more other things that should be there but weren't there because it had been shredded or lost or whatever. That meant that because of the way that she reacted it became very difficult for the other staff and so I got people saying to me, 'Don't bother her, don't go there, can I have an envelope' and I got extremely concerned at that point, because obviously she wasn't coping and it was making everybody stressed. That was difficult because of the huge amount of work going round that meant that the Ofsted situation almost caused a split, not between the teachers, but between teachers and admin staff, and it became very obvious that we had to sort it. I desperately tried to help her through it.

Diane did not see implications in terms of her own personal situation or career.

> I thought I might have to do a disciplinary, I thought it might come to that. That's not me. I don't avoid difficult situations, but I didn't feel that it would have served a purpose, if anything it would have added more stress, so I was concerned about that. I just felt I couldn't not do anything. I felt I couldn't make that decision not to do it, because of the pressure that I was under to make sure that people were doing their jobs properly.

She appears remarkably able to remain objective, particularly given the impact of someone's error on her own professional life. Her own ethos and self-image, as the leader and protector of her staff, is strong:

> I think that I do try not to bear a grudge, because it makes you resentful. I don't see what we gain from it. I am quite determined that they were not going to ruin what I had worked so hard to create. When I first came here, I was very aware of staff morale. It's a tough school and there was no real relationship with the parents, and literally I remember my first day walking into the staffroom, saying 'We've lost a child' and someone else saying 'Oh they always wander off'. I said – 'Hang on a minute, that's not acceptable'. I've worked so hard to

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change that ethos and I felt that I had got a really good supportive team, because I've just realised that I can do my job because of the support of everybody else, I couldn't do the job otherwise. I hope I'm very much a team player and I like everybody to be involved in that. So that is why I am not prepared to let them come in and ruin that. I will protect them whatever I possibly can from it. I will do whatever I need to do, and if they are in a rough period in their life and they need me, then I will do my best to support them and try and avoid the problem, but you can't always do that. I am not prepared to let the children suffer long term, but we all have to live don't we? Life sometimes has those times when all sorts of things are kicking off and you just need a bit of space. I think that is part of being a team. I know that sometimes I need a lot more support from people than at others. So if you have got that sort of team in place and you've got basic measures to actually improve the situation for the children, then you need to support them.

She does, however, recognise the way that the role of head teacher has changed, along with the rest of the staff:

Incredibly yes. I mean nobody ever handles the workload. That's a bit of a joke really. It is quite different, but I remember having to write a report and people would just put one word in it really – satisfactory or

good progress. I mean that would never happen now. I think though we have lost a lot of really good things as well. Everybody used to meet up on a Friday night, perhaps not all, but there was that air of you could have a good time and fun and I think to a certain extent the pressure is such that that has almost gone over the last few years.

She laments the impact that this increased workload has had on the staff:

It was so different in the past, we were all working together. On a Friday, the secretary came around and we put our sandwich order in, it's very different and I think along with that, a certain percentage of good work has gone with that, so you don't get people who give the amount of time that they used to give up freely. People are very much more conscious of the fact that they have got to get all the planning done, that is going to take x amount of time, therefore they can't do it. Things like football matches on Saturday mornings. All that sort of thing has gone really. And I miss that.

5.7   Long Term Impact

Diane's confidence in the long-term future of the school and her view that the inspection outcome was an anomaly seems to be borne out by subsequent events. The school was re-inspected just over a year after the Notice to Improve was given and was judged to be Good in all areas. Diane

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was singled out for praise, and the relationships that she had worked hard to maintain were recognised. She was described as 'highly effective' and her motivational skills were praised, along with her commitment to raising all aspects of pupils' development and engendering a clear sense of purpose and direction amongst staff. Pupils' achievement was described as good, and teaching as effective, helping to ensure that pupils reach demanding targets and develop positive attitudes to learning. Management systems were highlighted as well-developed, and inspectors felt that the school had demonstrated good capacity to improve further.

She is able to see the whole process as a blip, a footnote in otherwise steady improvement. The inspection system itself is in need of improvement in her view:

> It's a wasted opportunity really, because I think that schools should be inspected. I have no problem with inspections per se. I think what Ofsted has done, because of the nature, and certainly how it has started, is to make people very defensive, so it hasn't become an improvement model. It has become a punishing model, and I think that's wrong. Its hit and run, and I don't think that is helpful. I really do think it is a complete waste of opportunity.

5.8   Analysis

5.8.1   Rational Conditions

At no point in the process during or following the inspection did Diane's belief waver that the inspection was flawed and presented an inaccurate picture of the school. Although the report clearly extends the criticisms beyond the specific safeguarding issues to pupil achievement and teaching and learning, she believes that these judgements were clouded by the issue that arose early on the first day, and without this, the inspectors would have interpreted the evidence differently. This sense of injustice was perhaps most marked in relation to the Rational Conditions, her own management of teaching and learning. She highlights this as one of her key strengths, and the key element that sustains her headship. Indeed, she maintains that she made no changes in the planned work to develop teaching and learning as a result of the inspection.

She does acknowledge that results had left the school vulnerable to a Satisfactory Ofsted judgement, despite her four years in post, and that not all teachers were performing at the level she knew was required, and acknowledges also that improvements were still in their early stages. The positive outcome from the subsequent monitoring visit and inspection recognised the impact of this work, and clearly this had picked up pace,

even by her own account. Perhaps the issue - would the focus on Rational School Conditions have happened without the Inspection judgement? – is irrelevant. It clearly formed an important part of the work that enabled the school to make rapid progress. She articulates clearly her high expectations and moral purpose and talks fondly of the way she developed her love and understanding of teaching through her career. In the subsequent Ofsted reports her leadership of teaching and learning is cited as a strength of the school.

5.8.2   Emotional Conditions

It is within the Emotional path where the impact of Inspection seems to have been felt most keenly. Leithwood et al (2010) cite trust as the central emotional quality observed in turnaround schools, but trust was seriously damaged during the process. Diane explicitly stated 'Maybe I've lost that feeling of trust in my colleagues', and stressed the need to watch them more closely. She changed school policies in relation to safeguarding, introducing ones that are predicated on a lack of trust and a strict adherence to procedures. This is particularly poignant given the affection with which she recalls happy times in her earlier career which are characterised by professional trust.

Her description of the emotional impact on colleagues also indicates her belief that damage is caused by the inspection process. Leithwood et al (2010) identify the fact that emotions have an effect on a range of outcomes, including feelings of job satisfaction, morale, degree of stress or burnout etc. Diane is clear that these outcomes were all adversely affected following the inspection, and in some cases led to people leaving. However, she kept true to her belief that her role was to support the team, protect them and give them space. Indeed, in an explicit way, repairing the damage to Emotional School Conditions was a key way of moving the school forward. In the follow-up inspection report, relationships were highlighted and praised.

The application of Yamamoto et al's (2014) model is less clear-cut in Diane's case than in the other case studies, primarily because she refused to fully accept the inspection judgement, and therefore to recognize it as a critical incident. However, despite the apparent lack of impact on school policies and practices, her relationship with colleagues changed fundamentally, and has had to be built back up over time. In this respect, she did have to go through a loss of confidence and control, and reinvent her relationship with staff as part of the 'sense-making' process. At the end of this period, it is striking how often she looks back with obvious affection

on a period when her relationships with colleagues were more than simply formal and professional, and were characterized by trust and collegiality.

5.8.3   Organizational Conditions

One of the reasons that the failure to implement safeguarding procedures satisfactorily was so galling for Diane was her belief that she ran a 'tight ship', and that systems and procedures were efficient. However, she acknowledges that the safeguarding aspect of the school's organizational culture has now been improved. Outside of this specific area, she felt that her range of experience had given her a good basis for knowing which areas to prioritise, how to set up and manage systems and processes.

Leithwood et al (2010) focus on the way that school organizational conditions create a climate where teachers have the opportunity to develop a collaborative approach to their craft. When Diane reflects upon her earlier career, this is an element that she speaks of with great enthusiasm and warmth. However, she recognises that following the inspection, her relationship with teachers changed and she has become more prescriptive and hierarchical, even if her personal style remained inclusive and collegial – in her words 'the iron hand in the velvet glove'. It took considerable time to return to the work of rebuilding a collaborative culture, certainly beyond the first monitoring visit.

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Leithwood et al (2010) assert that there are 'few examples of school turnaround without some fundamental change in organizational behaviour.' Diane maintains that the changes were happening before Ofsted arrived, and if anything, were hampered by the inspection.

5.8.4   Family and Community Conditions

Another aspect that made the failure in inspection particularly unpalatable was the fact that it was a complaint from parents that triggered the sequence of events that in the eyes of Diane, led to the final judgement. The fact that the school served a community with above-average levels of deprivation, and that some of the families need high levels of support formed a large part of the clear moral purpose that motivates her, and so the complaint felt like a betrayal of trust. It had the effect of leading to further questioning from previously-supportive parents. Diane took what she felt was the difficult but correct decision not to talk openly to the parents about the reason for the safeguarding breakdown, because of the impact on the member of staff who was most personally responsible, but the result of this was the shaking of the parents' confidence in the school's ability to keep their children safe. Paradoxically, she then had to deal with parents who felt affronted and the victims of a lack of trust from the school as a result of the tightening of safeguarding procedures.

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There was a long and important rebuilding task that took place in the months following the inspection. She points to the work that the school has done in building links with parents, which does indeed appear to be extensive. As a flavour, the school's website homepage states the following:

> Parents are a valuable partner in our school. Apart from the very important job of listening to your child reading at home, which means your child can progress even faster, there are opportunities in school from helping with reading, offering time to do gardening around school, by improving the school environment, and other types of help.

> Remember the Coffee Morning each Friday of Term Time. This is an opportunity to meet with members of the school's Leadership Group in order to bring any questions you may have about the school. It is a a time when people gather to enjoy a chat and a coffee. It is held in the Library from 9 am - 9:30am. Everybody welcome.

> The best ways to help your child are to give them love, time and share play with them.

This is sincerely meant, and a fair summary of the home-school ethos at the school. However, Diane acknowledges privately that the experience

has made it difficult to imagine a relationship with the parent body that is

entirely characterized by trust and openness.

Chapter 6: Presentation of findings: Case Study C

6.1   School context

Primary School C is located in a large town in the south-east of England. Although it is smaller than most primary schools, it is federated with another similar-sized school on the same campus, a change which took place in the face of considerable local opposition. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, although the proportion who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need or who have learning difficulties is above what is normally found; the largest group has behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school holds the Activemark for Sport.

6.2   The Head Teacher

In Karen's own words, 'I have always taught'. Brought up in Yorkshire, she went straight from school to teacher training at Dudley Training College in the Midlands. However, teaching was not her dream growing up, and the decision to teach was a passive one:

(As a child) I don't think I did want to teach. I think I went to teaching because I couldn't do the Art that I wanted to do. I don't think I was

talented enough. I would have loved to have gone into textile design or something like that, but I wasn't an artist. I went into teacher training. I don't know why I did. I didn't get a lot of support from my parents, not because they didn't want to, but that they couldn't. I think I was the first person in my family to go on to college or to go away from home. So I sort of fumbled my way through at Dudley College. I don't know why I chose Dudley. I just did. I ended up at Dudley training college and had a really good three years. I have had three good teaching practices and sort of was glad I made that decision.

She began her teaching career at a Middle School in the Midlands, becoming Head of Art within four years. It was a happy introduction to the profession, and her Head teacher was a key role model:

It's a long time ago now, but I really had a super time. Was really happy. Lovely school. Lovely children. I was allowed to make mistakes. The Head was brilliant for doing that. He allowed me to take risks and make mistakes. I felt really comfortable that I knew I could do that. And at the time I thought he must have been a really experienced Head but since then I have found out that it was his first headship. But at the time I thought he was so wise, he must be. He wasn't. He was a first Head. And maybe that's why he let me take those risks. But it was great.

Despite her happiness, her next move signalled a change of direction:

> I went back to Yorkshire and I worked in a Secure Unit in Leeds, teaching adolescent boys between 11 and 18. Don't know why I did it, but I did. They wanted somebody to teach art to the young offenders. Six years I stayed there, working with boys between 11 and 18. The money was good, but I really didn't like that job very much. In the end we had an Ofsted inspection in the Unit and one of the Ofsted inspectors took me to one side and said 'What on earth are you doing here? You need to get back into mainstream'. And so I looked to get out.

Following a period as Head of Year in a Middle School, she relocated again when her husband got a job in London. She was appointed as a senior teacher, until reluctantly accepting a leadership post:

> I hadn't been there very long when the head asked me to be the acting head because he wanted to go somewhere else. I didn't want to do it, I didn't feel ready to do it, but he bullied me into doing it – 'you can do it, you'll be great' - and all this. So I did. I did the acting headship for about two and a half terms, and then they advertised the post and I felt I had to apply. But I didn't get it. So I left.

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She then began a period working for the local authority as a primary consultant in literacy, and then as a lead ISP (Improving Schools Programme) consultant:

> That was fabulous. Absolutely great. I loved it. Got 10 schools and I travelled round those 10 schools for 3 years. 3 years I did that, and then I thought if I am doing this for 10 different schools why don't I try and do it for one. So I applied for two headships, didn't get the first one and this was the second one.

As well as her practical experience, she also completed a Masters and Ofsted Inspector training, but despite her cv, headship was not a motivating goal.

> I was always very happy in the classroom. I really enjoyed being in the classroom and I was really happy doing ISP. I really liked the way that the consultants' role opened up. ISP hadn't started in our LA so a colleague and myself started it and got it up and running. I don't think people realised how big it was going to be, and so a maths colleague and myself, literacy, started ISP from my kitchen. We had 10 schools to work with. I really enjoyed that, really enjoyed it.

Although Headship was not her goal, she was developing useful skills:

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Those were just riddled with problems that had to be solved. I quite enjoyed that. And I suppose linked with that was I think I am quite good with people. I think I am quite good at working with people on a one to one or in a small group, and trying to work with them to solve the problem, and ISP was great for that.

There are aspects to her character that have surprised her in her headship role:

I didn't realise until I came to headship that I want to know everything. I want to have that sort of control and that power over things. I want to know what is happening. I think I am quite good at trying to solve problems. I think I quite like that, the analytical bit of things. This is the problem we have got - how are we going to solve it? And I think that is what motivates me, making a difference.

She is able to analyse her leadership style, and recognise strengths and weaknesses:

I think I am very people orientated. Very open. In fact I have learnt that I am too open, I'm too accessible, but that's me. I have learnt so much about myself in this job. That I am open door to parents, to children and to staff. But also I think I can't carry on being that open. I think I lead by example. I think I am a good role model to staff and I

think I have also learnt during this job that I can sometimes be more dictatorial than I am and that people will accept it. I think sometimes people want you to do that and maybe I haven't always done that. I thought I'd got to be more done by talking to them when really sometimes people want you to tell them what to do. I just learnt so much about myself doing this job.

However, despite her ability to remain objective, her period of headship has left its mark. When asked if she has been happy during her time as Head, she pauses for a long while before replying:

This is confidential isn't it? I have hated every minute of this job.

6.3   The Inspection Process

Karen took up post in 2008, having had a good knowledge of the school from her work with the Local Authority. She was the third head in just over two years since the painful amalgamation / federation process that the school had gone through. During her first year, she knew that Ofsted was due in the near future and that aspects of the school would make the inspection potentially difficult:

I was worried about it because I knew that the data wasn't good, and I knew that the new framework would be based on that, and I knew

that we had a downward trend in that, but I didn't think we would go into a category. But I was worried about it.

One of her key tasks was to share her concerns with staff:

I have been very up front and honest with the staff right from day one. We have shared. I think the staff now are more aware than ever in the two years I have been here about the position that they are in. We are in. I think they were quite taken aback by it, that we actually now share data together, that staff take accountability and responsibility for their class' progress and their data. Right from day one we talked about the level of attainment, the amount of progress the children were making and the lack of intervention and the lack of focussing on individual pupils, and we did that right from the beginning.

The initial call from the Lead Inspector raised issues although provisional judgements were not discussed. However, Karen subsequently discovered that he discussed the possibility of Special Measures with the School Improvement Partner during their meeting on Day 1 of the Inspection. Not aware of this, Karen was hoping for a Satisfactory judgement. However, events on the first morning completely changed the mood:

The first day we were ready, we were ready for them to come. They came in and the first thing they wanted to do was to meet with the

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senior leadership team, to have their briefing of what the day would look like. Then they asked me who I felt my most competent teachers were, and I said the two people that are with me now - the deputy head and the assistant head - and off they went to do the lesson observations, and at the end of that first lesson they had found both of those people inadequate. Which was an absolute - just knocked me for six. Because they had gone to see both of those, the Lead had gone to see both of those people, and found both of them inadequate, and I was just devastated really because that is not the case. It really isn't the case, but then it made me doubt my judgement. That maybe they were inadequate teachers. And they are not.

Immediately, Karen's judgement was called into question, by the Inspection team, but also herself:

I was with the Inspector for the assistant head's one, but not for the deputy head's lesson. The deputy head said that she felt that she had done an inadequate lesson. I was absolutely amazed. I felt that it (the AHT lesson) was a satisfactory lesson, which once again made me doubt myself and my own staff evaluation if he was saying it was inadequate. I did argue with him about it. We did discuss the lesson but it was almost as if he was out to prove right from the minute that it was maths in both of them and because obviously we have got a

downwards four year trend for maths. It was almost as if, I felt, he was just trying to prove his point right from the minute go. The rest of that day it was mainly maths that they followed. They did very little else. There was another lady with him that came to do Foundation Stage and they did the CRB stuff with me which was all o.k.

By this point, she had realised that Special Measures was a possibility, but kept the information from staff, in particular the issues with senior staff:

I think the deputy head hadn't told anyone that she had had an inadequate lesson and I don't think they did find out really until a lot later. The assistant head had asked if she could be observed again the next morning. She wanted to go through it again. And she did, and she got a Good the next morning. But the deputy couldn't do it again. She's a very, very strong person – she was acting head for the year before I came. It really, really knocked her.

All of her focus went into avoiding Special Measures:

Overnight I put as much as I could gather together to show why I didn't think we were a Special Measure school. The next morning I asked if I could see him, and I went through everything I had put together. I had put a package together entitled 'Why I don't think we are a Special Measures school', and he gave me about an hour and a half

of his time on the next morning. We went through data. He took it all on board. He had a second look at A, the assistant head, teaching and that went well, and then in the afternoon of the second day said that it wouldn't be Special Measures but that it would be a Notice to Improve.

Her initial feeling was one of relief, although this changed in time:

I think I was pleased because it wasn't Special Measures. It could have been far worse and we had pulled it back to being a Notice to Improve, but once I saw the report I was disappointed it was a Notice to Improve because our issues are all around maths, just maths. The questionnaires from the parents and the children were so positive. All of them agree or strongly agree. When I saw the report then I felt really angry that we'd got a Notice to Improve. One aspect of school that was almost saying our school was inadequate, when there was obviously so much good.

Karen called the staff together at the end of the second day:

I notified the staff that I wanted to speak to them at a quarter to five on that day. Everybody stayed. I went through every section and explained that it was Notice to Improve on the key issues. I don't think at that point I'd got a real sort of understanding of what the impact

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was, because it hadn't hit that we were going to have to share all this with parents, and I done so much to build up the numbers. I didn't realise that, on that day I didn't realise the sort of knock-on effect that parents might lose the confidence they obviously had in us.

Despite the relief, she continued to question her impact during the Inspection:

I have questioned myself, that had I been a more experienced head, would I have fought more vociferously for my school, but I don't think I would. I think I did fight for it and I think we did move from Special Measures to Notice to Improve overnight. You do question yourself. Could I have done it differently? I have questioned myself about that but I know I did enough.

The outcome was a Notice to Improve. The report stated that significant improvement was required, because it was performing less well than it could reasonably be expected to perform. It highlighted that significant improvement was required in relation to pupils' progress in maths.

6.4 Post-Inspection

Initially, the Local Authority took over the management of the post-inspection process:

Over the next couple of days we talked to the local authority and they said that they would have to hold a parents meeting, and they'd have to get this letter out to parents and write to them. The Head of Primary School Effectiveness, would come and would lead that meeting. That's when I started thinking 'Oh this is going to be so damaging'. So damaging to everything that we have done.

Feedback from parents at the meeting was surprisingly supportive:

We had about 40 people come to the parents meeting in the evening. It was a challenging meeting, and they asked challenging questions, the parents that came, but they all left on a high. One parent stood up at the end and said 'Could I just say that it sounds like this is the place to be. It sounds like it's going places and it sounds like you've gone through a horrible time and that's all behind you.' But next year's intake, on our website they will see the Ofsted report. So that's worried me how damaging that could be.

Karen has been most concerned about how the judgement may have affected perceptions and the reputation of the school:

There has recently been some work in the town and the local authority have done some talks with various groups of people, like the Extended Schools Coordinator and Youth Workers and actually

shared data with them, how we came out as an inadequate school. I just think it's dreadful - on the one hand you are helping us but on the other hand you are sort of naming and shaming us as being the one school that has a Notice to Improve, and it says inadequate. We are not an inadequate school. We have had an inadequate judgement on our progress in maths. That's what is really hurting. I know we are not, because I have been in many that are.

6.5   Follow-Up Inspection

Approximately eight months after the initial Inspection, the school received a formal Monitoring visit, which concluded that the school was making satisfactory progress since the inspection, although there were still some deficiencies in progress. The process was a far more positive experience for Karen than the initial inspection had been, and she was able to use it to address some intractable staffing issues:

It was good to do. Quite uplifting to do it actually, and know that everything was ok and that we were going in the right direction. We did observations together all morning and one of the teachers that was inadequate who was the Chair of Governor's wife - it's been a difficult situation the whole time I have been here, and after that lesson was inadequate he fed back to the Governors and the LA, he

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said my judgements were equal to his and we agreed on everything, and I think that really helped because the Chair of Governors was there. She (the teacher) has now left. In fact six members of staff left, and we have got six new ones. It needed to happen.

Karen is prepared to acknowledge that the judgement had an impact on the school's subsequent progress:

A good proportion of it is down to Ofsted, but not wholly. I think looking back, first year of my time here was wiped out really by the Inspection. I feel totally different now. I think the Ofsted did help. I think it helped to focus and give a sense of urgency and to get us all going. And it has given me confidence as well, I think that things are going well.

Her fears about parental reaction have largely proved to be unfounded:

Our numbers have gone up dramatically. They think the school is very happy, very safe, very secure - their children like coming here. It's me that keeps bringing it up by reminding them that we are doing ok. But our numbers have never been as high and that is with the Ofsted report there for them to read. Everybody who has been to look around the school I have been honest and open and said 'Have you seen the Ofsted report? Have you read it?

She has also found that her own reputation has improved:

> I think perception of me improved, and I think the longer I have been here I think their perception of me has got better. The Foundation Stage leader actually said to me one day that when I came here she said she had absolutely no respect for me whatsoever, and I think that was probably because of where I come from in terms of I hadn't come from school. I had come from a consultant's post, and she said that during the time I had been here that had totally turned around. I think that that is what people generally would feel, and I think they felt that in the Ofsted that I took the lead and at the end of the first day it could have been special measures. I took the data and presented it and it wasn't special measures.

Karen is very clear about her aspirations for the school in terms of Ofsted:

> For me, in a year's time I hope the school has got out of the category, and I really hope that it has got a Good. That is what we are aiming for. We don't want Satisfactory, we want to be Good. If another Head came and took it from me as a Good school with high numbers, full nursery, budget has been sorted because that was in a mess, and took it on from there – that's my hope.

6.6 Emotional Impact

There is a clear sense from Karen that her emotions had to be controlled and managed through the whole Ofsted experience, and indeed her Headship experience:

> In school, you just keep going. You put that face on, everything's great and you rally the troops and you tell them they are all fantastic and we can do it. If you don't think you can, tell them you can. You do that in school but then I go home and feel absolutely crap. I'd feel absolutely dreadful, because the job was hard enough anyway. It is my first headship and it's not been without its difficulties in terms of staffing, redundancies, and an issue with the budget and the kitchen, and things I've had to deal with in the two years leading up to this were just massive. I wasn't enjoying the job at all.

There is a feeling of duty, and lack of choice:

> I haven't enjoyed headship at all. I think I am doing ok, and I think we are getting there, but I just really don't like it. I feel like I've got to see it out and it's got to have a good outcome. I've got to do that for the school and I've got to do it for me, because I can't leave thinking that I didn't do it. I've got to stay, and I will stay until we come out of this. And then I'll leave.

As for whether she would go to another headship, or to a different job altogether:

> I think I have made my mind up that once Ofsted have been I will go, and I won't do headship. I have made that decision. I haven't a clue what I'll do. Perhaps if I went into a school that wasn't in these circumstances I might quite enjoy it, but I don't know what I'll do yet. Maybe wasn't right for headship anyway.

During my third interview, over a year since the inspection, she shared some significant details about her personal circumstances:

> I am looking (for other jobs) because if I want to leave at Christmas I have got to be looking. So I have been looking and since I have been here my husband has left me as well. So there's no pressure to stay here, I could go anywhere. My daughter is going to university in the Autumn and so I could go anywhere. It is time for me to move on.

> I was married for about 20, 22 years and I suppose with hindsight this job – I will always be the way that I am – even as a teacher - I used to have people coming out round to the house on a Sunday afternoon while I was a deputy doing planning. You'd go on holiday and I'd be the sort who was buying stuff for school and you don't realise over time that is what has happened to you, happened to your marriage

and things. Something would have brought it to a head when he finally decided enough was enough really. But that happened last summer (the inspection took place in September). Since I started here, in the first year, I started in the January and in the January, my mum was told she had got cancer and she was 70. She lives in Yorkshire and so every weekend for the first year that I was here I went to Yorkshire. Virtually every weekend until she died on Inset day in the September. And then at the same time Simon said he wanted to move on, but he would wait until my mum had passed away, and so in the first year my mum went and in the second year Simon went in the July, and this year Jess will go. So it has been a huge change.

At the time, she was so busy that she did not appreciate the emotional toll that these events were placing on her.

With hindsight I think what I should have done, but I didn't, is that I should have said in that January when I had taken the job, that I needed to take 6 months off. But I didn't, because it was a new job. They had just given me a headship.

She did not discuss her marriage break up with anyone at school, and has not spoken to anyone about her intentions to leave:

Nobody knows that. I think really I shouldn't tell them that. I feel that it would have a detrimental effect on the whole school. I think they need to feel that I am here and I am with them, and I will be to the day I move out. I wouldn't give any less commitment but I think if they knew that that is the way I felt that it wouldn't help.

Karen recognises that she does not have enough suitable strategies to cope with the emotional demands placed upon her:

I don't think I do actually. I don't think I cope with it very well at all. I am not very good at letting go. I won't get home until late, I might get home at 6.30. It is just me and my daughter at home. I cook a meal, we talk, about an hour or two, and then I work again. I don't work on Friday nights and I will take Saturday off and work on a Sunday or vice versa. And I'm not very good at not worrying about it, I am not very good at letting go. I think that will be my downfall. I can't let go and I can't stop worrying, and I can't stop thinking about it.

She describes herself as having a persona as a head teacher:

I do, and it is not me, because it is not who I am, and I consciously know that that happens and I change when I come in. When I am at home that is when I do the worrying about what is happening. But when I am here from the minute I get out the car, well I might have 20

minutes I am usually the first, I know that I suddenly turn into this very positive, happy smiling all right person, and I don't show the worry. Things go wrong most days. If I've made an error, and I think back to that first head that I had and think 'so what' and I deal with it. To me it matters how I deal with the problem, not whether we have the problem.

In her words, 'the mask never slips':

No, no, and I think it makes the job really hard. I don't know how long I could keep that going. I wonder sometimes if I ought to let it slip and I ought to be angry. I ought to be cross with everyone around, but I'm not. I am always this calm 'fine, we will deal with it' sort of person.

She cannot envisage a situation where she would share the burden with her colleagues:

I'd like to think it would change but I feel under this pressure, quietly, that is on me to prove that we are ok as a school. I feel it is my role to help them with that pressure. I think sometimes that maybe I do that a bit too much, that they are responsible adults who are paid a lot of money to do their job, and maybe I take too much of it on me, but I think it is the nature of the job and so there is that pressure.

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Perhaps surprisingly, she is sanguine about the Inspection, and there is no lingering sense of unfairness, although the perceived inconsistency rankles:

It was the right thing to give us the Notice to Improve, but I am also really struggling with the fact that there don't seem to be as many of them as I thought there would be, because I don't think that we are the only school that seems in this position. We are not unusual but I have not seen many others, that bothers me a bit, but I do think for here it was right. I think the process has given us a sense of urgency that we needed and it has made me more focused. It has given me more of a purpose as to where I am going and what I am doing, and I don't mind at all that we had it.

However, her decision to shoulder the burden personally has led to her carrying by far the greatest impact:

Personally, I think it rocks your confidence. I think the pressure during that year for me leaves me quite tired, and we have got to get out of it. So I am the sort of person who I think it is quite tough on. But I think other people have stayed pretty buoyant actually. I think people have stayed pretty positive, up for the challenge. There have been the odd blips where there has been another round of lesson

observations and people have dipped a bit, but generally speaking we have stayed buoyant There is more movement now, with people looking for jobs which I think is a good thing.

Despite the events of recent years, and the pressures of the current role, she can look back over her career and identify happy memories and positive aspects:

There have been so many in terms of teaching. Loads of things with children were absolutely wonderful, like going on residential journeys. When Ofsted came and they were very complimentary about my teaching and those sort of things. One of the inspectors said to me it is an honour and a privilege to be in your classroom. That sort of thing. Or working on ISP when we were just setting it all up together and the buzz that that gave you, starting something new and being able to go away and sort it.

I suppose here, the good parts of things are often with the children. It is when the children come and say something to you, at that moment. Lots of different ones really. They are few and far between these days.

6.7 Long Term Impact

The school was inspected approximately 15 months after the initial inspection, and judged to be satisfactory, although Capacity to Improve was judged Good. In particular, Karen was singled out for praise in the report, which stated that she had led improvements with 'tireless rigour'. It praised as 'impressive' her approach to eradicate inadequate teaching and accelerate pupils' progress whilst maintaining good standards of pastoral care, and identified that leadership at all levels has improved. As a result of her actions, the report noted that standards of attainment have risen in English and mathematics to be broadly average and that the capacity for continued and sustained improvement was good.

Her desire to do something different was not translated into action, partly because potential roles did not come up that interested her, and changes in educational policy limited the opportunities to work in non-school based roles. A year later, she left the school to take up a headship post in a small Church of England school in a different part of the country. It was in a very different position from her previous headship - stable, well-resourced with a long-standing record of success. She is now in her second year there, and has had a Good Ofsted judgement.

Since she left, the school has been inspected again and judged to be Good overall, under the new Head.

6.8 Analysis

6.8.1 Rational Conditions

Before taking up the post of Head, Karen had established her expertise as a leader of teaching and learning through her consultant work with the Local Authority. She had been recognized as an excellent teacher and had provided advice and support to school leaders, as well as delivering professional development on many occasions. Her model of leadership is focused on an instructional model. She saw the importance of using data about pupil performance to inform teaching, and considered that the biggest steps she had taken before the inspection were in communicating that to her staff. Moreover, her previous experience, including working with the Local Authority and training to be an Ofsted inspector, gave her the confidence to see herself as an 'expert' in teaching and learning.

However, the experience on the first morning of inspection had a significant impact on that self-belief. The teachers identified by her as the strongest practitioners were judged to have delivered inadequate lessons, opening up the distinct possibility of a failed inspection. She became aware that members of the school community had privately questioned her expertise

as a result of her lack of leadership experience, and her authority was undermined.

This became the key task facing her and she acknowledges that she used the post-Ofsted processes, such as the increased LA involvement and the imminent monitoring visit to drive through essential changes. In particular, she recognizes the jolt that it gave to expectations in the school, lifting them beyond previous comfortable expectations. By using the processes she had worked with on the ISP programme, she felt able to refocus staff on teaching and learning and the use of assessment and target-setting, and concentrate her improvement efforts on Rational School Conditions.

6.8.2   Emotional Conditions

The emotional nature of her time in Headship is clear in Karen's testimony. Leithwood et al (2010) refer to the importance of trust in the establishment of successful emotional school conditions, and highlight leaders who 'develop, nurture and model trusting and authentic relationships'. In Karen's case, particularly in the period following the inspection, she felt wholly unable to establish these trusting authentic relationships with her team. The difficulties in her personal life, her unhappiness with the role of Head, her intention to leave as soon as she felt able – all were vitally important things that she shared with no-one else in the organization. She

worked hard to provide a caring environment for her staff, but felt that it was based on flimsy foundations.

Karen's emotional relationship with her staff was therefore a highly unequal one. She considered it her role to shoulder the burden, protect the staff, create a safe climate. However, there were implications for her long-term success in leading the school forward. In essence, she prepared the way but at the cost of her own role in this progress. Her future has taken a different route than might be expected for someone who guided the school through difficult times – she has moved to a school where the pressure and the scrutiny are far less and has no desire to move again.

Applying Yamamoto et al's (2014) model to her case gives an interesting insight into the difficulty Karen has had in managing her own emotional journey. She clearly went through the initial phases where her view of herself and her professional life was shaken, followed by a fragmentation phase, characterised by a sense of loss of control. Following this, however, her unwillingness or inability to build fully honest and trusting relationships with colleagues appears to have made it difficult to successfully navigate the final phases of the model – reintegration of self, and reaffirmation of relationships – with the outcome that she has not been fully able to put the critical incident behind her. Perhaps this has happened, or will happen, in

the context of a completely different school, with no residual links to the inspection experience.

6.8.3   Organizational Conditions

Karen's lack of senior leadership experience led to some significant challenges in her early months of headship. Her lack of knowledge of school administration and day to day management was compounded by the issues that the school was experiencing as a result of the messy restructure and federation, which had led to budget and staffing issues. Far from having a culture that supported and sustained change, she was managing a school with a culture that made change more difficult. Although she worked hard to maintain cordial and supportive relationships, true collegiality and collaboration were not widespread.

Karen readily recognises that the aftermath of the inspection allowed her to bring about changes in culture which she had found difficult to broker beforehand. The fact that she had been so surprised that senior teachers had delivered inadequate lessons shone a light on the fact that there was an urgent need for practice to be opened up to greater scrutiny. Supported by external consultants and advisers, she felt able to bring about significant changes, introduce practices to support the ISP programme, and insist that teachers discussed the performance of their pupils (and by extension their

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own performance) openly and honestly. These changes were amongst the most significant factors in moving the school forward.

6.8.4 Family and Community Conditions

The fact that the school had had a difficult birth in the years before Karen took over had led to a somewhat troubled relationship with some parents, and it was perhaps as a result of this which meant that Karen did not feel that she had developed a strong relationship with parents. As such, she did not see the improvement journey as one that featured the parents as a key partner. After the inspection, the possible impact on parental confidence, and therefore numbers and budgets, caused her some concern, but she was reassured by the reaction at the Parents' Meeting, and her fears about children leaving the school were unfounded. However, it is notable that Family and Parental Conditions were not a key part of her improvement strategy.

The fractured nature of the community – brought together from a group of previously unrelated schools serving different sectors of the community – perhaps influenced this choice. Karen's current school is very closely rooted in the village community in which it sits, but in this case she was clearly operating in a different context. Moreover, her decision to shoulder the leadership burden so completely in the time following inspection

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affected her own capacity, both physically and emotionally, and the 'concerted effort' that is advocated by Leithwood et al (2010) was beyond her. As they say, 'Parental engagement has to be a priority, not a bolt-on extra' and Karen's selection of priorities was different at this time.

Chapter 7: Presentation of findings: Case Study D

7.1   School context

School D is a small faith-based primary school located in a large village nearby an industrial town. Pupils are drawn from a population with significantly higher than average levels of deprivation and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and / or disabilities is above average.

7.2   The Head teacher

Rob had been in post for four years by the time of the inspection. Prior to that he was a deputy head teacher at another faith school following teaching experience in 3 other schools, all in the North or North-East of England. His decision to go into teaching was not one borne out of a passionate desire, but he had many people around him who were involved in education, including his wife, his sisters and other extended family, and he found teaching enjoyable and stimulating:

> When I set out in teaching I never had any aspirations. I wanted to be a classroom teacher. Opportunity opens itself up, you have got to go for it. It's given me a good standard of life. It's given me some interesting exchanges.

Until the inspection, his career had been a fairly smooth and happy progression through the career ladder in primary schools. He found himself gaining experience and responsibility as a natural consequence of his work. However, throughout his career the enjoyment of the job was his motivation, more than a desire to climb the career ladder:

> The first year was an absolute joy to be in the classroom after the training. I really enjoyed that. I only left that job because my wife who I had met when we trained as teachers, and our agreement was that whoever got a job first that was where we would buy a house and the other would get a job in the area at that point. I probably did learn a lot in my first job. It was that that gave me the push to want a leadership role. A member of staff there saw something that I hadn't seen in myself and pushed me, so it was probably the most useful in terms of career development but not necessarily the most enjoyable.

It seems that the performativity agenda was something that passed him by, and when Ofsted arrived it was a difficult experience:

> I managed to dodge Ofsted for those first 8 years or so of my career, maybe 10 years of my career. Everytime I moved from school to school I left as they had Ofsted just afterwards, so my first experience of Ofsted was in 2001 and we went into Serious Weaknesses.

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Probably the best two years of my career at that point were getting us out in 2003 and I really, really grew as a teacher and a leader in those two years. The nice thing was that the pressure wasn't directly on me which, as Head, I can now understand why my Head was the way she was at the time. I've got a fifty-fifty record with Ofsted, 2 fails 2 passes.

His self-image reflects the fact that leadership was something that 'happened' rather than a burning ambition for him. However, he is able to look honestly at his strengths and weaknesses:

I am possibly a bit too laid back at times. When I first came here I had a very clear brief to improve the quality of teaching and for the first two years standards were all, we had lots of changes in staff, and then I took my foot off the pedal a little bit and it was very, very hard to then put it back on. I then had a very difficult year personally, you know away from here, and took my eye off the ball quite a bit, and then before I knew it we were in Special Measures.

7.3 Inspection Process

As the date for Inspection approached, there was a sense of foreboding about the outcome. The leadership in the school, and the Local Authority, had been aware for some time that poor results might result in difficulties when the school was inspected. The school was inspected in December

2006 and was judged to be satisfactory. In subsequent years, results were mixed, with considerable inconsistency between English and Maths.

Rob was anxious about the impact of the poor results:

> There wasn't a great deal of training on the new Ofsted framework prior to September, and as soon as I looked at it, I was a little bit anxious. I knew that, filling in the new SEF for instance, there were far too many fours (inadequate), and once your standards were a four all sorts of other things were running the risk. Then our SATs results weren't brilliant, our maths had dropped and it's the swinging between doing well and doing badly that caused me anxiety. Being a small school our percentage swings can be fairly great, so I was a bit worried. Sat down with the School Improvement Adviser and we started looking at our SEF and we were worried; had some training that week for Governors, he gave them a bit of wake-up call, and we were hoping that our Autumn term assessment data would show us in a better light, expecting to be inspected after the half term. As it was, the inspection came at the end of September.

Staff and governors were aware of the vulnerability, although had not realised the full implications:

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Certainly the key governors did. My Chair of Governors, after they had had the governors training, knew we were very vulnerable. My deputy had heard the message. It possibly hadn't been indicated to the rest of the staff, because I didn't want to get them too worked up before Ofsted anyway, because we hadn't had time to do much training on the new framework - I did not see the point in getting everybody as anxious as I was feeling.

The call from Ofsted came as a shock, coming much earlier in the year than expected. There was a sense of not being prepared:

I very rarely take time out to be away from school, but I did actually take that Friday afternoon to work from home, and they phoned after I had left the building; so, a 40 minute journey home, and by the time I picked up my answerphone (I won't answer it in the car) it was do I come back to school and speak to them, or do I do it all from home. The first call – I left at about 2 o'clock – they phoned at 10 past 2. My deputy doesn't work on Fridays, she only works 4 days so another member of staff took the call. So I did it from home and then spent the weekend in with most of the rest of the staff. That was a bit of an embarrassment that I wasn't actually in to take the call, but I know Heads can't always be on site.

The initial conversation was courteous and professional:

> It was a professional conversation. He asked for various documentation. I explained that I had left school and was speaking from home and that I would email it to him the following day, which he was fine with. He asked about the SEF – was it up to date? It is not in the new framework – at that point it was largely an update on the one that was written. He asked me to make that live as soon as possible. It was a fairly amicable conversation, and we would speak on the Monday morning. We did agree to speak on the Monday prior to him coming on the Tuesday.

Over the weekend, Rob sent information and data to the Inspector:

> On the Monday, at that point he said we obviously had an issue with standards, asked about the history of the school and gave me a brief run down. The fact is that in the summer term, we had a supply teacher when one of the members of staff was off on maternity, and that hadn't worked out. We got rid of him and brought in somebody else who was significantly better, but still not brilliant. We tried swapping teaching classes around a little but, so that we could have the better teachers in both key stages, the evidence wasn't going to be there in as much detail as we needed.

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Although there were likely to be significant difficulties, there was no great sense of panic, more of acceptance that it would not be possible to change everything at this point:

The inspection started Tuesday and from the off the first conversations were all about standards and what we had done and so on, and it was fairly obvious that we were going to be struggling, and from that point there were lesson observations, there was one unsatisfactory lesson which was a paired observation between the lead inspector and myself. That was on the first morning, and that was with the member of staff who wasn't permanent, but that was the only unsatisfactory teaching that was observed in the inspection. They saw some good teaching. One of my teachers had a satisfactory lesson. She wasn't very happy so she asked for them to come back the following day, to see her in what she thought was a better light, and they did and they saw a good lesson then. They saw some good teaching and they saw some satisfactory, and they saw one unsatisfactory lesson. It was the standards issue. It's all standards driven, the new framework. It was causing us problems from the start.

There was a sense of inevitability during the inspection, of going through the motions:

I think from the off I knew. In my heart of hearts I knew that I didn't have the evidence to avoid it. So from the word go really I was battling against the tide. To be fair to them, if you could prove that their information was inaccurate, they did listen to you, and they took that on board. We had some arguments about their information, but at the end of the day our results were such that it really was a difficult battle. On a personal level it was hard, because a lot of criticism was levelled in my direction because they didn't feel I was able to drive things on as much as they needed to be, so that was the hardest personally, but it was, from the end of day one, they told me unless I could prove x, y and z, and we couldn't.

The possibility of Special Measures was discussed at the end of Day 1:

The discussion around special measures or notice to improve was that it gives us that little bit more time to make sure that improvements are embedded, and that was a fairly long conversation at the end of the first day. That they felt it would actually give the school a better chance of coming out of it strongly.

However, Rob found himself powerless to provide the reassurance that inspectors wanted:

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I am not the biggest person on statistics so the only way I could have changed it would have been a different person myself, and spent a lot more time on statistics. I have learnt that as a lesson. I do spend a lot more time looking at data now and that means that I have got a much firmer grip on what is happening where. So that is a lesson that I have learned, but in the time that we had, no.

The knowledge about the likely outcome was kept between Rob and the deputy at this point, reinforcing the sense of inevitability:

I didn't want to put them off too much. We did say that it had been a very tough first day, that we needed to make sure the lessons on the following day were as good as we could get them and if they had any evidence, or any data from the first 3 or 4 weeks in school that they could share with me about progress then I would be willing to accept it. I tried not to demoralise people too much. The stress levels were high any way as a result of being inspected. They knew, having seen the new framework, they're intelligent and knew we might struggle.

Rob was unable to influence the outcome in any meaningful way, and it reinforced his inability to make the case for the school:

They gave me a few tasks to do on the first night and I did those. There were 3 or 4 tasks. There were 2 of them that I still could not

make the evidence, the data, look significantly better. One of the bits we did talk through, and their information was a little bit flawed, so we were able to argue that one, but one out of three wasn't good enough.

Hearing and then passing on the news was very difficult:

When they fed back, obviously we had the various representatives from the Diocese, local authority and governors coming in to the feedback. We sat and had quite a sombre meeting, and they formally announced it and then I went and informed teaching staff who had all stayed behind.

Rob remembers the meeting with staff with mixed emotions:

The first response was one of shock I suppose, because you don't like hearing bad news and we then went into anger, directed towards the whole system being unfair and it not taking into account x, y and z. So we sat around for an hour and a half probably talking about, having our moans, having our groans. At one point a governor came in, an ex-head teacher of a school, and had been through this, he came in and that was really, really useful. So we had half an hour of input from him, and then we sat down and starting saying, well what are we going to do about it? This is all on the same night. We went through all the emotions, and by the time we left here we were positive

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about what we needed to do. We weren't sure how at that point, but probably for the first time, I shared my long term vision for the school and people bought in to it. So, we actually turned it into as positive an experience as we could. Everyone was still shell shocked, obviously, but we all went home a lot happier than we had been two and a half hours previously. Emotions were still raw, and we had a whole-school trip organised, so we weren't able to talk as a staff the following day because we were out. But we did get the support staff all together before we went and explained the situation and we licked our wounds that day whilst we were out, and then obviously they had Friday and then went home. I think the weekend was very, very important for us all just to be able to switch off.

The final report stated that the school requires special measures because inspectors judged that it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. It highlighted directly that the people responsible for leading, managing and governing the school were not demonstrating the capacity to secure improvement. It also drew stark attention to the fact that in recent years, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 had consistently been significantly below average, and that attainment of pupils in the current Year 6 was exceptionally low.

7.4 Post Inspection

Following the inspection, the outcome remained confidential for several weeks, although rumours were widespread. However, external pressure began almost immediately:

> I had a fairly intense grilling from School Improvement Adviser and Senior School Improvement Advisers, and they were my worst moments because two hours of two very senior people questioning me over my capability for my job wasn't very nice, and in hindsight I shouldn't have gone into that meeting on my own. But I did and I learned a lesson that day.

Rob felt in a state of limbo – he knew action was needed, but also felt compelled to wait for the finished report. Moreover, the Local Authority were slow to respond:

> They wrote their Action Plan and it just felt as if, the end of September the middle of October the Action Plan was written, but nothing actually started from the Authority until January. The one thing we did have in the Autumn Term was a leadership review, which was another very uncomfortable couple of days looking at myself, my role particularly, but it was just like another inspection because we also had our re-inspection, so the Autumn Term felt like inspect, inspect, inspect. It

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was almost to us as if we had just been hit with the same things over and over again. Where is the advice to help us move forward? That didn't really feel as if that started until January.

Rob feels bitter about the role played by the Local Authority:

I think the local authority have come out of this looking very, very good when they didn't help this school in the way that they should. We, in all the time I have been here, we have been a category 4 school so should have had an adviser all of that time. Three years ago, the local authority adviser who had worked with me for years retired and should have been replaced. That person, nobody took the place until two years later so we really had been short-changed. So for them to then say this was a big surprise, big shock to us, was a bit unfair. We had asked for some support but it wasn't forthcoming.

Once action started and Rob began to sense momentum and change, he was able to reflect on the process and accept his own responsibility and position in the process. Within 6 months of the initial inspection, he was able to understand the Special Measures decision:

I can see why they have done it. So I think, reflecting on it, it will be a useful learning experience at the end. That's my nature. For me personally. For some of the staff I think it will be a waste of time and

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an incredible inconvenience on their lives. I will learn from it and I had always said it was the beginning of last September that the local authority and the Diocesan representatives talked to me about where I expected to be and what the future held for me. I feel I have coped with all the different stresses as you get older. If we had that conversation with the Diocese at a different time I might tell them to forget it. I do like a challenge.

7.5   Follow-Up Inspection

Following the initial inspection in which the school was placed into Special Measures, there were termly monitoring visits from HMI. In total there were five such visits before the school was re-inspected just over two years later. At all these visits, it was judged that the school was making satisfactory progress, and at the full inspection, the school was graded a category 3 – Satisfactory.

The constant cycle of inspection visits, and the preparation and follow-up from each visit became an ever-present feature of Rob's work, allied to the presence of Local Authority advisers. The monitoring reports did not vary greatly – hard work and progress were recognised but the distance still to travel was always referenced so there was little sense of nearing a finishing line:

The last (second) monitoring visit was a strange one in a couple of ways, because he felt there was too much to do, which was a bit upsetting because we have worked very, very hard, and we have struggled to do everything he had asked. It wasn't through lack of effort. One of my teachers said that you almost felt that you had been set up to fail. That left me a bit flat.

The perception from Rob and his staff was that 'goalposts were always moving' and there was a sense of deprofessionalisation, that the more he found out, the less he knew for sure:

There was a lesson that was inadequate was shared more with myself. I thought it was probably satisfactory but not enough children made progress so it was inadequate. It upset that member of staff and that had a knock on effect elsewhere. Some of the gradings were interesting. There was one teacher who had been good or been outstanding on a previous visit and he gave the first class he saw with her satisfactory, but said it was a small step away from being outstanding. That doesn't quite compute to me. Another lesson he observed he said 'I don't know if this is the best lesson I have ever seen or the worst lesson I have ever seen.' You have just got to make a judgement. It was just the messages were a bit woolly.

He was most concerned that improvements were not being recognised:

> I think we are a better school. No, I know we are a better school than we were but the problem is standards, we have got to get over the legacy. Our data actually went down a bit after the first year in Special Measures. The next year it will go up but our problem is our weakest cohort is still our year five. There is still that anxiety that because it is so standards driven that we will struggle to show rapid enough improvement.

7.6   Emotional impact

Rob felt strongly that he was bearing the brunt of the inspection outcome, and was responsible for the emotional health of others in the school. Over time, however, the strength of the community was a source of support:

> I think with being a small school there are less heads to share it around. Because I am not directly involved in what the children do on a day to day, that is what my staff are doing, so I have tried to shield them as much as I could and that has made it very, very hard. T has been very good, my deputy, at alleviating some of that and she has been involved more and more as the process has moved on. At the start I perhaps didn't involve her, use her, as much as I probably should have done. The Chair of Governors, I have a very good

working relationship with. In the Spring Term the governors have become much more actively involved and that has been a help and as a staff we have talked a lot more and I have shared it a lot more, my concerns as well. So I feel that that has happened a lot more. I did feel fairly anxious.

The support from outside school has been vital:

It's been tough. I don't remember being as stressed as I have been over the last couple of months before. But thankfully I have got a fairly solid home life, and have got other support amongst friends, and that has helped me get through.

He has people he feels he can trust, and who will provide unconditional support:

It has had an impact on my wife because she has never seen me like this – we have been married 19 years – and she has not seen me this stressed before. She's a primary school teacher, so she understands what I am going through, and there are an awful lot of members of my family who are involved in education at different levels. My sister, I have got three sisters, one of whom is a primary school head teacher and she was there before and that was really nice, but also the support from other heads has been very, very good. Some heads who

I've got a lot of time for, they have been the ones who I've picked up the phone with when I was feeling down and there is a head teacher nearby who is offering lots of support. We meet each week just to talk things through.

Meeting with head teacher colleagues who he did not know so well was a difficult experience:

The worst one was when the Heads get together in our Diocese once a year, and going to that I did feel a little bit uneasy. It's one of those things – some people knew – and there were one or two very supportive voices, but yes you do feel a little bit uncomfortable because you feel as if you are letting everybody down when you go into a category. I was at an ISP network meeting last week and talked to one of the heads there. Her school had just gone into special measures so it was not public knowledge yet but she let people on the table know, and it was almost that sense of 'I'm not the only one' or we are not the only one. My deputy was with us and we looked at each other, as if to say 'yes we are not the only school in this situation.' There is a bit of fear, anxiety about letting anybody else know.

As time passed, the pressure did not ease and as momentum stalled somewhat, there were times of real crisis for Rob personally:

Probably the leadership and management audit was the lowest. I could quite happily have quit at that point. That was Thursday and Friday. I got through the days and that left me with the weekend. I went out with my friends and wife on the Friday, went to the football on Saturday, and was a bit quiet. On the Sunday I broke down in tears, which I have never done before, my wife she listened, and she talked to me, that was the worse it has been for me to get to the point, my wife said, give it a little more time because you are not a quitter, you will come through it - I went to bed a lot earlier than usual and walked into school on Monday morning and just had to get on with it.

From talking to one or two members of the family and trusted friends who have been there in support, you keep going. The emotional rollercoaster is incredible. Even during the course of a day if something goes well its tremendous, and then it can dip. I think the second time I felt it was the week after half term in February when we came back then, because having been in special measures for three months at that point we had a raft of parents requesting transfer forms for their children. That upset me. So I would say the lowest I have been would be the Friday the first week after half term.

Despite these moments of personal crisis, he knows he needs to demonstrate emotional strength and resilience to the wider community, and take on the emotional labour associated with his role:

> I think with the staff they have realised that I have had to be a little bit tougher with them and when I want something I expect to have it. There has been once or twice when they had said, you have been a bit remote, we have not seen you for a while, and again it's knowing what's going on. Sometimes I'm not able to tell them. I have never hidden from the parents. I meet and greet parents every day. If I have to, I'm outside and deal with 90% of issues out there, and even from the day after the inspection I was still standing out there, and the day we were told this went live I was out there. So still there, still fighting.

The change in relationship with his colleagues is not a comfortable one:

> I have had to get tougher with people and I have upset people more often. To be honest not intentionally, but just because the pressure's on me.

From the outset, he realised that the implications for him were career-threatening, and that increased the pressure:

I have got family who are in education, friends who are nothing to do with education, who have financial pressures in care work who are going through a similar thing, so I know how they feel. I felt the Local Authority adviser was brought in to get rid of me. It's not been a nice place to be, everyday your emotions go up and down. Yesterday was a horrendous day because I met a family who out of the blue told me they were leaving today. No prior knowledge of that.

The toll on Rob's health and relationships began to be evident:

It took more of a toll than I realised. Just before Christmas I had a very frank discussion with my best friend and we had fallen out. For a number of people you realise you have gone months without spending time with them and this was a lad I had known since school, he lived local to me and we were avoiding each other.

Despite high levels of resilience and being able to call on support from others, the emotional toll had been considerable.

7.7   Long Term Impact

The legacy of this process has been very difficult for Rob:

I think for me the biggest downside of Ofsted is the impact on the number of lives. Not only the teachers, the support staff who do work

hard in a fairly challenging environment and I have seen the impact on them. Members of staff upset. I have been upset. That's not conducive to helping kids to make better progress. Something has gone wrong. It certainly doesn't improve the lives of people who work in schools with work in categories, and if those people are working with the stress levels that they are, then children won't make as much progress as they are capable.

He recognises the changes that have taken place in his professional practice:

I think I'm a better Head teacher. I think I have got a much clearer vision of what I need to do to get the school to where I want to be. I work well under pressure, but I am finding that hard as well.

However, the process has taken its toll:

I am not sure how much longer I can stay as a head teacher. I want to get out this situation – I am not going to do anything until we are out of Special Measures, but it would affect where my future is.

Following the second monitoring visit, Rob reflected on his long term plans:

As a head teacher I am going to be here for 5 or 6 years. I have got another 20 years in my career left, retirement age is 22 years ahead

of me. That's scary. I am not going to work until I am 66. I have got my family. I will be in a financial position to go a lot earlier. It has been very, very tough. My family have been supportive. I have got my family and friends around me.

After the follow-up inspection that removed Special Measures, the school was inspected again two years later, and was judged to be a category 3 again, although by this time that was a Requiring Improvement designation. Rob resigned within a month of the inspection without a post to go to. This was now 4 years from the initial inspection.

7.8.   Analysis

7.8.1   Rational Conditions

When Rob accounts for the reasons for the inspection failure, he is willing to acknowledge that standards in the school's test results made a negative judgement likely, and his frustration with the outcome is centred most upon the fact that he felt that inspectors could not see beyond the low standards. However, it is noticeable that he rarely makes reference to teaching and learning or his own instructional leadership. Leadership of this work was seemingly in the hands of the LA advisory team, and at each subsequent review and inspection event, Rob felt vulnerable and unsure of the outcome.

It is equally noticeable that he makes little reference to his love of teaching when he discusses his career history, and his own professional development seems to have been limited to the opportunities provided by LA or Diocese. This left him vulnerable when dealing with the issues provided by the data. His 'laid-back' attitude (his own words), and a shared sense among the staff of the difficulties in serving a disadvantaged community were not conducive to high expectations, and the relentless pursuit of improvement.

7.8.2   Emotional Conditions

The emotional toll on Rob was clear, and sustained long after the initial inspection. The sense of powerlessness that he had during the process remained as the key decisions about planning and strategy were taken by others. The school plan was largely drawn up by the LA adviser, and the inspection was not the lowest point – this came following an LA leadership and management audit. In contrast to the other case study heads, Rob was personally exposed in the inspection and review reports – there was a clearly an issue with leadership and he felt that he had let colleagues down.

However, it is also clear that his relationships with his staff remained positive on the whole. He felt that they were able to support each other emotionally. There was a sense of personal trust, but this did not extend to

professional relationships. Rob clearly identified with his staff, and identified Ofsted as the source of their difficulties. Although they had a strong relationship, this was not articulated in relation to the core mission and purpose of the school, namely pupil learning. High trust had not led to high risk or improving performance – the lack of focus on high expectations, or on teaching and learning did not allow emotional conditions to have a positive impact.

Rob's response to the critical incident of a failed Ofsted inspection failed to follow all stages of the model proposed by Yamamoto et al (2014) and remained stuck at the fragmentation stage. The loss of control and lack of clear understanding of what was needed to move forward never really disappeared during the research period. Indeed, despite the stated intention to improve and belief that positive change was happening, his focus remained on the immediate emotional needs of himself and those closest to him.

7.8.3   Organizational Conditions

Rob was regarded as an efficient manager, and systems and structures created the potential for staff to engage in 'productive activities'. Indeed, one of the reasons why the school had remained relatively undisturbed despite several years of poor results was that other indicators – staff

turnover, budget, pupil exclusions, parental concerns - were generally positive. He had the opportunity to prepare for headship through his time as a deputy and felt that in many aspects he was well-supported.

However, the efficiency of the organization did not translate into the development of cultures that supported pupil progress. Leithwood et al (2010) highlight the way that organizational conditions create the opportunity for collaborative working, to support development and change. The conditions that could have supported 'positive and productive sharing of knowledge' supported the smooth running of the school and the creation of a harmonious school community (which undoubtedly existed and was valued by many of its members). Even following the inspection, Rob saw his role as partly to protect the staff from turbulent change, rather than implementing it through organizational arrangements.

7.8.4   Family and Community Conditions

The school served a community with low levels of educational engagement, and although the parental body were generally supportive, involvement in the school was low, and centred around the religious events that the school was involved with – masses, festivals etc. In 5 years, only 8 responses have been recorded on the Ofsted Parent View website, despite a number of inspection events which will have prompted parents

for a response. Although the school is not oversubscribed, numbers have remained consistent and few parents withdrew their children following the inspection, which is something that Rob took comfort from.

Leithwood et al (2010) write: 'High-performing schools make a strong connection with parents and their learning community.' This connection was noticeably absent in this case – no parents' meeting was held following the inspection for example, the parents' section on the school website remains blank at the time of writing, Rob's account of the impact of the inspection makes little or no reference to parents and the local community. Given the importance of the connection, this may go some way to explaining the slow progress that the school has made.

Chapter 8: A Discussion of the findings

8.1   Introduction and Context

In the previous chapter, each of the four schools was presented as an individual case study, explored from the head teachers' perspective. This chapter will compare their responses to the experiences, and explore the factors that enabled them to move forward following the inspection and to identify the impact of the experience.

The key questions I will consider are:

- To what extent is the head teacher able to maintain agency in the light of a negative professional event, specifically a 'failed' Ofsted, and the accountability pressures it invites?

- What is the long-term impact of Ofsted failure on the career and future effectiveness of the head teacher?

- How important is the ability of the head teacher to manage the emotional dimension of a professionally traumatic event?

- What are the key leadership practices that enable successful head teachers to recover from a failed inspection and move the school forward? I will consider this final question within each of the four paths identified by Leithwood et al (2010), before considering how successfully the conditions were aligned.

I have discussed the schools' performance in subsequent inspections within each separate case study. In order to provide further context, it is helpful to understand how the schools performed in external assessments immediately before the inspection and in subsequent years.

The following table shows the performance of the four case study schools in the key KS2 SATs measures from 2010, immediately preceding the inspection to 2015. Results in bold indicate that the case study head teacher is still in post during the assessment year, and figures in italics are below the national average. The figures used are the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected standard in Reading and Mathematics in end of Key Stage 2 standards assessments (SATs). The headline figure from 2016 can be usefully compared to national levels, but not to previous years, due to significant changes in the model of assessment.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
A / Cath	*68*	**73**	**89**	**85**	**95**	**89**	**75**
B / Diane	*61*	**83**	***74***	***73***	**79**	**84**	**56**
C / Karen	*40*	**60**	**90**	*72*	80	89	*52*
D / Rob	*42*	**60**	**50**	**69**	**50**	89	*38*
National	74	73	75	75	78	80	53

Table 5: Achievement Outcomes in the Case Study Schools 2010-16

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All four schools have improved since 2010 relative to national averages. School A has now had a sustained period of performance which is well above national averages, and despite some year on year variations, Schools B and C have performed close to or above the national average for the last five years. Only School D has performed consistently below, with the exception of 2015. All four schools were below national averages in the run up to inspection, the majority were significantly below.

8.2   To what extent is the head teacher able to maintain agency in the light of a negative professional event, specifically a 'failed' Ofsted, and the accountability pressures it invites?

As discussed in earlier chapters, the ability to maintain agency is placed under pressure by the broader accountability context (Green, 2011; Boddy, 2012; Perryman, 2009). For the head teachers in this study, the additional factor of the failed Ofsted provided an added layer of pressure. To differing extents, they felt powerless as a result of their inability to influence the outcome of the Inspection, despite the fact that they had to shoulder the responsibility. Three of the head teachers were able to point to reasons for the failure that were not related to their own performance. They were either very recently arrived, hamstrung by results that predated their time at the school, or subject to an event over which they had little control. Despite the

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emotional difficulties that the inspections caused them, they did not lead to a significant crisis of confidence in their own ability, other than in the short term.

For Rob, however, there was a genuine crisis of confidence in his own ability to perform. The fact that the school was placed in Special Measures, the fact that he had been at the school for a while, and the fact that the Local Authority seemed to have applied far more pressure in his case than in others, all contributed to his fears that he would be found wanting.

The lack of ability to influence the outcome of the inspection was compounded, with one exception, by the way that their agency was explicitly diminished in its immediate aftermath. The influence of external inspectors and advisers from the Local Authority, Diocesan representatives, experienced head teacher colleagues in mentoring roles or inspectors carrying out monitoring visits, contributed to a sense of powerlessness. The sense that decision-making had been taken out of their hands was common, and reinforced on a number of occasions, such as the LA-led parent meeting (Karen), the leadership review (Rob), or the meeting with the mentor head teacher (Cath). Actions that they may have taken anyway were prescribed for them, further undermining the sense of powerlessness identified by Perryman (2007).

Despite the fact that all three identified this process, and felt frustrated and disempowered by it, they were compliant in it, and made attempts to appear willing and enthusiastic, both to the external 'support' but also to colleagues within school. This lack of resistance, which in many instances ran contrary to their true feelings, provides echoes both of the emotional labour identified by Hochschild (1983) and others (Crawford, 2009; Fineman, 2000), and of the way in which school leaders comply with the inspection and wider accountability agenda (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011; Courtney, 2013). The failed inspection significantly added to the pressure to acquiesce in policy enactment (Ball, 2003; Gu et al, 2014), not least from an instinct for self-preservation.

Diane was alone amongst the head teachers in avoiding this sense of loss of control. She remained steadfast in her belief that the judgement was not an accurate reflection of the school's performance or her leadership. She called upon the fact that she was able to identify a single incident beyond her control to which she attributed the inspection failure, rather than reflexively blaming her own self-efficacy, as cautioned by Kelchtermans et al (2009). The depth and breadth of her experience – Toom et al's (2015) personal, contextual and structural factors - provided her with the resilience to 'ride out' the negative judgement.

It appears, therefore, that it is not axiomatic that a negative inspection leads to a loss of agency, but that there is considerable pressure applied in this direction. Confidence borne of experience and success over time, along with a belief that the inspection result was not directly attributed to her own actions, enabled Diane to avoid this in a way that was not achieved by her colleagues with fewer resources to call upon.

8.3   What is the long-term impact of Ofsted failure on the career and future effectiveness of the Head teacher?

It is clear that a negative inspection is a career event of some significance and the failure is closely identified with the head teacher (Case et al, 2000: Woods et al, 1997). Such an event is therefore likely to have a significant impact on the future career narrative of the individual (Goodson, 2003).

The four head teachers in the case studies had some interesting areas of overlap and difference in their career narrative. In terms of career motivation, it is possible to see two distinct patterns. One group of three apparently almost drifted into Headship. None described a strong sense of aiming for Headship from early in their careers. The experience of one that 'opportunity opens itself up and you have to go for it,' was common across the group. Their early careers had been happy, indeed with the benefit of hindsight their descriptions make the time seem almost carefree and idyllic

– 'allowed to make mistakes' 'first year was an absolute joy'. Promotions came either because opportunities arose where they were working, or because colleagues encouraged them to apply for posts.

Diane, on the other hand, described the way that, despite 'drifting' into teaching, she realized very soon that she wanted to move to leadership positions, and this influenced her career choices. Of the four, she was the one who had most readily accepted the demands that came with the job.

Their paths to headship had also been very different – two, Rob and Cath, had followed a conventional route of promotion through the system. Of these, Cath described her experience of some very challenging situations that she faced in her career, whereas Rob had progressed serenely through a variety of posts, including being part of a failed Ofsted earlier in his career, before he had a senior leadership role. He describes it with very little emotion, and in fact seems to have welcomed the opportunity it gave him to develop as a teacher and a school leader. His experience of the same thing as a Head teacher was obviously very different.

Of the others, Diane had moved a great deal within education, teaching across phases and in different areas of the country, carrying out a range of roles within school, and working in many different schools. Karen had probably built up the most impressive CV. As well as a wide range of

teaching roles in different phases, she had a spell working with young offenders, a period of Acting Headship and an extended period working with the Local Authority, during which time she trained as an Inspector.

Despite the wide variation in the length of headship experience, from a couple of weeks up to several years, in all four cases it was their first headship and the first inspection as a head teacher. These characteristics can be summarized in the following table:

	Cath	Diane	Karen	Rob
Early motivation for Headship	No	Yes	No	No
Headship experience at time of Inspection	4 weeks	4 years	1 year	4 years
Family support	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Experience outside teaching	No	No	Yes	No
Experience in roles outside school	No	No	Yes – LA consultant	No
Experience in wide range of schools	Primary schools within the same city	Primary, middle and secondary,	Middle and Primary, schools as a consultant	4 faith Primary schools
Current post	In the same post	In the same post	Head in a smaller school	Left teaching – early retirement

Table 6: Career characteristics of the Case Study Head teachers

Following the inspection, Cath had considered leaving the job, and looking back from a position of relative security, she considers that if she had have had the opportunity to step aside, she would have taken it. The lack of alternative courses of action, the fact that she was swept up in the process led by the Local Authority - all made her feel that she had little choice. She speculated on the different situation she would find if she was starting her career under the current system:

> I don't know if I could cope with having to apply for my job again, if we had to be taken over – I would just be looking for a way out. It took me a very long time before I felt at home there, and if I had any more pressure, I would have gone, no questions asked.

She is now a successful head teacher of a Good school, who apparently had nothing more than a bump on the road in her career, for which she could not reasonably be held responsible. However, asked if she would apply for the job again, knowing what she knows now, she is clear:

> Definitely not. I would wait till I had 5 more years' experience, I'd do my research and I'd pick an easier school.

Diane had the clearest idea of her ambition to be a Head, the widest range of school leadership experience, and felt secure in her position in the school. She remains resolute in her belief that the Notice to Improve did

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not reflect an accurate picture of the school, or of her leadership as head teacher.

As such, the impact on her emotional health and her professional self-image appears to be the least profound of the head teachers in the studies. She remains in post, and intends to stay there until her retirement. The effect on the school as a whole and the wider school community seems to be more limited than any of the other schools.

Although her career before the inspection did not present any situations that challenged her to the same extent, she felt that she had plenty of experience to draw on, and a record of success in the past.

Karen enjoyed a wide range of experiences before her headship and had carried out some important roles within the system. Her role as an ISP consultant had involved working closely with a large number of schools in challenging contexts, some of which had experienced failed Ofsted inspections. She had also received training as an Ofsted inspector. As such, she had an understanding of Ofsted, what happened when schools failed, and why. She could rationalize the reasons for her own school's failure, and at no point did she feel that her position was under threat.

However, the responsibility of leading in a situation of real challenge was a new one, which coincided with extremely challenging circumstances in her

personal life. She had almost no support from personal relationships outside the school, and did not have strong enough relationships within the school to call on support there – indeed, her two most senior colleagues were the teachers who were judged to be inadequate on the first morning of the inspection.

Her response was to take on the emotional burden herself, to shoulder the responsibility of addressing the issues, keeping staff motivated and positive, and dealing with the dissatisfaction of parents, and high levels of challenge from Governors and the Local Authority. It is a testament to her high resilience and fortitude that she came through successfully, and moved the school forward to a judgement of Satisfactory.

> When we got satisfactory, my only thought was 'Thank goodness, now I can leave.' I had to get away – I started looking that weekend.

Her criteria were clear – she wanted a school in a different part of the country, and she did not want a challenge of the same order. In the end, she was happy to take a role in a much smaller and lower-profile school. Although the impact on the school of her work appears to have been positive overall, she identifies the inspection experience as ending her ambition to develop her career further.

I know we're (the new school) good, and I'm happy with that. It's a few years until I retire but I can't see myself going anywhere else. I've done the career thing, I'm afraid.

Although Rob had been in post for several years before the inspection, his experience had not been wide-ranging. All the schools he had taught in were similar in character (small faith-based primaries), and in context (white working class areas), which may have limited his ability to understand the broader picture, particularly in terms of Ofsted inspection.

Initially, despite the fact that the judgement was the most serious of Special Measures, the full import did not strike him and it was only as the intervention and action started to bite that the long-term impact was realized. Of the four head teachers, he was the one who had the least variety in his previous roles, who appeared to have the least involvement in the wider educational community, in developments in teaching and learning. He had undergone very little professional development that was not part of activity provided by the Local Authority or the Diocese. When the demands became more acute, he had limited prior knowledge, skills or effective networks to fall back on.

As a result of the Special Measures judgement, the level of scrutiny was at a level that was greater than anything he had previously experienced, and he had little in his career that had prepared him for this.

> I suppose I'd been lucky up to then – I'd had quite a stress-free time of it, my luck just ran out.

His family, particularly his wife, provided the greatest source of support and it was to them he turned when he was at his lowest ebb. However, although this provided him with emotional succour, it could not give him the professional support and advice he needed, and he admits that he was 'too proud' to turn to colleagues. Indeed, the sense of shame that he felt made it difficult to ask for help.

Although, he remained at the school until it was judged to be Requiring Improvement (Category 3 rather than 4) the relentless scrutiny took its toll. Although it was his own decision to leave, he was strongly influenced by the fact that he perceived his position to be under threat. There was little in his career path that had prepared him for the trials he went through.

It appears, therefore, that head teachers who had the widest range of experience to call upon used this successfully in dealing with the aftermath. The strategies that they were able to call upon were adapted in their own

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circumstances, sustained resilience and gave them more control over the way they responded (Beatty, 2007; Day and Schmidt, 2007).

Firstly, the more they had a record of successful leadership behind them, the quicker they were able to put the inspection behind them, and the less the judgement impacted on their professional identity, devising the 'alternative scripts' referred to by Sugrue (2005).

Secondly, the long term impact was far greater on the two less experienced heads in the group, and significantly affected their career plans. Both ultimately proved to be very successful in leading their schools forward and both schools are now in a very healthy position. However, they are both adamant that they do not want to take a major career risk again, a phenomenon identified by Perryman (2007).

Thirdly, whatever professional networks the head teachers had built up over the years, they did not call upon them in this situation, apparently because of the sense of shame that they had experienced, a common feeling amongst heads in their position (Harris, 2007; Courtney, 2013; Macbeath et al, 2007). This element of their career, which one would expect to be a source of support at precisely this point in time, was not accessed.

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The head teacher for whom the inspection failure seems to have had the least impact was Diane. Her strategy seems to have been to disregard the judgement as inaccurate and based on one isolated incident, and convince the school community to carry on regardless. There did not seem to be a crisis of personal confidence at any point, more a frustration with her situation. Whether it is because of her style of response, or whether it is simply that her analysis was correct and the judgement was wrong is difficult to determine. However, the school quickly returned to Good and the experience did not detract from the long-term progress of the school. That there has been a significant impact on future career narrative is undeniable, but this is not uniform and inevitable. It is dependent upon the levels of experience, resilience and expertise that has been acquired before the event, and the conception of 'self' (Gronn, 1999) that has formed the individual's 'leadership character'.

8.4 How important is the ability of the head teacher to manage the emotional dimension of a professionally traumatic event?

As evidenced in the literature, the process of inspection is an emotional one (Boddy, 2012; Learmonth, 2000; Perryman, 2007). Phrases like 'the colour drained and you actually shake' 'just knocked me for six' 'It was just fear and dread' were common, but similar descriptions have been reported

in other accounts of Ofsted inspection, regardless of the outcome. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in the elements of the inspection that are clearly linked to the emotional impact of failure – what elements are unique to this context?

One noteworthy aspect was that the way in which the head teachers described the emotional impact of the inspection changed during the sequence of the interviews. My experience echoed the work of Seidman (1998), who recommends three interviews in order to establish 'meaningful and understandable' outcomes:

> The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. (Seidman, 1998, p11)

During the first interviews they were far more likely to describe the impact on the whole school rather than their own emotional response. When prompted about the emotional impact, phrases such as 'I saw young teachers crying', or 'People were crying and awful and very resentful' were common.

An event of particular significance was the first meeting with staff after the inspection outcome was known. All the Heads described the traumatic nature of the reaction. One related how she had prepared everyone for the outcome, given regular updates over the two days and actually thought that the reaction might be relief that the judgement was not Special Measures. However, the reaction to the news was one of shock. Her first reaction was 'I felt that I had let everyone down' whilst any objective reading of the circumstances of the inspection would conclude that this was not the case, and if anything, the Head may have been justified in feeling let down by the performance of staff. Words used to describe the meeting were 'stunned', 'disbelief' and 'knocked for six'. Whilst there was some anger directed at the inspection teams, this was not the predominant emotion – rather it was the feeling of despair – meetings were quiet and staff tended to receive the news in silence. Every time the subject of these meetings came up, the heads talked about them with vivid recall.

The instances of the heads apportioning blame were rare. On only one occasion did a Head express a negative emotional reaction to a colleague. In this case, the member of staff concerned had made a key error which proved decisive in the inspection judgement. She had defended this member of staff on every occasion when she had spoken of the event, and stated that she attached no blame and that it was a mistake that anyone

could have made in the circumstances. On the third interview, when I asked explicitly 'How do you feel about (this person) now?' she paused and then said, with some venom, 'I just think, How could you have been so stupid?' This temporary insight lasted just a few seconds, before she once again stressed how supportive she was of her colleague.

In all cases, the head teachers became more willing to examine the impact on their own emotional state over time, most notably during the third interview. I believe that there were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, it has to be accepted that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee develops over time, and levels of trust are established. Secondly, the questioning had become more clearly focused on the background and career narrative of the head teacher so that there was a firmer context of self-analysis. It also juxtaposed the failed inspection with the successful previous career that they had all had. Thirdly, and in my view most importantly, the passage of time enabled them to describe traumatic events that had been raw when they were still recent, in a more honest and self-reflective manner. Crawford (2009) recognizes that 'one of the values of thinking about a leadership narrative is that it makes you more aware of how your emotional state can be influenced by various situations in school' (Crawford, 2009, p47).

Amongst the key moments when the head teachers 'let their guard down' as it were, was the account by one head teacher of the weekend a few weeks after the inspection when he broke down in tears talking to his wife. He described movingly how unusual this reaction was for him, and how shocking and upsetting it was for his wife.

Another key moment occurred when one Head teacher, again on the third interview, shared the fact that within the six months leading up to the inspection, her husband of over 20 years had left her, her mother had died following a long illness and her daughter, an only child, was preparing to leave home to go to university. She felt that there was no one within the school she could share her feelings with and had a feeling of profound loneliness. In an unguarded moment, reflecting on her experience of headship, she said quietly: 'I have hated every minute of this job.'

They all described a feeling of professional loneliness. They did not feel able to discuss their emotional responses, or the vulnerability they were feeling with their colleagues in school, or with other professional colleagues – advisers, governors, fellow head teachers – considering that this may have negative consequences and, at best, would solicit only sympathy, or 'passive empathy' (Boler,1999). Three of them talked about the support they received from their partner (all had been married for over 15 years) but nobody else was identified as a source of emotional support.

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All of the head teachers felt an overwhelming responsibility to keep going. None of them sought any professional support for stress, went to a GP, or took any additional time off. As one said, 'I knew that as soon as I went to the doctor and said 'I'm under stress', I might as well give up. If I described my symptoms, he'd give me 6 months sick leave!' One said 'My chair of Governors keeps asking me how I'm feeling. I just say 'Fine!' – I daren't tell her the truth'. This isolation obviously carries risks. Ginsberg and Gray Davies argue that 'while it is often 'lonely at the top' for leaders, it seems unhealthy and counter-productive to be isolated when making difficult decisions.' (Ginsberg and Gray Davies, 2002, p279).

The head teachers I was able to speak to at a much later date (over 2 years after the inspection, and after the schools had been removed from categories) still had a strong emotional response. It seemed that the further away from the inspection, the more likely a head teacher was to feel anger and to feel that they personally had suffered an injustice. By this point, they have defined their narrative of the inspection event. They are '…not merely recounting 'events', but interpreting them, enriching them, enhancing them, and infusing them with meaning.' (Gabriel, 2000, p31).

A recurring theme in the responses of the head teachers was the way that they felt compelled to present a particular face in their public role which was very different to their true feelings. As one said:

You put that face on, everything's great and you rally the troops ....

You do that in school but then I go home and feel absolutely crap.

All were adamant that their colleagues in school had no idea how they were really feeling, and it was only their partners who had any insight. The feeling of shame that accompanied their work after the inspection was described vividly. Three spoke about the first meeting to share the report with parents, particularly when the Local Authority attended, which had an undermining effect, at least in the mind of the head teacher. Two mentioned meeting with head teacher colleagues and feeling that they were the object of attention. One recalled the moment when an LA adviser speaking to a large group of head teachers, celebrated the fact that there was only one school in the LA in an Ofsted category.

I knew everyone knew it was us, but I just looked straight ahead.

The notion of emotional labour, whilst not always clearly articulated by the head teachers, is exceptionally strong in the case study head teachers. It entirely accords with Hochschild's description of emotional labour, which 'requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind to others' (Hochschild, 1983, p7). The role of the head, the assumption seems to be, is to shoulder the emotional burden of the inspection, to draw the negativity away from

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colleagues, pupils and parents. For the two Heads who were relatively new, the problem was particularly acute. They were both also in the situation that senior members of their team, who they might have turned to for help in shouldering the burden, were identified in the inspection as underperforming.

As described earlier, Karen in particular had little support to draw upon and found the inspection aftermath an exceptionally lonely process. Like all the heads, she felt that her staff expected her to be positive and resilient, to take on their concerns as well as her own. All four maintained their public face, although they described the ways they would manage this. As one put it, 'I smile, take a deep breath, go back in my office, and close the door…'

All of the Heads had the strong sensation of having a hidden part of their professional life, and having no outlet for it, and Rob in particular identified that as a change that had happened since the inspection. Cath also identified the fact that she felt she had to be seen to be tougher and more challenging to her staff, and in her position as a new head, that affected her ability to establish positive relationships:

> They just think I'm a bit of a battleaxe, but I have to do it, we can't afford to slip back into the old ways.

The Ofsted inspection process and outcomes had a huge emotional impact on the head teachers. This was long-lasting and recalling it at some distance still provoked an emotional response. All felt that they bore the burden alone and disproportionately, and that they had no alternative than to suffer this burden. There appeared to be no correlation between the weight of the impact and the 'fault' of the head teacher – a head teacher who had been at the school for a few weeks seemed to be just as affected as a head teacher who had been in charge for a significant period of time, and could reasonably be expected to accept their part in the judgement received. The sense that they were not an agent in this process, but were simply swept up within it caused them a great deal of anxiety and emotional turmoil.

8.5   What are the key leadership practices that enabled the successful head teachers to recover from the failed inspection and move the school forward?

As described earlier, I have used the model devised by Leithwood et al (2010) to analyse the leadership practices that allow the head teachers to bring about improvements following the inspection, although I have looked in detail at the key elements within the Emotional Path in the previous section.

8.5.1   Rational Conditions

'High-performing schools place teaching and learning at the heart of improvement efforts and relentlessly pursue ways of improving the instructional core.' (Leithwood et al, 2010, p239). This view is reinforced by many, including Brundrett and Rhodes (2011), Barber and Mourshed, 2007, Hallinger and Heck (2010), whether under the label of instructional leadership, or a related concept such as 'pedagogic leadership' or 'leadership for learning.' Although all of the head teachers acknowledge the importance of teaching and learning, their descriptions of the situation in the schools at the time of the inspection calls into question the extent to which they had established a powerful teaching and learning culture. For example, despite Karen's background in providing training and support for teachers, both teachers who she identified as her strongest practitioners taught lessons that were judged to be inadequate during the inspection. In all four inspection reports, the quality of teaching was judged to be inadequate overall, and aspects of the leadership of teaching were explicitly criticized.

Despite this, in their description of the events leading up to the inspection, the inspection itself, and its aftermath, none of the head teachers give a high priority to Rational Conditions, either as a reason for the failure, or as their first response. In most cases, the discussion about the role of teaching

and learning was instigated by the Local Authority advisers during the formulation of the Action Plan. Until this point, the response has been dominated by work in the other three areas, despite their objective understanding that a focus on instructional leadership was important.

As the immediate recovery was under way, the extent to which the head teachers engaged with their role as an instructional leader, and prioritized the improvement of teaching and learning grew in importance. The head teachers of the schools that made the most successful recovery took ownership of the leadership of teaching and learning at a relatively early stage. They improved the quality and frequency of monitoring and feedback of teaching, and increased the effectiveness of the use of data – all vital actions in developing Rational School Conditions.

By way of contrast, although much of the same work was happening at Rob's school, it was led by external LA consultants, and there was little sense that it was driven by Rob and his leadership team. Progress was made but it was limited and did not sustain.

The lack of effective leadership in the Rational Path appears to have been a strong contributory factor in underperformance. Furthermore, the development of this aspect of leadership was not seen as an immediate priority in the school's response to the inspection, and was often externally

instigated and brokered. However, improvements in the subsequent performance of the schools were accompanied by the increased effectiveness of the overt instructional leadership of the head teacher, and this appears to have been vital in securing long-term improvement. To quote Robinson (2007, p21): 'The closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to students.'

8.5.2   Emotional Conditions

As I have discussed at greater length earlier (see 5.5 above), the emotional impact of the failed inspection was profound, and in some cases, career-changing. In terms of their leadership practices, all four decided instinctively that their leadership role was to carry this burden. The emotional transaction between themselves and their staff was decidedly unequal. Leithwood et al (2010) draw attention to the importance of trust as a key outcome of effective emotional leadership. Trust was shaken through the inspection process, although the school community retained its trust in their head teachers to turn the situation around. Not one of the head teachers experienced any sense that their staff, governors or local community had lost faith in them and wanted them to leave.

Their own trust in their colleagues was another matter, however. This was profoundly shaken, and on a number of occasions, they articulated how they felt let down, and would make sure that they were not in a similar position again. Furthermore, this loss of trust did not seem to be diminishing over time. The nature of headship as 'emotional labour' remained strong, and it appears that the experience of inspection made them more reluctant to implement true distribution of leadership.

Head teachers may see their decisions and actions as rational and 'unemotional', although as Fineman (2003) argues, this view in itself is influenced by emotions, but as Crawford (2009, p33) argues: 'The headteacher is at the centre of much of this creation of emotional meaning. Within the emotional context, all the other aspects of leadership and management (finance, curriculum, etc.) take place.'

8.5.3   Organizational Conditions

All of the head teachers made swift organizational changes in response to the inspection. Most obvious were the changes to tighten up safeguarding arrangements where inspectors had highlighted concerns, but also the introduction of a focused action plan led to changes. Leithwood et al (2010) talk of a new way of working being 'not only possible but absolutely required', and the planning process that followed the inspection helped to

bring this about. All of the schools put in place a highly structured, well-resourced programme to secure improvement in pupil outcomes – this was either the full Improving Schools Programme (ISP), or an adaptation, which led to changes in curriculum structure, frequency of assessment, increase in lesson observations and feedback, amongst other organizational elements.

Although none of the schools was able to establish a robust culture of collaboration in the period following the inspection, the introduction of the action plan included regular monitoring which opened up practice. Indeed, two of the Heads specifically highlighted the way that they were able to gain access to classrooms far more readily as a result of the inspection and the Action Plan. In contrast, in the case of Rob, the changes were largely externally-imposed and superficial, and he did not use the opportunity to introduce new systems or processes. There remained a sense of resentment at the changes, and the Action Plan was seen as the property of the Local Authority.

According to Leithwood et al (2010), the 'key to successful leadership … is to help ensure that the day-to-day functioning of the school conspires to focus everyone's efforts on desirable student learning.' In the immediate aftermath of inspection failure, organizational leadership was the main area of focus for the head teachers. Drawing up the action plan, often with

significant input from LA advisers, enabled them to respond in a meaningful and immediate way to the report's recommendations. As a result of this, the important process of cultural change could begin.

The introduction of a structured programme such as ISP enabled a framework for the development of organizational conditions. Despite the pedagogical focus of the programme, the way it (or something similar) was enacted in the schools during its initial phase was much closer to the criteria for organizational leadership. The extent to which the head teachers willingly used the opportunity provided by the inspection report to make organizational changes appears to be reflected in their subsequent progress.

This path appears particularly suited to the early phase following the inspection, when rapid and demonstrable improvement are particularly important. According to Hoyle and Wallace (2005, p68): 'Effective leadership and management 'take the strain' by creating structures and processes which allow teachers to engage as fully as possible in their key task.' However, these are not sufficient on their own, and run the risk of focussing too heavily on a managerialist approach. As Bush and Glover (2014, p557) argue: 'Effective management is essential but value-free managerialism is inappropriate and damaging.'

8.5.4   Family and Community Conditions

Despite the fears of the head teachers, the reaction of parents and local community did not lead to the anticipated level of difficulty. All spoke about the anxieties they had felt about sharing the outcome with parents, but in all four cases, negative parental reaction was not a significant long-term factor. Even when the report raised concerns about children's safety, there was little wider impact among the community. However, in so far as they raised the issues of parents, all four spoke of mitigating the potential damage, for example, a fall in pupil numbers. There was little or no acknowledgement, at least initially, that 'the most powerful lever they have to secure high performance resides outside the school in the family and wider community.' (Leithwood et al, 2010)

As discussed earlier, of the four head teachers, Cath expressed the greatest concerns about the impact on her parental body. She was concerned that as a new head, it would colour her relationship with the community, and she was the only head who followed a clear policy of engaging with the community, and relating that to parental engagement with teaching and learning. The evidence from Parent View and subsequent inspections indicates that this has been a contributory factor in their subsequent improvement.

Although others did not appear to have prioritised the engagement of parents to the same extent, they saw parental reaction and approval as an important indicator of success, and the fact that parents kept faith with the school was clearly appreciated. Indeed, Karen believed that the inspection process and its aftermath positively improved relationships with parents, and enabled the profile of the school to be raised, and the previous separate identities of the pre-merger school to be forgotten. The most recent inspection reports of all four schools indicate that relationships are largely positive, which represents a significant move forwards.

Leithwood et al (2010) assert that 'parental engagement has to be a priority, not a bolt-on extra.' It is unclear whether the head teachers saw it as a priority but the need to manage the impact of the inspection failure with parents led to a focus on this area. All saw it as an attempt to retain parental support and defuse potential opposition, rather than a key improvement lever. None had a particularly high profile within the wider community - the inspection outcome raised this profile and put them into the spotlight. The fact that two of the schools in particular had been found wanting in their key duty of keeping children safe contributed to the importance of retaining the trust of parents and the local community, and this appears to have been the principal driver rather than the potential impact in improving pupil achievement. As Hattie (2009, p70) established:

'parents need to hold high aspirations and expectations for their children, and schools need to work in partnership with parents so that the home and the school can share in these expectations and support learning'. The re-engagement with parents following the inspection seems to have focussed more on assuaging concerns than raising learning expectations. However, whatever the motivation, there appears to have been some successes within the Family and Community leadership path, and this has led to some steady progress.

8.5.5   Alignment of Conditions

The tables below give a classification of the head teacher within each of the leadership paths at key points in time. I have summarised the position of each school in relation to the priority with which they viewed each area, and their capacity to lead effectively, and using the analytical matrices which appear as an appendix, have assessed whether the priority and capacity were high, medium or low at this point.

Before / During Inspection (Declining Performance):

School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Cath	Low priority inherited / low capacity	Medium priority / low capacity	Low priority / low capacity	Low priority inherited / low capacity
B / Diane	Declared high priority / medium capacity	Medium priority / medium capacity	Low priority / low capacity	Low priority / low capacity
C / Karen	Declared high priority / low capacity	Low priority / low capacity	Low priority / medium capacity	High priority / low capacity
D / Rob	Low priority / low capacity	Medium priority / low capacity	Low priority / low capacity	Low priority / low capacity

Immediately following Inspection (Crisis stabilisation):

School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family Community Conditions	
A / Cath	Medium priority / low capacity	Medium priority / low capacity	High priority / medium capacity	medium priority / low capacity	
B / Diane	Declared* high priority / high capacity	Medium priority / low capacity	High priority / high capacity	High priority / low capacity	
C / Karen	Medium priority / high capacity	Low priority / low capacity	High priority / low capacity	Medium priority / low capacity	
D / Rob	Low (internal) priority / low capacity	Medium priority / medium capacity	Low priority / medium capacity	Low priority / medium capacity	

Approx 1 year after Inspection (sustaining and improving):

School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family Community Conditions
A / Cath	High priority high capacity	Medium priority medium capacity	High priority high capacity	High priority high capacity
B / Diane	High priority high capacity	Medium priority medium capacity	High priority high capacity	High priority medium capacity
C / Karen	High priority high capacity	Low priority medium capacity	High priority high capacity	High priority high capacity
D / Rob	Low priority / low capacity	Medium priority low capacity	High priority medium capacity	Low priority medium capacity

Table 7: Alignment of Conditions at the time of Inspection, immediately after, and one year after Inspection in the Case Study Schools

Leithwood et al (2010) describe three phases of school turnaround – Declining Performance; An early turnaround or crisis stabilisation; and a late turnaround or sustaining and improving performance. For the schools that were most successful in turning around performance, the tables above correspond to those three stages.

At the start of the journey, there was little alignment between the priority given to an area and the capacity to lead effectively in this area (see Table 7a). Head teachers appeared to be constrained by the context they found themselves in – for example, Karen inherited a community that had been

forced into a school merger against its wishes, and therefore Family and Community Conditions were a particularly challenging area for her. It was clearly an area of high priority, since parental attitudes and lack of support were at best unhelpful and at worst undermining to improvement efforts. However, the immediate focus on other areas, the fact that many of her own staff shared the negative views of the community, and her own inexperience left her with little capacity to deal effectively with the issues.

As time went on, the capacity and priority given in each area became much more closely aligned in the schools were progress was most successful. Where progress was slower, the gap narrowed as the school emerged from the immediate crisis situation, but remained in place in most areas (Table 7b / 7c).

There was a clear sequence in all schools between organizational and rational conditions. In the immediate aftermath of inspection, organizational issues took priority in most schools, and were able to deliver 'quick wins'. This process was often supported by external brokers, either the LA or the monitoring inspector. Over time, the importance of leadership of Rational Conditions grew, as the focus on improvements to the quality of teaching and learning was increased. The greatest change for all the schools that made significant progress is the way that instructional leadership of the head teacher had a real impact on classroom practice and pupil outcomes,

and the lack of focus on this area by Rob was accompanied by a lack of real and sustained progress.

The two areas which remained most underdeveloped were Family and Community Conditions and Emotional Conditions (Table 7c). Whilst recognizing the importance of relationships with parents, all four head teachers considered that this was an area to be managed, and only one appeared to have established real partnerships with a clear teaching and learning focus. This may be related to the fact that she had the greatest issues immediately following the inspection, and felt the lack of support most keenly. However, her efforts seem to have been successful and have helped the school move forward rapidly. The other head teachers do not seem to have recognised the importance of this area to the same extent.

The response to the question of Emotional Leadership is more uniform. By the end of the process, all four recognised the emotional impact on themselves and the wider school community, and were still some way from establishing the bonds of trust identified by Leithwood et al (2010). There was a strong sense of not wanting to let their guard down, and an inequality in the emotional relationship with their team – their role as head teacher was to provide support and to be trusted, but they were unlikely to be giving the same level of trust in return. Their appetite for high-trust / high-risk cultures had not returned.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Implications

9.1   Conclusions

There are few empirical studies which have tracked the difficult inner journeys experienced by leaders of schools designated as 'failing' during and after the Ofsted judgement, and still fewer that have focussed upon the role played by emotions as leaders struggle with the personal and professional consequences. The evidence in this research highlights their fluctuating emotional journeys as they sought to understand and manage their emotional selves. The extent to which they were able to do this determined how successful they were, not only in improving their school from the current position, but also in developing their own career and their continuing contribution to the wider system. The principal claim to contribution to knowledge that this research makes is in identifying and defining the stages in this emotional journey as head teachers struggled to recover from the emotional trauma of private and publicly perceived professional failure and went on, in some cases, to achieve success.

This research has demonstrated not only the influences of changes in policy demands on the work of school leaders, but what the shorter and longer term effects can be on their emotional lives, both personally and professionally. As the senior leaders in the school, the head teachers had

not adapted to the performativity demands which held them responsible for meeting a set of prescribed 'standards'. Upheaval and uncertainty following an Ofsted category 4 verdict are not unexpected – indeed, when that upheaval leads to positive change it is a desired outcome of the process. However, Category 4 indicates not only that the school is failing its pupils, but that the school, and the school leaders in particular, are not demonstrating the capacity to effect positive change for improvement. The consequences, as this research has shown, can be emotionally traumatic.

In Chapter 1, I introduced a conceptual framework that described the work of school leaders to improve performance following a failed inspection within the context of external accountability, and with a focus on emotions. Accountability, enacted in this case through a negative Ofsted judgement, made huge demands on the head teachers' emotional resources - the way that they responded to and the extent to which they managed these demands had a significant influence on their subsequent success or failure.

In retrospect, the emotional impact of the judgement could be seen as a temporary hurdle to be managed at the time. However, this research demonstrates that for this group of head teachers, whilst short-term survival necessitated high levels of 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983), those who went on to achieve lasting success learned to regulate negative emotions and thus move beyond the initial stages of struggle to

demonstrate emotionally healthy leadership in the long-term. Put simply, the journey from emotional crisis, through emotional labour to healthy emotional regulation (Oatley and Jenkins, 2003; Hargreaves, 2005), is key, and if this is not achieved, there is little possibility of a positive future career outcome

Emotional crisis took place at the time of the inspection, during the initial period of negative emotions, including fear and loss of control that resulted from the outcome (Perryman, 2007; Learmonth, 2000).

There was then a period of **emotional labour** in the weeks and months that immediately followed, as the head teachers made conscious efforts to suppress their own emotions in their attempts to provide strong and decisive leadership (Hochschild, 1983; Fineman, 2003; Oatley and Jenkins, 2003), either through the way they displayed emotions in their daily interactions (surface acting) or by managing their 'felt' emotions to be authentic (deep acting) (Grandey, 2003). Both make emotional demands on the school leader during this period.

In the case of the head teachers who managed their journey with the greatest success, there then followed a period of healthy **emotional regulation**, as they rebuilt trust with their team and focused on longer term goals (Mills & Niesche, 2014; Crawford, 2009).

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Long-term success was then built upon **emotionally healthy leadership,** as head teachers developed a sustainable way of managing their own emotional demands, and building the emotional capacity of their school community (Wang et al, 2016; Goleman, 1995).

Leading schools in the early stages following inspection failure is emotional work, in the sense that it demands emotional labour (Crawford, 2009, Pekrun and Schultz, 2007), with school leaders having to manage, control and portray their and their staff's emotions to the wider school community in a way that supports the necessary improvements. Leading a school that is judged to have failed impacts on the emotions of those involved and affects their personal and professional identity. All of the head teachers 'conformed' through the exercise of emotional labour in this way. Their surface actions - 'rallying the troops', 'putting my best face on' etc. – belied their deeper emotional responses (Fineman, 2003; Crawford, 2014).

Some did not move on from this stage. As Karen says, 'the mask never slips', and so ultimately, despite leading the school to Good, she stepped aside and moved to a role that she felt protected her from being in the same situation again. Throughout his journey, Rob was considering when he could afford to retire and to lift the pressure – he did not appear to consider

the potential to become secure and successful in his role. Both Cath and Diane, in their different ways, rebuilt emotionally and achieved both career success and a return to emotionally secure leadership.

Each of the head teachers became a different leader as a result of their experience. The values and professional identity with which they entered the inspection were fundamentally challenged, and in some cases, overturned. The profound emotional upheaval changed them, and therefore affected both the decisions they took in moving their schools forward and their career narrative from this point. The fact that the process demanded so much of their emotional resource meant that the boundary between the professional and personal was no longer meaningful.

Earlier, I outlined the four-stage model proposed by Yamamoto et al (2014) to describe the experiences of school leaders who experience a critical traumatic incident, and I returned to this model in my analysis of the cases. The process set out in the model, if applied in the very particular circumstances of Ofsted failure, helps to illustrate the extent to which this leadership transformation took place for the head teachers in this study and provides a useful tool for plotting the path they navigated. As the authors write: 'Leading a school or organization has become a matter of sustainability, with how emotion is processed a critical and under-researched issue' (Yamamoto et al, 2014). The processing of emotion by

a head teacher in the light of Ofsted failure, and the impact this has on the reconstruction of their leadership and subsequent success or failure is demonstrated through this analysis.

The figure below outlines the way in which these four stages broadly correspond to the emotional journeys taken by the head teachers:

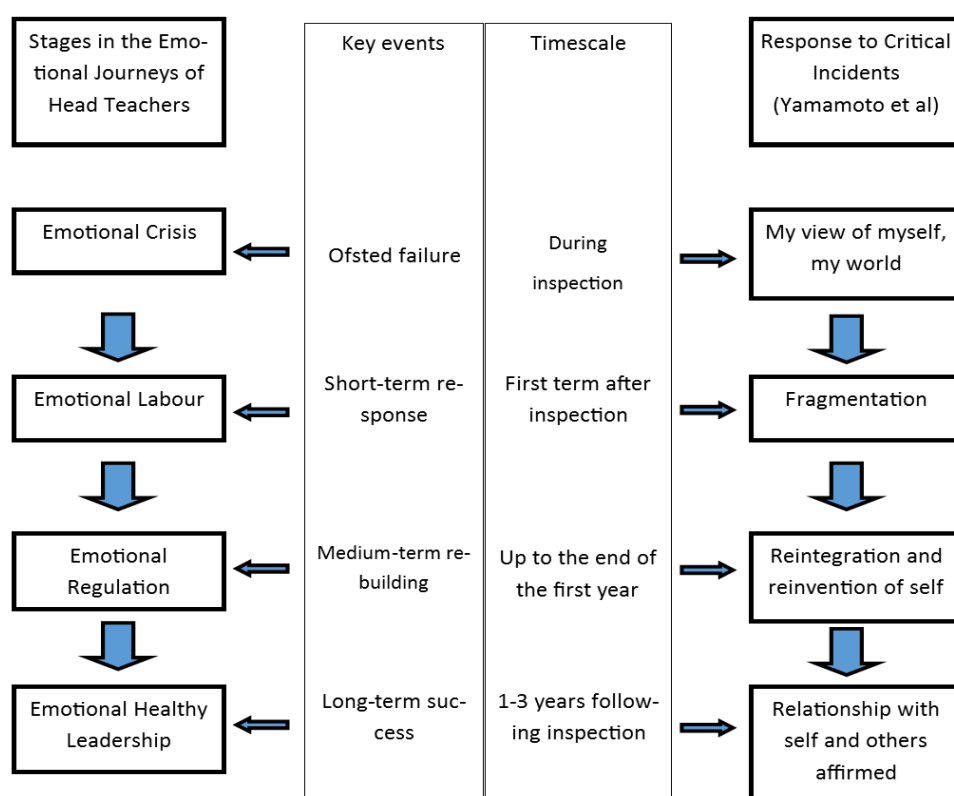| Stages in the Emotional Journeys of Head Teachers	Key events	Timescale	Response to Critical Incidents (Yamamoto et al)
Emotional Crisis	Ofsted failure	During inspection	My view of myself, my world
Emotional Labour	Short-term response	First term after inspection	Fragmentation
Emotional Regulation	Medium-term rebuilding	Up to the end of the first year	Reintegration and reinvention of self
Emotional Healthy Leadership	Long-term success	1-3 years following inspection	Relationship with self and others affirmed

Figure 4: Stages in the Emotional Journeys of the case study Head Teachers

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Stage One was entitled '*My view of myself, my world*', and corresponds to the period of emotional crisis described above. It sets out the way that their self-image as leaders changed and their confidence was tested, forcing a change in beliefs and resulting in 'the leader refining, redefining, and restructuring who s/he was as a person' (Yamomoto et al, 2014). For the head teachers in this study, this stage took place during the inspection and in its immediate aftermath, when their professional identity and self-belief were profoundly shaken. There was a sense of powerlessness during the inspection - Cath described feeling 'useless' and 'in a fog', Karen talks of being 'knocked for six', Rob talks about being personally highlighted, and of 'battling against the tide'. Only Diane recalls the inspection without the sense of powerlessness, although in her case, it was replaced with anger.

All four described ways in which their own views and competence was exposed and challenged, for example, when inspectors overturned their judgements about quality of teaching, finding teachers to be inadequate where previously the head teacher had judged them as good, or deciding that the school was not keeping children safe when children's welfare had been a stated priority and source of pride before the inspection.

The period of emotional labour corresponds to the second stage of *Fragmentation* – a sense of loss of control and a gap between understanding what was needed and how the leader would bridge the gap.

This stage was evident in the weeks following the inspection, as all of the head teachers experienced a period of personal and professional crisis. In some cases, the loss of control was tangible, such as Cath's experience when a team of experienced LA staff came in to manage the school's response, or Rob's imposed action plan, but even when this was resisted or less evident, there was still a shaking of confidence and belief in their own agency. For example, even when Diane asserted that she would remain on track and little change was required, she was anxious to relate the way that her judgement was confirmed and validated by her Local Authority adviser.

This stage represented the lowest point for all of the head teachers, with the moments of greatest emotional strain and personal crisis. It is the time when key decisions were made about future direction, and this was recalled readily a considerable time later. The impact of this loss of agency is unsurprising:

> Since teaching demands a high level of investment of oneself as a person, calls for change thus imply a (negative) judgement about teachers and eventually put their self-efficacies at stake. (Kelchtermans et al, 2009, p218)

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The third stage – emotional regulation, corresponds to Yamamoto et al's *Reintegration and reinvention of self* – creating paths to regain wholeness by finding ways to match who they were with what they did. Identifying their own emotional response was necessary in order to begin the process of reintegration. Through this process, they redefined, or in some aspects, reinforced, the self-image of their leadership. This is where differences begin to appear in the response of the head teachers, and where their new 'leadership identity' began to emerge.

Karen, for example, selected a different career path for herself, one that appeared to carry less risk of failure, and in which she felt less exposed. Her ambitions for her school were limited to moving it out of its immediate predicament, at which point she resolved to move on. Her ambitions for her own career changed completely – where she had previously found great satisfaction in working with a range of colleagues in a variety of schools, developing teaching and learning through leading professional development, she now wanted to have a quiet life and deliberately chose a small lower-profile school in a completely different local authority area.

In the case of Rob, as a result of his continuing feeling that he had not regained control of leadership agency, the process remained incomplete, and reinvention and reintegration never took place. His career remained in limbo, and he was never able to gain the public validation of his leadership

which may have helped this process. Although his early retirement did not take place until some years after the inspection, the seeds of this decision can be clearly traced back to the failed inspection.

Both Cath and Diane did appear to successfully manage this process, and continue their careers with some success. They reached the final stage of emotionally healthy leadership, corresponding to Yamamoto et al's *Relationship with self and others affirmed,* although they recognized that they had changed as leaders. As Diane put it 'I've lost that feeling of trust in my colleagues' and Cath reflected that the experience 'definitely made me into a stronger character and hardened me, but it had a massive impact on my well-being and self-esteem that I don't think I will ever get over.'

It is impossible to say whether the head teachers would cope differently if faced with a comparable level of personal and professional crisis, particularly within the context they now find themselves. Crawford (2009, p24) argues that 'headteachers need to be able to call upon personal reserves in times of crisis, and enable their staff to express their own feelings and emotions in a way that is helpful to them and the school as a whole'. This may only be fully tested if and when a similar moment of crisis arrives in future.

As Figure 4 sets out, failure in Ofsted leads to a period of crisis which is the start of an emotional journey. Although this mirrors the emotional journey triggered by other 'critical incidents', the particular brand of accountability of Ofsted inspections presents unique challenges. Unless the head teacher is able to navigate these emotional challenges successfully, it is very likely that Ofsted failure will lead to career failure. Conversely, the lesson of this research is that by navigating the emotional journey successfully, head teachers can recover from the inspection trauma, firstly to survive, and ultimately, to thrive.

9.2   Key issues

The evidence from the experience of the head teachers in the case studies raises a number of issues that invite scrutiny. These questions can be summarised as the problems of **supply**, **development, support** and **sustainability**.

Firstly, the issue of **supply**. It has long been recognised that recruitment of head teachers is a significant challenge for our education system, particularly in certain sectors and parts of the country. How do we encourage talented head teachers to enter the profession, and to take on schools in challenging circumstances? The term 'challenging' not only refers to schools which serve communities with high levels of

disadvantage, but also schools that have been underperforming, with intransigent staff teams, or communities lacking in aspiration, schools with budget challenges or that are in the shadow of a well-established high-performing neighbour. All of these factors could increase the risk of a poor inspection judgement, with the career impact outlined above. As the pressure increases, is sufficient consideration given to the impact on the next generation of head teachers?

Secondly, the issue of **development**. Whatever the experience that prospective head teachers may gain as deputies or through secondments or temporary roles, the experience of becoming the leader of the school, with personal responsibility for its successes and failures is a new challenge. Experience is acquired through practice, and it has often been observed that we learn most from our mistakes. Over the course of a career in headship, the best head teachers will learn from their experiences, will take risks, will be continually learning and developing. As Fullan (1997) points out:

> Leadership for change requires an internalized mindset that is constantly refined through thinking, and action, thinking, action etc. This cumulative learning produces an orientation and ability to exercise greater executive control over the forces of change, and a

capacity to generate the most effective actions and reactions in accomplishing change. (Fullan, 1997, p124)

The case study head teachers learnt a great deal in a short space of time from the process and most were able to use their experience to develop and become more effective school leaders. However, the experiences they went through made them more reluctant to pursue their careers with the same confidence that they would have otherwise done, and therefore hindered both their own development and the impact it might have had across the system.

Thirdly, the issue of **support.** The role of leadership in the exceptionally challenging context of Ofsted failure is particularly exposed, and the impact upon the individual who takes on that role is marked. All of the head teachers in the case study schools saw the burden falling on their shoulders. As Crawford (2012) points out, distributed leadership is difficult to bring about in an environment where accountability is borne by one person:

If school leaders are accountable to external agents for externally mandated targets, distributed leadership may have distinct limits on its uptake in the organization, even if it is rhetorically part and parcel of practice. (Crawford, 2012, p613)

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Finally, the issue of **sustainability.** The demands of headship are well-documented. As Harris et al (2006) write: 'No one close to schools in challenging circumstances would ever think that leading them is an easy task. The work of these school leaders is hectic, fast-paced and demanding'. None of the head teachers had any significant time off work, all accepted their responsibility to lead the school out of the predicament it was in, and all retained the support of their staff team. However, the emotional toll was considerable, and one they substantially bore alone. It is arguable that the careers of all four were affected significantly by the experience, if only to the extent that all four were reluctant to put themselves in a similar position again. In my encounters with them, I observed high levels of courage, resilience and commitment.

It is not uncommon for primary school head teachers to take up their first posts in their early thirties, and recent policy developments are encouraging the trend for the early identification of leadership potential, and therefore, early accession to headship. We are now entering a new period where the heads following this route could have twenty five years or more of headship under the type of increased pressure that has been described. It is not yet known what the impact of this will be on the long-term emotional health and leadership capacity of the next generation of

school leaders, but they are likely to need exceptionally high levels of talent, stamina and determination.

9.3   Implications from the research findings

This research exposes the reality of the emotional impact of Ofsted failure for the people at the centre of the process, and gives a voice to their experience. It can certainly be argued that, despite their experiences, the outcome in the long term was positive for the head teachers in the majority of cases, and for students and schools in all cases. However, this would be to ignore many of the lessons that emerge from these cases. The potential systemic contribution that each of these head teachers might have made was clearly affected by their experience, and although the progress in the majority of the schools was worth celebrating, without high levels of personal resilience and determination, the fragility that existed could easily have led to a very different outcome.

It can be argued that recent developments in education have reduced the opportunity for head teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues, to access support, to take part in supportive long-term induction programmes. The expected pace of change and development for heads new in post, regardless of experience; the fact that so many support systems are reduced, or provided within a line management structure through a Multi-

Academy Trust; and above all the high-pressure, high-stakes accountability framework that they now operate in, renders head teachers who are in danger of Ofsted failure exceptionally vulnerable, whatever the reason or wherever the culpability lies. The lessons from this research provide some answers for ways in which we can maintain the drive for improvement whilst safeguarding the emotional wellbeing of those charged with leading that same improvement.

Support networks outside accountability structures

With the decline in the role of Local Authorities, the opportunity for head teachers, particularly inexperienced head teachers, to be part of informal support networks has diminished. Although mentoring arrangements and advisory support are often in place, this does not always provide the opportunity to share concerns and doubts with someone in a similar situation. Likewise, the context of a Teaching School Alliance or a Multi-Academy Trust, whilst giving opportunities to network and share practice, may not allow for a safe place to turn for support, given that colleagues will owe loyalty and accountability to the wider organisation. The case study head teachers found the formal networks to be a source of shame once the inspection result was known, and at least one actively avoided them. It is likely to be difficult for head teachers to access this level of support without guidance at a time of vulnerability.

Inspection report commentary on head teacher effectiveness

In recent years, Ofsted frameworks have moved towards reports with greater consistency between judgements - in other words an overall judgement of inadequate will usually be accompanied by an inadequate judgement for leadership. The logic for this is compelling – good schools are the result of good leadership, poor schools the result of poor leadership. There may be cases, however, where that judgement does not reflect the long term potential for the individual - for example, if they are very recently arrived in post, or if they are dealing with significant problems and the impact of their work has not yet been felt, or if they are simply inexperienced and learning quickly. However, the lack of a specific comment on the leadership capacity of the head teacher makes it difficult for this to be reflected, potentially leading to a damaging impact on future career prospects.

In a monitoring visit, the inspector will make a judgement whether the head teacher is taking effective action to address the key issues – it is possible to see how a similar judgement could have been made in the original report about some of the case study head teachers, thus supporting their improvement efforts and their emotional capacity, without compromising the overall report.

Career development and planning for head teachers and aspirant head teachers

The nature of the head teacher's career path has changed hugely in recent years, with the advent or expansion of a whole range of roles and opportunities, including executive headships, all-through schools, free schools, National and Local Leaders of Education, and Teaching School Alliances, amongst other developments. Navigating these opportunities, particularly in the context of the day to day pressure of school, can be a bewildering process. None of the case study head teachers appeared to have an effective career development plan or a system for putting this in place. This made it difficult for them to take a longer term view of their own role, particularly when things were most difficult. Given that systems are in place to support governors with head teacher performance management, this would seem to be a relatively straightforward addition to that process.

The emotional burden on head teachers

The emotional labour carried out by head teachers, particularly during tough times, has been discussed at length. The case study head teachers did not feel that they had anywhere to turn for support outwith their own private and familial networks. None of them contacted their professional association, accessed counselling or support or sought advice on dealing

with stress. It is important to understand that it is unrealistic to expect head teachers to ask for this at the very point when they may be most anxious about displaying vulnerability, and so the duty of care will need to sit elsewhere. It may be advisable, for example, for a governing body to arrange a welfare interview with someone outside the school, perhaps a professional association, at a time when pressure may be greatest.

External support for instructional leadership

Wilcox and Gray (1996) identify three concerns regarding improvement following inspection:

> The first of these is how to ensure greater 'ownership' of change initiatives amongst those closely involved. The second is how to create greater 'focus' on the priorities that really matter; change efforts which embrace wide-ranging objectives are hard to sustain. And the third relates to aspects of time; two to three years may be required for a specific initiative to take root and as long again for it to become institutionalized. (Wilcox and Gray, 1996, p136)

In the case study schools, the development of teaching and learning was the priority that really mattered, but did not always seem like the most pressing concern or the one that would yield the 'quick wins'. Although support was provided by the LA, the ownership of the head teacher was

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often limited, and did not develop their own instructional leadership capacity.

Currently, the chief source of capacity for supporting instructional leadership is within Teaching Schools, now well-established across England. Giving Teaching Schools a formal responsibility to support schools in Ofsted Category 4, without the need for the school to find significant additional funds at a point where they may be needed elsewhere (for example to support staffing changes) would both signal the importance of this area, and support the implementation of an effective action plan.

The risks of taking up posts in low-performing schools

There are a range of programmes and support packages for schools that are defined as being in challenging circumstances. This include formal access to support from funded programmes such as Teach First, access to volunteer programmes, and a greater understanding of context by external bodies, including Ofsted. There is also a recognition that leaders in these schools merit high levels of support, and deserve additional credit for success. The definition of 'challenging', however, refers primarily to the socio-economic or cultural context of the school.

At least two of the case study head teachers took up post in schools that were already in danger of failing their forthcoming inspection, but did not fit

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the definition of 'challenging' schools. Each of them took something of a personal and career risk, and found themselves in a challenging situation, not least in the context of their own career. They were very clear that they would not have knowingly put themselves in that position, and would not do so again. There are a number of ways of mitigating this risk, whether through the increased use of secondments, to the explicit recognition by inspection teams that new head teachers need time in their new schools and in their new roles to fully develop effectiveness.

9.4   Final Thoughts

Sharing the stories of head teachers who had gone through an experience that was not only hugely significant for their career and professional identity, but also life-changing, was humbling and powerful, and I am indebted to them for their generosity and honesty. I believe that they all recognise the importance of their role in making sure that the children in their care have the best start in life, and also that they are ultimately responsible for their own success or failure in this role.

At the same time I believe that if we understand the emotional burden that the enactment of the current policy places on head teachers at the point of greatest professional challenge, and the emotional journey that lies ahead of them, then we can provide the support that will not just enable the school

to recover in the short term, as judged by its Ofsted grading, but will strengthen and prolong the impact of school leaders, across the system and over time. This, ultimately, is acting in the best interests of young people in schools – it is surely possible to have an inspection system and process in place that acts with efficiency and compassion, in the interests of both pupils and those who dedicate their professional lives to serving them.

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Appendix: Analytical Matrix Summary

Before / during Inspection - Capacity				
School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Cath	Experienced staff **Limited engagement with National Strategy materials** **Knew that some T&L was inadequate** **Lack of knowledge how to plan a good Ofsted lesson** **Staff weren't on top form** Time as DHT / Acting HT in good school helped knowledge of T&L **Previous experience focussed on managerial roles, not T&L**	**Recent arrival, so no time to build trusting relationships** **Anxiety about the picture in school** **Didn't have much connection with children – they didn't know me** **Compelled to be positive, despite realization** **Tears / numbness** **Couldn't display the real me**	**No CRB checks in place** **Statutory policies limited** **Spent Summer putting basic systems in place** **Didn't have a deputy to fall back on due to staffing issues** Time as DHT / Acting HT in good school helped knowledge of systems	**No relationship in place with parents** Tradition of cordial relationships Positive view of the school in the local community leading up to inspection **Parents not involved with T&L / day to day support**
B / Diane	Previous good performance Experienced HT – varied background **No previous involvement in T&L projects / cpd**	Strong confidence and core beliefs – able to clearly articulate philosophy **Shock and anger at outcome – sense of unfairness**	**Lack of quality HT training** **Lack of knowledge of safeguarding from key staff** **Gaps in vetting / recruitment checks** Confident about changes to behaviour, assessment etc **'frantic' preparations, which contributed to key issue**	**Parental complaints led to failure in eyes of HT – breakdown of trust** **Inability to share issue with parents led to wider concern than necessary**
C / Karen	Senior leadership experience of T&L cpd programme Evidence of good pedagogical understanding Delivered cpd in the past **Lack of engagement at this point from current staff**	**Worry prior to inspection about the possible outcome** **Potential difficulties communicated to staff** **Personal issues / lack of support from home affected HT capacity**	**Lack of experience in practical aspects of leadership** **Difficult merger led to some poor relationships and ineffective systems** **Lack of QA systems and culture led to inaccurate judgements**	Positive parental feedback during inspection **Parental concerns remained from school merger**

	Poor performance of senior staff			
D / Rob	**Poor results / inconsistency** **Lack of experience developing pedagogy / cpd** **Teaching inconsistent – temporary staff** **Poor teaching observed during inspection**	**Shock / anger from staff – directed towards Ofsted** **Small staff group – felt beleaguered** **Staff did not feel prepared – HT felt alone in bearing the brunt**	Considered to be an efficient manager **Lack of experience with Ofsted – lack of recent training** **SEF not updated** **Lack of data analysis** **Lack of input from DHT**	Strong sense of community, partly through faith link **Lack of parental engagement with T&L issues**

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Before / during Inspection - Priority				
School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Cath	**I said we would have to work really hard to get satisfactory** **Kept an eye on everything, not using worksheets** **Hoping satisfactory, but sceptical** **Staff feeling that not enough classroom focus – not shared by HT** Professed love of T&L **KI included raising attainment and improving teaching**	Strong desire to support and lead the team, in order to establish herself with them **Felt pretty useless on the day** **We were all very, very scared** **It was distressing** **Got through it in a fog** Staff just getting on with the job during inspection	**Policies were missing** **I knew how much the school had to get done** **Strong systems had to take a back seat to urgent issues**	**Parents were a concern – they would say the school isn't safe** **Parent View response was limited**
B / Diane	HT regularly teaches - sees herself as a model of good practice Had maintained long-term focus on quality of provision in the classroom **Lack of awareness of the importance of some progress issues**	Focus on preparing the team Support for vulnerable members of staff **Focus on managing inspection despite sense of injustice**	**Safeguarding systems had to be quickly strengthened** **Wider school systems were under scrutiny during inspection**	**Unable to share specific issue with parents** **Needed to reassure parents - gossip**
C / Karen	HT aware of standards issues, had tried to communicate to wider staff **Teaching issues came as a shock** HT understood significance of data	**Sense of urgency not shared by staff** **Not yet established trusting relationships with colleagues, so did not share close emotional support**	**No clear understanding amongst wider staff of gaps e.g. QA / subject-specific areas** **Lack of whole staff cpd systems**	V concerned about how the report would be received
D / Rob	**Eye off the ball on standards** **Had not been focused on improving teaching – more on staffing issues**	**Lack of engagement of staff with upcoming inspection, therefore unprepared** Immediate focus on building staff morale and keeping going	**Not properly prepared for inspection – came in earlier than expected, while HT was absent** **SEF not up to date** **Laid back about data**	**Very little Parent View response** **No parents' meeting called**

Immediately following Inspection - Capacity			
School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Kath	**Backed off from family of Heads – lot of underlying competitiveness** **Resistance (passive) from some staff to improvement efforts** **High level of change**	You're a new Head – doesn't matter **Lack of control in meetings with SIP / mentor** **'Flashing light' at meetings** **Level of conflict and blaming in school** **Nightmares / panic attacks**	**Enormity of the paperwork got to me** **Input from LA mentor advising things she had already started to do** **Lack of support from HR / Unions for change** Good AP in place, supported by HT	**Parents immediately critical – not a safe school** **Parents moved children** **Children commenting on website report** **Only school in county in category**
B / Diane	Reinforced T&L expectations Concentration on making sure standards improved quickly Used support to add to existing plans	**Loss of trust in colleagues** **Distress of colleagues, beginning of a blame culture** **Rift between groups of staff**	**Increase in HT workload** Strict new systems now in place Wider staff engagement with policies / systems	**Lack of a community feel to staff / wider group** **Shaking of confidence from some parents as a result of KI**
C / Karen	Knowledge of ISP was helpful Links to LA colleagues were helpful Introduction of ISP focused staff on pedagogy, enabled HT to use her previous experience positively	**Puts a face on, rally troops** **Goes home – feels terrible** **Not enjoying job** **Lack of family support** **Confidence rocked**	**Lack of HT experience – not sure how to address some important issues** **Lack of advice and support within school** **Introduction of ISP established effective new systems e.g. assessment**	**LA-led meetings marginalised HT with parents** **Local organisations contributed to labelling of school** **Most parents responded well**
D / Rob	**Leadership taken over by LA advisers** **Action delayed until support was fully in place** **HT lack of expertise exposed** **Lack of expertise across small staff exposed** **Ingrained slow progress difficult to address quickly**	**Questioning of competence by advisers / inspectors** **Feeling of powerlessness** **Family support vital** **Public shame in meetings**	**AP written by LA** Existing systems enabled smooth running to continue **Confidence in HT capacity and judgement shaken** **New assessment systems had difficult introduction- staff resentful**	**Parents requested transfer forms** **Negative publicity in local media**

Immediately following Inspection - Priority				
School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Kath	Ofsted identified the same priorities as HT **2 members of staff in capability / 2 staff left, but issues remain** T&L have become more important AP prioritises key areas	Initially not seen as a big issue for her personally Growing understanding of effect on relationships and wider school community **Emotional toll highlights need for support from family** **Recent arrival means that relationships need to be quickly built**	M&E timetable introduced Changed timetables to focus on KIs Tightened assessment Introduced pupil progress meetings AP introduced immediately, with support	**Concern that the school may have to close** **Worry about the impression HT has made with parents** Messages from parents to pupils affects T&L
B / Diane	Highlighting of specific areas provided focus HT recognized urgent need to secure improved results External support is welcomed and managed by school	**Rift between staff groups needs to be mended quickly** Determination to make sure that inspection has little impact long-term	HT view that other than specific Safeguarding, no changes to systems as a result of inspection	Desire to establish that school is a safe environment
C / Karen	Introduced ISP in full Used external support to challenge underperforming teachers **Key messages could be reinforced that had not been taken seriously before**	**Don't enjoy the job – just get on with it** **Have to stay for a while, and then leave** Don't think it was unfair	Drew up AP based on prior knowledge of ISP Set new targets and involved wider staff group Introduced pupil progress meetings	**Vulnerability to loss of numbers** Immediate calling of successful parents' meeting
D / Rob	**LA advisers took control** **Lack of confidence in dealing with this area, so happy to pass responsibility on** **Focus on responding to instructions re T&L**	**Significant personal emotional impact, leading to distress** Maintained strong personal relationships with staff	**State of limbo – waiting for report, and then for LA support** **LA wrote AP – identified support delayed until new term** **Leadership review instigated by LA**	**Very little Parent View response** **Desire to avoid anxiety of community – aimed to reassure**

Approx 1 year after Inspection - Capacity				
School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Kath	Improvement in results – in line with NA Positive HMI visit Positive inspection – now satisfactory Successful in focussing improvement efforts	**Still anxious and panicky about Ofsted call** **Sense of isolation remains** **Health issues, linked to stress** Retains hope, and feels optimistic about the school, although unsure about her own future	Unsure about systems until after Ofsted inspection Improved her own organizational skills Support has helped improve systems	Parents now positive – **worried that HT may leave** Feedback shows change in parental attitudes
B / Diane	Improvement in results – above NA Positive support from LA with review Positive monitoring visit Joint observations confirmed HT judgements Positive inspection – now Good, leadership highlighted	School has largely returned to previous state Harmonious community, although relationships limited to professional contacts **Key members of staff still emotionally raw**	HT confident that systems are now in place and effective Policies have not changed much, but implementation now more closely monitored	Parent survey very positive No repeat of issues **Some resistance to tightening up of procedures**
C / Karen	Improvement in results – **still below NA** Monitoring visit positive Positive inspection – improved attainment, leadership praised - satisfactory overall Quality of T&L now more consistent	**Sense of isolation still strong, both within and outside school** **No desire to stay at school long term** Strong enough to present positive show of emotion HT feels that there is greater trust and sharing across the wider school community	HMI support was helpful in addressing staffing issues ISP processes have led to long term improvement in systems HT feels she is gaining experience rapidly	Numbers up and parental satisfaction has increased – was high during inspection Improvement since inspection gave opportunity for community to move on from merger
D / Rob	Improvement in results – **still below NA** **Monitoring visits led to ongoing criticism** **Undermining of HT teaching judgement in monitoring visit**	**Strain on personal relationships** **Emotional rollercoaster** **Shaking of confidence in own ability to manage**	Day to day management of school is efficient Systems have been introduced, HT happy to support **but thinks it is too much long term** **Lack of impact so far on standards**	Overall numbers have **dipped slightly**, but stabilized **Involvement in T&L still limited**

Approx 1 year after Inspection – Priority				
School / Head	Rational Conditions	Emotional Conditions	Organizational Conditions	Family / Community Conditions
A / Kath	Review undertaken – good outcomes T&L now more central to HT vision and practice Importance of standards now widely understood by staff	**Anxiety / nightmares waiting for inspection call** **Different person outside school** **Still feels lack of connection with the school community** Wants to rebuild emotional health – her own and school's	**Maintains very high level of workload** Systems now clearly understood – ensures that teachers follow them all Maintaining very strong focus on safeguarding	Wants to make a difference for children and community Running community events, has improved parent section of website All staff understand importance of good links with parents
B / Diane	T&L remains central Teachers continue to use support to increase their own practice Improvements will continue – picture looks promising further down the school	**Remaining sense of injustice** **Residual damage to trust** Wants to build sense of team	Happy with systems and procedures in place – focus is on evolution and making sure they are being used and having the desired effect	Far more attention given to impact of trips etc School website gives prominence to parents' involvement New activities introduced e.g. coffee mornings
C / Karen	Inspection / monitoring visits supported increased T&L focus ISP practices need to be fully embedded and remain in place even after improvements in standards	**Wants to leave – doesn't feel at home here** **Feeling of isolation does not seem something that can be resolved in this situation** **Wants to be somewhere where she feels less vulnerable**	Can see the importance of having really good systems in place, especially linked to the classroom Wants to develop cpd for staff so that they can improve Wants a more distributed leadership team	Parents have been more involved in giving feedback Has brought parents into school much more – this is now shared with wider staff group
D / Rob	**Standards still fragile – not sure whether improvements will be for the long term** Happy with satisfactory in challenging circumstances **T&L can still be improved – needs the right people in place**	**Planning to leave HT role** Wants to leave with pride intact but not expose himself to this situation again **Still difficult to take**	Has become tougher with staff – more focused Considers he is a better HT Happy to run with systems that are now in place – seem to be working well	HT fells that the community has moved on **Wants support but doesn't expect that to be closely linked to classroom in this area**