

**USING SOLUTION FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY TO SUPPORT
SECONDARY AGED PUPILS FACING EXCLUSION FROM
SCHOOL**

**Thesis submitted towards the degree of
Integrated Doctorate of Philosophy**

School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

204 06489 0

Thesis L8052

DENNIS WILSON

14th November 2005

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

School of Education, Communication and Language Studies

I certify that all the material in this submitted work which is not my own work has been identified, and that no material has been submitted for any other award or qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. White'.

16th October 2005

ABSTRACT

This study was set in a mainstream secondary school, where a group of Year 7 pupils who had already experienced repeated exclusions were faced with the prospect of the cycle continuing. The researcher, who was also the educational psychologist for the school, used solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) in preference to previously unsuccessful methods of intervention in individual sessions with eight pupils over a period of one term. Employing a qualitative research methodology, based on an action research framework, the practitioner researcher had three main aims - to support the pupils' continued attendance and at the same time evaluate the impact of intervention; to simultaneously develop a flexible model of SFBT that was responsive to pupil need from an initial model based on a review of current literature; to consider the compatibility of this approach with the school context. The key findings, in relation to outcome, were much improved ratings by seven out of eight pupils of their perceived situations at the end of intervention, compared with their initial assessments; significant positive change over time in teacher comparative ratings of pupil behaviour; reductions in the numbers of exclusions and reported problem incidents. A flexible model, rather than one which is fixed and formulaic, proved to be critical to constructive collaboration, as was careful attention to the development of a blame-free therapeutic alliance. Major deviations from the initial model were the inclusion of detailed problem talk; the repeated revision of both problem and goal definition; the omission of the miracle question and the utilisation of the technique of 'externalisation' from Narrative Therapy. The rationale for these developments is discussed, along with some proposals as to underlying processes. Engagement with school systems proved to be less than satisfactory, although the revised individual model of intervention was not undermined by this. Nevertheless, some implications for compatibility of SFBT with school procedures are considered in the light of this finding, with suggestions for a number of possible applications of SFBT in relation to the everyday working practices of an educational psychologist.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the pupils around whom this whole project was centred – for their cooperation, their honesty, and their willing participation. I would like to thank them for giving me permission to use our shared experiences as an opportunity from which to develop a greater understanding in the use of solution focused approaches to therapy. I hope that they felt some benefit from our time together, and better prepared to deal with the difficulties they had previously experienced in school. I would also like to thank the teachers and parents concerned, for their cooperation in making the study possible and for providing me with information and feedback on its ultimate value.

In addition, I would like to extend my appreciation to Dr Liz Todd for her invaluable advice and guidance throughout the course of this research. Finally, I would like to offer sincere thanks to my wife Deborah and our children – Jennifer, Michael, Hannah and Elizabeth – for their continuing tolerance and enduring personal support through the sometimes endless nights and weekends taken up in the production of this thesis.

Contents

1. Introduction5

1.1 Context5

1.2 An Alternative Approach – SFBT9

2. Literature Review13

2.1 Epistemology13

2.2 Outcome Research17

 2.2.1 Clinical Studies17

 2.2.2 School Focused Research23

2.3 Process Research28

 2.3.1 Clinical Studies29

 2.3.2 School Focused Research and Literature32

2.4 Summary36

3. The Initial Model42

3.1 First Session43

3.2 Subsequent Sessions53

3.3 Summary55

4. Methodology56

4.1 Research Questions.....56

4.2 Research Design.....57

 4.2.1 Qualitative Paradigm57

 4.2.2 Action Research63

4.3 Research Method.....68

 4.3.1 Pupils69

 4.3.2 Procedure.....69

 4.3.2.1 Initial Teacher/Parent Consultation.....71

 4.3.2.2 Individual Pupil Sessions.....72

 4.3.2.3 Follow-up Consultation.....75

 4.3.2.4 Final Review.....75

4.4 Data Collection.....75

 4.4.1 The Model.....75

 4.4.2 Outcome.....76

 4.4.3 Systems Compatibility.....77

4.5 Ethical Considerations.....78

5. Findings.....80

5.1 The Model.....81

 5.1.1 Initial Sessions.....82

 5.1.2 Subsequent Sessions.....93

5.2 Outcome.....97

 5.2.1 Initial v Final Pupil Ratings.....97

 5.2.2 Data from Teachers & School Records.....99

5.2.2.1 Baseline Measures.....100

Incident Reports.....100

Initial Teacher Ratings.....100

Pupil -Teacher Comparison.....108

5.2.2.2 Post Intervention Measures.....110

Exclusions/Incident Reports.....110

Teacher Ratings.....112

Additional Information from Teachers.....113

5.3 Summary.....117

6. Discussion121

6.1 Outcome.....121

6.2 The Model.....128

6.3 Systems.....151

7. Reflections on Methodology168

8. Conclusions174

9. Personal Reflections.....184

References199

Appendices217

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1 - Pupil Goals.....	87
Table 2 - Pupil-Identified Problems, Targets and Strategies	91
Table 3 - Pupils' Ratings.....	98
Table 4 - Comparison of Pupil and Teacher Ratings	109
Table 5 - Exclusions and Recorded Incidents.....	111

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Procedures Flowchart.....	70
Figure 2 - Initial Teacher Ratings of Pupil Behaviour.....	104, 105
Figure 3 - Revised Model Flowchart.....	129

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

This research study took place in an inner-city comprehensive school. The school has approximately one and a half thousand pupils, and draws the vast majority of its population from council wards identified in the Indices of Deprivation (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000) as being among the 5% most deprived in England. Prior to the study, an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection had deemed the school in need of special measures because of poor standards of attainment, attendance and behaviour. One outcome of the subsequent school/LEA action plan was a successful bid for Single Regeneration Budget funding of a three-year project to be entitled 'Improving Pupil Behaviour'. The school's intention was that the majority of the funding would be used to employ an educational psychologist (EP), full time. Following negotiations between the school, LEA and Educational Psychology Service (EPS) the researcher (the school's existing EP) was invited to set up the project in collaboration with the school's vice principal.

The project incorporated a range of EP activity, including the systems and INSET work advocated by Frederickson, Cameron, Dunsmuir, Graham & Monsen, (1998), Imich (1999), Leadbetter (2000) and Watkins & Wagner (2000) for example. Central to the conditions of the project, however, was a requirement that the EP should also work directly with individual pupils who were 'at risk of exclusion'. A decision was taken, at the outset, that this intervention would focus on the Year 7 intake in the first instance. Pupils from this group could then be tracked, and supported through their entire Keystage 3 careers. Further groups would then be established from subsequent intakes.

No single theoretical model was adopted for this individual work. For the first two years of the project the approach probably best matched the 'eclectic' policy that Cooper

(1999) suggests is usually appropriate, because the '...diversity of approaches fits with the diversity of problems of EBD' (p.8). A number of issues arose, however, which raised doubts in the researcher about whether this was, in fact the most effective strategy. There were, for instance, practical difficulties associated with attempts to implement behavioural programmes. As Daniels, Visser, Cole & de Reybekill (1999) suggest, behavioural methods have been perhaps the most widely employed techniques by teachers and others in their work in schools. Their primary focus is on behaviour that can be directly observed, and it is assumed that well-established patterns of behaviour can be changed (controlled) by altering environmental consequences or other related events (Ayers, Clarke & Murray, 1995). These principles have provided the foundation for many training and development packages, including 'Assertive Discipline' (Canter & Canter, 1992), 'The Behavioural Approach to Teaching' (Wheldall & Merrett, 1985) and 'Building a Better Behaved School' (Galvin, Mercer & Costa, 1990). The careful shaping of pupil behaviour can, however, be very demanding of a classroom teacher – a point that teachers were often quick to point out to the researcher. As Cooper, Smith & Upton (1994) and Miller (1996) note, the time investment required in attending to the specific detail of a programme can often lead to disillusion if the results are perceived as not significant, are not quickly achieved, or are not generalised and maintained over time. In so far as EP practice is concerned, McNamara (1992, 1998) also suggests that published demonstrations of the success of behavioural interventions have often been carried out under conditions that maximise the probability of successful outcome. These conditions, he argues, may have only very limited resemblance to the more usual working conditions of EP's. Conoley & Conoley (1990) similarly argue that it may be entirely unrealistic to expect teachers to implement complex behavioural programmes in their classrooms.

An alternative theoretical model, perhaps more suited to work with individual pupils, is one that Daniels, Visser, Cole & de Reybekill (1999) label 'psychodynamic'.

Psychodynamic approaches are based on the assumption that many of the anxieties and motivating forces which determine behaviour are unconscious (Davie, 1986; Greenhalgh, 1994), with problems taken to be outwardly visible signs of inner conflicts. Psychodynamic approaches are characterised by attempts to engage in dialogue with pupils with the aim of helping them to gain greater insight into the nature of their difficulties and their behaviour. They typically require relatively long term involvement and are usually seen as demanding specialist skills (Cole, Visser & Upton, 1998). As such they are more likely to be encountered in special school settings than in mainstream schools.

A further model, also encompassing individual working, is generally outlined as a 'cognitive approach' by Frederickson & Cline (2002). This perspective focuses on cognitive processes, relating to how pupils perceive and interpret events. 'Undesirable' behaviour develops when they misperceive, misconstrue and respond 'inappropriately' to situations. Intervention would aim to challenge their perceptions or attributions, and to facilitate alternative perspectives and responses. As with the psychodynamic model, then, the discourse of cognitive approaches clearly locates problems as 'within-child' (Booth, 1993) and undertakes to correct 'faulty' thinking.

In direct contrast with the concept of problems as being located entirely within-child is the notion that pupils belong to a set of social subsystems, and that all behaviour is a product of interactions between and within these systems. Behaviour also varies according to the contexts and the situation. This ecosystemic, or interactionist, perspective has gained increasing influence in schools (Wagner, 1995) and is firmly endorsed by the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a). In terms of intervention,

emphasis is placed on the idea of altering unwanted patterns of interaction, with the introduction of change into one part of a system inevitably effecting change elsewhere. Dowling & Osborne (1985) and Provis (1992) have been particularly prominent in the development of ecosystemic approaches in their work with schools.

In common with this work, but less therapist directed, is that of Molnar & Lindquist (1989), whose approach is also underpinned by a discourse of social constructionism, which emphasises the role of language in the social construction of our understanding of the world, rather than accept incontrovertible truths. In working to promote change they suggest that social, personal and professional factors can influence teachers' perceptions of events, and that these perceptions can actually contribute to the maintenance of problems. Their methods seek to achieve change by altering teacher perceptions of pupil behaviour, or 're-frame' their interpretations of the purpose of the behaviour. In addition to the introduction of change into one part of a cycle so as to promote change in another, therefore, re-framing also helps eliminate blame from the situation, promotes understanding and encourages a focus on the desirable aspects of a social pattern.

Despite the appeal of such an approach, in terms of its inherent values, its rationale and its reported potential, the approach would not have easily translated into the researcher's situation. Although the EPS was moving towards consultation as a basis for service delivery, in parallel with national developments (West & Idol, 1987; Wagner, 2000; Wagner & Gillies, 2001), the conditions determined by the project were negotiated separately. While there was some commitment in principle to collaboration from key staff in the school, and reasonable access to all teachers, the expectation was that the mainstay of his work with individual pupils would more closely resemble the psychodynamic/cognitive approaches in practice. This did not rule out, however, the

possibility of adopting a social constructionist discourse, or the idea of encouraging change in patterns of interaction across a system from a single point within that system. If the underlying principles were sound, that point could be an individual pupil.

1.2 An Alternative Approach - SFBT

Practice based on such a model was, in fact, rapidly emerging in therapeutic literature - the Solution Oriented or Solution Focused Approach. This model embodied social constructionism at a level of individual intervention, but was initially developed and described by de Shazer and his colleagues at the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee (de Shazer, 1985, 1988, 1991; Weiner-Davis, de Shazer & Gingerich, 1987; O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989). Importantly, however, it was also a product of a significant shift of focus from the traditional problem-solving framework. de Shazer and his colleagues had drawn the conclusion from their clinical experiences that what their clients found helpful had no direct relationship to the problems presented in therapy. As a result the emphasis of intervention moved from trying to understand a problem, and therefore knowing how to 'treat' it, to helping clients focus on their personal goals, their own strengths and therefore their potential for finding their own solutions. An added bonus is that therapy then becomes brief in nature, and so the approach is widely known as Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT).

The assumptions underpinning SFBT have been well documented in overviews of solution focused approaches by a number of authors such as O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis (1989), George, Iveson & Ratner (1990), Cade & O'Hanlon (1993) and O'Connell (1998). Summarised, these fundamental assumptions are:

- Personal constructs are created through attempts to make sense of our experiences, and these constructs influence behaviour.

- Problems do not imply individual dysfunction, but exist in a social context. Attempting to understand the cause of a problem, therefore, is not a necessary step towards resolution. In intervention, emphases on the past and on details of the problem are not necessary for the development of solutions.
- Individuals attempt to solve their problems, but with a focus on the details of the problem at the expense of possible solutions. There are always exceptions to the problem, however. No matter how fixed the problem patterns might appear to be there are always times when they are absent or less, and therefore when the individual is engaged in some of the 'solution behaviour'. Identification of such exceptions, and doing more of 'what works' is the key to progress.
- Individuals have the resources to resolve their own difficulties, although people tend to emphasise their own failures or weaknesses. They can be helped to recognise and utilise their own strengths, and to develop a more positive construct of themselves as competent and in control.
- An individual's goals must be central to the therapeutic process or else the intervention is unlikely to succeed - the 'centrality of goals'. Intervention does not involve the therapist as expert, in a process of judgement or interpretation of psychological theory, in determining what is best for the individual.
- A small change can lead to widespread changes. This assumption is a reflection of the ecosystemic origins of SFBT - sometimes only a small change in one part of the ecosystem will interrupt the problem-maintaining pattern and prompt new cycles of behaviour. Thus, relatively complex interactions have an appealing potential to be critically influenced through collaborative intervention with one individual within a social system.

At the time of the present study, the SFBT model had been utilised by clinical practitioners to deal with a range of presenting problems such as drug and alcohol dependency, marital difficulties, sexual abuse, depression and anxiety. It had been employed to a lesser extent in school settings, although it was becoming an area of growing interest by EP's in the UK (Rhodes, 1993; Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995). They saw the approach as offering a number of potentially attractive features to a school-based practitioner:

- There are strong claims for its effectiveness and, given that it demands comparatively little time, its efficiency.
- It is a flexible approach which can be adapted for use in any setting, with any type of presenting problem. Intervention can be targeted at any point in the school/home ecosystem, involving any combination of child/teachers/parent or carers.
- It is purposeful and positive. Because it is not problem focused there may be less likelihood of those concerned becoming 'submerged', disheartened and paralysed by seeming entrenched and insurmountable difficulties.
- It does not depend upon insight on the part of the client, either pre-existing or as a consequence of adult intervention.

Additionally, for the researcher, it was attractive from the point of view of children's individual rights. It is not intrusive and does not depend upon a need to manage, coerce or control thinking and behaviour. From a practical perspective, it should be compatible with the conditions and constraints of the research context. As a consequence of these seeming advantages over other possible methods, and the researcher's own developing curiosity about the possibilities for the approach, a decision was taken to adopt SFBT. It would become the method of individual working with a group of pupils from the Year 7 intake in the final year of the project. This work would also form the basis of ongoing evaluation of its potential for future work in the school.

The manner in which SFBT was employed, and the extent to which it was ultimately helpful to pupils, the school and to the researcher is the focus of the remainder of this research report. The next chapter presents a more detailed critique of relevant SFBT research and literature; a potential model for use in the present setting is then outlined. This is followed in subsequent chapters by the main questions of interest to the researcher and the methodology employed to address these; an analysis of the findings of the study and a detailed discussion of the issues arising; conclusions and implications for both further study and for continuing EP practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Epistemology*

The previous chapter noted the evolution of SFBT from a problem-solving into a future oriented therapeutic approach, and also reported that its emergence from family therapy followed a somewhat experiential path. Before moving on to a review of research and other literature relating to SFBT, it might be helpful to briefly consider its underlying philosophical and epistemological position.

SFBT is underpinned by both social constructionism and systems theory (O'Connell, 1998; Lines, 2002). As such it contrasts with the modernist position of the other approaches to intervention which historically have been more frequently employed with children and adolescents. Behavioural management, for example, argues that there is an objective reality, available to experts and/or adults, and features the manipulation of variables in order to achieve desired effect. The often discouraging time and resource demands, however, and the sometimes tenuous causal links between events (Dessent, 1988; Miller 1996) - for instance between presumed 'inadequate parenting' and behaviour in class – were noted in the last chapter as notable disadvantages of this approach. The alternative, psychodynamic or cognitive approaches would propose that individuals require therapy in order to remediate the damage caused by earlier experiences, evident in faulty irrational beliefs or learned maladaptive behaviour, so as to achieve 'insight' - a cognitive state more consistent with expert knowledge and values (Cade & O'Hanlon, 1993). Again, this is an approach founded on an assumption of individual dysfunction, and carries with it the implication of slow, time-consuming change and long term demand on highly skilled and limited resources.

In direct contrast with the underpinnings of these two approaches, social constructionism posits that knowledge is constructed through internalised social relationships and that language and communication play a crucial part in the social construction of meaning. The way that individuals make sense of their experiences, rather than their personal shortcomings, therefore needs to be the critical focus for intervention. Understanding is always interpretative, with no privileged position. A social constructionist approach to individual counselling will assume that problems are generated by, and embedded in, current patterns of interaction rather than simply the product of individual or outside factors. This emphasis on constructivism and on interactional patterns has become increasingly prevalent in professional practice as a framework for understanding behaviour. The Code of Practice (2001a) for example, despite its continued labelling of SEN categories, stresses the importance of taking into account the interactive effect of all possible contributors towards a child's experience of difficulties. Specifically relating to EP practice, Watkins and Wagner (2000) describe a move towards viewing children's behaviour as representing one point within a cycle of human interaction, and not necessarily any more important to its maintenance than any other factor. Stobie (2003) similarly reports on a progressive evolution of methodology employed by EP's over the last few decades towards multi-level intervention, and on the change in underpinning discourse away from one of deficiency to one of interaction.

In parallel with this developing alternative framework for understanding the nature of difficulties and consequent implications for intervention, has been the emergence of a greater degree of respect for children's views about situations affecting them - by what might be termed the helping professions and by government. Allen (1999), for instance, argues convincingly on the importance of taking children's perspectives into account in the current debate on the issue of inclusion. Gersch (1996) also acknowledges the particularly valuable contribution that children can make towards understanding of

complex issues affecting their lives. Indeed, Miller (2000) illustrates the flawed logic of the 'expert' stance with his evidence of the distinct disadvantages of *not* taking into account the views of all concerned, including children themselves. Furthermore, in addition to this increasing recognition of the pragmatic value of taking account of children's perspectives has been a greater emphasis on their rights as individuals. In the UK this has culminated in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' (2003), and more recently the Children Act (2004), which stress the fundamental right of children to be heard and insist that best outcome for a child (rather than a professional, an organisation or an institution) should lie at the very heart of all professional activity. Implicit in this scenario is the notion of empowering children (Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000) so that they are able to make a positive contribution towards determining and managing their own futures, in direct contrast with what Miller (1996) describes as behaviourist efforts to control them. Given this current background and context, it is perhaps no surprise that EP's have begun to express an interest in SFBT, set as it is within a social constructionist framework.

The fact that SFBT refuses to acknowledge problems as fixed and defined truths about individuals highlights the dynamic process of change and, it is claimed by protagonists, therefore increases the possibility of change. Rather than focus on underlying dysfunction or maladaptation, SFBT focuses on success; instead of linking past events to present problems, it centres on what might be termed 'final causality', i.e. the concept that what happens in the future is dependent on what individuals do today. This positive, and relentlessly constructive, focus is generally regarded as one of the main attractions of an approach which is also more respectful and inclusive of its clients than many other approaches. The language characteristic of SFBT is also seen as more likely to motivate and support an individual towards change, with its narratives about the future rather than the past and its open recognition of competence, skills and qualities the client can use.

Ultimately, however, the value of SFBT is likely be determined by the extent to which it can be demonstrated to be effective, efficient and appropriate to the settings in which it might be employed. Its proponents argue that it is a highly effective approach, by definition is brief and therefore relatively undemanding of resources, and can be adapted to multiple settings. This demonstration of effectiveness, in a range of contexts characterises the research literature relating to SFBT. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, SFBT emerged as a direct consequence of the systematic evaluation by practitioners of what their clients had perceived as having been the most helpful aspects of intervention. Central to this early work were de Shazer and his team at the Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC) in Milwaukee. Their early reports (de Shazer 1985, 1988) offer a naturalistic, casework-based description of the evolution of technique. As Berg (one of the team members) points out (1997a), their interest was in ongoing review of individual cases in an attempt to develop an evidence-informed model. One driving force was undoubtedly a desire to establish, report on and share a model of practice that seemed to offer the prospect of high rates of client satisfaction. The managed care system of health professionals in the USA (and more recently in the U.K. - Roth & Fonagy, 1996; Rowland & Goss, 2000), however, emphasises the importance of cost as well as clinical effectiveness. Accountability to funding agencies, therefore, became equally important to practitioners. As a consequence of these influences, research has included two broad strands. The first is what is described as 'outcome' research, which has concerned itself primarily with the demonstrable effectiveness of the approach; the second is 'process' research, which has addressed the issue of clinical technique, either by attempting to isolate and describe those elements of the model felt to be important to successful outcome or else by offering descriptive accounts of personal experiences. This chapter will now consider research and descriptive literature, published up to the

time of the current study, relating to SFBT as a therapeutic approach. The first section will look at literature relating to outcome, followed by a section on SFBT process.

2.2 Outcome Research

Because of its prominence in the literature, and its importance to the development of the approach, the first part of this section deals with research in clinic settings even though it refers mostly to work with adults. This will be followed by a review of studies in which the SFBT model had subsequently been utilised and adapted for work with children and in school settings. From the outset it should be noted that, at the time of the present study, relatively little systematic research had been reported on the approach, particularly in relation to schools.

2.2.1 Clinical Studies

Outcome research has typically considered one or more of the following four questions:

a) Is the approach effective?

This general question probably occupies the largest proportion of outcome research and is self-evidently of critical importance, whether the approach is to be considered for use in clinic settings or in schools. Two significant early reports on effectiveness were outlined by Miller, Duncan & Hubble (1996). In one of these McKeel (1996), in a review of reported studies to that point, cites two in particular as evidence of effectiveness. In the first study (Kiser 1988) 65.5% of clients engaged in SFBT achieved the goals, which were set during treatment. In the second, in Sweden (Andreas, 1993), 80% of clients achieved their goals. This compares favourably, Miller, Duncan & Hubble (op cit) suggest, with other psychotherapy outcome studies which:

'...generally report that approximately two thirds of clients accomplish significant improvements.'

(p.252)

Other researchers (McDonald 1994; De Jong & Hopwood, 1996; Lee 1997) had also reported similar results, and in SFBT research the 'two thirds' figure seems generally to set the guiding standard for concluding that intervention has achieved a measure of 'success'. McKeel (1996) also warns, however, that the majority of reported studies had involved only small sample sizes (a notable exception being De Jong & Hopwood (1996), whose client group involved 275 clients), had used no controls and had employed simplistic assessment methods. In fact, most clinical studies tended to rely exclusively on a single outcome measure - one, subjective, source of data. Although the context of the studies may have made it difficult to access alternative sources of information regarding improvement, the possibility of bias in such research cannot be easily ruled out.

The whole issue of appropriate methodology in relation to real life research, in particular the question of quantitative versus qualitative paradigms, will be considered further in a later chapter on methodology. However, an immediate problem for outcome researchers, regardless of paradigm, is that of consistency in the model of intervention employed. The flexibility of SFBT, and hence its potential for uniquely tailored intervention, is generally regarded as one of its greatest strengths. This freedom generates a dilemma, however, especially for those wishing to employ a positivist framework in order to demonstrate the general effectiveness of the approach - If the model itself is not clearly defined, how can its effectiveness be evaluated? Even within a qualitative research framework, the concept of 'replicability' is still viewed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000) as an important issue. Schofield (1993), for instance, suggests that in real life research it is important to be able to provide a clear, detailed and in-depth description of methodology so that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research can be generalised to another situation – the issues of 'comparability' and 'transferability'. Some SFBT researchers have suggested a compromise on the matter, so as to allow flexibility

in practice but some comparability between studies. This compromise involves defining SFBT as including at least a minimum number of predefined elements. Although acknowledging that SFBT cannot be determined entirely through a rigid protocol, for example, de Shazer & Berg (1997) suggested that the model could only be demonstrated to be effective if defined by commonly understood characteristics, which might then be subsequently replicated. They proposed that the SFBT process should, of necessity, include at least the following components:

- the 'miracle question'
- a scaling question
- a homework task

Beyebach, Sanchez, Miguel, Vega, Hernandez & Morejon (2000) used these guidelines in their study of intervention over a four-year period in a clinic setting with 83 cases, using independent observers in order to complete their first/last session rating questionnaires. Consistent with other claims as to the effectiveness of SFBT, over 80% of clients reached treatment goals. Accepting these criteria, together with the developing European Brief Therapy Association outcome research protocol (later described by Beyebach, 2000), Gingerich & Eisengart (1999) also undertook a meta-analysis of what they describe as all published outcome research on SFBT up until 1999. In addition to the above framework, they also included only those studies, which met further criteria:

- They employed some form of experimental control
- Some attempt at objective assessment of client behaviour or functioning (not only reported satisfaction) was made.
- They took into account 'end of treatment' or follow-up outcomes

In all, they found 15 studies which satisfied their criteria and in 13 of these there were reports of improved client outcome. A number of outcome measures were used besides client self report, including counsellor ratings of client progress, improved scores on

various personality and standardised rating scales, and independent observations of behaviour. Given the rigour of these studies, compared with other outcome research, the results might be seen as quite impressive - with one study (La Fountain & Garner, 1996) reporting that 81% of 311 clients were described by independent observers as having attained treatment goals. Again, however, even though careful design criteria were applied there was some considerable variation in sample size. In contrast with La Fountain, for instance, the research by Franklin, Corcoran, Nowicki & Streeter (1997) involved only three subjects but made claim to 'significant' changes on rating scales. Ironically, one of the studies which reported no finding of significant effect, by Sundman (1997) included 382 subjects - the largest number of subjects in the studies reviewed by Gingerich & Eisengart (1999). Taken overall, however, reported research would appear to offer some support as to the effectiveness of SFBT.

b) Is SFBT effective for a range of problem types?

Despite the apparent contradiction in the idea of relating the effectiveness of an approach which has its roots in social constructionism to a 'problem type' or psychological characteristic, such questions have nevertheless been addressed in outcome research. The studies reported by Gingerich & Eisengart (1999), for example, covered a variety of reported 'problems' such as depression, offending, anxiety and drug abuse. McKeel's (1999) overview also reports a small number of studies which examined the effectiveness of SFBT with specific populations. de Shazer & Isebaert (1997), for example, noted a 74% success rate for clients with alcohol problems, and Eakes, Walsh, Markowski, Cain & Swanson (1997) achieved similar results with a small group of clients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Metcalf & Thomas (1994) and Beyebach, Sanchez, Miguel, Vega, Hernandez & Morejon (2000) describe SFBT work with couples, and an interesting study by Zimmerman, Jacobson, MacIntyre, & Watson (1996) used an adaptation of SFBT group work to address parenting issues.

Notwithstanding the focus of these studies, however, and the fact that much SFBT research has been undertaken in clinic settings, what the work with specific populations led to was research in other contexts - including prisons and social services departments. Of particular importance to the current study is the fact that some took place in schools. These will be reported separately, later in this section.

c) How brief is SFBT?

The very term SFBT arose from the evolution and assimilation of approaches espousing one or both of two key concepts - that therapy should be solution-focused and that it should be, therefore, brief. That it is time efficient is perhaps almost as important as it is successful to busy practitioners. The attraction of a brief therapeutic approach which achieves results that are at least comparable with long term, resource-consuming counselling has been a significant factor in the uptake of SFBT across a range of different settings, and a feature which has been emphasised in descriptive literature. Indeed, Talmon (1990) has even developed his ultimate version of SFBT, described in his work Single Session Therapy.

Much of the research data about the number of sessions taken to reach client goals is noted within reports of 'effectiveness' studies such as those already described. In the study by Lee (1997) for example, the average number of sessions taken was 5.5. For McDonald (1994) the figure was 3.8 sessions. The De Jong & Hopwood (1996) research offers an average of only 2.9 sessions. While these figures provide one indicator as to the efficiency of the approach, particularly to those who might otherwise have been engaged for protracted periods of time, the measure is simplistic and taken on its own could even be misleading. Some researchers do provide additional information. Lee (op cit), for instance, notes a standard deviation of 3.5 and thus gives an indication of a

range - although this might simply mean that for some clients the therapy was very brief, and for others not-so-brief.

A further complication is that in some clinic based practice, and its reported research, a client's failure to return for follow-up sessions is seen as a sign of success as the client is assumed to no longer feel the need for help. For others, however, clients' ceasing to attend is taken as an indication of dissatisfaction and failure. This discrepancy raises what may become critical questions about the reliability of drop-out as a measure of both efficiency and effectiveness in studies where the parameters for ending therapy are not described, although Lee did attempt to confirm with clients themselves that they were in fact satisfied.

In contrast with this are those studies set in a context where the number of sessions available to a client or therapist are extremely limited, and the question focuses not on how brief therapy will be but on what can be achieved within a brief period of therapy. In answer to this question, a study by Kiser & Nunally (1990), described by McKeel (1996), considered success rates in comparison with numbers of sessions attended. Those clients who received 3 sessions or fewer had a success rate of 69%, while those who attended 4 or more sessions had a success rate of 91%. The significance of this finding, even though it stems from only one study and refers to a possible relationship not frequently evident in SFBT literature, might be particularly relevant to the typical work constraints of an EP in school settings.

d) Is SFBT more effective than other approaches?

A small number of research studies had attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of SFBT by comparing it with other approaches. De Jong & Hopwood (1996), for instance, found that successful outcomes for the SFBT approach were comparable with other

approaches, and because they were achieved in a shorter time, however, SFBT could be assumed to be more effective.

Where possible, comparison studies randomly assigned clients to treatment conditions, and then measured outcome by collating evidence from both client self-report and other sources. Two such studies are reported by Lindforss & Magnusson (1997), and Litrell, Malia & Vanderwood (1995) in which a 'standard' treatment had previously been, or was currently, provided against which to compare an SFBT approach. The research of Lindforss & Magnusson (op cit), coincidentally cited by Gingerich & Eisengart (1999) as an example of a well-designed study, was conducted in a prison setting in Sweden. Sixty prisoners were randomly assigned to either an SFBT group or else to an existing treatment group. The outcome measure was recidivism, as indicated by rearrest in the period after release. After eighteen months, only 14% of the traditional group had not been rearrested, against 40% of the SFBT group – a statistically significant difference. The study by Litrell, Malia & Vanderwood (op cit) took place in a high school in the USA, where SFBT achieved comparable results with the problem-focused counselling approach traditionally used, but in a shorter period of time. The study is cited here as an illustration of a comparison between two approaches, and offers some further support for SFBT as a model of intervention. It is also one example of the way in which positive reports on work with adults led to the model being utilised in schools. A wider range of examples of work with children/young people, particularly in school settings, is described below.

2.2.2 School Focused Research

Prior to the outset of the current research study, a small number of studies had been reported in which the SFBT approach had been adopted as suitable for use in work with children in relation to school based problems. In their meta-analysis, for example,

Gingerich & Eisengart (1999) described two small-scale, unpublished studies (both coincidentally meeting the EBTA criteria) whose focus was school problems. In the first, by Triantafylliou (1997), 12 students aged 10-14 years who had been placed in a residential school setting because of 'hyperactivity and oppositional behaviour' experienced four sessions of counselling using SFBT. Post-test comparison was carried out for matched subjects. Outcome measures were student ratings, incident reports and the perceived need for use of medication. In the experimental group there was a 65% reduction in reported incidents compared with 15% for the control group, who experienced what was viewed as 'standard child care'. The second study, by Geil (1998), involved 8 elementary school students who exhibited 'externalising' behaviour receiving eight sessions of SFBT with a school psychologist. This was a single subject, A-B design and the students were compared with controls who were offered 'behavioural and standard consultation'. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity in respect of the control treatment, and the small numbers involved, time sampled observation indicated a greater level of improvement in the experimental group.

On a wider scale, and addressing both school and home based problems, Williams (2000) describes the successful work of a multi-professional family support centre which elected to use SFBT in its work in dealing with schools and families. Lee (1997) reports on the work of such a project, where SFBT was used with the families of 59 children attending a family support centre in Toronto. A one-group, post-test design was employed in which the families were interviewed by telephone after an interval of six months following therapy. A success rate of 67 % was noted, achieved in an average of 5.5 sessions.

La Fountain & Garner (1996) conducted an equally large-scale study of the effectiveness of SFBT, but solely within school settings. The work took place across a number of

elementary, middle and high school settings in an area of Pennsylvania. Acting as consultants to 68 school counsellors they randomly allocated half to each of a treatment and control group. The counsellors in the treatment group then received training in solution-focused methods. A total of 177 students subsequently experienced groupwork using SFBT, with 134 acting as controls in more traditional groupwork with the remaining counsellors. Students were randomly assigned to groups, although some pre-selection took place. Each student participated in weekly groups for eight weeks. Three measures were used in order to assess the effectiveness of the SFBT groups:

- Index of Personality Characteristics (IPC, Brown & Coleman 1998), described by the researchers as a standardised measure offering information about the personal and social adjustment of children, was used as a pre and post-test comparison.
- Students' self report about the extent to which goals were achieved (ratings)
- Ratings supplied by the counsellors about student behaviour – this was based on information ranging from comments made to them about the students by teachers to their own judgements about student behaviour during the group sessions.

Despite the researchers' desire to incorporate control groups into their study, the two measures relating to achievement of goals were, surprisingly, collated for only their experimental group. In all, 91% of the students in the SFBT groups reported progress, and 81% were equally described by the counsellors as having made progress towards their goals. This is taken as evidence that the SFBT approach provides a favourable context for student goal achievement. Comparison was made between the groups' scores on the IPC, with significant and positive differences noted for the SFBT group in areas relating to self-esteem and the ability to cope with problems. In terms of its relevance to the present study, although this research was school based one critically important difference was that students were carefully selected for the study. Those

chosen were perceived by teachers and counsellors as most likely to be amenable to attempting self-change, to be able to articulate attainable goals, and therefore as likely to benefit from involvement. The circumstances surrounding pupil contact with the researcher in the present study would be markedly different, with the distinct possibility that they might even be resistant to any idea of engagement.

An example of successful intervention with less carefully selected students across a number of schools is provided by Laveman (2000), where counselling was offered to adolescents considered to be at 'serious risk' over problems related to school, home and family and social life. Although also not based within one particular school, a study by Morrison, Olivos, Dominguez, Gomez & Lena (1993) nevertheless describes interesting work with students experiencing situations much more comparable to that of present concern – exclusion from school and enforced engagement. The study is a further example of the work of a multi-disciplinary team, this time with students deemed to have failed to respond to 'traditional disciplinary methods' and considered at risk of exclusion. Over a period of two years the team worked with 30 referred pupils and their families. Of these pupils, 77% either completely reached their objectives or made what was described as observable progress towards them, and teacher and/or parent ratings generally confirmed the improvements reported by individual pupils.

In contrast with the extension of SFBT research into schools in the USA, especially the relatively large-scale studies covering a number of settings, very little research carried out in the U.K on SFBT with children and/or in schools had been reported at the time of the present study. One notable exception was Wheeler's (1995) evaluation of work in an outpatient child mental health setting. Wheeler used a post-hoc caseload outcome analysis of information that he had collected as a regular feature of routine practice. He compared the outcomes for fifty cases before the point at which he adopted SFBT as his

standard practice with the fifty immediately afterwards. Wheeler summarises his results as:

- A reduction in the number of cases ending in withdrawal or of clients ceasing to attend the clinic.
- A rise in clients reporting successful outcome from 43% to 67%.
- A drop in the number of cases 'requiring transfer to other resources', i.e. 'referred on', from 31% to 11%

His first conclusion highlights a contentious issue among clinical practitioners, which continues to have particular relevance to their outcome research. As noted earlier, some subscribe to the view that clients' ceasing to attend is an indication of dissatisfaction and failure. Others interpret this as a sign of success, with the client assumed to no longer feel the need for help. Wheeler assumes the more cautious position, and in doing so lends strength to the claims he makes for successful outcome – especially when taken together with client self-report.

Two smaller scale studies involving SFBT with children, but of particular importance in the present context, reflect an emerging interest in the approach by EP's, are reported by Rhodes (1993) and by Rhodes & Ajmal (1995). In the former, Rhodes describes the successful application of SFBT in a school in the London borough of Hackney, in the form of a case study involving a five-year-old boy who presented difficult behaviour in class. Working in consultation with his teacher, through only two sessions, they were able to achieve what they saw as improvement in the situation. Rhodes & Ajmal (op cit) adopt a case study framework in order to illustrate their work with parents, teachers and individual pupils and cite the flexibility of SFBT as a major strength in this context.

Finally, in this section on outcome studies, Thorne & Ivens (1999) report on a carefully constructed research project involving ten EP's working with six secondary schools in

Lewisham over students who had been referred by their schools because of concern about behaviour. The context of this study, therefore, closely resembled that of the current study although once again an important difference was that the situations were not seen as 'critical' and the students were not in immediate danger of exclusion. A repeated measures, matched pairs design was employed. Twenty-three pairs were generated, matched for age, gender, ethnicity and academic levels. Intervention consisted of four interviews of 30/40 minutes each, as follows:

- With the student
- With a key member of staff
- With parents/carers
- All of the above, together

Ratings were completed by the key staff for both 'target' and 'matched' student, before and after the series of interviews. The researchers report significant improvement in behaviour in the intervention group compared with the controls, as determined by staff ratings. Even though the context of the latter studies again differed from the present situation in one or other fundamental respect, they do illustrate the manner in which EP's were beginning to explore the use of SFBT. Considered alongside the accumulation of reports of successful intervention elsewhere, particularly those involving children, these accounts of their work provide an interesting and encouraging indication of the potential of the approach as a model for school based casework.

2.3 Process Research

Despite the emphasis on outcome studies, of at least equal relevance to the present situation was the literature relating to process. If SFBT had shown itself to be a relatively effective approach generally, what might be the key components of a SFBT model? This section will review literature relating to the specific format and sequences of activity within what would generally be held to constitute such a model. Again, clinic based

research on particular elements of the model will be considered first although, because this was relatively recent at the outset of the current study, the accumulation of process evidence had been fairly limited. This will be followed by a comparison of the more descriptive accounts of models employed by some of the leading practitioners in school based, individually focused, intervention. The key issues for consideration in determining a model for use in the present study will be highlighted.

2.3.1 Clinical Studies

In a sense, this focus on developing the SFBT process finds itself in conflict with the drive towards greater standardisation noted in the first section of this chapter. There has been some debate, summarised by O'Connell (1998), about how SFBT research should progress. One of the main questions (discussed in the next chapter on the initial model adopted in the present study) has been about whether the model should be defined by the systematic employment of a relatively fixed sequence of specific elements, lending itself to the more positivist research methodology inherent in the EBTA protocol. The alternative would be to view SFBT as a flexible approach, driven by immediate client need within a broad framework determined by fundamental principles. As noted earlier, from its beginnings SFBT had been inherently exploratory and reflective in trying to establish 'what works' for an individual client, by evaluating day-to-day experiences in order to inform improvement in delivery. The evolution of the model as practised had therefore tended more towards the latter position. Nevertheless, a small number of studies had attempted to evaluate the relative importance of constituent elements, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This research, again largely clinic based, addressed three key aspects.

The first of these is the initial contact with clients. de Shazer (1985) suggested that it is common for clients, in the first session, to be able to describe improvement which has

already occurred since the point at which help was requested ('pre-treatment improvement'). Utilising such reports in order to explore with clients the means by which they have achieved this change has become common practice. McKeel (1996) reports on a study undertaken by himself and Weiner-Davis in which more than 60% of clients reported improvement in their situations, and Allgood, Parham, Salts & Smith (1995) found that almost 40% of clients attending a first session reported improvement. Interestingly, Beyebach (1996) suggested a significant relationship between reported pre-treatment improvement and eventual outcome.

O' Hanlon & Weiner-Davis (1989) addressed a form of questioning, 'pre-suppositional questions', in which questions are framed in such a way as to tie an assumption of some previous success with a presenting problem, even as it is being described. In turn, it is suggested, exceptions to the problem can be elicited and personal strengths and resources recognised. Weiner-Davis, & Gingerich (1987) report a study in which 20 out of 30 clients answered this question by describing examples of recent improvements in their presenting problem.

A second element of clinical process research focused on a particular technique known as 'formula first session task' (FFST) de Shazer & Molnar (1984). This involves a 'homework' task being given to clients, to be undertaken between the first and second sessions of therapy. The task might, for example, simply be that clients observe events or the behaviour of others that they would like to continue in their lives. de Shazer (1985) notes a study in which clients were given the FFST, with 57% of them subsequently reporting that their situation was actually better by the second session. Jordan & Quinn (1994) also report their research, this time aimed at examining the association between FFST and treatment variables. Clients were randomly assigned to one of two groups. The first received problem focused treatment which included a

homework assignment in which they were to notice and subsequently describe the events and reactions of others around the occurrence of identified problems. The second group involved SFBT with a FFST. The researchers comment that the latter group were significantly more likely to report that their problem had improved, to have greater optimism that treatment would succeed, and to describe their first session as a valuable and positive experience.

The third key aspect to have attracted special attention had been, not surprisingly, the Miracle Question. This is generally considered to be one of the key elements of the SFBT model and is therefore, as already noted, included in the EBTA protocol. McKeel (1999) reports a qualitative study by Dine (1995) in which participants in a parental support group describe their experiences of interviews which included the use of the miracle question. Responses were divided into three categories - 'concrete' (e.g. a better home), 'relational' (e.g. closer relationships with an individual) and 'affective/emotional' (e.g. happier). All participants described themselves as being more hopeful about their situation following the use of the miracle question. In respect of how best to utilise the miracle question, Nau & Shilts (2000) analysed videotapes of sessions conducted by each of four recognised leading SFBT practitioners. They were able to draw tentative conclusions about how, and in what circumstances, the technique might be used to greatest effect. In direct contradiction with the assumed wisdom on the matter, however, Rosenberg (2000) describes work that suggests that the traditional form of miracle question is actually of little value to clients who are 'mandated'. This is a term used to describe clients who are not actively seeking help but, instead, attend therapy because others, in a position of power, have referred them and/or compelled them to do so. The standard miracle question, he argues, is actually inappropriate in such cases, because it ignores important motivational factors.

2.3.2 School Focused Research and Literature

A number of influential authors have also described the development and application of solution focused approaches in their own working practices with children. Some have featured group work (Banks 1999; Furman, Ahola, Birn & Terava 1999) while others have centred on individual interview. Because of the context of the present study, the latter have more relevance here. The approaches have not necessarily emerged from systematic research, and there are differences of view in some important areas. A brief review of some of the key descriptive accounts is included here because of their influence on the increasing use of SFBT with children, and in order to inform an initial model for the present study.

Selekman (1993), for instance, has developed an approach which is essentially solution focused but which also draws on methods associated with family systems work, his 'Solution-Oriented Brief Family Therapy' approach. This is an expansion of the Solution-Oriented Therapy model of O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis (1989), adapted for use with difficult adolescents but not restricted to school related problems. Selekman favours a flexible, rather than formulaic, model. He proposes guidelines as to a basic sequence in therapy, his 'Purposeful Systemic Interviewing' but also offers 'choice points', allowing for the incorporation of individual elements according to immediate need.

Another important writer and practitioner, whose school based methodology deviates from the EBTA notion of a 'pure' SFBT form is Metcalf (1995, 1999). Her methods are also informed by the model of O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis (1989), adapted to a school setting. In addition, she draws on the narrative ideas of White & Epston (1990) in developing her concept of 'Competency Based Conversations', which emphasise the importance and power of the language employed in interview and which are designed to

help students, as well as parents and teachers, to recognise that they have the personal resources for promoting positive change.

The work of Durrant (1995) was particularly influential in the early introduction of solution-focused methods into schools. Durrant proposes a 'Brief Interactional Approach'. The approach is underpinned by the view that school problems reflect patterns of social interaction, often coincidentally maintained by attempts at solution in such a way that they tend to escalate into vicious cycles that reinforce problem-focused assumptions on the part of those concerned. Crucially, however, all patterns of problem include examples of exceptions, when something different is happening and which can offer a lead toward solution. Because of this, it is not necessary to know what the problem is. Therapy can be undertaken successfully even when the therapist doesn't know the exact nature of the problem, or when there is disagreement about its origins. Durrant stresses the importance of 'Assessment of Competence' rather than what he regards as the traditional model of in-depth assessment of the problem. This position is strongly supported by Sklare (1997), who adds that removing the need for investigation of cause also shortens the time needed for counselling overall, an important consideration in a school setting.

In contrast, Murphy (1994, 1996, 1997, 2000) and Murphy & Duncan (1997) argue that school referrals are usually made following on from failed attempts to resolve difficulties. They suggest that it is important, therefore, to utilise information about such efforts in order to understand the students' 'theory of change'. This includes obtaining information specifically about their views on the nature and cause of a problem. Given the social constructionist position on a client's perceptions of a problem as 'reality' it should similarly be important to incorporate their perceptions of any potential for change within a new solution attempt. They do not see this exploration of the problem as undermining

the traditional position of the model, since the information obtained should simply help to avoid further cycles of failure and at the same time identify strengths, exceptions to the problem and circumstances which have previously promoted change. Furthermore, despite his seeming disagreement with the need for problem exploration, Durrant's (op cit) suggested process for initial assessment nevertheless does include the following elements:

- Describing the problem specifically and behaviourally
- Describing the interactional sequences around the problem
- Describing the previously attempted (and failed) solutions
- Describing the client's 'position', i.e. viewpoint on the problem

Whether or not a detailed problem description does take place, the search for exceptions with children seems to be universally accepted, in much the same way as is the case in clinical literature. The manner in which this is translated into action, however, appears to be more contested. Durrant (op cit), for example, favours the use of strategic intervention on the part of a therapist, employing a range of techniques derived from family therapy. Their inclusion in his model reflects the origins of the approach in ecosystemic work, with the assumption that a change in one part of the system ('doing something different') will inevitably lead to changes elsewhere. Further, Durrant believes that the balance of responsibility for change in this situation must lie with the professional adult. Both Selekman (1993) and Durrant, therefore, see directive intercession on the part of an adult as a fundamental element in their approach. This issue of whether a course of action should be prompted through adult guidance, or emerge entirely from the ideas of pupils, was considered to be one of the major questions for the current study and is returned to in the outline of the initial model in the next chapter. Regardless of the basis on which action is generated, however, Sklare

(1997) argues that it is simply the clear focus on goal directed activity that makes SFBT ideally suited to work in schools. Because of this, his model proposes that clear goals are established very early in the interview sequence, without problem exploration, and that pupils are then helped to prepare for the real life struggles towards success that they are likely to encounter between sessions.

Before moving on to consider the initial model adopted in the present study, one further important aspect of Sklare's work, not widely considered in SFBT literature but of potentially critical consequence here, is its clear recognition of the sometimes-difficult circumstances surrounding school referrals. He recognises and gives careful consideration to work involving 'involuntary' students, suggesting that the real customers in such situations are usually parents and/or teachers who want the student to be changed. The student is often not committed to the counselling process, and may be simply honouring or responding to a request or ultimatum. Murphy & Duncan (1997) also argue that students are usually referred because they *are* the problem, as perceived by adults. Very often the adult/teacher's version of the problem, and their desired outcomes, drives therapy. It is for this reason that they propose, in direct contrast with Sklare, that engaging students by considering the importance of *their* theories of change - informed by problem definition - is crucial to the successful outcome of SFBT intervention in schools.

Finally, at this point it is perhaps worth reflecting on the language used in SFBT, and in literature relating to schools. The discourses of schools, as outlined by Zimmerman & Beaudoin (2002), set the context for visiting practitioners such as EP's who work to support pupils described as presenting or experiencing difficulties. As noted in the last chapter, some of the alternative approaches to behavioural intervention - widely acknowledged as effective working practice - are founded on an assumed primacy of

within-pupil deficit. Much of the SFBT literature reviewed here also includes, perhaps unexpectedly, the use of categorical labels and terminology whose origins lie in very different discourses from the social constructionist position of SFBT. A number of research studies, for instance, report on the effectiveness of SFBT with problem 'types' such as 'depression' and 'schizophrenia' - clearly belonging to what might seem an incompatible reductionist, medical model. While this is not the place to engage in a detailed debate about the potential contradictions inherent in such practice, the issue needs to be raised because of the intention in this study of comparing the outcome and processes of the current study with findings elsewhere. These language conventions are used, therefore, where this is felt to be helpful.

The use of an SFBT model in schools, as with clinical applications, also requires at the very least a co-existence with sometimes-conflicting discourses, and reports of research undertaken in a school context will inevitably reflect the language of that institution to some extent. The discourse of discipline for instance, according to Zimmerman & Beaudoin (op cit), imparts a strong influence on school life and not surprisingly its language features in this discussion, along with the labelling terms of current government legislation – SEN, Learning Difficulties, EBSD etc. (DfES Code of Practice, 2001a). Some of those concepts that had a direct bearing on the study will receive further comment in the discussion chapter, later.

2.4 Summary

Studies involving SFBT have generally focused on two aspects of the approach. The first of these, outcome, concerns the evaluation of its effectiveness as a therapeutic approach. The second, process, has looked at technique within the SFBT model with a view to improving practice. For outcome studies in particular, there has been a certain amount of (continuing) pressure to 'demonstrate' effectiveness in clinical or medical

contexts, using a predominantly positivist methodology. This approach, however, conflicts with the view (Miller & Dingwall 1997; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000) that such methods are usually inappropriate and in practice can never be adequately applied in real life settings. Such a perspective has also led to the use of reductionist terminology in research reports and other literature, which appears incompatible with the social constructionist paradigm underpinning SFBT. In any event, simplistic outcome studies, it can be argued, do not fully address the questions of greatest interest and value to practitioners.

Nevertheless, some 'consumers' of SFBT research remain primarily interested in the pursuit of clearly evaluated effectiveness studies, although the whole question of measuring success in outcome studies is inevitably problematic. While a few of the early studies were in a position to employ multiple methods of data collection these were the exception, rather than the rule, and claims to effectiveness are based largely on client reports of satisfaction. This is not to suggest that such information has no validity. Indeed, a social constructionist viewpoint in relation to a context where clients request help would be that there is every reason to see these accounts of satisfaction as the most important gauge of effectiveness – and this was precisely the evidence base for the whole approach. In other contexts, however, such as those in which clients are not actively seeking help, this simplistic measure might be a less reliable indicator. In such circumstances, confirmatory evidence of effectiveness based on multiple sources is likely to have greater persuasive power, especially against a background of participatory and practitioner research.

Again, on the question of whether or not the approach is in fact brief, the apparently straightforward measure of number of sessions taken has also proven to be more complicated than might be anticipated, with data presented in research reports

frequently unclear. There are certainly indications that the approach might well be brief when set against its background origins in long-term psychotherapeutic work, although the study suggesting improved outcome with an increase in sessions is also worthy of note.

Even those studies seen as relatively rigorous cannot claim unqualified success. The data needs be treated with caution, at the very least because of potential vested interest. Inevitably, it is SFBT practitioners themselves who have conducted and reported their studies of the approach. In the broader context of their work, these practitioners have been striving to develop and actively promote SFBT as a better alternative to more 'traditional' psychotherapeutic approaches. As such the research literature on outcome seems heavily weighted in favour of 'successful' studies providing supportive evidence, and the potential for researcher bias needs to be acknowledged. Similarly, the reported research is notably lacking in discrepant case analysis. Given that, even where claims are made for overall success, for instance, there are often significant proportions (e.g. 30/40% - although the actual numbers can be quite small) of clients who do not achieve desired outcome this seems to be a notable omission. The threat of bias as a consequence of selecting data simply to fit a preconceived or ideal concept is something against which Silverman (1993) warns. Maxwell (1992) also emphasises the ethics of 'truth' in research, and a lack of account for unsuccessful outcome invites questions about the possibility of selective reporting and, therefore, of validity. Despite the problems of design and reporting, however, some outcome studies do offer encouraging results, as illustrated in particular in the review by Gingerich & Eisengart (1999). Some have also attempted to address the question of validity by taking key factors into account, such as the detailed description of methodology, triangulation of data and, where possible, use of controls. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to accept that

SFBT can be a *relatively* effective therapeutic approach, and it has certainly been applied across a wide range of settings.

Of at least equal importance to the question of outcome, especially for practitioners, are those relating to process, and to the ongoing refinement and development of the model within specific contexts. A number of important issues have been noted in this review of literature. Perhaps the most fundamental is whether the SFBT model should be flexible, with elements and techniques introduced in response to individual need, or else follow a more fixed pattern as recommended in the EBTA protocol and evidenced in much of the outcome research. Whichever approach is adopted, a further question concerns those elements that might be critical, if any. Goal setting and the use of scaling, for example, are generally recognised within research and descriptive literature as being central elements of SFBT. In contrast, research suggesting that the miracle question (arguably one of the defining characteristics of the approach) can actually be unhelpful is a direct challenge to widely held beliefs about its importance.

This review of literature has also referred to the fact that there is some disparity about other, fairly key, elements. Disagreement about whether or not to include 'tasks', for instance is clearly reflected in the descriptive accounts of child-focused models. It may of course be more helpful to consider no element as being necessarily crucial, but instead to shape patterns of engagement according to immediate need within a broad framework. It might even be prudent to maintain a willingness to incorporate techniques not normally associated with SFBT in its more popular format, as with the model proposed by Sagesse & Foley (2000) that offers alternative routes within a solution oriented framework. The inclusion of an opportunity to engage in extended problem talk, for example, would be viewed as a notable deviation from typical SFBT practice by many researchers and practitioners – with the potential to impede the generation of solutions.

On the other hand, in a situation where children are 'referred' by adults rather than volunteer themselves it might be counter productive to deny them an opportunity to present their own perspective on the nature of problems. Such arrangements for initial contact with pupils are acknowledged in some school-based literature, as are the difficulties of engagement inherent under them, and these were precisely the context of the present study. Importantly, they reflect conditions under which an EP might commonly expect to work.

Despite a growing interest in the approach by EP's, however, very little research on the use of SFBT with children and/or in schools in the U.K. had actually been reported prior to the current study. The small number of studies reported, by EP's and others, did seem to offer some grounds for optimism that the approach could actually be adapted to the current setting. Significantly, however, they all differed in some important contextual feature from those in which the present researcher would operate. Firstly, although some studies took place in U.K. comprehensive schools, none reported work with referred pupils, or pupils who were not pre-selected on the basis of likely cooperation. The pupils in these studies were not drawn from a population experiencing longstanding or extreme difficulties, unlike the probable group here. Secondly, where research had been undertaken by EP's, special adjustments to school systems had been negotiated beforehand. The reports give little indication of subsequent organisational difficulties. The present research would need to be set almost entirely within existing school systems. Compatibility, therefore, could not be assumed.

Finally, the models for individual intervention employed were fixed and predetermined, as variables within a research study. In contrast, the situation for the researcher here was that successful outcome for individual pupils must be the sole aim of intervention, with the research aspect a secondary consideration. Flexibility in the model would need

to be permitted, as circumstances dictated. This did not mean that the SFBT model employed should be entirely ad hoc. An initial model could be drawn up on the basis of the literature reviewed here, but taking into account parameters set by the situation, and the model developed and refined through the course of intervention. This initial model, and the rationale underpinning it, will now be described in the chapter which follows.

3. The Initial Model

The initial SFBT model of individual intervention adopted for this study will now be outlined. The model describes the intended structure and sequence at the outset of the study. In keeping with SFBT principles, it seemed important that the model should be evidence-based. Its format is therefore influenced by the conclusions of reported process research, and from the experiences reported in the body of literature of recognised practitioners. The model was also informed by the boundaries and demands of the context in which the research took place.

Before setting out the details of the model, a number of explanatory points should be made. The first is that the intention here was to develop a model that would be efficient as well as effective. An underlying principle, therefore, was the hypothesis noted earlier that the introduction of change into one part of an ecosystem can produce change elsewhere. This being the case, it ought to be possible to effect change by working exclusively with the pupils themselves. The second point, based on the SFBT principle that individuals should be assumed to possess the resources for change, was that all change should be pupil directed. A decision was made, therefore, that the concept of 'tasks', set by the researcher, would be excluded from the model. Thirdly, the point has already been made that the model should be flexible, and responsive to need, rather than formulaic. The present study was an attempt to develop a model relevant to the context, not to evaluate an imported model appropriate to other circumstances. Nevertheless, the model comprised a basic structure which could be reviewed in the light of experience and adjusted accordingly, and against which patterns of intervention could be compared for individuals.

The place of the following interview schedule within the overall procedures of the study will be described in the next chapter, Methodology. The model here relates specifically to a proposed sequence to be used in sessions with individual pupils, described in order.

The first and subsequent sessions are considered separately in order to provide some methodological structure, and to reflect apparently distinct phases in the process suggested in literature. The opening section of this chapter, therefore, focuses on the processes of the first session or interview with pupils. The second section deals with the planned sequences for subsequent sessions. Although this chapter describes details of the expected sequence covering the whole period of intervention, it was also anticipated that there would be some variation between sessions, dependent upon the progress of each individual case study. Sessions might not always include all of the elements described below, the sequence of presentation might vary, and certain elements might be omitted if this seemed to be in the best interests of pupils. Equally, it seemed inevitable that there would be setbacks, or unforeseen events, and these would need to be accommodated. Regardless of the stage of intervention, of course, the techniques of questioning and interaction are derived from fundamental SFBT principles and underpin the whole model. They would therefore be pertinent to every stage and employed throughout intervention.

3.1 First Session

The initial model proposed the following sequence:

Problem-free Talk

Sklare (1997) gives problem-free talk, the establishment of rapport through informal and non-threatening conversation, relatively little attention and sees it simply as a short social exchange in order to 'break the ice'. George, Iveson & Ratner (1990), on the other hand, suggest that it is particularly important to incorporate problem-free talk into a first

session, not only because it helps build rapport but also as it fulfils a social expectation which encourages clients to feel at ease in an artificial situation. Even so, they believe that this phase should be limited and seen as an opportunity to collect information about client strengths and the successful areas of their lives.

Based on their research into factors common to all successful therapeutic intervention Miller & Duncan (2000) put forward a much stronger case for the importance of rapport, suggesting that as much as 30% of all successful outcome variance can actually be accounted for by relationship factors such as caring, empathy and acceptance. If this perception of the alliance with the therapist can be so important with clients generally, then the importance to pupils who frequently find themselves at odds with adults at school might be even more critical. Their potential need for emotional support, and perhaps advocacy, is a matter that could not be ignored by a practitioner researcher. Such pupils - often involuntary and possibly resentful at being pushed into meeting the researcher – were likely to present as guarded, defensive, anxious and suspicious of adults they perceived as representing 'authority'. It seemed particularly important in this context therefore to spend some time reassuring, explaining and building up trust.

Problem Definition

While there is a clear emphasis on 'solution talk' in SFBT, Murphy & Duncan (1997) also see the first interview process as important in validating pupils' experience of the problem. It legitimises their concerns, acknowledges their efforts and demonstrates a belief in pupils and in their ability to resolve the problem. Durrant (1995), although noting the importance of describing the interactional sequences in a pattern of behaviour, warns that the act of asking questions about the history of the problem also has the potential to reinforce a focus on the problem and encourage a 'big problem' perspective. Selekman's (1993) work with adolescents, however, leads him to believe that in many cases there is

a very strong *need* for clients to talk about the problem and that they typically do not respond well to solution focused questioning alone.

Murphy & Duncan (1997) argue that it is important to discuss the problem, but in a purposeful way. They suggest that it is actually vital to ascertain pupils' 'theory of change'- based on their perceptions of the nature of the problem, of the manner in which this situation constitutes a problem, and of their experiences of previous attempts at solution. This systematic exploration of the pupil's perception of the world is important, as the eventual solutions will arise directly from this construct rather than from therapist advice. Given that, by definition, the pupils referred in this study would all have experienced some form of previous 'intervention', it seemed important to take the opportunity to explore pupils' theory of change here. Further, it might also be the case that the pupils concerned would have had a very different understanding of the referred problem from that of the teachers making the referral. It seemed important therefore to attempt to gain some appreciation of how pupils viewed a situation, but with a view to helping them decide what to do about a problem rather than discover why the situation had arisen and in a way that should help them retain control of that action. In addition, an effective model which did not require the researcher to use up time in meetings with teachers as well as with pupils might later be attractive to school personnel looking for more helpful ways of working with pupils. At the same time, information was still to be sought from teachers about the nature of problems as one aspect of measuring change. This information would be available to use with pupils if this seemed helpful.

Goal Setting

Murphy & Duncan (1997) make the following statement about determining overall goals:

'What teachers, parents and students want (from intervention) may be the single most important piece of information that can be obtained.' p 34

On the face of things, checking out what is wanted might be a fairly straightforward process, and the clinical studies with self-referred cases seem to confirm this. Overall goals are typically agreed as a result of initial questions such as:

- 'What is the reason you have come to see me?'
- 'What will have to happen as a result of you coming here that will tell you that you no longer need to see me?'

The researcher's previous experience in this school, however, indicated that there was often a great deal of confusion over the issue in the circumstances in which pupils were brought to his attention by teachers. Furthermore, in order to even begin to set goals, pupils would need to be motivated to cooperate with the interview procedures being proposed by the researcher. This motivation, or the sometimes-apparent lack of it in work with involuntary pupils, is something which would need to be taken into account in the initial model. Both Sklare (1997) and Durrant (1995) stress the need to consider the position of a pupil in relation to a particular problem along the visitor-customer dimension (de Shazer 1985). They suggest that referred pupils often present as lacking in motivation, and understandably so. If a pupil is to become actively engaged in solution building then this can only be achieved through his/her assuming the customer viewpoint, and wanting to do something about what they perceive as the 'problem'.

Sklare (op cit) offers a number of practical techniques which he claims can be helpful in encouraging confused or reluctant pupils to become motivated to set what he calls overall goals at this point. He also suggests ways of helping turn negative goals, e.g. 'To stop getting into trouble' into positive and achievable targets. Sklare stresses the critical importance of establishing clear, well defined goals if intervention is to be effective. Indeed, he suggests, the identification of clear goals in the first session is the best single

predictor of effective outcome in therapy. Further, the more concrete and behaviourally specific the goals the quicker the pupils make progress because describing desired behaviours for them enables them to envision what is possible for them. The goals should be stated as the presence of a behaviour, he argues, and they should also be framed as a pupil's responsibility ('What will you be doing?').

The clear setting of goals seemed then, on the basis of others' work in schools, to be a crucial element for inclusion in an initial model for this research study. Hopefully, of course, taking account of a pupil's views in setting targets should represent little difference from the already established practice of the researcher. What was different with this SFBT model, however, was that targets would be determined *solely* on pupil perceptions of a problem and on their desired outcomes - regardless of the views of teachers. On this latter point Murphy & Duncan (1997) make the observation that what pupils really want out of intervention is often either assumed or overlooked. Indeed, they propose that practitioners' inattention to the pupils' desires and/or the 'theoretical imposition' of pupils' goals by adults is frequently the cause of 'intervention failure'.

Miracle Question

As noted earlier this technique features almost universally in descriptions of SFBT, and is considered a defining element by the EBTA protocol. In perhaps its standard form the miracle question is phrased

'Suppose when you go to sleep tonight a miracle happens and the problems that brought you here today are solved. But since you are asleep, you don't know the miracle has happened until you wake up tomorrow. What will be different tomorrow that will tell you that the miracle has happened?'

(de Shazer, 1988, p.94)

The main claim for this technique is that it enables clients, who might previously have been immersed in problem details, to visualise how an ideal solution might look and to be able to describe the hypothetical situation in detail. Sklare (1997) sees the use of the miracle question with pupils as very important, and as a major route to helping them establish meaningful goals. He believes that it magnifies and expresses 'minute glimpses' of solutions, which are not always apparent, particularly with children. Although he acknowledges that troubled school pupils can often respond to the question with negative or non-specific replies, he also believes that techniques can be utilised to help rephrase and reshape responses into descriptions of potentially positive outcomes.

While Sklare and many others see the miracle question as one of the core elements of SFBT, some doubts have nevertheless been expressed as to its importance. Rosenberg (2000). Murphy & Duncan (1997) describe it simply as a possible prompt for helping pupils to clarify goals rather than as a critical feature. As with the 'change focused therapy' of Miller, Hubble & Duncan (1996) and Miller, Duncan & Hubble (1997) they place emphasis on the need to identify a picture which represents a potential solution but do not view the miracle question as being necessarily essential to this process. The critical factor is the constructed picture. The means to achieving this, for them, can simply be the identification of 'exceptions' (below) with or without the use of the miracle question.

On balance it was decided that, for the purposes of this study, the miracle question should be incorporated into the initial model, partly because its importance to the majority of leading practitioners and also because it might make comparison with other studies more feasible.

Exceptions

The identification of exceptions is another technique which is generally accepted as fundamental to SFBT, usually used in conjunction with the miracle question. The premise on which the utilisation of exceptions is based is that asking clients about times when a problem isn't a problem, or is less so, is usually more helpful than asking about the times when it is. The purpose of this is to discover when, and in what ways, the solution is already in action so that a client might 'do more of what works'. It is assumed to be easier to build on what is already going well than it is to 'fix' what is going badly.

Sklare (1997) proposes that once a hypothetical picture of success has been developed and magnified through the miracle question, the next step is to look for instances when some facet of pupils' miracles has already happened – when some aspect of the pupils' goals are being attained or when the problem is less severe or absent altogether. This acknowledging and reinforcing of instances when the pupils' behaviour has led to success should help them recognise their own resources, responsibilities and strengths. In addition, it offers an experience of feeling empowered to change things. This process is typically ignored in problem focused approaches, according to Sklare, who holds a firm belief that all pupils experience times when they are being successful or not encountering the identified problem, even when their immediate perceptions suggest otherwise. As de Shazer (1991) also notes in his clinical work,

' Even for the client, times when the problem is absent are dismissed as trivial or even remain completely unseen, hidden from the client's view'

(p.58)

In relation to school settings, Sklare (op cit) suggests a search for one class, for instance, in which a pupil is achieving followed by reflection on how the pupil is *making* this happen. Such an approach seemed very much appropriate to the present setting, where the implications of the researcher's previous experiences in the school were that pupils might well be described as 'problems' by referring teachers but actually be described in contrary terms by others. Typically, however, the only views presented were those of staff experiencing difficulties, with positive comments not heard or sought. At this point in contact with pupils, however, the aim was to help them identify situations which they might recognise as being more successful than others, consider the nature of the differences between them, and ultimately move towards reproducing their personal successes more widely. Certainly, the views of pupils on areas of success were unlikely to be overtly represented by referring teachers. It was critically important, therefore, to help them identify situations which they might recognise as relatively successful. Once defined, they would then be in a position to consider the nature of the differences between them, and ultimately move towards reproducing their personal successes more widely.

In order to promote some degree of consistency in what seemed likely to be a critical stage in the model, and because its structure should coincidentally facilitate comparative analysis, it was decided to address the exploration of exceptions using three techniques from Murphy & Duncan's '5 E method' (1997), as follows:

- ***Eliciting*** – This refers to the process already described, whereby exceptions are initially agreed. Murphy & Duncan suggest that it is common for those involved in school problems to view them as constant and unchanging and so it is seen as important to be prepared to spend some time on this identification process. The language used throughout the exploration of exceptions is seen to be particularly influential, and at this stage an open form of questioning is suggested, such as

- 'Tell me about a time whenhas already happened'
 - 'When did a small part of it happen?'
 - 'How close have you come to..?'
- **Elaborating** – As with the miracle question, the elaboration of detailed descriptions of exceptions through the prompting and probing of the therapist is seen to help a pupil recognise the circumstances and those aspects of behaviour which contribute to the success. de Shazer's (1991) 'What else..?' characterises the routine. This careful and comprehensive analysis of the 'picture', noting the features of success, helps make the vision more concrete for the pupil and at the same time intensifies the feelings of achievement and realism.
- **Empowering** – Helping pupils to *own* the exception is considered to be one of the keys to successful outcome. Murphy & Duncan (1997) stress the importance of pupils believing that they have the resources with which to influence and exert control over situations that they would like to change, commenting that the reverse perception is often the case in pupils who find themselves at odds with the school institution. Using phrases such as
 - 'How do/did you manage to do that....in a particular lesson?'
 - 'What did you do differently that time?'
 encourages pupils to appreciate that *they* can influence a pattern of interaction, and promotes understanding of how they might do this. Helping pupils to explore exceptions in this way, and acknowledging and praising their achievement, also demonstrates a clear belief by an adult in the pupils' resources and strengths.

Scaling

Scaling was employed in this study both as an element of the intervention itself, and as a means of obtaining a measure of change. Scaling represents Murphy & Duncan's (1997) fourth E – Evaluation. They see the use of simple rating scales in first sessions with pupils as further highlighting and emphasising exceptions, as well as providing a baseline measure. In subsequent sessions it enables pupils to determine where they are in terms of goals they have set. Scaling questions in a first session would usually take the form:

‘On a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 means how you want things to be and 0 means the worst things have been, where would you say you are now?’

The answers to scaling questions are completely self-referenced and do not relate to external criteria, although their value as one measure of effectiveness was considered important here.

Action Planning

This final phase of the first session was intended to determine small, manageable and realistic steps towards the identified overall target. Sklare (1997) refers to ‘goaling’, and Murphy & Duncan (op cit) to their fifth E – the Expanding of exceptions, either in terms of frequency or extent. Again, the idea of describing and elaborating a ‘picture’ of this next step towards solution is stressed, utilising the scales with questions such as

‘If you are now at 4 on the scale, what would 5 look like? What would you be doing? What would your teacher be doing?’

Once this is established the next question becomes

‘What will you need to do to get to 5? How can you get there?’

The emphasis here is on pupils identifying and developing strategies which they control and can employ as they work towards targets which they themselves have set. This might involve 'doing more of what works', or 'doing something different.' Although in a sense these became between-session tasks they were not of the type described earlier in relation to systemic clinical practice, in which they are determined by the therapist and therefore represent a form of directed intervention. The tasks here were generated entirely by the pupils, in the form of their own action plan.

Having agreed strategies to try, the final step was to be what Sklare (op cit) describes as 'Identifying and Overcoming Obstacles to Success'. This involves acknowledging that circumstances or events beyond the pupil's control might act against the next step being achieved, or at least make it difficult to attain, and attempting to recognise what they might be. Once these potential obstacles have been identified, further planning or rehearsal of strategies to overcome them can take place.

3.2 Subsequent Sessions

The anticipated structure of the model beyond the initial interview, up to the point of disengagement, relies primarily on the work of Sklare (op cit). He uses the acronym 'EARS' to describe what he considers a regular and predictable sequence:

- **Eliciting** what is better or different, identifying signs of success or improvement since the first or previous session.
- **Amplifying**, a process similar to Murphy & Duncan's (1997) elaborating in which the details of improvement or change are described in detail. In addition, however, the notion of 'reciprocity' is introduced at this stage. This involves a

systemic consideration of any noted effects of planned changes in the pupils' behaviour on the behaviour of others, for example teachers. Although insight is generally agreed not to be a prerequisite for successful outcome with SFBT it is anticipated that pupils might begin to develop a greater appreciation of the effects that their own behaviour can have upon others and on interactions with them.

- **Reinforcing**, a parallel of empowering or emphasising the role of the pupil in achieving change, by using questions such as
 - 'How did you do manage to do that?'
 - 'What was different that time?'

The importance of empowering at this stage is stressed by Lambert & Bergen (1994), who found a strong correlation between the maintenance of change and the extent to which clients attributed this change to their own efforts. de Shazer's (1991) preferred term for this is 'blaming the client.' Sklare (1997) also refers to such questions as 'mind mapping' because of the intention of helping pupils to 'see' what they have achieved and how they have done this, which then encourages them to feel more able to take control of their own situations.

- **Starting over again**, checking for other signs of change - 'What else is different?'
- **Scaling** which, as already noted, provides a means of rating progress towards targets.

Following on from this sequence the process should then revert to Action Planning, a feature common to every interview, before concluding with an arrangement to meet again.

3.3 Summary

The initial model proposed at the outset of this research study was characterized by a number of key features:

- A flexible approach would be employed, rather than a rigid and formulaic structure.
- Intervention should involve only the pupils.
- Pupils would determine all action; the researcher would not introduce tasks.
- Problem talk would not be ruled out.
- Pupils' theories of change would be investigated.
- Goal setting, the miracle question, exception finding, scaling and action planning would be included, as well established SFBT techniques.

The chapter that now follows outlines the overarching research methodology, and the place of the interview schedule which is embodied in the above model will be set out.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

The literature review concluded that there were three important factors relevant to the present situation that had not previously been addressed by SFBT research undertaken in schools in the U.K. These were

- the models used had tended to be formulaic and predetermined
- the pupils involved were not perceived as presenting extreme difficulties
- the compatibility of SFBT with regular school systems.

These issues, therefore, formed the basis of the research questions (Outcome and Process) for the present study:

- a) What might constitute the most appropriate, but flexible, SFBT model for use in supporting pupils who have experienced exclusions from school (Process)?
- b) Could the situations in which these pupils found themselves be improved, and further exclusions prevented, using individual interview sessions (Outcome)?
- c) To what extent would such a model be compatible with existing school systems and organisation, and with typical educational psychology service delivery (Process)?

The present study therefore represented an attempt to simultaneously develop and evaluate a SFBT model, in this unique setting.

4.2 Research Design

This section will consider factors felt to be pertinent to decision making about the research design adopted for the present study. The appropriateness of a qualitative paradigm will be discussed first, followed by consideration of the potential value of the Action Research model in particular.

4.2.1 Qualitative Paradigm

As noted already, a major issue in SFBT research has been the question of appropriate methodology. Because a large proportion of SFBT studies have been strongly influenced by their context in the medical world, with its associated positivist research framework, this has restricted the extent of research into process. It has even left some lack of confidence among researchers themselves about the validity of outcome studies undertaken within what are, inevitably, poor approximations to experimental design. A parallel is drawn by McLeod (2001) who is critical of the fact that counselling research generally has largely been driven by the pressure to build up legitimacy through the evaluation of clinical effectiveness. Such research has been dominated by the methods of inquiry used within disciplines such as psychiatry, including diagnostic categories and experimental design. He cites the adoption by the National Health Service in Britain of a policy of 'evidence-based treatment' and clinical trials (Roland & Goss, 2000), even in the mental health field, in support of this claim. This positivist framework encourages a view of the client as 'ill' and as a passive recipient of 'treatment'.

In a similar vein, but from the perspective of educational settings, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) argue that the true purpose of the study of 'social reality' is to attempt to understand the way in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves. Positivism, they suggest, wrongly finds itself regarding human behaviour as passive, determined and controlled. The more researchers attempt to control and simplify variables, the more trivial and unreal the findings become, with little

relevance for practitioners. Hammersley (1993) has also highlights what he sees as the irrelevance of conventional research methods to educational issues, and their lack of validity in the classroom. Silverman (1997) likewise argues that studies conducted in real life situations will inevitably be fluid and changing rather than reflect the more static and controlled conditions of the laboratory. The school in which the present study was to be conducted, a complex and evolving institution with significant changes in organisation actually being implemented during the period of study, was certainly an example of an unpredictable setting.

Aside from the dynamics of the setting itself, other particular features of the present study illustrate the inappropriateness of the quantitative research paradigm. One of the most pressing was, perhaps, simply the actual definition and measurement of a concept of 'behaviour'. Guba & Lincoln (1994) question any notion of 'ontological objectivity' in connection with human interaction, asserting that

'People's constructions are not more or less "true" in any sense' (p. 10)

Within the context of a complex organisation such as a secondary school, with almost one hundred teachers and one and a half thousand pupils, there was the potential for immense variation in perceptions - dependent on factors such as individuals' own values, experiences and expectations. Compounding this was the fact that perceived behaviour would then be subjected to interpretation, not only in terms of visible action but also against a judgemental frame of reference – personal, institutional and cultural. Silverman (1997) refers to the need to attend to this social construction of meaning in real life studies, rather than view the social world as if it were a hard, external and objective reality. SFBT, importantly, assumes precisely this stance and an appropriate research paradigm would need to reflect the position, even in the evaluation of outcome.

A further issue for the current study was that the proposed intervention was not to be a rigid procedure, applied consistently across all cases irrespective of individual pupil differences or circumstance. A view does exist among some SFBT researchers, referred to already and represented in the EBTA protocol for instance, that studies lack validity unless certain key model components are present – a position strongly refuted by McLeod (2001). The initial model as outlined would require an alternative approach to research, but was felt to be a more faithful reflection of the fundamental principles that should underpin practice. Here, the specific details of operation were to be determined by the ongoing and immediate needs of the pupils and their situations in school. As a consequence the particular elements to be included, or their sequence of presentation, might be markedly different for individual pupils.

Even though the researcher might be actively involved in shaping the intervention process, however, account would still need to be taken of other factors influencing outcome. Given the circumstances of this study - pupils and teachers experiencing genuine, immediate and distressing difficulties – the idea of even attempting to establish control groups who might receive no intervention, and therefore no support, would be unethical and professionally irresponsible. While an alternative, the use of a comparison group might have been considered (particularly in view of the EBTA position) this would have been impractical because of numbers. Extending still further beyond the research design, are what Verma & Mallick (1999) refer to as 'intervening ' and 'extraneous' variables, which they believe can have a hidden but significant impact on measured outcomes in educational research. In a situation where each individual pupil might be taught by ten or more different teachers, a researcher would be powerless to eliminate the effects of, for example, social and environmental influences on behaviour within school boundaries, let alone from outside. Even the researcher himself would not be

disengaged from the ongoing processes of interaction – a situation directly at odds with the notion of experimental impartiality.

An alternative to inappropriate, and ultimately futile, attempts to impose artificial experimental constraints on social situations is the employment of a methodology more consistent with the needs of both researcher and researched. Qualitative inquiry (Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Coffey & Coffey, 1996; Scott & Usher, 1999) offers such a framework, and is described by Denzin & Lincoln (1994) as

'.. involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.'

and as

'...attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.'

(p.2)

Rather than fit the concern to a rigid methodology, they suggest that qualitative researchers should use whatever methods appear to be most relevant for answering the questions arising from the context in which they are located, an approach described by Goss & Mearns (1997) as 'methodological pluralism' or 'mixed methods'. Eisner (1998) agrees that qualitative inquiry should be multi-method in focus, and does not rule out the use of quantification if this is the most appropriate means of describing the important aspects of a situation. He also outlines what he considers the six most important features of good qualitative study:

- It is field focused.
- It employs the self as the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it.
- It involves interpretation by the researcher and those involved in a situation in describing and meaning to experiences.
- Expressive language is used, reflecting personal feeling, presence and empathy.

- Attention is given to particulars rather than to establishing or demonstrating general relationships.
- It becomes believable because of its coherence, insight and Instrumental utility - its aim is persuasion rather than demonstrable significance.

Further criteria for judging qualitative research are provided by Mertens (1998), in her comparison with those of quantitative methodology. She proposes (after Guba & Lincoln, 1989) the following dimensions:

- **Credibility** (replacing the concept of internal validity) – Credibility aims to demonstrate that the inquiry has been undertaken in a manner which ensured that the subject of the study was accurately identified and described. Credibility is enhanced by features such as: negative case analysis; researchers monitoring their own developing constructions through the use of diaries; triangulation of data showing consistency of evidence across multiple sources.
- **Transferability** (corresponding to external validity or generalisability) - Bloor (1997) suggests that one of the principle reasons why validation in the study of human behaviour is an inappropriate pursuit is that it cannot be achieved through subsequent replication is that identical social circumstances can never be recreated. Instead, Mertens (op cit) argues, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make a judgement about similarity and or the potential for transfer to their own setting. This requires extensive and carefully set out detail, using such techniques as 'thick description' and 'purposive sampling' (Schofield, 1993).
- **Reliability** - Within a positivist paradigm this means stability over time. With a constructivist framework change is expected, but should be well-documented and publicly inspectable.

- **Dependability** - It should be possible to track qualitative data to its sources, and the logic used to interpret the data made explicit.
- **Authenticity** – This refers to the importance of presenting a balanced view of all perspectives.

As Silverman (1997) asserts, then, the use of qualitative methodology as the most suitable means of studying the complexities of a real life situation does not rule out objectivity and rigour, determined by the purposes of the research. Silverman believes that what is important is integrity, and that the standard for qualitative studies should be the standard for any good research - namely that researchers demonstrate what they claim and that the research problem tackled has theoretical and/or practical significance.

Given the general appropriateness of a qualitative paradigm in the study of human interaction, the next question becomes one of determining a framework consistent with the research questions of concern, and their context. In the particular context of education, Verma & Mallick (1999) make the distinction between what they call 'basic' and 'applied' research. The former might have no direct practical relevance but applied research, by contrast, is often designed to solve specific problems or to provide information of immediate use. They see two of the major methodologies of applied educational investigation as being action research and evaluative research. In fact, the research questions set out at the beginning of this chapter involve two parallel components, outcome and process. McLeod (2001) uses the terms 'verification' and 'discovery' in respect of studies aimed at simultaneous evaluative but explorative development of approaches to intervention with individuals. Action research, according to Altrichter, Posch & Somekh (1993) provides a framework which is particularly suited to accommodating such dual foci in an applied educational setting, and was the framework chosen to guide the present study. Its main features are set out below.

4.2.2 Action Research

Action research is frequently employed in school settings with a view to increasing professional understanding and, at the same time, improving the immediate experiences of pupils. The research and action processes are integrated and, because of this, the approach is often utilised by practitioner researchers. Kemmis & McTaggart (1988), Taylor (1994) and Kemmis (1993) argue that it is an essential characteristic of action research that it provides a way of working which links theory and practice - what they term 'ideas in action'. McNiff (1988) also acknowledges the dual aims of action research in suggesting that it is pursued out of an immediate desire or need to improve educational knowledge and practices. Elliott (1991) describes action research as

'..the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it.....the validity of the 'theories' or hypotheses it generates depends not so much on 'scientific' tests of truth, as on their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skilfully. In action research "theories" are not validated independently and then applied to practice. They are validated through practice.'

(p.6)

In defining action research in this way, Elliott clearly stresses that it does not represent the positivist view of research but emphasises the relevance of its intention to real life situations. He also alludes to the importance of systematic and self-evaluative inquiry and the build up of a body of knowledge, even if its development follows a narrow and situational focus. The framework has been successfully employed by EP's working circumstances similar to the conditions of the present study, illustrated for example by Burden (1997).

The general features of action research as applied in an educational setting are summarised by Altrichter, Posch & Somekh (1993):

- Action research is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched. Often this involves a practitioner researcher in a process of developing greater understanding of personal and professional practice through systematic study.
- It starts from practical questions arising from everyday educational work. It aims to develop both the practical situation and the knowledge about the practice of the participants. Because action research tends to be localised and small scale, however, the scope for change is often limited.
- It must be compatible with the educational values of the school and the work conditions of the researchers, and these often impose boundaries on the research.
- Action research offers a range of simple methods and strategies for researching and developing practice. The methods employed are aimed at what is achievable without disrupting practice. It is characterised by a continuing attempt to interlink, relate and confront action and reflection.

(p.22)

The action research approach is not without potential weakness, of course. Robson (1993) suggests that the first of these is its potential lack of rigour, although the concepts of credibility, reliability addressed earlier (Mertens, 1998) would apply to action research in the same way as to other qualitative methodologies. Two others, the possibility that practitioners' understandings of their own situations may be partial or distorted, and that relationships can place restraints on inquiry, are specifically related to the question of practitioner researchers – and also apply to applied educational research more generally.

In the present situation the researcher was also the EP involved directly in the intervention with the pupils. This situation, whereby a researcher acts simultaneously in another capacity, does raise particular issues in terms of credibility. Biott (1996), for

instance, suggests that conflict can arise over identity at a personal, professional and researcher level. Atkinson (1994) similarly describes her experiences as a teacher-researcher and the tensions generated, for example, between an obligation to adhere to rigid methodology and her professional experience suggesting she should be more responsive to newly arising or recognised pupil need.

On the other hand, Robson (1993) also recognises the advantages of the practitioner researcher as being:

- 'insider opportunities' - the idea of a pre-existing or tacit knowledge and experience base.
- 'practitioner opportunities' - implementation of action can be easier to achieve.
- 'practitioner research synergies' - practitioner role and insights can help in making the design, carrying out and analysis of studies more relevant.

Manion & Morrison (2000), on the question of practitioner 'inside knowledge' versus 'outside objectivity' argue that the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated - by the researcher sharing the frames of reference of the participants. In so far as the present study was concerned, the researcher was based in the school for a large part of the time, and therefore enjoyed a level of insider knowledge. At the same time, however, he was not a regular member of school staff or employed in the same professional capacity as anyone else in the school and had regular access to supervision elsewhere. It was felt, therefore, that it should be possible to act in a relatively independent manner compared with a teacher-researcher arrangement.

In terms of procedure, the approach incorporates a cycle of planning, action and data analysis, followed by evaluation of results and process. Elliott (1991) offers a detailed

and structured model of the action research process, involving cycles of activity.

Typically the following elements would be included:

- ***Identifying and clarifying the initial idea.*** Here the situation or state of affairs one wishes to improve upon or change is established.
- ***Reconnaissance*** or fact-finding analysis. At this stage the situation as it stands is described as fully as possible, helping to clarify the exact nature of the problem. An attempt may also be made to generate initial hypotheses, which might guide action.
- ***Constructing the general plan.*** This will include a revised statement of the general idea, based on the information gathered, and an outline of the action steps proposed.
- ***Implementing the first action step,*** or perhaps a series of small steps.
- ***Monitoring the effects.*** This may also include further reconnaissance.
- ***Revising the general idea and amending plans for subsequent action steps.***

This moves the process into a new cycle of action and monitoring.

Action research, then, offered a framework very much suited to the setting and conditions of this study, and to the research questions identified. The terms outcome/process and verification/discovery have already been used to reflect dual purpose. Verma & Mallick (1999) similarly refer to 'formative' and 'summative' evaluation. Formative studies, they suggest, gather information about programmes while they are in progress, so that data can be used to modify and improve these as they progress. Summative evaluation is designed to measure the effectiveness of a programme on completion. Robson (1993) prefers process and outcome evaluation, the terms adopted here, where process concerns itself with systematic study of what actually happens in the course of a programme. It can be used to complement the

information obtained through measuring the extent to which a programme has achieved its objectives, by shedding light on possible causal links. Thus the action research framework should lend itself to the development of an SFBT model appropriate to its context, and at the same time permit some ongoing, systematic evaluation of its impact.

As noted earlier, the current study was set in the context of ongoing project work in the school that was now in its final year. One implication of this was that previous phases of the project had already served to inform the initial two stages of Elliott's (1991) model, so that this study effectively began at the 'construction of a general plan'. In terms of Elliott's notion of reconnaissance, the collection and analysis of data from the two preceding years of school intake by the researcher suggested that a small number of pupils, typically between ten and fifteen in total, were likely to experience and/or present difficulties beyond a first academic term of 'settling in'. These pupils were also likely to have experienced problems during Year 6, at primary school. Given their young age and the circumstances in which they now found themselves they were, not surprisingly, perceived as particularly vulnerable. They also represented a very different population from that of other SFBT studies reported to date in the U.K. The intention was to continue with the research through a period of approximately one term, using primarily a case study approach. Given the intended flexibility of the SFBT model, each case study was to be treated as a smaller scale action research sequence, contributing to a wider multiple case study research, beginning and ending at different times and involving different levels of direct contact with the researcher.

Case study methodology has its own potential problems, however. Verma & Mallick (1999), for example, note the issue that, because case study methodology often has a clinical basis, the resultant information is frequently confidential and so cannot be evaluated by other researchers. Another disadvantage is that the cases presented in

such research have the potential to be unrepresentative of a population, so that only very limited generalisations, if any, can be made – a point already dealt with here in respect of qualitative inquiry as a whole. The limited number of subjects available in the present study did, instead, offer the advantage of potential in-depth evaluation of both outcome and process, using multiple methods of data collection at both individual and group level. Case studies also allow for interactive process exploration and explanation in a way in which other methods do not. As such, Robson (1993) believes, the case study is a research strategy with its own designs and not a flawed experimental design.

In treating each individual case as a form of action research project, using a flexible SFBT model, decisions about the details of an intervention would be based on what Atkinson (1994) calls 'pragmatic solutions', which must work for the individual child and arise out of contact with that child. They are often prompted by pragmatic need and require almost instant and intuitive action. Such 'mini-cycles' were anticipated here, since the primary purpose of involvement by the researcher with the pupils was to offer help at a critical period in their school lives, rather than in the interests of research. The group of pupils included in the project were not selected as such by the researcher, although they might be seen as constituting what Robson (1993) refers to as a 'purposive sample'. The research concerned itself, therefore, with real issues in the lives of individuals.

4.3 Research Method

This section describes what is termed here the research method. This comprises information relating to pupil selection, followed by an outline of the overall procedures within which individual interview sessions and data collection took place.

4.3.1 Pupils

The pupils were from Year 7. They were initially identified by the Year Manager and/ SENCO, who judged them as in need of additional support. The school had set no specific criteria for referral to the project. Instead, decisions were based on a combination of historical information from the pupils' primary schools, and on informal review of how they had settled into their new school over the first half term. In practice, the pupils had a history of exclusion at primary school, had by now been excluded at least once in their first term at secondary school, and were considered at risk of further exclusions. Parental consent for inclusion in the project was obtained by the school. Between October and December twelve pupils were referred, ten boys and two girls. One boy was not seen, as his parents subsequently withdrew consent. The fact that the researcher was not involved in this decision making ensured impartiality in the selection process.

4.3.2 Procedure

In keeping with the action research framework, Fig. 1 (over) outlines the intended procedures for the case studies, each contributing to the overall evaluation cycle. It was, however, anticipated that practical limitations and demands, as well as decisions made on the basis of ongoing evaluation, might introduce some variation.

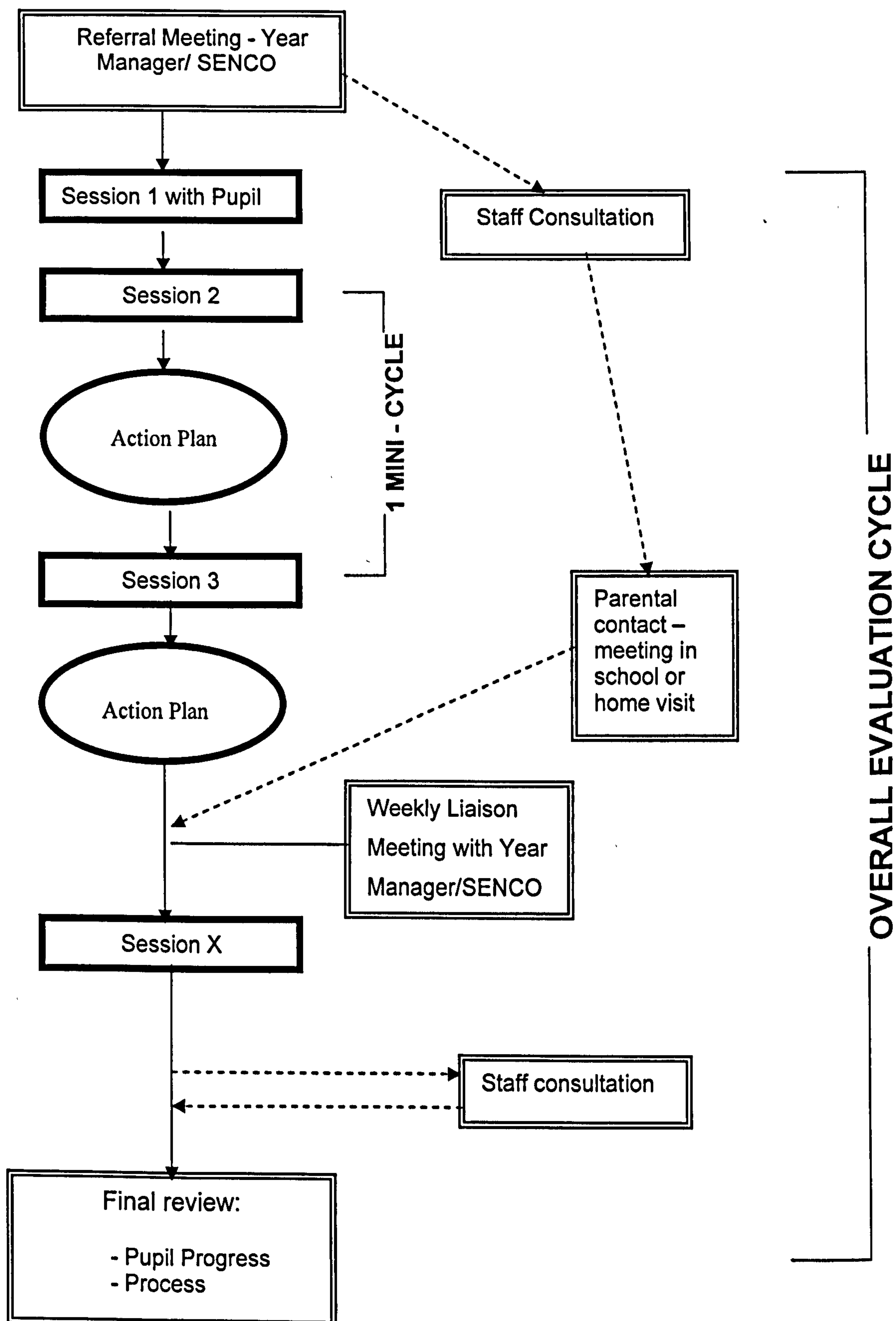


Fig. 1 - Procedures Flowchart

4.3.2.1 Initial Teacher/Parent Consultation

The aim of this study was to develop and simultaneously evaluate a model which would support pupils in reaching the best possible outcome for identified problems. Because of its roots in social constructionism, the primary measure of outcome for SFBT is typically self-report, with the technique of scaling used as a means of comparison over time. The term 'effectiveness', therefore, might be more appropriately replaced with 'satisfaction with outcome' and this in turn determined predominantly by pupils – one reason why independent observations would have been meaningless in this study- and so the information from pupil ratings is considered in detail in the next section. Within the context of a school, however, logic also suggests that teacher perceptions are likely to carry at least, and perhaps considerably more, influence in evaluation of outcome. It would be in the personal interests of the pupils concerned, therefore, if some consensus over the matter were achieved. Furthermore, confirmatory data from sources other than the pupils themselves would enhance the credibility of this study, as noted above.

Referring to Fig.1, then, all staff who had regular contact with the pupils were consulted on their perceptions of any problems they had experienced in their own work with individuals, using a questionnaire (Appendix 1). In an attempt to maintain a balance between research and intervention, the questionnaire had two purposes. The first of these was to ask teachers to offer their assessments of pupils' behaviour on a scale of 0 – 10, where 10 represented the behaviour of 'most other' pupils in a class and a rating of 1 behaviour considered extremely untypical; they were also invited to express a view about possible causes of difficulty, or to provide some indication as to their own 'theories of change' Secondly, they were also asked to comment on pupil strengths and on strategies which they had found helpful. Even though the focus of intervention was to be the direct work with pupils, it was hoped that introducing solution focused language in this way might influence teachers' perceptions of individual pupils and their interactions

with them by drawing attention to pupil strengths, and to their own previous experiences of exceptions or successful management of the problem situations concerned. In addition, both the process and the data provided by teachers should contribute towards an assessment of the practicalities for an EP of using a SFBT approach in the context of school systems – the third research question.

The researcher contacted parents/carers early in the cycle of involvement and arrangements made to meet with them. The importance of responsible professional practice in relation to parental rights, as well as the efficacy of home-school liaison, has been well documented (DfES, 2001a; Long, 1988; Gupta, Stringer & Meaken, 1990). In the present circumstances it seemed equally valuable simply to ascertain parental perceptions of if the situations in which their children now found themselves. Even if these were not to be acted on directly, they could at least contribute to a 'thick description' of background context. The fact that all parents opted for a home visit rather than meet in school is in itself, perhaps, important information about context. These visits took place at some time during the course of intervention with the pupils. Consent was confirmed, they were offered the opportunity to raise concerns and were given information about the researcher's role as EP. The visits were not conducted as formal interviews, although permission was obtained to make brief notes. Parents were invited to contact the researcher at any time, and were informed that contact would be made again after a number of sessions with their child.

4.3.2.2 Individual Pupil Sessions

Arrangements were made through the Year 7 Manager for the pupils concerned to be withdrawn from a lesson in order to participate in an initial interview/session with the researcher. This, and all subsequent sessions were conducted in the researcher's office, in the main school building. Each lesson period lasted fifty minutes.

Although there were differences in the number, frequency and content of later sessions, the overall process followed a similar sequence – the initial model described in the last chapter was the guiding reference at the onset of involvement with pupils. For the purposes of outlining overall procedure the first, second and subsequent sessions are explained separately here:

Session 1

This session was used largely as an introductory interview, and always included the following elements:

a) Information Sharing

- An explanation of who the researcher was; his role as EP in the school; checking the pupil's understanding of why he/she had been asked to meet the researcher and willingness to continue with the session.
- Description of what might be included in future sessions, i.e. discussion, planning together to improve their situation at school.
- Explanation that the EP would also speak with parents and teachers about school.
- Assurances about confidentiality and permission to make agreed summary notes of sessions for joint future use.
- An opportunity for pupils to ask questions of the EP about concerns they might have.

b) Confirmation of willingness to attend further sessions

c) Planning further sessions - based on negotiation with pupils about preferences, although the researcher needed to be wary of issues such as pupils missing the same lesson more than once. Copies of the pupils' timetables were subsequently used, and each session shaded as it took place. Agreement was made that the researcher would

meet pupils at the beginning of a designated lesson period, having meanwhile obtained permission from the teacher concerned.

Session 2

- a) Permission to audiotape sessions was checked. This idea was considered potentially too threatening to introduce in the first session, and would not have been suggested at all if the pupil appeared uncomfortable with the researcher. Consent was sought to use some aspects of the sessions anonymously as research, to inform the process of help being offered to others who might experience difficulties in school. No pupil refused.
- b) Appropriate stage in the SFBT model followed.

Session 3 & Subsequent Sessions

Next stage in model - review of progress/evaluation of mini-cycle; ratings; goaling; Action Planning etc.

The frequency and total number of sessions would depend on:

- Agreement between pupil and researcher about the need for further sessions
- Ongoing information from school and/or parents – 'extraneous variables' – which might warrant a change of action plan, e.g. immediate threat of exclusion .

Each session ended in an agreed Action Plan for future review, or else an agreement that no further sessions would be required unless circumstances changed. The final session, session x, was for some pupils dictated by the end of the project, as a result of the timing of the referral and subsequent progress.

4.3.2.3 Follow-up Consultation

Following the final pupil session for pupils, staff were consulted, using a questionnaire (Appendix 2) in which they were asked once again to rate pupils' behaviour and comment on any progress. This questionnaire, for a second time, served dual purposes – practical and research.

4.3.2.4 Final Review

A final evaluation meeting was planned with the Year Manager and SENCO. This would review outcome, in terms of pupil progress; evaluate systems processes related to school organisation; consider the potential for further development of the SFBT model by the researcher as school EP under normal working arrangements.

4.4 Data Collection

Essentially there were three broad areas under investigation, embedded in the research questions above and relating to:

4.4.1 The Model

Data collection methods to be utilised in relation to the SFBT model itself, with regard to individual pathways and as a whole were:

- Sessional case notes – The main sequence of events covered, related to aspects of the model, were summarised immediately following each session.
- Post interview analysis of audiotapes - This was undertaken at a convenient time after interviews. A framework was used, based on the initial model, against which the actual elements featuring and their sequence were compared. This was then crosschecked with the case note analyses for accuracy.
- Research Diary - This was maintained throughout the period of intervention and incorporated descriptive and interpretative entries as suggested by Altrichter,

Posch & Somekh (1993) and Hopkins (1985). Diary entries were made systematically after each individual session, and at other times as necessary and convenient. The entries were regularly analysed for emerging themes and difficulties.

4.4.2 Outcome

As already noted, the satisfaction levels (of perceived progress) expressed by pupils were to be the primary source of data. Data was available via analysis of the ongoing ratings, and by pupil comments during sessions. Such qualified feedback, or 'thick description', was recorded in sessional case notes made by the researcher and confirmed with the pupils as correctly representing events. Further confirmatory data would also be sought from other sources, notably:

- Teacher ratings – comparison of initial and final assessments, and with pupil ratings.
- Year 7 incident reports – scrutiny of ongoing pupil files in which the school routinely collated information regarding details of difficulties experienced by teachers. Feedback on pupil progress from Year Manager and SENCO at weekly meetings, recorded as minutes.
- Parent/carer views – obtained through initial unstructured interview, and any subsequent contact through the intervention period.
- Information relating to exclusions was of particular interest. This would be drawn directly from existing school records, where all exclusions were recorded. A comparison of rates of exclusion, before and during intervention, could be made.

It seems important to restate here that the researcher played no direct part in assessing outcome. He simply collated the data provided by pupils, staff and from school records.

4.4.3 Systems Compatibility

The main sources of information regarding the match, or otherwise, between the intervention and the contextual systems for pupils, teachers and researcher would be:

- Research Diary – entries based on formal or informal feedback from pupils, teachers or parents and recorded as personal thoughts and comments that could be examined for themes or recurring problems.
- Qualitative, evaluative comment from Year Manager and SENCO at weekly review meetings.

In seeking and recording all of the above data, no demands were made on others – pupils, teachers and parents – which did not serve the purpose of improving their situations in school. The manner in which data was actually used through the course of intervention to inform an evolving practice model, and the ongoing action research process, will be presented in the Findings and Discussion chapters.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Some of the ethical issues related to this research design, including the potential for researcher practitioner tension, have already been mentioned. A further source of possible difficulty where an evaluation is funded, discussed by Robson (1993), are the questions of a pre-set agendas and accountability. McLeod (2001) also warns that social forces, including such organisations as schools, may have an interest in co-opting therapists as agents of social control. The agenda here was, of course, determined to an extent by the funding agency as 'Improving Pupil Behaviour', although as noted earlier the aims were not in conflict with the principles guiding EP practice already. The overall project was funded as a means of support, and this permitted but did not influence the research element.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000), and Burgess (1989) consider in detail the ethical issues that can arise in social and educational research and this study was undertaken in the light of their recommendations for moral and ethical practice. Furthermore, the Code of Conduct of the British Psychological Society (2000) together with the working regulations of the LEA and Association of Educational Psychologists provide a professional framework that guides all aspects of an EP's practice. The context of the research for example, i.e. that it was based in a school, raised specific issues. It was already the researcher's role to work as an EP with pupils, teachers and parents in the school setting in providing support and therapeutic intervention. As such he had access to information about pupils through school records, and contact with current and previous teachers. He was also in the position of working, privately and in confidence, with children about matters of a very personal and significant nature. As a professional working in a school he was also in a position of power in relation to pupils, and this inevitably poses problems for a researcher attempting to adopt a neutral stance.

Particular matters arising in the course of the study, some of which have already been mentioned but are worthy of note here, were:

- Parental agreement and contact.
- Pupil consent to participation - Cohen, Manion & Morrison (op cit) refer to this as informed consent - After agreeing to attend sessions they were informed that they would be able to terminate any session and /or decide not to return for a subsequent session, although none did so except in rearranging a session to participate in a preferred activity.
- Pupil consent to recording the content of sessions - written and audiotapes.
- Confidentiality - Pupils were informed that the EP would speak with teachers and parents about their progress in school. All information offered by pupils was, however, considered confidential unless it was agreed with them that it might be helpful to share some aspects with teachers and/or parents.

Finally, permission was sought for the researcher to report the study, in anonymity, from the pupils, parents, vice - principal of the school and the funding agency for the project.

5. Findings

The primary tasks of qualitative research are seen by Wolcott (1994) as to describe, analyse and then interpret the phenomena that are the focus of study. This section reports the findings of the research, with a more in-depth discussion of emerging issues presented in the next chapter. The order in which the research questions were set out will not be adhered to at this point, however. While the literature review typically reflects a fairly clearly ordered SFBT model, it was anticipated here that there would be significant differences for individual pupils, because of their particular and personal needs. This was indeed the case, and for that reason the second research question, relating to process – the nature of the model, and its development through the action research framework – will be addressed first. Once the eventual version(s) of the model have been set out, this should then provide a context against which to understand data on outcome, the focus of the first research question.

Before considering the findings, some relevant information relating to the constitution of the group of pupils involved in the study is needs to be reported. Of the twelve initial referrals to the project only eleven pupils began the intervention cycle, with eight completing a full period of intervention. The first 'drop-out' occurred because it proved impossible to engage one boy, because of his attendance difficulties. Another pupil was admitted to a psychiatric unit shortly after the study began, and so he attended only one session. Two more pupils were withdrawn from the project before they were even seen, when it became apparent that the SENCO and Year Manager had been rather premature in making the referrals, following consultation with other teachers.

The findings will now be presented, in the following order:

- a) **The Model** - Examination of how pupils responded to the key elements of the model (process analysis) -The manner in which the initial model was modified and developed, according to need, is reported. In order to offer a structure, the information is presented in a sequence centred on the initial model, with reference to the procedures that were followed in the first, and then subsequent, sessions.
- b) **Outcome**
 - Comparison of the individual pupils' initial and final ratings. Both sets of data will be reported simultaneously, so as to reflect reported improvement in their situations in school.
 - Analysis of data obtained from teacher ratings and school records, pre and post intervention. Some comparison is also made between teacher and pupil views about initial areas of concern and subsequent developments.

No analysis is presented at this stage in relation to the third research question, regarding systems compatibility. The qualitative information used to inform the researcher's review of this aspect of the study is drawn from the research diary. Little systematic analysis has been undertaken of this information, but the researcher's thick description is offered in some detail in the Discussion chapter.

5.1 The Model

Analysis of the taped and written records of sessions confirms the anticipated disparity among the particular sequences followed by individual pupils. As will be described in detail later in the pupils' rating scores, (Table 3, page 94) for example, the number of

sessions attended by pupils ranged from 4 to 10. Simply from this perspective, therefore, it was inevitable that their overall experiences would be markedly different. Despite this, however, there was also some commonality in the ways that these experiences differed from the initial model.

The nearest approximation to the linear course predicted by the initial model is illustrated by DMc, who made steady progress over six sessions – apart from what turned out to be a minor and temporary setback. All other pupils pursued a less direct path towards solution, even where fewer sessions were attended. Some pupils repeated elements of the model, within or between sessions, as a means of clarifying, elaborating or reviewing their perspective of situations. Pupils also repeated what were intended as early elements in later sessions and it was not uncommon, for example, to see a return even to the starting point of problem definition in the light of experiences between sessions. In essence, the routes within and between the sessions became 'mini-cycles' of action research for each individual, building on, but generally diverging from, the initial model. The analysis of process below broadly follows the sequence of the initial model, with comment on variations as appropriate. The analysis is divided into two sections. The first describes the early sessions, to the point at which pupils set out to enact agreed plans for solution to the problems they had identified; the second relates to sessions subsequent to this, when action and progress were reviewed.

5.1.1 Initial Sessions

All first sessions began with what is referred to as *problem - free talk*. As noted earlier, this phase was undertaken as a process of introduction, and the establishment of rapport based on general conversation unrelated to situation of concern. The skills which are seen to be important in establishing rapport and relationships in any counselling situation are well documented (Nelson-Jones, 1988; Egan 1990, Swain; 1995, Heron, 2001) and

the need to be aware of possible anxiety in children who see themselves as being 'in trouble' was especially important. Typically the early talk would involve seeking non-threatening information about previous schools, family composition, hobbies and interests, and personal strengths in and beyond school. The ultimate importance of this phase will be considered in some detail in the next chapter.

What was achieved in these first sessions was in part determined by the amount of time available for each one. It had been assumed that there would be available a full lesson period of fifty minutes but in practice this was often cut short by delays for pupils in getting from one side of the school campus to another, in the additional time required for changing after PE etc. Some pupils seemed to need more time at this phase anyway, and so for them it was decided better to wait until the second session before moving on. Already there were individual differences then, at least in the pace of progression through the intended stages of the model. Furthermore, even within the first session pupil responses meant that paths began to diverge from the simple model, and from each other.

Regardless of whether it occurred in the first or second session, the next element to be introduced was ***problem definition***. Despite their referred status the pupils were all willing and able to give an account of what they perceived to be the current problem, although some were initially more reticent than others, or found the task more difficult. Five pupils (boys) described their problems as 'fighting'. One pupil, MB, described her problem in terms of others bullying her and teachers blaming her for trouble in class. Another, RR, simply said that 'maths' was the problem, but with prompts developed this to losing his temper in maths. The final pupil, TB, listed three problems which might have been taken directly from a behaviour checklist – 'fighting, not sitting in seat, shouting out in class'. Her later difficulty in providing detailed descriptions of these problems, and the

fact that she changed her problem definition through the course of later sessions, made it seem likely that the words were those used by teachers outlining her problems *for* her. Interestingly, all of the other pupils except MC and DMc subsequently reviewed their original descriptions to a greater or lesser extent either during the course of identifying exceptions, or else following their attempts at attaining the targets they set for themselves, based on the initial problem definition. As Table 2 (p.87) shows, for example, RR began with maths as his main concern but subsequently extended this to include other problem areas. In time, all but DMc identified more than one subject area in which a problem was evident, and these were consequently treated as separate problem situations with their own ratings. In any event only he worked on one single and unchanging problem definition. What did not change, however, was the view of themselves as somewhat detached from the problem, with their own behaviour in the situation a justifiable response rather than a contributing factor.

On the face of it, this redefining of problems would seem to conflict with the notion of a solution-only approach and the generally held SFBT principle that attempting to understand their cause is not a necessary step towards resolution. The process did, however, seem to help pupils to clarify their own thoughts about the issues at hand and to develop ideas for possible solutions. The seeming importance to pupils of the process offers some endorsement to the views of Murphy & Duncan (1997), influential in determining the initial model here. They believe that, despite the central focus on constructing solutions, it is nevertheless important for children to be allowed to reflect on and express a ***theory of change***, or how they believe change might be achieved, based on the clear definition of a problem and an explanation of its causes.

Indeed, only one pupil, TB, failed to offer such an explanation again adding to the impression, coincidentally, that she had simply reported others' views originally. The

remainder of the group were quite clear in their theories of change, universally blaming others for causing the problems. The common theme was that they were victims of others' behaviour, and that they were not in a position to control the situation. Their theories were that *others* should change. Six pupils reported that they reacted to other pupils' teasing and provocation, and four of these also explained their behaviour as a natural reaction to unfair treatment by teachers. MB, as noted above, didn't even include her own behaviour as a feature of the problem at this point. Four of the pupils also commented that they became angry and would hit out when frustrated by being asked to do work that they felt was too difficult.

The latter complaint raised the possibility of seeking the involvement of teachers in intervention, even though this had not been intended. This point will be taken up again in the discussion of the findings. For the time being, however, it was important not to knowingly place pupils in a position that was likely to cause them distress. Although wanting to adhere to a model which acknowledged pupils' strengths and resources in managing problems, this was a moral dilemma for a practitioner. A decision was made to carry on working with the pupils' perceptions of problems, but to confirm with the SENCO that teachers were aware of nature of the pupils' reported difficulties with curriculum access. In this way teachers would be simply reminded of information that they should already have about the pupils concerned, through action which was part of the school's existing SEN systems.

The evaluation of ***previous attempts at solution*** is considered to be the other major contributor to an understanding of theory of change. The pupils had all recently arrived at the school, and described problems and causes which were very much grounded in the context of this school. Even though their concerns were about current circumstances their descriptions of what had happened in attempts by adults to elicit change in their

behaviour referred to both primary and secondary schools. Taken together they generated a list of what were largely seen as punitive actions, ranging from them being 'on report' to the use of detentions, short-term exclusions and being 'forced' to move to new schools. This view of action by schools as generally punitive was also expressed by all parents during home visits, even though some tempered this with a variation on an 'I know s/he is not an angel, but..' statement. Diary extract 1 (Appendix 9) shows the researcher's brief notes following two home visits. Both mothers describe their contact with this, and previous, school in negative terms. They cite the lack of discussion about problems and the lack of an agreed overall plan for their children. MC's mother also offers her interpretation of the school perspective – one in which they believe that it is simply parents' responsibility to ensure 'good behaviour' in their children. The fact that only one pupil had not been excluded during the first term at secondary school, and only two of the remainder had been excluded less than twice would seem to be supportive evidence of parental experiences. Furthermore, there was also a general consensus of opinion among pupils and their parents that what was perceived as punishment had been largely unsuccessful, although there were some reports of more supportive attempts to intervene – involving one each of an LEA special needs support teacher, a community nurse and an educational welfare officer – at primary school. One particular pupil, MC, had experienced help from a number of professionals in succession – two psychiatrists, a special needs teacher, a school nurse and an EP. All periods of intervention had come to an end, he suggested, because '.. they hadn't made any difference.'

Despite the lack of immediately useful information from this stage, the next phase in the model, establishing **overall goals**, was pursued. Table 1, over, summarises pupils' initial responses to the question about what they would like to achieve beyond their current situations. All goals were stated, in the first instance, in negative terms. Five

referred to others refraining from particular behaviours, such as 'stop others getting me into trouble'; three referred to the absence of something, for example 'not being on report'. Sklare (1997) describes techniques for restating goals positively, stressing the importance of discovering how the proposed goal would be better for an individual. Restated goals are included in the table. Although there were instances of pupils wanting to continue a conversation around apportioning blame at first, they were all able to state a desired outcome.

Pupil	Negative Goal	Goal Stated Positively
AH	Stop teachers throwing me out of school	Get good report and stay in school
AL	Stop people getting me into trouble	To be calmer when others go at me so that I can stay in class
DMc	Stop others bugging me	Stay in school and get good report to show mum
MB	Stop people bullying me	Come to school and enjoy being with my friends
MC	Stop getting into trouble	Behave and do work without arguing with teachers
RH	Stop teachers and others getting at me	Get 2/2 on report card, stay in school, please mum and be able to go to the wrestling
RR	Not being on report	To come to school without getting upset
TB	Be off report	Improve my behaviour - be good and stay in school

Table 1: Pupil Goals

Some of the desirable outcomes were more concrete and specific than others but all represented a view from the pupils of how things would need to be so that they could achieve an overall goal – to remain in school. In the case of RH he made reference to the school's 'report' system, in which 2/2 was the best possible score, and it was decided to incorporate this existing school arrangement into discussions. TB's use of the term 'be good' was a somewhat unexpected comment from a twelve year old and again seemed

to reflect her apparent perception of her passive role in events which were controlled by other pupils and teachers.

Once overall goals had been established, the next step in the initial model was the *miracle question*, although as a consequence of decisions made within the action research framework through the course of the study (described below), it was employed with only two pupils. These are worth reporting individually. TB's first offering was an example of what Sklare (op cit) paradoxically calls an 'impossible miracle' in that she wanted certain pupils to be removed from her class. With further questioning about what this would achieve for her she was able to reformulate her miracle as 'me being able to go into class and get on with my work', although found it difficult to elaborate further. In contrast, AL was able to describe his miracle scene in some detail. This involved him staying in class, getting on with work and sitting still at his desk. He was then able to identify *exceptions*, when some of the miracle had already occurred. These exceptions were listed as subject lessons in which the problem was perceived to be absent. He saw these problems in absolute and polarised terms – they were present in some lessons, and not in others. Consistent with his causal attributions, however, he was unable to describe these exceptions as in any way controlled by his own actions, and therefore still saw the solution to his problems in the hands of others. Nevertheless, if these were his exceptions they should be accepted as such. What this meant, interestingly, was that the miracle question might have been unnecessary, and the exceptions could perhaps have been elicited immediately following problem definition. Having the situation in these exceptional lessons as an aim for what were currently perceived as less successful lessons might in itself be sufficient to enable target setting, in addition to providing a real and concrete benchmark against which pupils could measure progress. Given that one of the ultimate aims of the research was to develop a model that was effective in its use of time as well as outcome it was decided (noted in diary extract 2) to explore the idea of

not using the miracle question with subsequent pupils if the process of discussing their situations naturally highlighted exceptional subjects. In fact, apart from DMc who saw his problem as existing across all classes, the remaining five pupils who subsequently reached this stage of the model spontaneously identified exceptions during the process of problem definition.

Typically, pupils would begin by reporting that problems existed in most subjects. Then, when asked to think of exceptions, they might think of one, followed by the build up of a range of subjects which they labelled as at least satisfactory with a smaller number, sometimes only one, in which they felt they really experienced difficulties. Throughout sessions pupils always maintained this frame of reference, with their school worlds apparently viewed as a collection of sub-units, each with its own distinct ecosystem. In one sense, therefore, the pupils themselves were highlighting the interactionist nature of problems in describing them as situation specific, even though they appeared to experience difficulty in recognising their own part in the dynamics of both the problem and exceptional situations. As with AL, the initial comments of the other pupils about the influences on behaviour within classroom settings almost invariably attributed control to factors other than themselves -either to other pupils, to teachers or to a subject being 'interesting'.

The next step in the initial model was to determine a baseline measure of problems using the *scaling* technique. Even though the pupils had tended to use extreme terms in their first accounts of the differences between subject lessons, they were generally able to make finer discriminations with the structure of the rating scales. In the interests of consistency all pupils were asked to give an initial rating on a scale of 0 to 10 for each of the problem areas. Pupils rated between one and three targets each, although the number of targets sometimes changed in subsequent sessions, as will be described

later. The two most common ratings given by pupils were 2 and 6. The remainder were fairly evenly distributed between these two points, with the exception of RH who surprisingly rated problem areas at 7 and 9. When this was questioned he reverted to making complaints about others, apportioning blame for problems. His view, therefore, was not challenged, but it did raise doubts in the researcher about his engagement in the process. (Diary extract 3 illustrates the researcher's concerns at the time about this apparent reluctance – what it might represent, and how it might be addressed.) AL's responses again suggested a greater degree of understanding of the demands of the task than other pupils, in that he gave an initial rating which he subsequently reconsidered in the light of further discussion. He was also able to describe his vision of 8½ as a level which might be a 'good enough' goal. In all, a problem rating was reached during the first session with only half of the pupils.

Once the problem areas and, conversely, the exceptional lessons had been identified the next stage of the intervention was to begin to consider strategies that could be employed to address the areas of concern – individual subject lessons, with the aim an all-inclusive 'doing well' in each. Because of the lack of recognition by the pupils of any control over their situations, however, and their views of themselves as the victims of problems, the strategies were generated by treating the problems as 'externalised' (Metcalf, 1995; Morgan, 2002). In doing so, pupils considered ways of reducing the impact of the problems on their lives. All pupils were able to make suggestions that they could try, even though not based on reported experiences in exceptional subjects. The initial problems, target areas and intended strategies are summarised in Table 2, over.

Pupil	Initial Problem	Target Areas	Initial Strategy
AH	Fighting	RE, French	Complete work; listen to teacher
AL	Hitting out at others	Maths	Ignore others who try to argue; keep chair still; get on with work
DMc	Losing temper and fighting	All lessons	Ignore other pupils
MB	Others bullying me and teachers blaming me	Science	Finish work; ignore AL
MC	Losing temper and fighting	Maths, Science, Art	Get on with work; ignore people
RH	Fighting	Maths, English	Finish work; keep quiet
RR	Getting angry in maths and throwing books	Maths, History, Art	Do what teacher tells me; raise hand if stuck; ignore others
TB	Fighting, not sitting in seat, shouting out in class	PE	Improve my behaviour

Table 2: Pupil – Identified Problems, Targets And Strategies

The strategies proposed, as with the problems, were quite similar within the group. This might be explained to some extent by the fact that ignoring perceived teasing through 'getting on with work' would be a fairly obvious competing strategy for a problem of fighting, and indeed may have been suggested many times previously by teachers. Indeed, TB again seemed to paraphrase what might be described as standard teacher reprimands.

The setting of short-term goals and then linking these with pupils' proposed strategies had been intended as the *next steps* stage of the initial model. All pupils had been able to use scales in order to make their own assessment of the situation in targeted subjects, and to generate strategies for change. They found the concept of a situation improving in stages, however, much more challenging. When asked to describe how a next step might look only AL anticipated that a complete change in a situation might not be

achieved in one attempt. For the others the 'all or none' perspective was again evident, with pupils believing that they could reach 10 on a scale in one move. Even when the possibility of gradual change was prompted through questions such as 'What would 5 look like?' or 'What would it take to get to 5?' pupils found it difficult to describe anything but their vision of perfection at this point. Rather than attempt to influence, what seemed to an adult, an unrealistic expectation of instant and total change it was again decided simply to accept the pupils' position on the matter, in keeping with the principles of SFBT and previous decisions in relation to the initial model. What this meant, however, was that for all but one pupil the *next* step to solution became instead *the* step to solution.

This expectation of immediate and total solution was again illustrated in some of the attempts to prompt pupils to predict and reflect on potential **obstacles** to success, as per the initial model, as five of them were unable to cite any factors at all which might prevent them from achieving their goals of instant solution. In contrast, MC and DMC had both already expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to achieve success because of factors they believed to be beyond their control, even though they had agreed to try. Once again AL, consistent with his ability to anticipate gradual change, recognised that some of the influences on his behaviour would continue even if he were to make progress. He was also able to discuss how he might deal with these when they arose. In any event all pupils reached a point within the first couple of sessions at which they agreed to attempt to effect change in their situations, using self-determined strategies, and they were all prepared to use the scales in order to measure progress. Before closing the session it was reaffirmed with the pupils that they saw the planned action as likely to move them towards their previously stated overall goal, of being able to remain in school. All agreed that this would be the case.

5.1.2 Subsequent Sessions

Although sessions became increasingly individualised for pupils, particularly as they spent time redefining problematic and exceptional lessons, all began with the basic 'What's better – how did you do that?' format of the initial model (elaborating, amplifying, reinforcing). There were relatively few instances of pupils not responding positively to this form of questioning and, as Table 3 (p.98) illustrates, once the final targets had been agreed, the trend was for pupils to evaluate their situations either as improved or else as stable following earlier improvement. One notable exception, however, was MC whose sessions repeatedly reverted to describing deterioration or further problems. The sessions with him were characterised by cycles of the researcher encouraging him to focus on exceptions and set positive targets that might improve the situation for him in school and, although he would initially do so, his then drifting back into problem-talk and accusing others, including teachers, of deliberately getting him into trouble. An example of such a conversation is illustrated by the following sequence, from session 3:

Res: Where are you today? (scaling)

MC: 7, 8 and 5 (maths, science, art)

Res: That sounds good. How did you manage that? What have you been doing since last time?

MC: I've been ignoring T. She's always trying to get me into trouble. Everybody knows she's a troublemaker. The other kids all know it's her. When she slags off my mum I *have* to hit her. I'm not taking that! I don't know why Mrs K won't do something about her. My mum would come in and do something about her. Why don't you do something? It's always me. Why aren't you talking to her?

Others, by contrast, were by now beginning to be able to describe how they had managed to achieve the progress, and to recognise the increased control over their situations associated with improvement. In some instances the process confirmed for pupils that their strategies would work, even if they needed further refinement, and

seemed to act as motivation to continue with successful, or attempt variations on failed, strategies in other targeted areas. The enthusiasm generated by early success for two pupils, MB and TB, was particularly rewarding for the researcher given the feeling of only superficial engagement in the opening sessions.

MB, who had found it especially difficult to recognise her part in the dynamics of problem situations and had even experienced some difficulty in articulating her own perceptions, gave an unusual and individual account of her achievements in science lessons between the second and third sessions. Noticing a flip chart in the interview room she asked permission to draw her solution to avoiding the boy who habitually teased her. She proceeded to produce a diagram of the laboratory and noted the usual seating arrangements. She then indicated that she had waited in line in the corridor before lessons and, rather than enter immediately, had made note of the boy's choice of seating before quickly finding a seat from which his view of her would be obscured. It was then possible to discuss the application of this successful strategy in other target lessons. Given that one of the fundamental aims of this study was to evaluate the potential of a model designed to achieve change by influencing only one aspect of an ecosystem, the pupil, this was an important step. In subsequent sessions she rated all three of her targeted subjects as no longer problematic and also reported that she was developing friendships with her new neighbours in class.

The experiences of TB were equally remarkable in the manner in which she responded to the realisation that she could exert control over her situation. Of particular interest in this case was the seemingly parallel process of growing recognition that she was at liberty to define problems as *she* saw them, rather than as teachers did, and to suggest her own solutions. While she began with a target of improving her behaviour in all

lessons she later redefined this and set herself more focussed aims, based on her experiences.

The remainder of the pupils, apart from MC who continued to report problems as insurmountable, redefined the nature or circumstances of problems in the light of experience and consequently refined targets they had set. Some also became better able to use between-session experiences in anticipating potential obstacles to achieving or maintaining progress. This development of what seemed to be the 'skills' of knowing how to participate in SFBT was particularly evident in the increasing focus of pupils at the very beginning of sessions on reporting ratings and offering updates, self-initiated setting of targets, and a general reduction in the length of sessions. There were signs that this was also coupled with some improvement in understanding of the dynamics of classroom interactions and led to extended use of identifying exceptions. Rather than make only between-subject comparisons, the use of within-subject exceptions and the relating of these to the pupils' own actions became more common as objectives in other subjects were reached. Another effect appeared to be a better appreciation for some of the, sometimes, incremental nature of change - perhaps in part as a result of the failed attempts at instant change, as well as the possibility that the experience of being required to measure the extent of change using graduated scales actually encouraged situations to be viewed in this way. The use of scales as a means of demonstrating success from session to session to the researcher, to her parents (and to herself) was extremely important to TB who, enthused by her own progress and the positive feedback she received from teachers, insisted on extending the scales to twenty so that she could set herself further targets. Furthermore, she also demonstrated the spontaneous application of her newly acquired/ liberated solution-finding skills when, during session 7, she revealed:

'I have been talking to Mrs G about Geography. She moved me away from T (best friend) because she says it was just causing trouble for the class and stopping them from getting on with their work. I'm going to prove that she was wrong to separate us. I don't want a scale for this because I don't want the others to know what I'm doing, but I've got a plan. Mrs G says she'll admit she was wrong if I can show her that I can be different.'

Although TB opted not to use one on this occasion, all pupils cited the scaling process as the single most helpful aspect of intervention when asked the question during their final session. Up until the completion of intervention pupils continued to report improving or improved situations and, apart from MC whose case is described above, any perceived setbacks were temporary.

The completion of the intervention cycle was determined in one of a number of ways. Three pupils, DMc, AH and RH reached what they felt were acceptably high ratings after a small number of sessions. Despite the researcher's continuing concern about the latter two pupils' commitment to the process, and the possibility that they would still experience or present difficulties, they attended no further sessions. MB requested that she carry on meeting because she enjoyed the experience, even though she also believed she had already achieved sufficient improvement. AL and TB also expressed a desire to continue meeting up to the point that they felt they could maintain their achievements unsupported. For them, sessions became shortened fairly quickly to almost a 'checking in', confirming ratings and then arranging to review the following week. Although RR felt he would have liked to continue, his late referral and a number of school absences meant that this was not possible because the end of the project had been reached.

5.2 Outcome

5.2.1 Initial v Final Pupil Ratings

All pupils identified between one and three problems to which they were able to ascribe initial and final ratings using the scaling technique described in the SFBT model outline. A scale of 0 to 10 was used and, as noted earlier in the description of the initial model, a score of 0 would represent the worst that things had ever been in a particular situation and a score of 10 the ideal position - although one pupil elected to extend this to 20 during the course of the sessions. Table 3, over, summarises the pupil ratings data. Each cell represents a particular interview session, numbered for individual pupils in the sequence in which they took place. Pupils attended differing numbers of sessions. RH attended only four, for example, and MB ten. In some sessions, usually in the early stages of intervention, no rating was given because that element of the model was not included. Where more than one problem had been noted, each was given an individual rating, although for some pupils not all problems were identified during the same session. While some cells contain only one rating, therefore, others contain three separate scores. The earliest recorded ratings in the sequences represents the initial ratings, followed by those of successive sessions. The last recorded rating for each problem signifies the final ratings.

Session Sequence										
Pupil	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
AH	0 1	10 2	10 5	10 10	10 10	*	*	*	*	*
AL	-	4.5	5.5 4 2	8.5 6 6	9 8 9	9 9 9	8 9 6	9 7 9	9 7 9	*
DMc	5	8	9	9.5	5	10	*	*	*	*
MB	2	1 1 2	2 4 9	10 10 10	10 10 5	10 10 9	- - -	- - -	10 10 9	10 10 9
MC	-	7 4 6	7 8 5	3 0 1	- - -	9 7 6	5 6	4 6	*	*
RH	7 9	6 9 9	9 9 9	9 9 9	*	*	*	*	*	*
RR	-	1 3 6	3 5 10	5 7 9	5 8 9	*	*	*	*	*
TB	6	7 4	7 8	9 8	10 9 5	15 9 8	19 13 19	20 18 20	*	*

- No rating made

* No further sessions

Table 3: Pupils' Ratings for Identified Problems Over Successive Sessions

Looking at the data for individual pupils:

- All identified improvement in at least one area over the period of intervention. For DMc, this was his only area of concern.
- Five out of eight (AH, AL, MB, RR, TB) reported improvement in all of the areas of concern, indicated by increased ratings on the scale between 1 and 10, except for TB who extended this scale up to 20.
- One pupil, RH, noted progress in two out of three areas although his ratings show some apparent contradiction – in one area he rates a score of 7 as problematic, with 9 as satisfactory outcome yet in another rates 9 as both initial problem rating and as a final rating of good enough solution.
- One pupil (MC) reported improvement in only one area, with no overall change in two others.

Taken overall, twenty-one problem areas were identified by the pupils. Of these, eighteen were rated as having improved by the final sessions. Most pupils reported a degree of progress by the first session following agreement to a plan of action. For some the rate of reported progress was rapid, before stabilising; in other cases there was a steady increase. As far as pupils were concerned, therefore, all but one individual reported what might be viewed as significant improvement over the period of intervention.

5.2.2 Data from Teachers & School Records

Because it is potentially more complex than outcome data obtained from the pupils, being derived from multiple sources, the information available as initial and later measures will be presented separately. Teachers' baseline data will be presented first, and then compared with pupil perceptions, as defined by their own ratings. Post-intervention data, reflecting teacher assessments of pupil behaviour will then be outlined.

5.2.2.1 Baseline Measures

Incident Reports

The school followed a system of 'incident reports,' which were routinely collated in appropriate year group files following the recording of any incident felt by teachers to be 'serious'. While the files of all of the pupils referred contained examples of such incidents at the time of referral, a discussion with the Key Stage 3 Manager made it apparent that the system itself was not adhered to rigorously. She cited a number of reasons (largely related to variation in teacher practices) why the files should not be regarded as accurate records of events since the start of the school year and suggested that they might be seen rather as indicative of the relative levels of concern about pupils within the year group. While the information available cannot therefore be taken as an absolute baseline measure, a comparison with the records at a later date did provide some useful information and added to the overall picture. The comparison is made later in this section.

Initial Teacher Ratings

As outlined in the methodology, staff views relating to pupil behaviour were collated shortly after individual referrals were made. The point that this study assumed a constructionist position is worth repeating here. On the other hand, the word 'behaviour' is used widely in educational settings, and in government documents, and would be the chosen language of teachers. Questionnaires were sent out to 45 teachers asking them to rate pupils' behaviour on a scale of 0 – 10. The ratings were intended to provide information about the extent to which pupil behaviour as encountered by subject teachers was within what they saw as the range of behaviours typically displayed by others in a class group. Form tutors were also asked to complete a rating. A higher rating would tend towards what they saw as acceptable behaviour within the context of their own situation. Because the ratings were subjective, and furthermore were not

related to specific or identified behaviours in the way that pupils' ratings were, the limitation of the responses as a reliable baseline position needs to be recognised. On the other hand the teacher ratings, taken as a whole, should go some way to representing a collective perception of the nature of a pupil's performance within school and therefore serve as an indicator of both level of concern and likelihood of further exclusions. (The question of reliable baseline measure will be dealt with more fully in the Discussion chapter that follows this one).

Completed questionnaires were returned by teachers from all subject departments, although not all questionnaires were returned. Some pupils were taught a particular subject by more than one teacher; others, in the 'foundation classes', were taught more than one subject by the same teacher. The return rate was variable. Six teachers returned no forms and some teachers produced ratings on some, but not other, pupils. There were two pupils for whom some staff felt unable to provide a rating because of frequent absences from school or from their particular lessons. In all 83 out of a possible 142 (58%) ratings were provided, with a further 7% returned but no rating given. For individual pupils with good attendance, the number of responses ranged from 5 to 13 teachers each. Appendix 3 includes the full table of ratings. It includes initial ratings for all twelve referrals, even though the group size was thereafter reduced to eight.

It was not intended in the initial, simplest, SFBT model here that teacher responses would be used as an aspect of the intervention itself. It was also not the purpose of this study to offer an analysis of teacher perceptions of the causes of problem behaviour, although many of the teachers who responded clearly did have their own views - including combinations of family, social, and developmental difficulties (Appendix 4). Interestingly, there were numerous references to pupils' difficulties with work contributing to behavioural problems, an issue referred to already in terms of pupils' learning

difficulties and in comments from pupils themselves. Again, it was not the intention here to address curriculum provision for pupils and the response to this issue has already received comment. Nevertheless, the fact that pupils and teachers saw this as an issue does perhaps suggest that any impact of the current intervention might be reduced in such cases. It also, of course, raises the question of why teacher-identified school systems issues were not being directly addressed.

The teacher descriptions of problems, and of the perceived causal factors, for each of the eight pupils who completed a period of intervention are listed in Appendix 4. Even though the intention was not to use the information directly it was, nevertheless, felt that it could be used in individual cases (perhaps where some form of joint negotiations needed be held involving pupils and teachers) if circumstances warranted a change in approach. At the very least it might be possible, for research purposes, to make a comparison between teacher and pupil descriptions of a problem and to consider the implications for intervention beyond this study. The main purpose of the teacher questionnaires, however, was to obtain ratings for use as baseline measures against which to evaluate perceived progress. Given that the information available at the time of referral was typically a summary reinterpretation of complaints from some, but not all, teachers these ratings were very important in helping to establish a more comprehensive picture of the situation in school for each pupil.

Generally, individual teachers offered a spread of scores about different pupils, suggesting that they were attempting to use the scales in a manner which would genuinely reflect situations as they perceived them. Seven particular teachers, however, returned 14 ratings in total with none outside the range 8-10 and these need closer examination. Two of the teachers were found to be form tutors for the pupils concerned. Their contact with the pupils, noted in one case, was wholly in the relatively informal

setting of a morning tutorial period which might be seen as less likely to lead to confrontation than formal lessons, although these two teachers were also widely recognised within the school as having good classroom management skills. Three further teachers taught the subjects music, drama and PE. In the researcher's experience as EP for the school, pupils who find other curriculum areas demanding sometimes report these subjects as enjoyable. In fact, the records of initial interviews with the pupils rated highly here confirm that they described these subjects as areas of personal strength or preference.

The two pupils who were withdrawn from the project, as noted earlier, can account for the other high initial ratings. Because the ratings given by teachers were consistently high, suggesting little general concern among them, it seemed inappropriate to continue even though the Year 7 Manager had requested their inclusion in the group. Careful examination of incident records revealed that they had actually both been involved in one, fairly serious, incident but that there had been no further incidents or expressions of concern. At the end of the study school records confirmed that they had continued to do well in school.

The following charts (Fig. 2) show the profile obtained for each of the eight pupils who completed the intervention period. They are set out so as to show the initial ratings ascribed by the individual teachers who returned relevant questionnaires about the pupils. The numbered teachers are not in any particular order, and do not correspond from pupil to pupil. Thus, for example, 10 ratings were provided for AH, but only 5 for RH, and these could have been provided by completely different teachers.

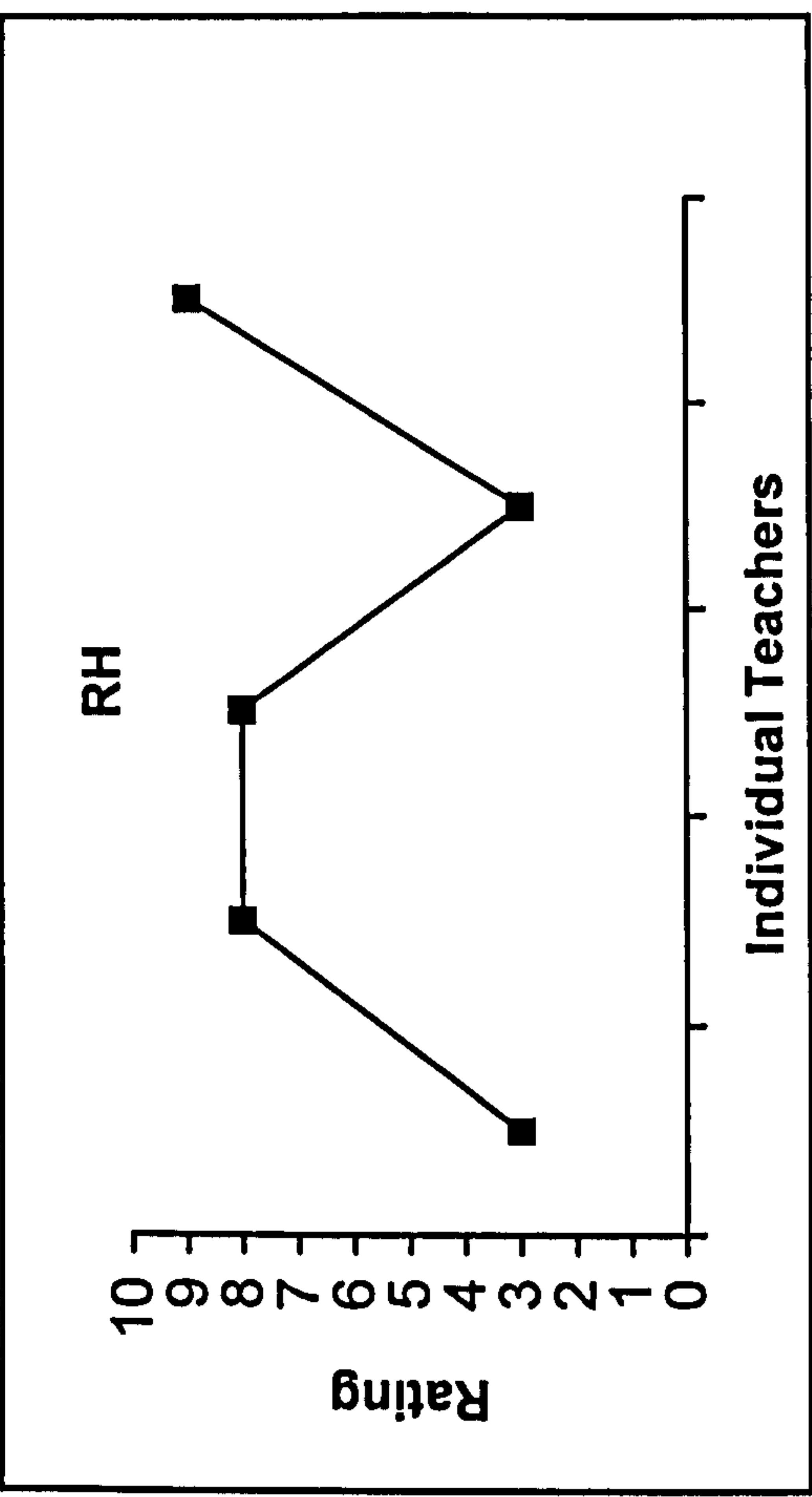
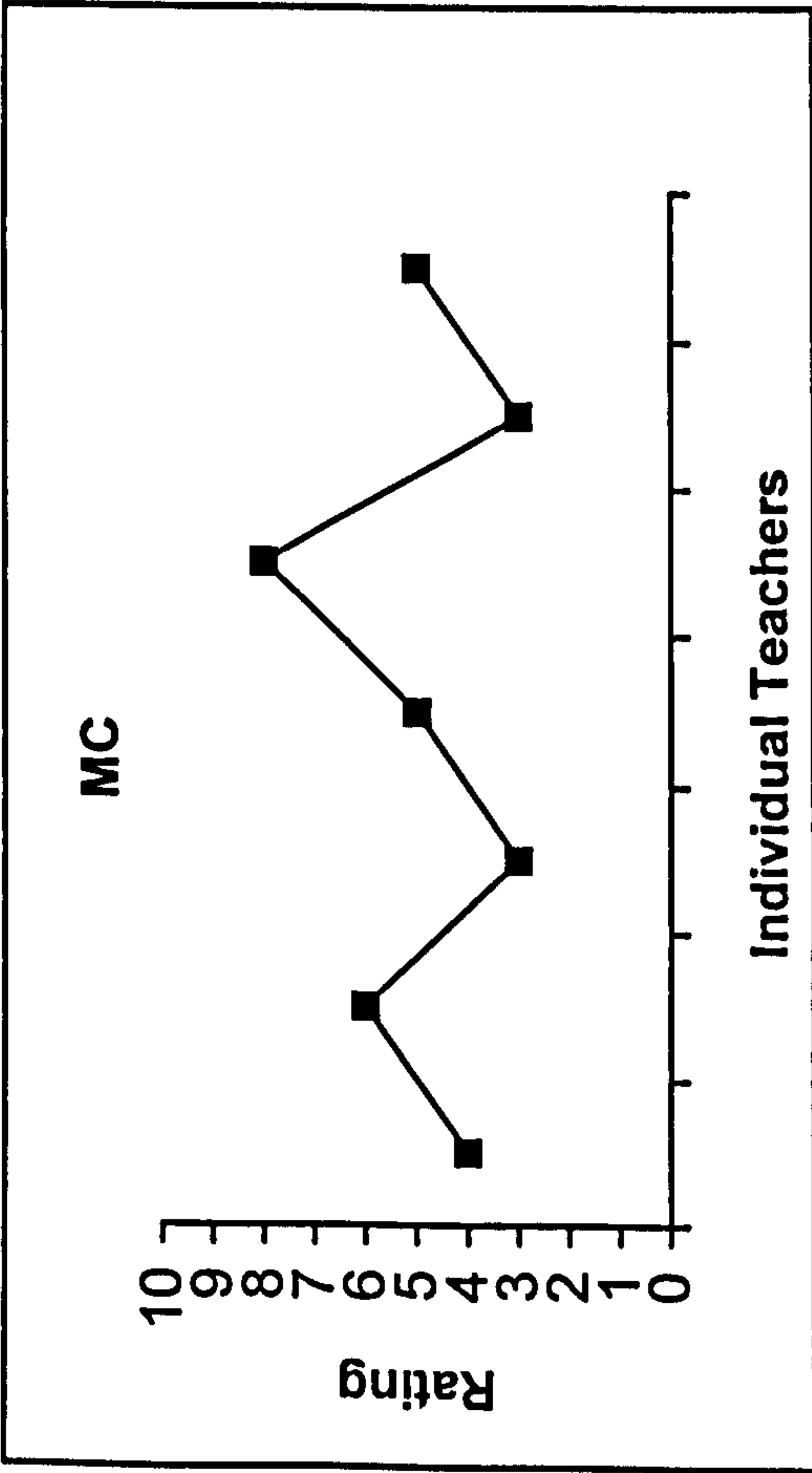
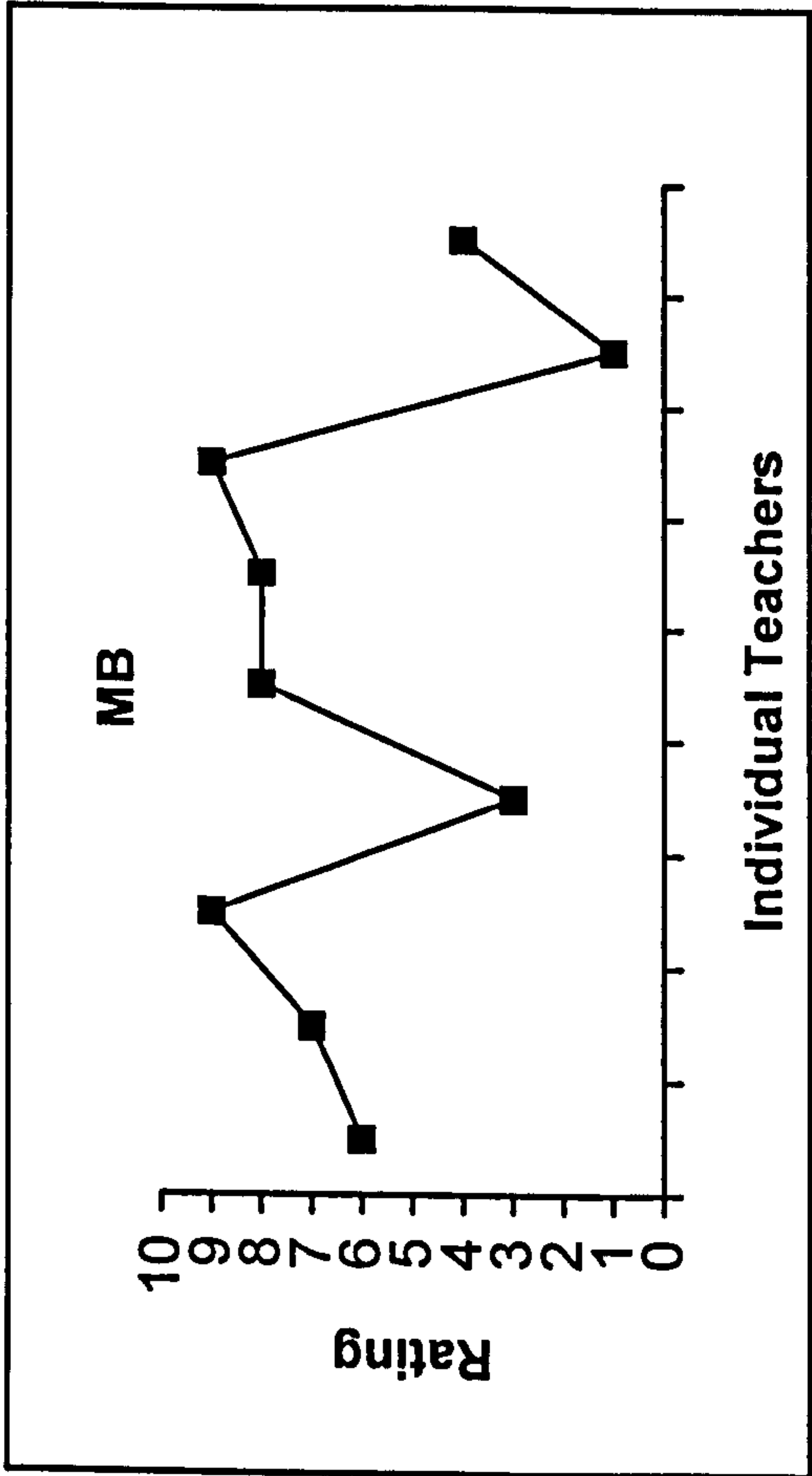
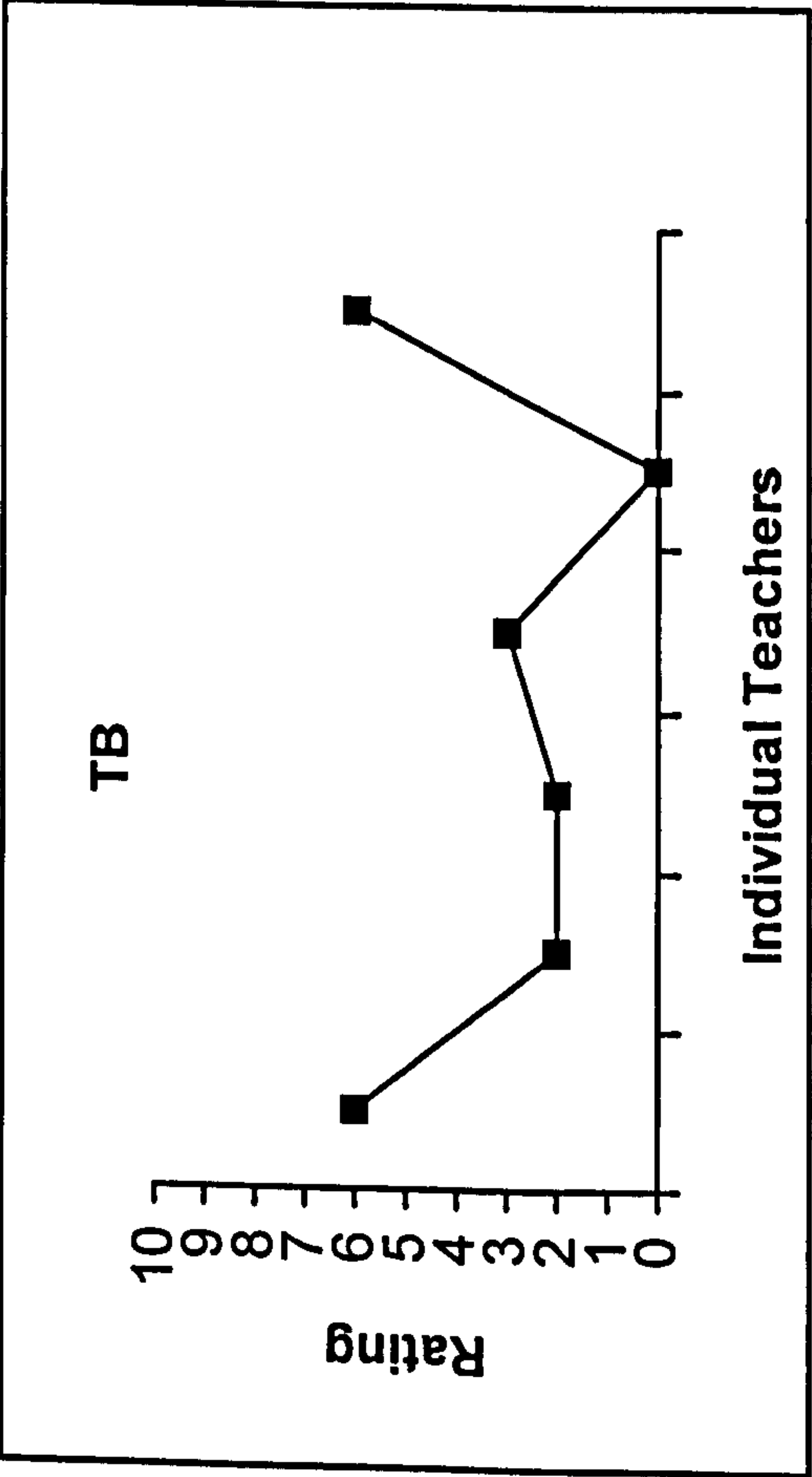


Figure 2 – Initial Teacher Ratings of Pupil Behaviour

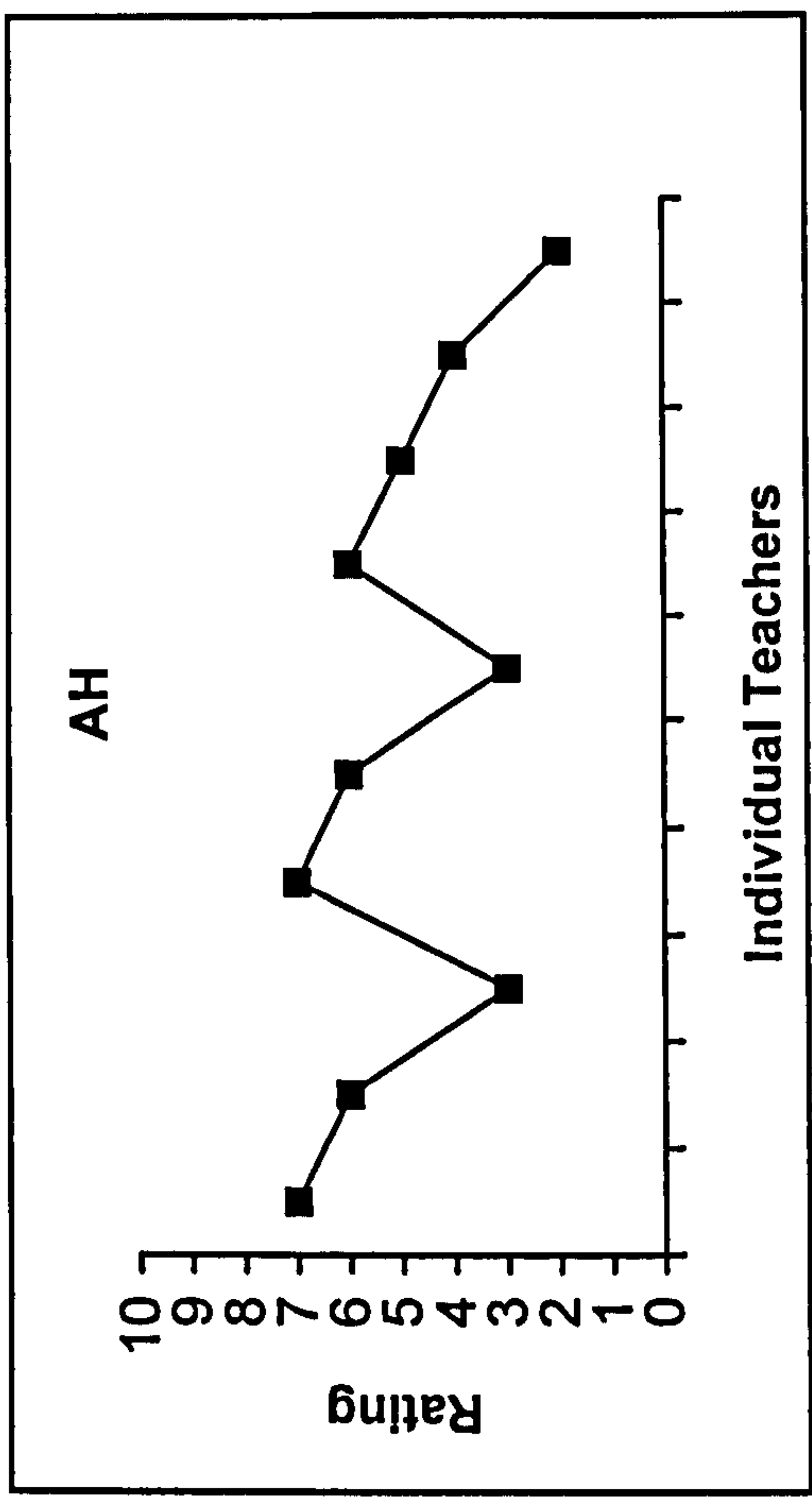
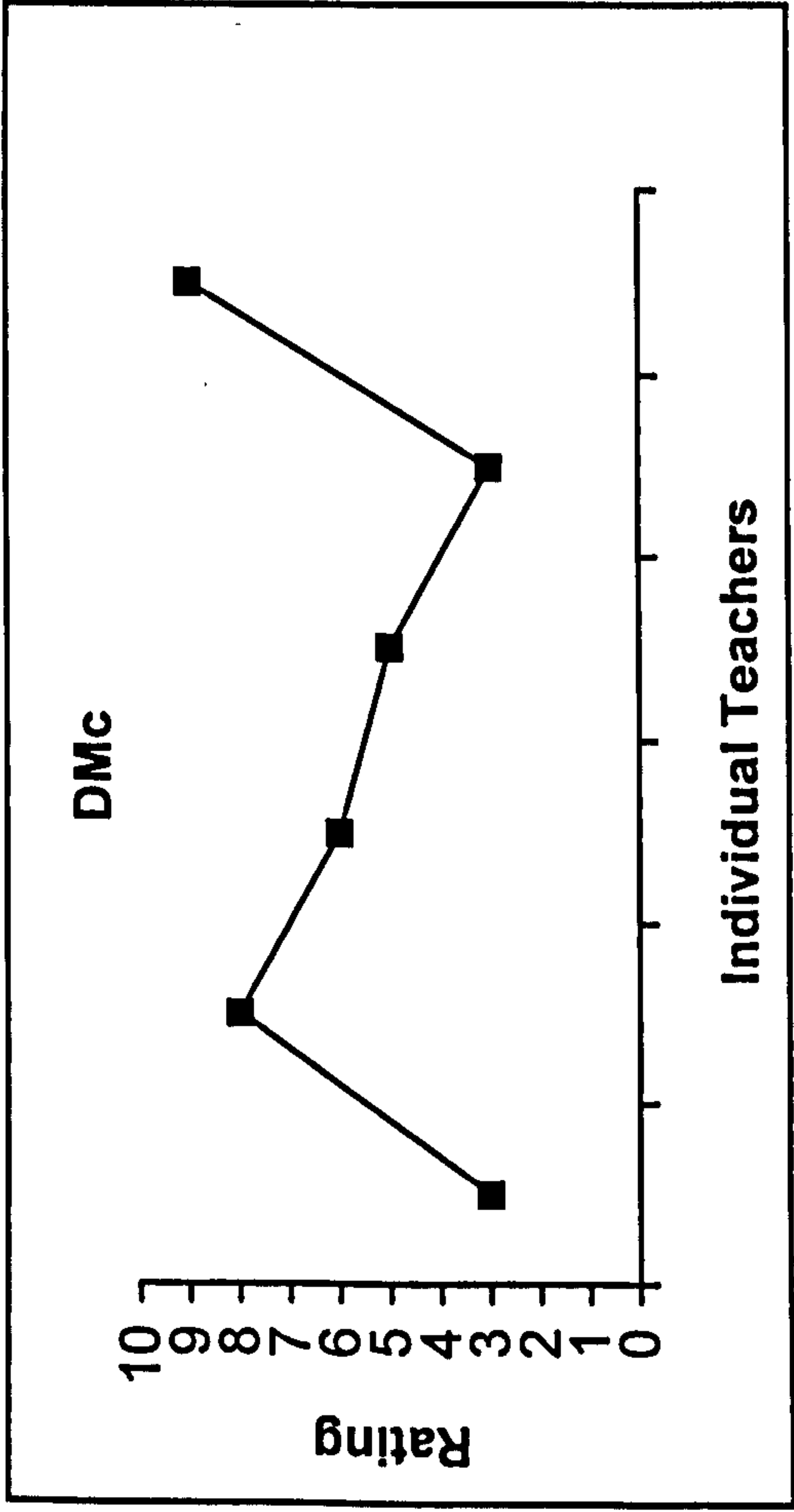
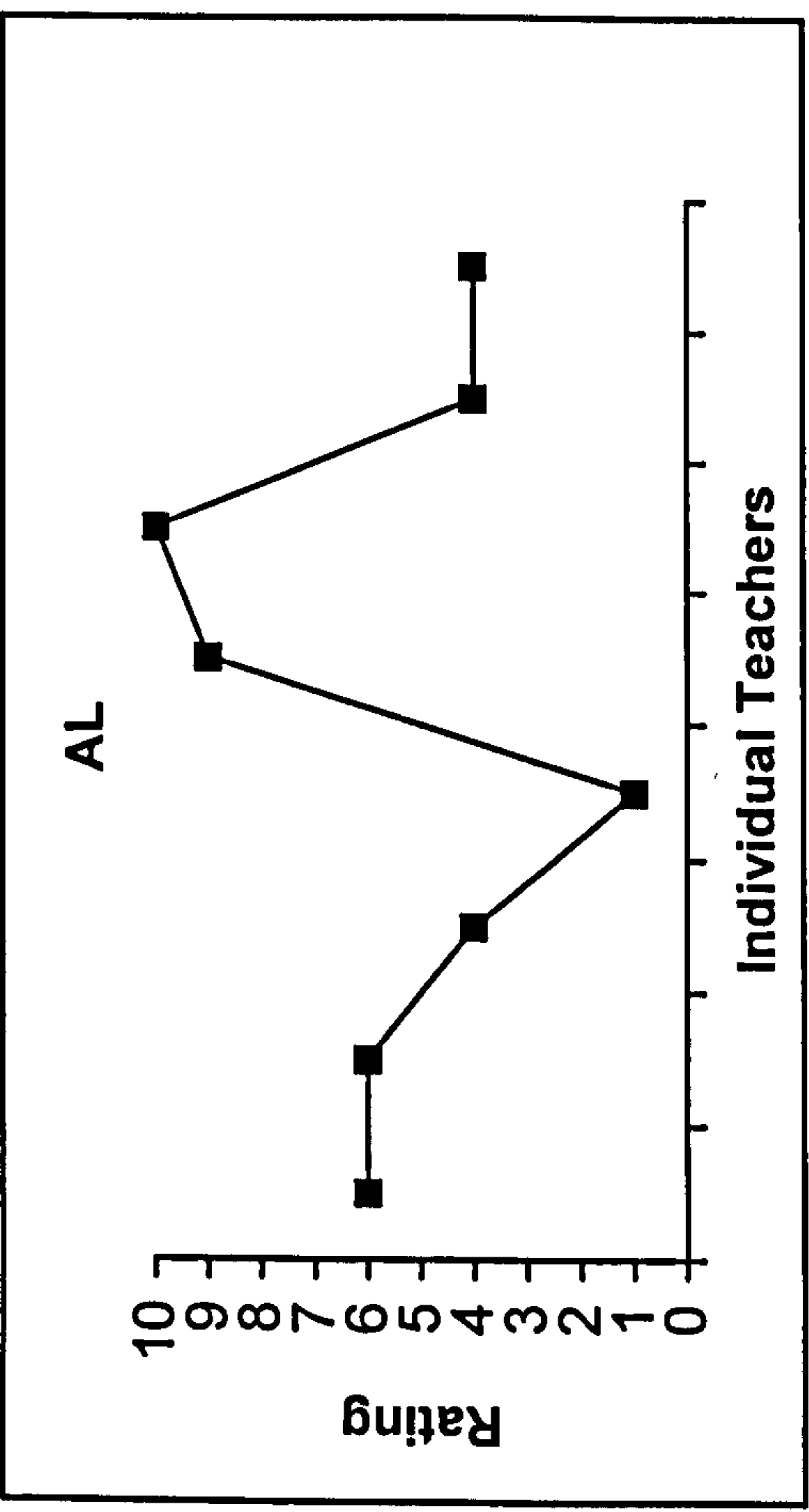
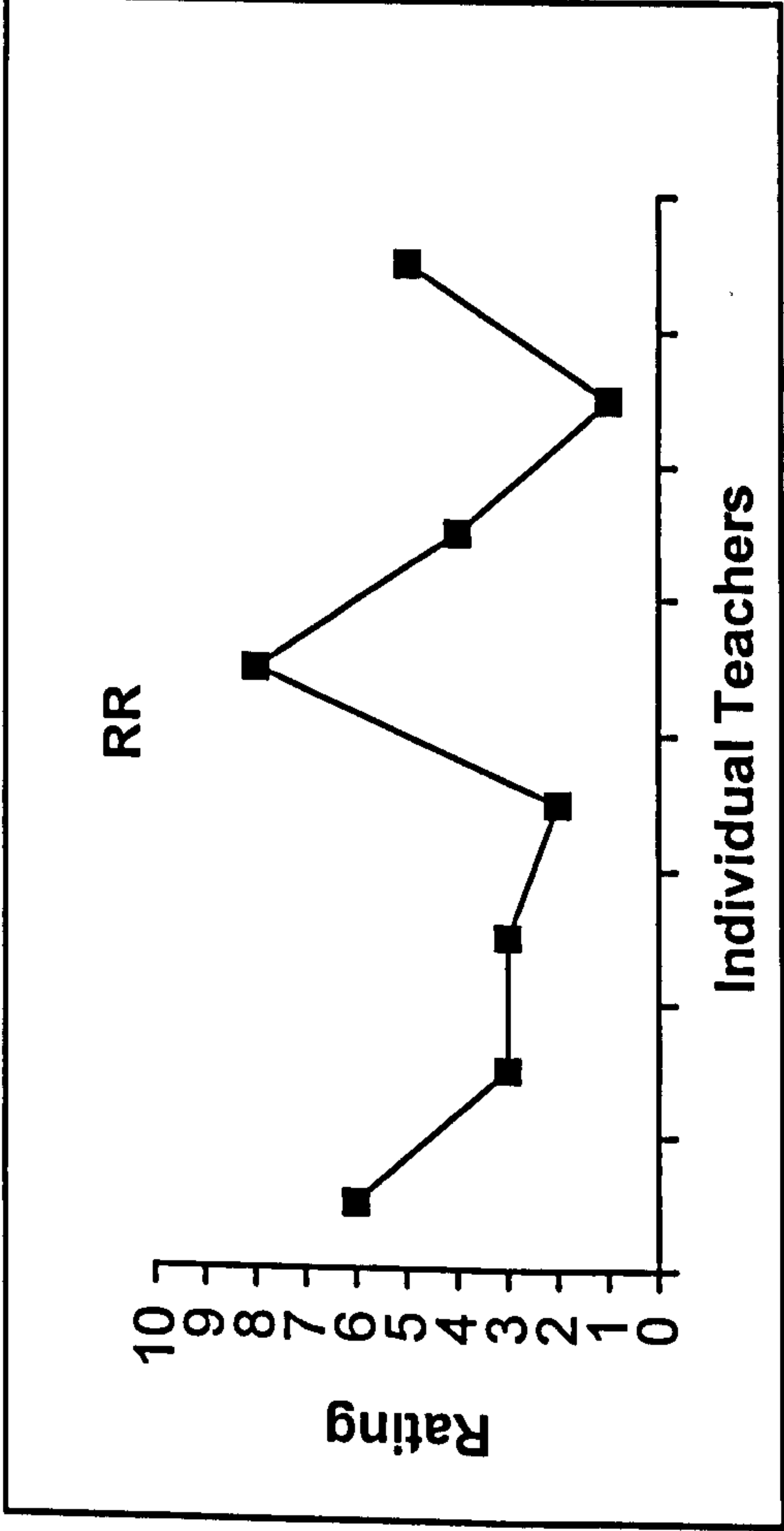


Figure 2 – Initial Teacher Ratings of Pupil Behaviour

In seeking the views of up to fifteen teachers over one pupil significant variation in ratings was anticipated, as a result of one or more of the following:

- the subjective nature of judgements relating to 'acceptable' behaviour
- idiosyncrasies in the use of scaling as a measure
- contextual variation in pupil/teacher interactions

The ratings themselves represent individual and subjective judgements and therefore scores of individual teachers cannot be compared with those of other teachers, although it may be possible to assume some broad similarity of order between ranges of scores, for example 3 or less, 8 or more, mid-range scores. The high scores already noted suggest some consistency in the use of ratings, at least at extremes. A further indication of consistency, albeit tentative, is in the ratings of two pupils (MC, AH), who also produced a relatively flat profile. Nine out of ten ratings for AH, for example, fell within the range 3-7 which would seem to support the idea of a large number of teachers consistently reporting what they saw as difficult, but not extreme, behaviour. The teacher descriptions accompanying the ratings confirmed this view. Similarly, the seven teachers who provided comment on MC all noted related problems, especially his difficulties in relationships with other pupils. Recognising the limitations of teacher ratings as objective measures, but assuming some validity as indicators of concern about real-life interactions in the ratings, the profiles of the pupils illustrate some interesting features, including the following:

- All pupils were, not surprisingly, seen as exhibiting difficult behaviour in some lessons.
- Some pupils, however, had marked contrasts in ratings. AL, for example, received ratings of 1 & 10. MB received four ratings of 8 or higher, but also ratings of 1 & 3. They were both perceived as model pupils in certain lessons and as extremely difficult in others.

- No pupil was perceived as presenting extremely difficult behaviour over all settings, despite the group's description as consisting of the most difficult pupils in Year 7.

This finding of situation-specific difficulties, therefore, offered support to the idea of utilising an approach that is founded on an interactionist/ecosystemic model which sees behaviour as a reflection of the dynamics of a specific situation. Indeed, the conflicting ratings for AL at both 1 and 10 demonstrates quite clearly the dangers of adopting a reductionist model describing behaviour in terms of consistent, within-child factors.

The variation in ratings from the baseline assessment generally illustrates the complexity of the task involved in attempting to define and measure the behaviour of 'problem pupils', and in targeting intervention aimed at improving this. In addition, the confusion evident in the initial referral process among key school personnel and the inadequacies of the incident records demonstrate that the systems for sharing concerns and information about behaviour can be very inefficient. Perhaps one of the most important points is that it could not be assumed that pupils who experienced difficulties in one area of school life would do so in all areas, or that one solution could be universally applied. While there were some similarities across different areas it was important to consider each of these as a potentially individual, and indeed trouble-free, situation. In addition to the concept of the ecosystemic nature of behaviour, therefore, the baseline evidence here also supported the notion of the individuality and the personally constructed meaning of interactions, and it seems appropriate to utilise a method of intervention that holds this concept as one of its fundamental principles. Issues relating to school systems that arose through the course of the study are considered further in the next chapter. For the purposes of this study, however, the data was not intended for direct use in intervention although it nevertheless highlighted areas

of potential exception – either for use with pupils or as a focus for systemic work if it became apparent that the model was unlikely to succeed without this backup.

Pupil -Teacher Comparison

For research purposes only, some comparison is made here between the initial problem situations as described by pupils and by teachers. Although an implication of the model of intervention adopted for this study was that teachers would not need to be aware of pupils' intentions, and no information was given to them routinely, it might be that a comparison would yield information which might be helpful in any future development of the model in school. In any event, it would be reassuring as a practitioner to feel that the pupils' chosen target areas would address at least some aspects of teacher concern. Table 4, over, shows the target areas and ratings noted by pupils alongside the appropriate teacher views, where this information was available. Information on DMc is not included because of his view that one problem existed across all situations.

	Areas Pupils Chose to Change		Equivalent Teacher Ratings		Comment
AH	RE	0	RE	2	Lowest teacher rating Among the lowest
	French	1	French	3	
AL	Maths	4½	Maths	?	Second lowest Lowest
	Science	4	Science	4	
	RE	2	RE	1	
DMc	All subjects		Not appropriate		
MB	RE	1	RE	3	Second lowest Lowest
	Science	1	Science	1	
	Maths	2	Maths	?	
MC	Art	7	Art	4	Among lowest, but no extreme scores at all from teachers
	Science	6	Science	?	
	Maths	4	Maths	6	
RH	English	6	English	8	RH Didn't select either of the two areas rated at 3 by teachers
	Science	9	Science	8	
	Maths	7	Maths	?	
RR	Art	6	Art	6	Among lowest Among lowest
	History	3	History	4	
	Maths	1	Maths	3	
TB	English	4	English	2	Second lowest Lowest Third lowest
	PE	6	PE	0	
	Science	5	Science	3	

? = no information provided

Table 4 – Comparison of Pupil and Teacher Ratings

The comparison is not intended to measure the degree of correlation between pupil and teacher ratings. The aim is simply to confirm for the purposes of the study whether or not there were major discrepancies between what the pupils saw as significant problem areas and the perceptions of teachers. The table sets out the ratings given by pupils for their subject lessons of greatest concern, i.e. target lessons, set alongside the rating given by the appropriate teacher where this was available. Despite the 'missing' returns, a rating was provided by teachers in 16 out of 20 of the subjects singled out by pupils. The comment column in the table also notes that, for a large proportion of these subjects, the ratings were among the lowest for each pupil - some indication of pupil/teacher agreement about areas of greatest difficulty. It would not be surprising, of course, if teachers generally made more effort to return questionnaires when they had strong concerns, although the data does not clearly support this notion. For RH, for example, there were only five returns, with three scores of 8 or over, while TB received six returns but with four of these at 3 or less. Despite the unexplained gaps in information some confidence could still be taken that, for the most part, the lessons targeted by pupils were also areas of concern for the teachers of those subjects.

5.2.2.2 Post Intervention Measures

Exclusions/Incident Reports

Table 5, over, is a summary table of information about exclusions and incidents reported in pupil files. The data was collated over similar timescales, for the periods before and during intervention.

	Fighting		Disruptive/ Uncooperative		Exclusions	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
AH	7	4	6	1	3	1
AL	1	1	10	4	1	0
DMc	4	1	5	1	1	0
MB	2	0	4	1	1	0
MC	5	3	4	3	2	2
RH	7	3	3	3	2	0
RR	1	1	4	3	2	0
TB	4	1	10	4	2	0
TOTALS	31	14	46	22	13	3

Table 5 – Exclusions and Recorded Incidents

The Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks test (Seigel & Castellon, 1988) indicates that all results were significant - Fighting at the $p=0.05$ level, Disruption and Exclusions at the $p= 0.01$ level (one tailed).

The question of the reliability of the data on incidents has been discussed already. Taken as an indicator, though, the numbers of recorded incidents did drop both for the group as a whole and for most pupils taken individually. Because of the legal requirements on schools in respect of their recording of exclusions, the data can be taken as factual. The overall reduction was a welcome development.

Teacher Ratings

The final ratings, i.e. completed after intervention had ended, are detailed in Appendix 5, and the combination of initial and final ratings for the eight pupils in Appendix 6. The returns were again disappointingly low in view of the fact that these pupils were reported to represent the major concerns in the year group. In all there were 40/93 returns (43%), each providing a rating and comments on perceived improvement. It may be, of course, that some of the non-returns actually represented a lack of current concern. Examination of the returns showed that there were twenty-four cases where an initial but no final return was made and of these, fifteen initial ratings had been at 6 or higher as opposed to only six at 5 or less. This might be an indication that some teachers did not feel strongly or concerned enough to return final questionnaires as a matter of priority over other demands on their time. On the other hand, sixteen of the non-returns were in respect of two particular pupils for whom attendance continued to be a problem throughout the year, and the returns could be a reflection of this fact.

Despite the gaps in the data, all pupils received between four and seven ratings from teachers and the information is treated here as a representative sample of the total number of situations involving the intervention group. Because the ratings produced only ordinal data it is not possible to make statistical comparison between teachers over an individual pupil and they have so far been used only to give broad indications of the scale of problems in particular situations. Even with individual teachers it is inherent in the context and the nature of issues under study that over a period of time the same graduation of scale may not be used in making judgements. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume some level of consistency from skilled professionals and to conclude that a shift between ratings represents a genuine change in position. While substantial improvement would always be welcomed, in practice a change in a positive

direction might be a more realistic achievement over a period of only weeks for pupils with reported longstanding problems.

There were thirty-five pairs of initial and final ratings available for the following analysis, each describing a specific situation. Where a range of scores was included in an initial rating the highest value was used here, in order to reduce the bias towards evidence of improvement. There were no such final ratings. Of the pairings:

- 21/35 (60%) showed an increased rating, i.e. towards behaviour seen as more in keeping with classroom norms. Using the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks test (Seigel & Castellon, 1988) the results were significant at the $p=0.01$ level (one tailed).
- Only 6/35 (17%) showed signs of deterioration, even though the overall situations of the pupils concerned had previously, by definition, been seen as deteriorating.
- 8/35 (23%) were rated as unchanged -no better, but no worse.

Where data was available for comparison, therefore, a large proportion of situations for the group as a whole were seen as having improved. All pupils were rated as having achieved some improvement in at least some areas but increased ratings were not uniformly distributed. There was evidence for some pupils in the ratings, for example, of large scale and general improvement across settings. There were also individuals who made good progress in specific areas. It would not be unreasonable to assume that this improvement might make a contribution to the overall reduction in exclusions.

Additional Information from Teachers

Despite the already stated limitations of the data from the exclusion figures, incident reports and ratings, each still make a contribution to describing the overall situation for

pupils at the end of the intervention period. Supporting data was also made available in two other ways, through the written information from teachers provided with the final ratings (listed in Appendix 7) and through occasional personal comment offered by teachers to the researcher during the course of intervention. The following vignettes are summary statements, based on the reported situation for each pupil and incorporating all of the information available from teachers and the pupils themselves.

AH Only 4/14 final ratings were returned, perhaps due to poor attendance. Of those returned two noted progress, one no change and one deterioration. Of his target areas, one noted improvement and the other was not returned. He was reported to be responding better to adults and to be remaining on task for longer periods although there were still concerns expressed by all that his absences were making it difficult for him to sustain improvements. There was a reduction in exclusions from 3 to 1, with incidents of fighting and disruption halved.

AL 5/10 final ratings returned, three noting progress, one no change and one deterioration. Two of the non-returns were from teachers who had initially rated him as 9 & 10 and conversations with these teachers confirmed that they had no concerns. Two of his target subjects were rated as improved, and one not returned. Others noted that he was making obvious efforts to improve his behaviour in class. There were no exclusions and a reduction in reported incidents of disruption from 10 to 4. The reported incidents occurred at the time of a family break up.

DMc 6/10 ratings returned all noting progress. His foundation class teacher, who would spend significantly more time with him than any other teacher, approached the EP during the course of intervention to comment on a dramatic improvement in behaviour. This teacher gave ratings of 3 and subsequently 8. All other respondents noted

improvements, with few reservations. There were no exclusions and a reduction in incidents of fighting from 4 to 1, and in disruption from 5 to 1.

MB 4/11 returns, three noting progress and one some deterioration. Two of the returns noting progress were her target areas, with one not returned. Comments noted that she was more settled, more willing to listen to staff direction, and that her behaviour had seen some improvement. Any problems remained in limited, specific areas. There was still some inconsistency in behaviour, although this was mainly in the subject in which she had obtained her lowest initial score but had nevertheless improved from a rating of 1 to 4. Four of the non-returns were from initial ratings of 8 & 9. There were no exclusions and only one reported incident of disruption.

MC 5/12 returns, only one of which noted progress - although this was in one of his targeted areas. Of his other two, one reported no change and one was not returned. One other teacher noted no change and two deterioration. One teacher gave no initial rating but a final rating of 2. MC continued to record incidents of fighting and disruption and was excluded twice - the only pupil for whom there was no reduction.

RH 5/12 returns, none of which indicated progress, but the ratings alone did not fully reflect other information on how things were. One rating, his area of greatest difficulty (French - not noted as a target by him) was low initially, at 3, and reduced further to 2 with comments stressing the problems. Another rating dropped from 8 to 7 but with the comment 'He continues to work quietly in lessons'. This was one of his target areas. One teacher gave ratings of 8 on both occasions, noting that 'He always works hard'. One further teacher provided only a final rating, at 10, noting his enthusiasm in class. There were still some incidents of fighting, although reduced from 7 to 3, and 3 disruptive incidents. Most of these related to French lessons. Exclusions fell from 2 to 0.

RR 5/11 returns. He continued to have some attendance problems, after having spent long periods of time absent from school in Years 5 & 6. Most of his scores were fairly low, both initially and finally, indicating the extreme nature of his difficulties. Even so he did manage some progress. His foundation teacher, for example, returned the questionnaire personally in order to explain her ratings. She described his move from 1 to 3 as representing 'immense progress' as he had started to develop relationships and become more settled in class. His art teacher, one of his targets, noted slight progress. Even in the case where the ratings indicated no change and one in which ratings dropped from 3 to 2 (Maths - the greatest concern of RR) these were accompanied by the positive comments 'shouts out less' and 'much better work recently'. Reports of disruption continued at a similar level, but exclusions fell from 2 to 0.

TB 7/13 returns. Six of these showed improved ratings and one had submitted no initial rating but gave a final rating of 9. All of TB's target subjects were reported as having improved. One teacher, whose ratings increased from 2 to 5 (TB's target of English) approached the EP to say how pleased she was about this. A meeting was subsequently held involving him, TB, and her teacher in order to acknowledge her efforts. The number of fighting episodes reduced from 4 to 1, disruption from 10 to 4, and exclusions from 2 to 0.

Finally, even though the SFBT model here did not involve collaborative work with subject teachers, they were provided with what was termed a 'strategy sheet' following the termination of the intervention period. The background to the development of these sheets will be outlined further in the Discussion chapter, but it was hoped that they would help maintain and promote further progress. The sheet was produced by the researcher, in consultation with the pupils and Year Manager, and sent out under her name. The

sheet contained a solution focused collation of positive ideas for supporting pupils, drawn from information provided by teachers themselves through the questionnaires, a list of target behaviours from the pupils, and a suggestion that teachers watch for and acknowledge pupils' attempts to achieve these. The strategy sheets are attached as Appendix 8.

5.3 Summary

Even though the information from teachers proved to be less comprehensive than had been hoped, the available information, taken together with the pupil ratings and interview analyses, provides a multiple data source from which some tentative conclusions can be drawn. They are summarised here, and relate to process and outcome:

Process

- All of the pupils referred to the project were willing to engage in the SFBT process with the researcher, despite the fact that they did not request help . For the majority of pupils who completed a period of intervention their willingness to engage in attempts to achieve change was indicative of what in SFBT terminology is referred to as a 'customer relationship'.
- The apparent problems most frequently encountered by pupils in engaging with the initial model included difficulties in articulating detail within the various elements; their uncertainty during the early stages about the very nature of difficulties; recognising their own contribution to patterns of problematic, and equally to the more successful, interactions; recognising the possibility that change might take place gradually, and anticipating events which might act against progress.
- Although there was not an exact matching of pupil and teacher identified problems, there were few significant discrepancies. The causes attributed to problems were, however, notably different for pupils and teachers - although remarkably similar

among pupils. There was also commonality in the actions suggested by pupils to address areas of difficulty.

- With support all pupils were able to note an overall goal for themselves, and then to set targets for achieving these. Although the initial model formed the basis of all work with pupils the pattern and sequences in which the various elements of the model were encountered or utilised varied, according to pupil need.
- One technique that is generally held to be a fairly central feature of SFBT, the miracle question, was used in only a minority of cases. In contrast, one aspect which is frequently held to be irrelevant to the approach, in depth discussion of problems, featured significantly in the work with pupils.
- The other elements of the model were all used successfully, although not always as anticipated. Strategies for change were generated by the pupils themselves, after identification of exceptions. The scaling technique was reported by the pupils themselves as the most helpful aspect of the approach.
- What was achieved was accomplished almost exclusively by working directly with the pupils, with little involvement of systems more widely. There were some indications, however, that where teachers were included in the intervention, even if only to offer acknowledgement to a pupil, this had a highly motivating effect. To this end, and as a means of promoting the maintenance of improvement, the solution focused strategy sheets were produced.

Outcome

Pupil Views

- Seven out of the eight pupils reported successful attainment of their targets.

Although this improvement was not matched target for target with teacher reports, there were many cases of confirmed progress.

- Much of the improvement was reported by pupils as having been achieved within the first few sessions of intervention.

Teacher information

a) For the group as a whole

- There was an overall reduction in the numbers of exclusions experienced by pupils, alongside fewer reported serious incidents.
- There was a significant move in ratings by teachers in the direction of more acceptable behaviour, mostly in classroom settings.
- Seven out of eight pupils had improvement reported by teachers in one or more areas and/or aspects of their behaviour.
- Progress was not uniformly distributed, either between pupils or across individual settings.

b) For individuals

- For four pupils (AL, DMc, MB, TB) evidence was reported of improvement in a number of settings.
- There was little suggestion of change in the situation at school for one pupil (MC). Although he felt he had made progress in one subject area, he largely agreed with the assessment of teachers.
- Three pupils (AH, RH, RR) had more mixed results, but all with some evidence of improvement. While the ratings for RR were not encouraging in themselves the qualified comments from his foundation teacher would have been afforded some priority in any case review of his progress.
- For some pupils (e.g. DMc, TB) the scale of improvements was marked. For RR what seemed to be most significant, however, was the shift relative to his starting point. While the standard against which the teachers were asked to rate all pupils was the

behaviour of others, in order to offer them a reference point, the progress of pupils was measured in relation to their own initial positions.

A number of the conclusions highlighted here will be taken up and discussed in greater depth in the chapter which now follows. Further qualitative data, based on records maintained in the research diary, will also be incorporated in an attempt to clarify some of the underlying, but important, issues of relevance to the success and future development of the SFBT model at both individual and school systems levels.

6. Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to relate the findings of the study to the initial research questions, in an attempt to develop some understanding of the issues involved. The three research questions centred on:

- a) The processes underlying engagement by pupils with the initial SFBT model and the subsequent development of the model through the period of study.
- b) The impact, or outcome, of the intervention on their situations in school.
- c) The compatibility of the SFBT model with existing school systems

In addressing these research questions, this chapter will follow a different order than has been the case so far. Firstly, the implications of the data on outcome will be considered further, along with some comment on its limitations. This will then be followed by a discussion of some length and detail around the prime concern of the researcher as practitioner – the SFBT model. The place of a revised model in the context of school systems and EP working practices will then be reviewed.

6.1 Outcome

At the outset the intention was to use the information from various sources - pupil records, teacher ratings and pupil ratings – so as to achieve some degree of triangulation in respect of the effectiveness of the intervention. The analysis of findings in the previous chapter presented a summary of the resultant data and also referred to its limitations. At first glance the data on exclusions seems fairly straightforward. The records could confidently be taken as representing the actual number of exclusions which took place and the significant reduction was a welcome development for all concerned. It would be inappropriate, however, to consider the question of exclusion for this group detached from the politics of the issue at both local and national levels. The

DFEE publication 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support', for example, had previously set out one of its principle aims as being a reduction in exclusions. At the time of the present study, there was still much ongoing national debate about the document and subsequent position statements by the government, teacher unions etc. not surprisingly, informal discussions with the school senior management team indicated that there was a desire to reduce the overall exclusion rate in this school. Indeed, figures collated by the researcher indicated that there had already been a steady reduction in exclusions during the three academic years before the study began, a trend which mirrors the recently released DfES national statistics (2003) on exclusions from secondary schools. However, the fact that the pupils in this study had already experienced exclusions (some more than one), and were at the outset referred to as being under threat of permanent exclusion, confirmed that there had been no absolute policy decision not to exclude. Furthermore, the fact that the exclusions had taken place within their first term in secondary school seemed to reflect a ready willingness to do so, and a situation of serious concern for these pupils.

A further possible explanation for the reduction in exclusions was the very fact that pupils had been referred to the project. Evans (1999) comments on the inclination of schools, in the belief that problems are essentially located outside of their own systems - in pupils and their families - to refer them to an expert to be 'fixed'. It could have been, then, that the pupils were seen as being 'dealt with' and so decisions were taken not to exclude them on the basis that this might somehow interfere with the individual interventions. If there were an equivalent pupil group not participating in the study it might have been possible to make at least a basic comparison of data on exclusions, but the fact that the pupils in the study were those about whom there was greatest concern, and who as such were by definition most at risk of exclusion, meant that this was not possible. However, when the experiences of the researcher in his attempts to collaborate with school

systems, described later in this chapter, are taken into consideration the likelihood becomes even stronger that this was not a significant influence on outcome. In any event, the involvement of the researcher did not actually prevent the exclusion of two pupils during intervention. In summary, then, while it would be impossible to measure the exact contribution of intervention to the reduction in exclusions, it would be accurate to note that, prior to intervention, all pupils had experienced exclusion and that there was a marked reduction from the onset of intervention.

One of the main limitations of the data sources was the reliability of the records of incidents of problem behaviour, as highlighted by the Key Stage 3 Manager. It should not be unrealistic to assume that her position and lengthy experience would provide her with a reasonable working knowledge of school practices, and so her comments should be taken seriously. On the other hand, there was no reason to presume that the practices adopted by teachers in recording incidents would have changed significantly over the periods before and during intervention. If the original records reflected only a proportion of what she assumed to be a 'true' baseline position, then the incidents recorded during intervention might represent a similar proportion of what she would consider 'actual' incidents. The drop in the number of recorded incidents to less than fifty per cent of the baseline level seems likely, therefore, to be indicative of some reduction in the levels of teacher concern about the behaviour of pupils in the study.

The use of such records also demonstrates some of the pitfalls associated with dependence on a generalised and open-ended measure of behaviour, implicit in which is the concept of objectivity and truth. Aside from the inconsistencies among staff in record-keeping, the ratings data from both the pupils and teachers showed that what the researcher was dealing with could not be reduced to one 'problem' per pupil, let alone one whose occurrence could be measured independently. Instead there was a matrix of

unique interactions between individuals - a situation predicted by the discourse of social constructionism, and a position assumed by SFBT. From this standpoint the 'problem' is defined in terms of the cumulative perceptions of individual interactions. The most valid measure of successful outcome will, therefore, be the extent to which teachers expressed increased satisfaction about their interactions with pupils, and the pupils with their teachers and peers.

From the teachers' perspective, this satisfaction might be expressed in one of two ways - fewer incident records in pupil files and/or through improved final ratings. The analysis of findings revealed some evidence of both although, as noted, with reservations.

Ultimately, the finding of a reduction in exclusions should be one indication of satisfaction on the part of the school as a whole. It is difficult, however, to be confident about the basis of the non-returns of the staff questionnaires. On the one hand they may be indicative of teacher apathy or lack of time; on the other it might be argued that, with no greater requirement than to provide a simple numerical rating in respect of only one pupil, failure to return was symptomatic of reduced concern about a pupil previously perceived as causing major problems. Even had a 100% return been achieved it would be unrealistic, given the complexity of the picture, to expect such a clear outcome as improvement in each of the 93 subject areas under scrutiny.

It might be equally over-optimistic to expect that any progress would be linear and without setbacks, even against a background of general progress. This overall approach to evaluation, despite the advantage of its affinity with social constructionism, is therefore dependent upon a number of circumstantial factors – including the time at which the question is asked - with the situations of concern in a state of continual variation. In this case the timing was determined in one of two ways, either by the pupils voluntarily suggesting their own general satisfaction or else by the ending of the project in which the

study was set, although in most cases where the latter was the determining factor the pupils were still reporting improved situations at that point. Despite its limitations, therefore, when the data from both teachers and pupils is considered together there are good indications that the conditions for satisfactory outcome were achieved. For these 'successful' states of resolution to be maintained, of course, the predominant overall perceptions of teachers would need to remain weighted in favour of satisfactory contact with pupils. While no follow up ratings were sought within the framework of this study the researcher, as EP for the school, did subsequently have access to information which indicated that all of the pupils completed the school year without permanent exclusion.

It cannot be claimed of course that the progress made was as a sole consequence of the intervention, any more than such conclusions can ever be drawn from research on social interaction in a natural setting. One approach that has been developed in order to illustrate that an initiative has exerted influence on a process of change in the context of a complex, social setting, however, is outlined by Connell & Kubisch (1999). They acknowledge that, in such situations, there will be a range of influential factors at work, some of which might even be acting in opposition to the planned action. Their Theory of Change approach to evaluation attempts, instead, to establish staged links between long-term outcomes and initial action in full acceptance of this. While the approach was not referred to in the setting up of this study, their model does have some potential application here, if only in retrospect. Certainly, there were other forms of action being taken in the school before the period of intervention. Despite this, the situations involving the pupils were viewed as still deteriorating. Indeed, referral to the project was a consequence of this conclusion. Equally true was that there was a significant drop in exclusion rate through the time of the study, and a reduction in incident reports. At the same time, the questionnaires suggested an increase in satisfaction with pupil behaviour by teachers, and this correlated well with pupil ratings. The pupil satisfaction ratings, in

turn, related to what they saw as the consequences of their own actions – doing something different. These actions, confirmed by the pupils, were planned, performed, reviewed and refined as the central core activity of SFBT. Finally, at the end of the sequence of interviews with the researcher, the pupils were asked whether they felt that the sessions with the researcher had been helpful to them and, if so, in what way. MC, as noted in the last chapter, did not feel that his situation had improved although he did remark that he had nevertheless enjoyed contact with the researcher, whom he felt 'cared what happened to him' and had 'tried his best'. The remainder all articulated a view that the sessions had indeed been helpful, and that the scaling exercise in particular had been crucially important, in the way that it enabled them to set their own targets and then check on progress. Taken as a whole therefore, it is suggested, the information presented here represents as good an endorsement of an individual intervention as would have been realistically possible in the circumstances.

Although the overall evaluation of effectiveness relates primarily to the outcome measures as described above, two specific issues that featured in the outcome research referred to earlier are worth considering here. The first is the extent to which the intervention did in fact prove to be brief - while the development of the model and its successful application in the context of a school were the prime aims, a method of intervention which is also time-limited would have considerable value in everyday practice. The fact that the pupils made progress towards their goals in the early sessions, some of it rapid, is important information in terms of the processes of the model, but this information also gives some indication about the number of sessions which might be required to reach a state of satisfactory solution. One of the pupils, MC, felt that he was no further forward in one of his target areas when the project came to an end, by which time he had participated in eight sessions; RR became involved relatively late and intervention was also ended for him by the deadline on the project, although he

was making progress. Three of the remaining six pupils announced satisfaction within six or fewer sessions. The other three each reached a high rating well before their final session with the researcher, and certainly by the sixth session, but expressed a desire to continue meeting. Even though there was no deliberate attempt to stay within the six-session prediction of some other studies, then, (McDonald, 1994; De Jong & Berg, 1996; Lee, 1997) the indications are that it might have been possible to discontinue intervention at around that point for most of the pupils.

The second issue related to previous outcome studies and which it was anticipated might arise here. This was that the project might face referrals of pupils categorically labelled as exhibiting a 'problem type', terminology which is a fairly common feature of the clinical literature in particular. With some of the research reported earlier it was apparently possible to reduce the issues of concern to a single category, and to describe the extent of this problem with one specific rating. In the present study this proved not to be the case. No one simple or generalised term was used to describe the pupils referred, and the teachers' collective profiles also illustrated the variation of opinion about individual pupils. This lack of categorisation, compared with other studies, might be a reflection of the number of teachers involved with individual pupils in a secondary school, to the extent that an overall consensus (and therefore label) might be unlikely to emerge. It may be that the tendency to 'diagnose', even where the within-child perspective of behaviour predominates, is less prevalent in schools than in the clinic-based settings which until very recently have tended to dominate reported SFBT research. It might simply be because the researcher did not utilise labels in the way that some other studies have done, either as a means of establishing subject groups or else as a consequence of post-hoc data analysis. In any event, the question of efficacy of the SFBT for different types of problem became meaningless in this context.

6.2 The Model

In making the decision to adopt an action research framework the overriding influence was the importance, given the real life context, of developing the most effective SFBT model possible within the limits of the study. Such a research paradigm, it was hoped, would take into account the combination of pupil and practitioner needs in simultaneously pursuing both change and understanding of the processes involved. Although the stage of development of the model attained during the relatively short period of this study might itself ultimately become only an early step in a much longer evolutionary process, this form of evaluation had the potential for greater immediate practical impact than might an appraisal of a pre-existing model developed elsewhere. The relative success here for most pupils in using an intervention framework that made specific provision for individual tailoring would seem to support the incorporation of flexibility into the employment of the stages and techniques associated with SFBT. Indeed, the more detailed consideration of the processes underlying the engagement with pupils which now follows would suggest that the decision may even have been crucial. As the analysis of findings illustrates, the individual SFBT interventions themselves took on a format not dissimilar to that of action research. The overall sequence involved 'mini-cycles' of action, critical reflection and refinement, a feature of successful intervention similarly noted by Miller (2000). For the majority of pupils this was a prominent feature, particularly in the early stages of the model, and it seems important therefore to attempt to clarify what was happening. In order to help achieve this, the processes involved are again considered in logical sequence so that common and/or individual features of intervention can be highlighted, along with decisions made within the research paradigm. The pathways that pupils followed are summarised in the flow chart, Fig. 3 over:

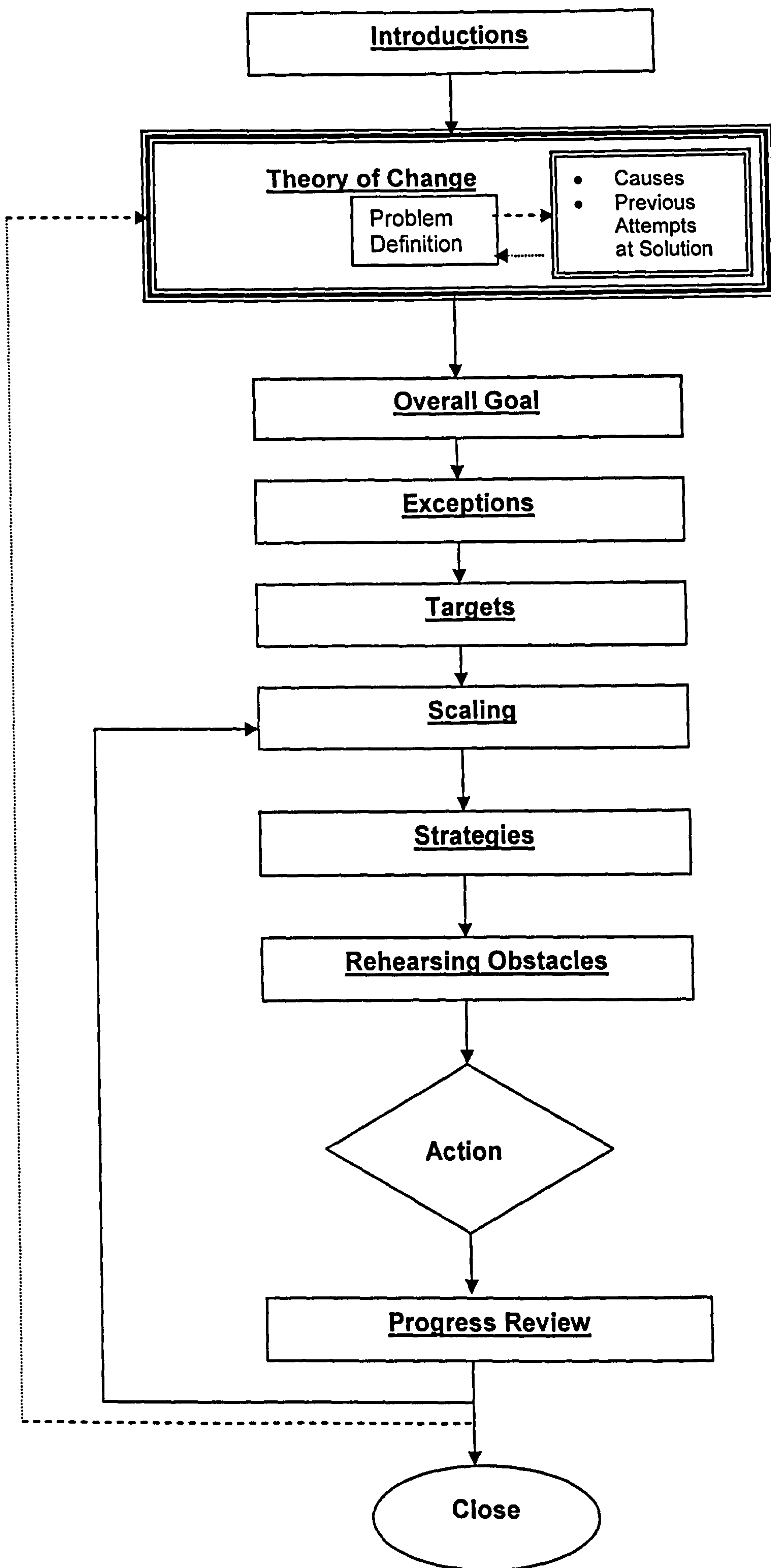


Figure 3 – Revised Model Flowchart

In order to explain the rationale underpinning the eventual sequences of the revised model itself, however, some of the contextual factors - matters linked to pupil perceptions, and researcher/pupil relationships, which also emerged as highly influential - need to be taken into account and an attempt will be made to link these through the course of this discussion.

Crucially, the model was not simply the mechanical application of a series of constituent elements or techniques, the sequence of which had been arranged to accommodate this particular school setting. Instead, there was a continuing interaction and interdependence of situational, interpersonal and technique-based factors, with each seeming to dominate proceedings at particular phases in the intervention. At times their combined effect was clearly important. The three main themes appeared to be:

- The fact that the pupils did not request help from the researcher and therefore did not arrive expressing a desire for change.
- The need to establish a supportive, constructive and collaborative relationship from such a starting point.
- The importance of a SFBT framework that was sensitive to individual need, and responsive to the pupils' own fluctuating perceptions/explanations of their situations.

The prevailing factor at the outset was perhaps inevitably that none of the pupils had requested involvement with the researcher. In this sense they were what SFBT literature typically refers to as 'involuntary', having been referred by teachers because of what were seen as their emotional & behavioural difficulties, presenting as management problems in school. The pupils were also what Duncan, Hubble and Miller (1997) describe as 'veterans of unsuccessful therapy', with a recorded history of largely failed attempts by adults to alter their behaviour. As 'therapy veterans', whose situation in

school had reached a stage of crisis, the group encompassed a very different population from those of studies such as Thorne & Ivens (1999), in which pupils were specifically selected on the basis that this was *not* the case. Teachers who had previously worked with the pupils in this study, in this and no doubt previous schools, had already made attempts to effect change, based on behavioural management and on approaches aimed at promoting what they would broadly describe as 'insight'. In addition, as the pupils themselves were later keen to point out, they had exhausted the full range of disciplinary procedures available in the school, leading to exclusions.

As a result of what was interpreted as their refusal to respond to such measures the pupils were, in effect, simply informed that they would need to meet the researcher, albeit with parental consent. The implicit message would be 'Because your behaviour has been so bad, and because you have failed to co-operate with our attempts to change you, you are going to be seen by a psychologist'. This discourse in schools, which sets up expectations that an 'expert' EP will 'fix' a problem child, seems as likely to influence the beliefs of pupils as those of teachers and it is therefore important to recognise, although perhaps not quite so easy to fully appreciate, the impact of such a statement on a young person. The alternative to seeing the researcher, however, was for them to face further punishment and/or exclusions. As Osborn (1999) points out, however, such ultimatums frequently engender feelings of confinement and helplessness and are likely to induce embarrassment, anxiety, and suspicion. The discomfort, and in some cases reluctance, of some of the pupils was quite evident at the first meetings and, as already noted, for a small number this continued beyond the first session, never far from the surface. Duncan, Hubble & Miller (1997) also suggest that enforced treatment has the potential to make a client feel 'wrong', which then generates resistance aimed at salvaging some self-respect. de Shazer (1985) similarly argues, although refuting that this is actually resistance, that apparent non-cooperation is a direct consequence of a

lack of full ownership of the problem. Even where students are able to acknowledge why teachers want them to receive 'help' they may not be interested in participation, according to Sklare (1997), at anything other than a superficial level. Similarly, Gingerich & Wabeke (2001) warn that counsellors working in school settings should guard against falling into the trap of trying to convince students that they have problems, an approach that Selekman (1993) suggests simply increases resistance and is ultimately counter-productive. The adolescents in this study would be unremarkable in believing that they did not need help from adults claiming to know what was best for them. In any event, their early responses (blaming, justifying their own actions etc) suggested that they were not prepared for a SFBT approach. Their descriptions of previous experiences suggested that they would have been unlikely to be able to anticipate what would happen in sessions, and indeed their later comments on experiences of coercive methods suggested that they would almost certainly be expecting something very different. In all, therefore, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the circumstances under which the pupils were to meet the researcher were not ideally suited to the expectation by teachers of rapid change, regardless of the model of intervention.

Because of this context, therefore, the starting point in the model, the initial **introductions**, were especially important. Although not only relevant to SFBT, of course, it was necessary to take into account the need for directly promoting a situation conducive to meaningful and constructive application of its techniques. Wheeler (2001) reports on the importance of the former, and actually notes the difficulty in distinguishing the relative contributions of the SFBT model and of the relationship fostered by its techniques. The findings of the common factors research of Hubble, Duncan & Miller (1999) and Duncan & Miller (2000) have been mentioned already. They also attach particular importance to the impact of the relationship and therapeutic alliance in work with individuals, suggesting that these aspects of intervention actually provide the

greatest influence on any improvement in a situation. Nau & Shilts (2000) similarly argue that the techniques of SFBT should be considered secondary to the groundwork initially established in the therapeutic relationship, and Murphy (1997) comments that failure to utilise relationship factors effectively will actually serve to undermine the value of technique. In the present situation, this personal aspect of the intervention was quite clearly going to become a prerequisite of any successful model. In helping these pupils move from a position of uncertainty and mistrust of a strange and potentially powerful authority figure to one of feeling unconditionally supported in collaborative solution finding, therefore, the 'problem-free' talk was almost inevitably going to be more than Sklare's (1997) social nicety. Indeed, the pupils' histories, combined with the circumstances of their contact with the researcher, dictated that the first meeting could never have been entirely 'problem free'. The impression most pupils gave, of expecting criticism, and then of relief that the sessions were perhaps not going to be 'more of the same' vindicated the decision to attend directly, and in the early stages exclusively, to the development of a positive researcher/ pupil relationship through engaging in a process of conversation rather than interview, around topics of personal interest. Although two pupils, AH in particular and RH to a lesser extent, appeared to the researcher to be particularly guarded throughout, this element of the model did seem an important first step in setting the scene for what followed. Without the establishment of some genuine rapport, the first meeting had the potential to be quickly perceived by the pupils as nothing more than further conspiracy on the part of an adult to force them to admit fault.

Having spent time in trying to establish a basis for potentially supportive relationships, it was now possible to embark on the next stage of the model. This phase centred around Murphy & Duncan's (1997) concept of **theory of change**, itself determined by pupil perceptions of the **nature** and **causes** of problems, and evaluation of **previous**

attempts at solution. Paradoxically, one of the generally recognised fundamental principles of SFBT denies the need to understand problems in order to find solutions, although Sklare (1997) sees problem talk as an opportunity for pupils to 'unload' if necessary. Korman (1997), however, takes the view that problem-talk actually acts to magnify the extent of a problem and, furthermore, that the kinds of questions needed to help formulate an understanding of the problem and those needed to be asked in order to help things change are mutually exclusive. In contrast, and in a way that perhaps clearly illustrates variation in practice among those who would describe themselves as solution focused therapists, Murphy & Duncan (1997) assume a position closer to that of narrative therapists as outlined by Zimmerman & Beaudoin (2002). Their view is that within a social constructionist paradigm it is crucial to fully explore a pupil's perceptions of a problem situation if these are to remain central to the process of intervention and that it is necessary in order to appreciate how previous attempts at solution, based in alternative discourses, may themselves have actually become part of the problem. Rosenberg (2000) comments that solution focused therapists, in their enthusiasm to identify exceptions and facilitate change, can unwisely play down or trivialise the clients' experiences of problems and Lee (1997) also reports the view, based on interviews with clients on the matter, that the opportunity to talk about problems is particularly helpful to the SFBT process. The decision to include a problem definition phase here also took into account other factors. The first was the possibility of useful information being made available for research purposes. More important, however, were the issues of pupils' rights (Gersch, Holgate & Sigston, 1993) and recognition of the pragmatic importance of pupil participation in decision making (Gersch, 1996; Morton, 1996; Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000). Similarly, in their case study presentation of work by an EP using a SFBT model, Stearn & Moore (2001) note that the pupil concerned was allowed to describe the history of problem incidents, as a mark of respect as much as an integral element of their intervention model. This issue highlights one of the dilemmas sometimes faced by

practitioner researchers in real life settings - in the present study it was anticipated that the pupils would at the very least want the opportunity to give their version of events and, that being the case, they had the right to do so even if this meant a modification to the model. The researcher's view was that some initial problem talk need not necessarily preclude subsequent talk of exceptions and solutions as the main focus of intervention, but that it might engender a more positive relationship. Dykes & Neville (2000) suggest that the development of such a therapeutic alliance, already beginning to present itself here as an issue of real importance, actually depends not only on factors overtly concerning relationships but also upon sufficient time being spent discussing problems. In the event the pupils were very keen to tell their own stories, and by and large did so with a strong sense of injustice.

Gingerich & Wabeke (2001) advise that once pupils' views about the nature of problems have been ascertained, these should be checked against the complaints made by referring teachers in order to establish what they call the 'facts'. Notwithstanding the seeming contradiction of such a view within a social constructionist framework, this idea presents a further dilemma for a SFBT model in school settings – to accept pupils' views without question, as a 'true' solution-focused approach would dictate (Ajmal, 2001), or else to take into account the alternative perceptions of teachers in search of a consensus theory of change. The latter was the position adopted by Thorne & Ivens (1999), where a compromise view was negotiated between pupils and teachers. In the present study, however, the decision not to do so was taken for reasons of developing alliance with naturally guarded pupils described above and also, as noted earlier, because one aim of the study was to evaluate the possibility of working solely with pupils. To have become locked in debate about contradictory agendas, and to risk introducing the discourse of 'adultism' (Zimmerman & Beaudoin, 2002) could easily have become detrimental to this process. In fact, the idea of addressing what pupils see as

important in spite of what others deem to be significant is described (Berg, 1997b; Murphy 1997) as likely to be the most effective way of working with them, a position also assumed by Rosenberg (2000) in the belief that matching intervention to a client's view of the world not only addresses the pertinent problems but also has the effect of strengthening the therapeutic alliance.

As noted, the pupils here were all able to express a view about what they saw as problems. They also tended to express very strong opinions about how others were the cause of their problems, another facet of theory of change, and saw their own behaviour as natural reactions to their situations as victims. That the pupils blamed others is consistent with the findings of research on causal attribution by pupils (Miller, 1999; Miller, Ferguson & Byrne, 2000; Miller, Ferguson & Moore, 2002), and would not have been entirely surprising in any event, if only because of their involuntary status and the likelihood that they expected to have to defend themselves yet again. In accepting their theories of change it was important to acknowledge these views and also to make explicit their importance to the researcher. Again, listening to and showing respect for their feelings and perceptions without challenging the information presented also contributed further to the development of cooperative and trusting relationships, and incidentally added to the impression that this experience was fairly novel for them. The researcher 'doing something different' by validating their perspectives seemed to encourage a willingness to engage. On reflection, it seems highly likely that any attempt at compromise over the origins of problems would have been perceived as an attempt to introduce blame and would have left pupils less committed to the process of intervention. This is not to dispute the potential value of a shared understanding between teachers and pupils, but to acknowledge Miller's (1996, 2002) suggestion that the personally valid starting points for teachers, parents and pupils should be taken into account in intervention – and that these are frequently conflicting. It was felt that trying to persuade

these pupils (or teachers), at this time, to concede some ground would not have been consistent with the SFBT approach, and may well have indirectly helped perpetuate the 'cycles of disturbing behaviour' which Evans (1999) sees as being a result of such widely differing perceptions. Instead, the pupils' theories of change were taken, without question, as the starting point for intervention, what Selekman (1993) refers to as 'working the other side of the fence'.

Following from this, the final aspect of exploration of theory of change was the evaluation of previous attempts at solution. This should, according to Murphy & Duncan (1997) offer some indication about what had previously been helpful to pupils and therefore provide information that might usefully be incorporated into the present intervention.

Unfortunately this was not achieved to any extent in the current study, perhaps largely because of the pupils' strongly felt sense of previous failure. On the other hand, what was inferred from the pupil responses was that it would be important to make the present intervention markedly different from previous experiences, including not challenging their beliefs about the nature and causes of problems.

Despite the completion of this first phase of the SFBT model, and the encouraging signs of potentially productive alliance, at this point the interaction would nevertheless still be defined in terms of 'visiting/ complaining' or, as a Rhodes (1993) prefers 'information giving ', with the pupils not yet committed to engaging in a process of change. The pupils were generally willing to talk about what they disliked about their situations but, because of their theories that others should change, there was no immediate prospect of discussion about solutions. They would not, in de Shazer's view (1988) be ready for change. And yet this was precisely what had been previously asked of them - to make changes when they were absolutely convinced that they were not responsible for, or in control of, problem situations. Further, it would be almost impossible for them not to

experience such a request as a suggestion that there was something 'wrong' with them. It would be illogical, therefore, from their point of view, to be asked to produce a solution to a problem over which they could exert no control, and a potential source of conflict with adults intent on forcing co-operation. Readiness for change would need to be reflected in a very different sort of conversation from the 'Why should I change? How could I change?', experienced so far, for the techniques of SFBT to achieve any meaningful success.

One descriptive model of the processes of preparation for and engagement in change, referred to by O' Connell (1998) and which seems to embody some of the underlying themes here, has been reported by Prochaska (1999). His views stem, in part, from his work with substance abusers and although that was not the issue in the present study, a parallel could be drawn with the notion of inviting reluctant pupils to make changes to habitual patterns of potentially harmful behaviour. His ideas have some commonality with de Shazer's (1998) visitor/customer metaphor and offer an interesting perspective on the SFBT model described here. His notion of an individual at the 'precontemplative' stage might in many respects describe the early situation of the involuntary pupils in this study. Such pupils, his theory would propose, are likely to be uninformed (or ill-informed) about the consequences of their behaviour and typically would deny the existence of a problem or their role in a problem situation. Hoyt & Miller (2000) develop Prochaska's (op cit) idea further, proposing that at this stage individuals may actually agree that a problem exists but not have made a connection between this and their contribution to its continuation. Alternatively they may have previously attempted to change but their lack of success has made them become demoralised. As a consequence they tend to avoid thinking or talking about ways to solve the problem. Such a perspective provides no inherent motivation to change and any attempt to push them to change, without further

preparation, is likely to prove unsuccessful. Confrontation is seen as a particularly 'high-risk' intervention strategy. Murphy (1997) similarly observes:

'One of the surest ways to disempower a good idea or technique is to force it on a student who disagrees with it, or is not asking for help in the first place. Models and techniques are effective to the extent that they are accepted by the client; they become impotent when forced on unwilling recipients.'

(p.78)

Instead, any movement from pre-contemplation to contemplation (the next stage towards change) usually begins with consciousness raising - an increasing awareness and understanding of causes and consequences, and the consideration of possible solutions to a problem. In describing his work with substance abusers, however, Prochaska (op cit) assumes a degree of objectivity and 'fact', and seems to imply that intervention at this stage will include a degree of information giving and advice, following an agreement that the client 'has a problem'. In contrast, the challenge for the model of SFBT used here became a need to invoke contemplation, without offering expert advice, and with reference to problems whose origins were perceived at this time as being located entirely beyond the boundaries of self. While Prochaska's model might not have been particularly useful at this point in terms of advising on technique related to the promotion of change, therefore, it did nevertheless offer a helpful framework for representing a sequence of movement towards its achievement.

The first step in addressing the challenge, confirming that pupils did in fact want to see things change, was accomplished within the next stage of the model, (Fig. 3) that of determining **overall goals**. Sklare (1997) sees the setting of this desired outcome as one of the most critical tasks in SFBT, and recommends that is actually undertaken

almost immediately in the first session. To do so with involuntary pupils, however, would have been somewhat inappropriate, although the need to have clear and desirable aims was recognised. To this end, pupils were encouraged to think about how their situations at school could be changed for the better. In response all of the pupils were clear that, despite the difficulties they experienced in their situations and the distress that this often caused them, it would be in their interests to avoid exclusion or, stated positively, they wanted to remain at the school. Although not yet linked to action on their part, the achievement of this personal overall goal then became the main driving force behind all subsequent conversation.

The next stage in the (as yet linear) model, the identification of **exceptions**, is arguably the defining feature of SFBT, and was used here in an attempt to promote contemplation by linking the stated overall goals with action which it would be possible for individual pupils to take in order to effect change in their current situations, still without implied responsibility for problems. The identification of exceptions in SFBT literature is seen as a therapeutic technique intended to support clients to redress the problem/solution balance by noting times or circumstances in which the problem does not occur or, or is less severe, and then to enable consideration of the already successful strategies for achieving this. Typically in accounts of research this phase of intervention begins with the **miracle question**, one of the most widely recognised techniques of the approach. As already noted, however, its use in this study was discontinued when it became apparent that the pupils, in defining the problems as subject specific and therefore automatically identifying lessons in which they were absent, could quickly identify exceptions without the need to consider a hypothetical case. Although it had been included in the initial model because of the importance placed on it generally within the literature and in the EBTA protocol, not all solution-focused therapists see it as essential. Murphy & Duncan (1997) and Bertolino (1999), for example, regard it as an option rather

than imperative. This is also the view of Rosenberg (2000) who believes that the miracle question can even be obstructive with involuntary clients, because it can set up an adversarial position if clients believe they are being expected to envisage someone else's miracle. Lee, Greene, Mentzer, Pinnell & Niles (2001) also feel that the miracle question can be counterproductive. Their view is that the question implicitly suggests that locus of control over a situation is external, and strengthens a belief that a client will be unable to exert influence on problems. This then runs counter to the process of personal empowerment, the very heart of all therapy (Greene, Mentzer, Pinnell & Niles, 1998). The position which emerged here as a consequence of ongoing review was that the miracle question need not be employed unless exceptions could not be already recognised, a view represented in the Integrated Brief Therapy model of Sagesse & Foley (2000) in which the miracle question is included within only one of three possible pathways. Interestingly, quite frequently during the course of the initial identification of exceptions in this study pupils actually contradicted what they had previously said about problems, and then went on to offer an alternative, amended version.

On the basis of the exceptions that the pupils were able to identify they were subsequently encouraged to consider their own contribution to these positive experiences – an exercise designed to magnify existing successful strategies, and at the same time to promote a sense of empowerment. Just as there had been little acknowledgement of their own contributions to the problem situations they described, however, they similarly tended to attribute control over the exceptional times elsewhere. While they were able to recognise situations which were already contributing towards the achievement of overall goals, therefore, by comparing what they saw as successful with unsuccessful subject lessons, this information in itself did not provide an immediate platform for utilising client resources as anticipated, although an adult prompting them to focus on already successful aspects of their school lives did promote the belief that they

were not simply 'failing', that difficulties generally lay in only a small number of subject areas, and that success in these subjects was not beyond reach – a method utilised by Molnar & Lindquist (1989) and described as 'reframing'.

In terms of SFBT technique, the next step (represented in Fig. 3 by the single unbroken line) was to encourage pupils to rate the severity of problems where they were seen to exist, and so establish a baseline rating for each using **scaling**. All pupils undertook this activity, and usually appeared to find it enjoyable.

Before considering subsequent stages in the intervention, during which pupils moved from considering the concept of possible change to actually planning its achievement, it is perhaps worth summarising the situation at this point. By now, most pupils were at least beginning to contemplate the possibility of change or, alternatively, were engaging in something resembling a 'customer' – type conversation. This represented a significant shift from the starting position and had been encouraged by a number of key factors:

- Alliance – a growing sense of collaboration, built to a large extent on an unquestioning acceptance of pupils' problem definitions and attribution of cause.
- Overall goals – recognition of a need for change in the pupils' situations, in a manner that they felt might serve their best interests.
- Identification of exceptions/targets – the recognition and acknowledgement by pupils of an overall predominance of successful over unsuccessful lessons, and an emerging belief in the possibility that improvement in the latter might therefore also be possible.

Despite their stated desire for change, and in that sense they might be viewed as 'customers', they had not yet achieved Prochaska's (1999) third stage in the process of change, 'preparedness'. They were still not ready to *enact* change. A prerequisite to this

would be a willingness by the pupils to even consider changing their own behaviour, given that it was others who were exhibiting the 'problem' behaviour - an important issue as this suggestion had previously been closely associated with blame. The motivation for the commitment to contemplate such action seemed to stem from two main sources, both of which are noted by Prochaska (op cit), as factors likely to promote consideration of behaviour change. The first was a cost/benefit analysis – was it better to continue with the present repertoire of responses and accept the likelihood of further exclusion, or might it better serve their own interests to temporarily set aside their feelings of unfairness and attempt to change the behaviour of others by not reacting, and therefore ostensibly not be controlled by them? This approach left any decision to change very much in the hands of pupils but a strong enough alliance, built around pupils' theories of change, should allow the idea to be interpreted as an invitation rather than a threat. The second factor was precisely that feeling of unfairness and resentment at being blamed and/or controlled, what Prochaska terms 'dramatic effect' or emotional arousal.

Preparedness would now be defined by the linking of their willingness with their own ideas for possible action, suggested within the **strategies** element of the SFBT model (Fig. 3). In the initial model, of course, it had been assumed that pupils would volunteer some recognition of their own contributions to exceptions but, as noted above, this was not actually achieved. Rather than challenge the pupils' perspectives of externalised problems, however, it was decided, consistent with previous decisions, that these should be accepted and that intervention should address them as such, using a technique more typically associated with narrative therapy. The technique of externalising problems is described by Zimmerman & Beaudoin (2002) as one in which the therapist encourages a client to ascribe characteristics to a 'problem', and to perceive it as separate from the person. The overall task then becomes to reduce the effects of the problem as it impinges on the client. In this study the pupils spontaneously separated themselves from

the origins of the problems and viewed their own behaviour as rational responses to intrusive external stimuli. Although the language used by pupils in relation to the externalised problems was not of the labelling style of Zimmerman & Beaudoin (op cit) they did describe their own behaviour in terms of natural responses to provocation and to problems impinging upon them, and so the implications for finding a solution might be similar. Although the employment of techniques from other approaches to intervention had not been included in the initial model, the decision to do so now was taken on pragmatic grounds – the continuation of a positive alliance by not challenging the pupils' theories of change, and in response to their inability to generalise currently successful strategies. Furthermore, the technique of externalising problems is actually endorsed by some SFBT practitioners, for example Metcalf (1995), Selekman (1997), Dykes & Neville (2000), Shilts & Reiter (2000), McGlone (2001) and Lines (2002) as being compatible with an SFBT framework, and coincidentally illustrates the point made by Rhodes (1993) in his early account of SFBT work as a U.K. EP – that in practice solution focused therapists tend to draw on skills which they have taken from other models of therapy.

The pupils were therefore asked about their usual responses during encounters with 'the problem', and then prompted to speculate about alternative responses that might help them achieve their overall goal. It was hoped, even though they had so far been unable to pinpoint existing successful strategies, that they might at least be able to generate options which would see them assume a more active and controlling position than they appeared to have done previously. Although they were willing to try, their responses to this questioning were expressed in rather vague terms in the first instance, and again they found requests to elaborate rather challenging. An example of the latter is illustrated by the following, strained dialogue during an early session with AH:

Res: How is it in French?

AH: Don't know....(prompt from researcher)...2

Res: Is that better than last time?

AH: Don't know. It's 3.

Res: That is better. How is it better?

AH: (silence)

Res: What has been better?

AH: Behaviour

Res: What have you been doing that made things better?

AH: Doing what I'm told

Res: If you moved to 4, how would your behaviour look different? What could you be doing to improve again?

AH: Doing what I'm told.

In fact, as diary extract 4 demonstrates, there were times when the researcher became concerned that the probing questioning of pupils with limited verbal skills was in danger of becoming stressful for them.

Similarly, at this stage there was also little evidence of pupils being able anticipate potential **obstacles** to their intended strategies, most believing instead that change would easily be accomplished - a position somewhat at odds with their stance so far. The fact that only one pupil, DMc, followed the path predicted by the initial model from this point, through **action**, review of progress and refining strategies until such time as he felt he had achieved satisfactory ratings or a 'good enough' solution offers its own comment on this optimistic supposition.

For the others an unpredicted pathway arose, represented by the broken line in the flowchart. As reported earlier, for some pupils the exercise of identifying exceptions led to reconsideration of the nature of problems. Surprisingly, however, this also sometimes

happened during subsequent sessions, following attempts at agreed strategies. For some pupils this even happened more than once - with the consequence that further target areas were added to the originals. The individual mini-cycles, therefore, were not simply about reviewing the effectiveness of action they had taken, as predicted by the initial model. What was happening, on the face of things, was that even though the pupils were given full opportunity to describe problems and the situations in which they occurred, they later became dissatisfied with their first responses. The situation was quite different, therefore, from that predicted by Murphy & Duncan (1997) who propose that the theory of change can and should be established in the first session. For all but one of the pupils in this study, reaching a final decision about the problem(s) and subsequently identifying exceptions, was a more involved and complicated procedure than had been expected; this, in turn, made movement through later elements of the model less straightforward, made the intervention less brief, and demanded a higher level of flexibility than had been anticipated.

While the pupils were never asked to give an explanation of these shifts of position it was a common, and important, feature of their responses. A number of factors are likely to have influenced the process, and one of the more immediately obvious is perhaps simply that it was difficult for pupils to quickly adjust to an approach which reflected a very different stance from the more typical school discourse of discipline. They may well have been confused and somewhat taken by surprise if their original expectation had been to have to justify behaviour. This being so, it would naturally take time for them to develop confidence that their own views really were being sought. Certainly, with the relatively extreme case of TB there were signs that trust in, and comfort with, the researcher's method came much later than the initial session – particularly in her more relaxed manner as she began to express her own views of her world rather than those of her teachers.

A further possibility was that the pupils did not carry with them a readily available and evaluated view of their worlds which they could easily articulate, on demand, and that would satisfy the researcher's questions. If they had never before been asked to provide a theory of change, in whatever form, it should be no surprise that they might be unclear about such matters. In addition, given their involuntary status and the problems that they frequently experienced in elaborating views generally, they might simply need extended time to think and to reflect. Given this situation, it may well have been the case that the apparently impulsive approach to generating strategies had also led to hurried decisions about the nature of problems, leaving the pupils even less adequately prepared for change at the point of action than had been feared by the researcher. Genuine preparedness for change would, as a first step, require personal clarity about the nature of problems. On reflection, because of their tendency to compartmentalise school life according to individual subject areas, the initial task for pupils would have been to engage in a process of judgement around approximately ten of these, comparing each one against every other. Given the complexity of this calculation, it should perhaps be no surprise that they might want to readjust their early conclusions, especially in relation to the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the interactions they were being asked to assess. In some subjects the situation might even change significantly from lesson to lesson. This being so, there may well have been some inevitability that the early attempts at solution would involve an element of trial and error, and that they would provide an opportunity for evaluation and clarification through practical experience – not only of strategies, but also of their theories of change. One option for future development of the present model in this school context would be a structure to support this early step in intervention. A ratings chart, using the scaling technique as an initial screen of all subject areas, might be a more concrete way in which to rank order levels of concern. This would provide a visual overview, and help prioritise target areas. It could even form

a basis for planned 'observation tasks' where uncertainty existed. Indeed, the point is sometimes made (de Shazer, 1994; Miller, Duncan & Hubble, 1997; Hubble, Duncan & Miller, 1999; Miller & Duncan, 2000) that the real work in SFBT takes place between rather than within sessions. While the pupils here were not asked to undertake any between-session activities, it seems that they nevertheless enacted what amounted to their own observation tasks. Once they had satisfied themselves about the location of problem situations, they were able to envisage improvement, and then reconsider how they might go about making a difference - in this case through reducing the impact of the problem on their lives in target lessons. O'Connell (1998) sees the latter two steps as a shared ongoing process of search for 'levers for change' and rates them as the main task for a therapist in SFBT.

Miller & Duncan (2000) actually describe what they see as a process of 'refocusing' from session to session as an integral and shared process in brief therapy. This refocusing involves evaluation of action taken, assessment of the present situation, and further forward planning. The main differences here, however, were in the continuing re-evaluation of the nature of the problem, and the fact that it was not guided by the researcher, but led by the pupils. It seemed important that these adjustments should be seen as constructive rather than as setbacks, and that the pupils were given the opportunity to reflect for as long as was required until they felt confident in their decisions about where and how to try to instigate change. The alternative would have been to engage in what the clients in Lee's (1997) study found to be decidedly unhelpful – a rigid, inflexible and too positive process of 'forcing solution', which in this case might have meant addressing inappropriate targets. Indeed, as Sklare (1997) argues, the identification of clear goals is the best predictor of effective outcome, and it seems fair to assume that this begins with a confidence in knowing what the problem is, even if it is never discussed. While most of the pupils still found it difficult to articulate the details of

what ultimate solution might look like in the 'concrete' fashion suggested by Sklare, they nevertheless expressed confidence that they had a personal picture of what success would look like. The researcher accepted, therefore, that 'clear' need not necessarily mean 'demonstrably clear', and instead simply checked that the pupils were also confident that satisfactory improvement in these target areas would lead to the achievement of their overall goals, of no further exclusions. With most pupils the certainty about target areas was expressed assuredly after one or more revision cycle. From the point of no further revision, the increases in ratings for those subject lessons was perhaps a strong indication that such clarity had indeed been attained. This gradual isolation of problems even seemed to have a certain therapeutic value, evident in increasing enthusiasm, as pupils who had previously been categorised as failures were faced with their own considered assessments of success in a majority of subjects. The apparent clarity of purpose that resulted seemed to be a major spur to decisive action. From the point in intervention at which pupils reached this assurance in their targets, they began to follow the more direct, predicted, sequence of the initial model, using scaling to rate their reported improvements up until the final sessions. The later confirmation by teachers of improvement in what turned out to be, to a fair extent, mutually agreed 'problem subjects' added further support to the decision to accept the refocusing around problem definition as an important element in a developing model of SFBT that was responding to pupil need. All targets and strategies were determined by the pupils. There were no suggestions at all from the researcher in either respect and so, by definition, the model fulfilled the SFBT remit of utilising pupil resources.

In contrast with this, unfortunately, was the repeating cycle which seemed to overtake MC. Rather than use between-session experience to inform further action, as the other pupils did, MC's downhearted reports of continuing failure to achieve (total) success always left an impression that he interpreted this as confirmation of the futility of even

attempting to do things differently. Lee, Greene, Mentzer, Pinnell & Niles (2001) describe such a presentation in their work with 'depressed' clients – as experiencing a 'pervasive sense of helplessness and lack of control over their lives' (p35). MC seemed to be overwhelmed by the weight of the 'old story' (Zimmerman & Beaudoin, 2002) that he reported at the initial session – that the current intervention was likely to reach the same end as the many previous attempts at solution. Indeed, as diary extracts 5 and 6 illustrate, the sense of failure was so pervasive as to lead the researcher to venture, for the only time during the study, into advice-giving during an especially emotional session when he announced 'I've been given one week to prove myself or I'm out!' The researcher reluctantly drew the conclusion that the levers for change had not been uncovered, and that the 'something different' was not different enough.

Although this section of the discussion has focused on the development from an initial model, in particular the unpredicted revision of sequences in the early stages of intervention, some final observations here relate to the concept of 'insight' (Sagesse & Foley, 2000; Zimmerman & Beaudoin, 2002) The point was made very early in this report that SFBT, unlike some other approaches, does not address the issue directly – based as it is on constructing solutions rather than 'understanding' problems or, even worse, achieving an understanding defined by others. For the majority, although the mini-cycles had been a deviation, subsequent interview sessions began to include a welcome feature – reports of the effects which successful strategies were having on others' behaviour. There was an increasing awareness of reciprocal effect, as pupils began to relate their own behaviour to the behaviour of others. DMc, for instance summarised his observations of this phenomenon in session 6:

- 'Other kids not bugging me, and letting me get on with my work.
- Teachers starting to be nice to me.
- Mr L starting to say it's not me who starts any trouble.

- Mum being pleased with me and letting me go out again.
- Being able to go ice skating with M.'

The pupils were more able to draw on personal resources, evident in their reports of successful 'missions' from session to session, as they began to recognise, become empowered by, and build on the control that they were able to exert on their situations. MB's previously described flip chart explanation was a clear demonstration of her realisation that she could take control of events, and prompted diary extract 7 (Appendix 9) in which the researcher reports a 'powerful session'. In effect, the usable exceptions emerged from within the target areas. While subject areas were initially identified as exceptions, in the sense that problems did not present themselves there, it was only possible to utilise pupil resources once they were able to appreciate their own personal contribution towards exceptional episodes within normally difficult lessons. In achieving this the pupils were able to recognise, perhaps for the first time, that they possessed the means to assume greater influence over their lives in school, and begin to experience themselves as successful and competent. Ideally, this apparent growing awareness and understanding of the dynamics of their situations might even have some potential for generalisation to other situations.

6.3 Systems

The final aspect of the study to be considered here is the manner in which it was possible for the work undertaken with individual pupils to be integrated into the school context, or ecosystem, in which it took place - an issue not addressed in any depth in previous studies. The point should be made again that no attempt was made to work systemically in the manner described for example by Molnar & Lindquist (1989) or by Provis (1992). Such an approach to working with schools is described by Frederickson (1990) as originating in therapeutic work with families, aimed at addressing such issues

as relationships, homeostasis, and boundary maintenance, and requiring 'expert' interpretation of presenting symptoms of dysfunction. Rather, as already indicated, SFBT assumes an ecosystemic perspective which simply predicts that the introduction of change at one point in the system, in this case through the actions of an individual pupil, can effect change in other parts of the system. Those pupils for whom intervention was rated as relatively successful reported such an effect in their perceptions of changing behaviour in others; the situations concerned were similarly perceived by teachers as having improved.

There was, of course, always the issue of whether or not the impact of intervention might be greater through simultaneous action at more than one point in the system, and it should have been possible to include teachers in the discussions with pupils at any stage of the model. Even though the least intrusive position was adopted here, it is worth reflecting on how effective the alternative might be. This approach is proposed by some practitioners, such as George, Iveson & Ratner (Brief Therapy Practice Information Sheet), who suggest that if a problem cannot be resolved by a conversation with a child, the inclusion of parents and/or teachers should then be considered. Some research studies (Ponec & Dickel, 1999) (Thorne & Ivens, 1999), for example, have adopted such an approach from the outset, in which outcome goals are jointly negotiated. Even though the setting for the latter research was quite similar to that of the present study, however, (EP's working in a UK comprehensive school) those pupils were selected precisely on the basis that their situations were *not* critical, and their involvement seen as a form of early intervention. Indeed, the authors themselves suggest that this approach might be inappropriate in circumstances where 'emotions run high'. The number of exclusions experienced by pupils prior to their inclusion in this study is perhaps suggestive of such strength of feeling.

The research into causal attribution noted earlier raises a further important factor that needs to be taken into account in relation to this issue. These studies suggest that strongly opposing views are often held by pupils and teachers over the causes of difficulties in schools. As noted in the previous chapter, such polarisation was very much in evidence in this study, and the potential for compromise on shared goals, given the fervently held opinions about origins of problems, might have been limited. There were certainly examples of the discourses of discipline and of 'adultism', the lack of concern for pupil perspectives on a situation (Zimmerman & Beaudoin, 2002), during informal discussions with teachers about pupils and in the comments made on the initial rating sheets. The experiences of Stearn & Moore (2001) in their work in a secondary school, where Heads of Year actually saw the SFBT approach as being in direct conflict with their perceived role, that of responsibility for control of behaviour, also has relevance here. Indeed, there have been suggestions (Hammersley, 1984; Miller, 2000) that, because of their prevailing discourses, schools tend to be predisposed to blaming children and their families for the difficulties they encounter and so are not easily engaged in any problem solving relating to behaviour.

From the perspective of pupils, the importance to this intervention of an open acceptance of their own interpretations of events, particularly in the early stages of intervention, has already been discussed. The points have also been made that previous efforts by teachers to influence the behaviour of pupils would almost certainly have included attempts to get them to compromise their views on the matter, and that to have become involved in a meeting comprising two authoritative adults and an eleven year old pupil would have invited pupil assumptions of collusion in further punitive measures.

Despite the decision not to invite teachers to participate directly in the process of intervention, however, the study did not take place outside of the context of the school in

question. The researcher/ practitioner could only act within the boundaries of the institutional structures. For the period of involvement with pupils therefore, he actually became an integral part of its organisation, although an EP can sometimes be in a position to introduce alternative dynamics to an existing system (Miller, 2003). The researcher was also accountable to the school for his professional practice there. The idea of working in complete isolation and not liaising with teachers, therefore, would have been both inappropriate and in any case impossible to achieve. Further, for the model developed through the action research process to be applicable to the day-to-day practice of an EP, account needs to be taken of the existing structures and systems whose continuing purpose is to promote and support what is seen as the healthy functioning of a school, even though these might at times appear to conflict with or impose constraints on that work. Ultimately the feasibility of the model will depend to some degree on its compatibility with school systems. The extent to which this was achieved, and some of the difficulties encountered in trying to employ an SFBT approach alongside the school systems, are described below.

Before that, however, a couple of instances in which interested teachers themselves elected to engage in the intervention process are worthy of comment. In both cases the teachers approached the researcher to discuss what they saw as improvements in the behaviour of two particular pupils from the study. Given the enthusiasm of these teachers, and the flexibility afforded by the action research paradigm, it seemed appropriate to invite their involvement for these two pupils, after gaining their consent. Although this participation was not at the level of three-way discussion of desirable goals, as with Thorne & Ivens, the invitation to teachers to attend for part of the next session did provide an opportunity for the pupils to experience reciprocity directly, in the form of positive comment and acknowledgement of their efforts. One consequence of this feedback seemed to be the increasing sense of agency and control, already referred

to, which had a very encouraging effect – DMc reached his final target rating of 10 very shortly afterwards; TB decided to extend her scale to 20 in order to be able to set herself further targets, and she also decided that she would begin to take her chart home so that she could share the scaling exercise with her parents. Perhaps similar acknowledgement for MC of even the small amount of improvement he sometimes reported would have been helpful. The direct involvement of key teachers for him might have increased the likelihood of small changes being noticed more widely, and/or of them being acknowledged as 'real' (Triantafylliou, 1997) rather than temporary, prior to his reverting to his 'true colours'.

In contrast with the success of this unexpected contact with teachers, however, the planned liaison with them proved to be much less satisfactory than had been hoped. Although conflict between the discourses of discipline and the social constructionism of SFBT had been anticipated, along with the probability of inconsistency of approach among a large number of teachers, the extent of the difficulties of working into existing systems, even where agreement to do so had previously been reached with school personnel, had not. Indeed, it was expected that it might be even easier to work in conjunction with school structures as an insider than was normally the case as an occasional visitor. Unfortunately, however, the retirement of the vice-principal involved in the original planning for the project during its second year had a significant impact on systems and on the researcher's influence with the senior management of the school. As outlined in the methodology, the intention had been to share information at a formal level throughout the period of contact with pupils by participating in the already scheduled weekly review meetings between the Year 7 Manager and SENCO. It was hoped that the meetings might evolve into what Harker (2001) refers to as solution focused strategy meetings, providing the opportunity to demonstrate the use and value of SFBT and to raise issues about the possible generalisation from case studies (Dessent, 1992) into a

wider application in school. Unfortunately, during the course of the study only two of the fifteen planned weekly meetings actually took place. The remainder were cancelled by the Year Manager, usually at the last minute, because of her need to attend to a 'crisis' situation. Despite his own more positive experience of review meetings, Harker does make the point that there needs to be a strong desire from key school personnel for the meetings to take place, because of the inevitable difficulties in a secondary school of releasing the teachers who are involved with a pupil. Their cancellation here was one symptom of what seemed to be the generally unreliable operation of school systems relating to pupils experiencing difficulties and this had an impact on pupils, teachers and on the work of the researcher.

In relation to the pupils in this study, it meant that there was virtually no opportunity for routine exchange of information or review of progress. This made it particularly difficult for the researcher to maintain an up-to-date picture of day-to-day events. Even the attempt to get information through questionnaires to individual teachers led to a disappointing 58 per cent return. As a consequence of the lack of communication, there were even a small number of incidents of exclusion from school about which the researcher was not aware at the time. Conversely, those teachers with key responsibility for the pupils, and who made the decision to involve the researcher in the first place, were not in a position to benefit from the only summary of systematically collated views about individual pupils in existence - the profiles built up by the researcher. They were also denied the opportunity to check on the effects of their referral. Given their attributed status as eight of the most 'difficult' pupils within a year group of approximately three hundred, the apparent lack of priority for follow-up, monitoring and recording was a something of a surprise.

The difficulties in respect of communication of information were not an exclusive feature of the relationship between the researcher and school staff, however. The researcher did have open access to the central, pastoral, pupil records that were held and updated in the Year 7 team office and also to those kept by the SENCO. The researcher was familiar with the formal school procedures for dealing with and recording of incidents relating to behaviour difficulties, having been the school EP for a number of years and an LEA representative on the team which formulated the school's action plan following the Ofsted decision to place the school into special measures. A system did exist, and had been set up in an attempt to ensure regular communication between Heads of Department, Year Managers and SENCO so that information was shared and class teachers were supported directly over their concerns regarding pupils. In practice, apart from the entries noting official exclusions, the pastoral records turned out to be largely a collection of personal and anecdotal summaries of incidents or problems, handwritten by individual teachers and archived as loose notes by the Year Manager. As already noted in the analysis of findings, the Key Stage 3 Manager made the point herself that these records were not entirely reliable as a source of information, because of discrepancies in practice among teachers. Clearly they did not operate in the manner intended, as a system for collating, evaluating and sharing information. Equally there were no signs of management or support plans, monitoring by the Year Manager or details of targeted support, despite the vulnerability of pupils who been excluded at least once within weeks of arrival at the school.

The SEN records were no more helpful, either as a source of information or as a means of collaborative planning. The logistics of even maintaining up to date paperwork related to individual education plans (IEP's) for pupils left the SENCO with little time for contact with the pupils, a problem which may not be uncommon in such schools. Lingard (2001), for example, conducted a study of activities undertaken by SENCO's in secondary

schools. He highlights the administrative and time consuming burden of producing IEP's, which the respondents in his survey actually saw as leading to frustratingly little change in the approach of individual subject teachers. The burden of paperwork he refers to was never more apparent than at a meeting during the course of this study, attended by the researcher, between the SENCO and SEN 'link' subject teachers midway through the first term of the school year. The SENCO presented files, the contents of which had been carefully photocopied and organised so that each department (and therefore all teachers) would have access to the IEP's of all pupils in Year 7 whose names appeared on the SEN register (itself created simply by adding together the records of the various feeder primary schools). As a means of disseminating advice and information, and of attempting to achieve some measure of consistency, this would seem a reasonable approach to what Kinder, Wilkin, Moor, Derrington & Hogarth (1999) see as a major problem for secondary schools with their high numbers of teachers. In this school, with a figure near to one hundred and with the SENCO the only member of an SEN 'department', the task was enormous. Furthermore, the number of pupils on the SEN register at the school was approaching 600, out of a population of approximately 1500, with the SENCO under pressure from the head to increase this to 700 in order to reflect 'true levels of need' in the school and therefore to attract further funding – another potentially conflicting discourse, that of the 'market' (Riddell & Brown, 1994; Barton, 1999). Almost 150 of those were in Year 7, and all of the pupils in this study were represented in the school's SEN population. The SENCO was left with what he saw as no alternative but to hand out IEP's into which he had simply transferred information relating to and written during Year 6 - while they were attending primary schools!

In effect, then, there were no support plans for the pupils in the study, at least during the autumn term. The inexperienced Year Manager was weighed down by the level of day to day demands on her to deal with relatively minor concerns such as punctuality and

school uniform, and the pastoral system as a whole viewed the pupils as predominantly a discipline problem, evidenced by the early exclusions. These characteristics are not untypical of high excluding secondary schools (Ofsted report 1996, quoted in Watkins & Wagner, 2000) in which

'.. year heads and heads of house worked hard but were often overwhelmed by numbers of pupils referred to them for indiscipline by classroom teachers. Frequently such referrals short circuited established systems and merely reflected the unwillingness of some staff to deal with problems at source. As a result, such problems often escalated and, although pastoral heads spent much time with difficult pupils, often that time achieved little other than to register concern and pass sentence. In the schools which provided good pastoral support, the key factor was that the importance of tutoring was recognised.'

(Office for Standards in Education, 1996 p.19)

Evans (1999) also refers to teachers who overuse such pastoral referral systems, and as already noted, sees them as likely to locate the causes of difficulties exclusively outside of the school. The Key Stage Manager and the researcher, acting in another capacity during the course of the study, made an attempt to address this issue directly with the form tutors within the Year 7 pastoral group. At a team meeting the possibility of extending the role of form tutors from that of maintaining attendance registers and hosting a once weekly PSE period into one, as described by Kinder, Wilkin, Moor, Derrington & Hogarth (1999), of offering genuine pastoral support in order to promote the inclusion of those in greatest need met with strong majority resistance.

Likewise the SENCO, overwhelmed by the sheer numbers on the SEN register, focused his efforts primarily on pupils with learning difficulties - notwithstanding the frequent association between difficulties in behaviour and learning, detailed for example by Adams, Snowling, Hennessy & Kind (1999), Miller (2000), Wise (1999) - in the hope and expectation that responsibility for problems of behaviour would be dealt with by the pastoral team. The lack of shared planning between the two key personnel (SENCO and Year Manager) meant that there was no collective response to the relatively small number of pupils about whom there was greatest teacher concern in this year group. For the researcher, and indeed other professionals working to support the school, there was little sign of the proactive and collaborative organisation that Watkins & Wagner (2000) see as characteristic of the 'well behaved school', but instead suggestions of a pastoral team which serviced '..an inappropriately reactive discipline system'. (p26)

Diary extracts 8 to 13 provide examples of the researcher's concerns, and his increasing frustrations, over the difficulties he experienced in his attempts to work in synchrony with school systems – particularly over cancelled meetings and the lack of planning and targeted intervention. On one particular occasion, even a meeting which had been arranged between the researcher and a parent about her son, to which the Year Manager had been invited so as to share some positive feedback, was subsequently cancelled by the Year Manager without informing the researcher (diary extract 13). This action led the researcher to the conclusion that there would be little point in continuing to pursue such parental involvement at that time, and instead he chose to contact them by telephone instead. One meeting that did take place, albeit briefly, was with the Keystage 3 Manager (KS3M – diary extract 14) in which she expressed her preference for the researcher simply to ensure that a carefully documented record of his contact with pupils was filed, along with some written recommendations (unlikely to be read), so that the

school would be able to produce evidence that they had taken some form of action in respect of the pupils at a forthcoming Ofsted follow-up visit.

The lack of success of the attempts to link with, what seemed to be, incohesive school systems led the researcher to make one final revision within the action research framework, in seeking an alternative means of communicating with teachers in a way which might:

- Encourage the Year Manager and SENCO to share a dialogue over the individual pupils, and help promote one common and positive approach to support.
- Illustrate, at least in a small way, something of the nature and value of the SFBT approach.
- Act as a form of maintenance beyond the period of direct intervention, in linking the pupils' perspectives with those of teachers, by providing information to teachers based on their own reports of 'successful strategies', and framed in positive and solution focused language. It was hoped that this rather indirect form of consultation with teachers, focusing explicitly on the behaviour of pupils in order to prompt an implicit effect in teachers, (Redpath & Harker, 1999), might foster a greater awareness that they too could utilise positive strategies that would make a difference.
- Provide some feedback to teachers about the researcher's work with pupils, as an aspect of his accountability to the school.

The DFEE guidance, Social Inclusion Pupil Support (1999), provided a potential opportunity to achieve these aims and perhaps even influence school practice more widely, with its concept of a Pupil Support Plan (PSP). The Year Manager was not aware of the document and was grateful when the researcher offered to produce plans, on her behalf, for the group of pupils with whom he had worked. In discussion with the pupils

themselves, during the final session of intervention, agreement was reached that it might now be helpful to them if teachers were made aware of the targets that they had set for themselves, given that they had actually made some progress towards their achievement. A PSP was produced and circulated to all subject teachers. A copy was placed in the pastoral records, ostensibly to function as a working document, and a further copy given to the SENCO for attachment to the IEP. Each plan set out the pupil's targets followed by a small list of simple but positive strategies which teachers themselves, in response to a supplementary question on the final ratings sheet, had suggested as helpful in promoting behaviour that they found acceptable. Teachers were asked to watch out for, and acknowledge, behaviour that was indicative of pupils attempting to achieve their targets. In the absence of robust systems for supporting pupils the PSP would hopefully model an alternative way of observing, framing and responding to pupils' behaviour, based on a platform of 'exceptions'. Thus, in much the same way as with the pupils, the theories of change of the teachers were not challenged but their contributions to improvement were acknowledged. They were simply asked to do 'more of what works' (de Shazer, 1994; Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995) and because 'what works' had been defined by their own colleagues, in the terms of the familiar discourse of 'managing' behaviour, they too might feel more empowered. In the short term, for this group of pupils, this linking directly with subject teachers may have made some contribution to the maintenance of improvement and the absence of further exclusions through the remainder of the school year. It was hoped that it might also prompt, and provide a model for, the development of more considered and proactive support.

The action was, however, born out of necessity as a final attempt to engage with school systems which did not, in practice, reflect stated policy. This raises questions about how best to apply the revised SFBT model developed during the study to everyday work as the EP for the school. It had actually been hoped that the individual model might

ultimately be somehow utilised in collaborative work with the school, perhaps even to the extent that teachers might incorporate the model into their own working practices. Certainly, the point has already been made that despite the general success of the model as used individually, the involvement of teachers at the later stages of intervention was felt to have added to the effect for two pupils, TB and MB. Conversely, the lack of teacher involvement may have detracted from the potential impact of using the individual model with MC. A further disadvantage is outlined well by perhaps the most articulate of the pupils, AL, reflecting on the apparent absence of reciprocal effect following his efforts:

'I want to be off report, but I can't. / know I've tried hard but it's not easy to get to 10. Last time I said 8½ would be good enough but it's not good enough for the teachers. I'm going to have to be perfect for weeks before anybody even notices. After that I'll probably go straight back onto report if I do one thing wrong. Why bother?'

In addition, regardless of the impact of the individual model, the practice of an EP 'seeing' a pupil without reference to the context risks confirming beliefs of a 'within child' problem requiring an external specialist. In the conditions under which this research took place it proved possible to work with pupils almost irrespective of the teachers, who seemed largely happy to maintain a distance during intervention and to accommodate the work of a resident 'expert' – a situation unlikely to encourage teachers to consider their own potential contribution to problem situations. Even if this were desirable, however, these working conditions were unusual and it would be highly unlikely for visiting EP's to find themselves working in a school in quite the same way.

In more typical circumstances the involvement of an EP would begin with a request from the school in relation to an individual pupil. At this point the EP should be in a position to discuss the nature of that involvement and the arrangements for joint working with key

personnel within the school. Although it might never be possible to lose the assumed expert role, this initial contact should offer the greatest opportunity for debating potential roles and responsibilities around the *situation* of concern. This interactionist position was strengthened by the revised Code of Practice view that:

'Schools should not assume that pupils' learning difficulties always result solely, or even mainly, from problems from within the young person....A school's own practices make a difference – for good or ill.'

(DfES, 2001a p.62)

With this as a starting point, it should be feasible to encourage a process of shared evaluation and planning, even where a conflict of discourses arises, and it should therefore not be an insurmountable task for school personnel to be persuaded to at least accommodate a constructionist perspective. A possible framework for using a solution-focused approach in this school, encompassing the revised model of this study, is now outlined.

At the simplest level, it should at the very least be possible to encourage teachers to participate in the 'four-fold' assessment process proposed in the Code of Practice, and in doing so to consider the various school-related factors which might be contributing to a problem situation. In a secondary school it might be possible to employ something resembling the teacher rating activity of this study, in order to support the key personnel, for example SENCO or Head Of Year, in collating and establishing a representative school perspective (the focus would naturally be different in a primary school, of course where a problem situation might involve only one teacher). This would, in itself, be an improvement on the 'system' encountered in this study, where pupil profiles were effectively defined on the basis of the most critical comments available. The next step would be determining what a reasonably satisfactory outcome might look like, followed by some identification of existing exceptions and exploration of how such exceptions are

maintained. In essence, the process becomes a form of solution focused consultation (Watkins & Gillies, 2001; Harker, 2001) in which one of the objectives might be for the referrers to be encouraged to move from being complainants about children to active participants, willing to work towards change in those situations which they experience as difficult. Consistent with SFBT, this does not mean that blame needs to be apportioned, or that the referrers should hold full responsibility for achieving change, but it would require a willingness to work collaboratively towards desirable goals, in a context which recognises shared responsibilities in supporting pupils experiencing difficulties. The EP might participate in no further action other than a review of progress.

If, on the other hand, agreed strategies were to include some direct work with an individual pupil, a decision would need to be made about whether or not to involve teachers from the outset, as in the approach of Thorne & Ivens (1999), or McGlone (2001). Following this path would have the advantage of an open recognition of individual perspectives, but with agreement between a pupil, teachers and perhaps parents as to what would constitute successful outcome, and should also facilitate the acknowledgement for pupils of even small steps towards that success. This arrangement is likely to be a more positive experience for pupils than intervention based on a model of discipline, may be more acceptable to a school than a model which requires unquestioned acceptance of the views of pupils most likely to be perceived as unreliable and untrustworthy, may need a relatively brief period of intervention, and is likely to be appropriate for at least some pupils.

Experience in this school over a number of years however, confirmed again in the present study, indicates that those pupils brought to the attention of the EP have usually experienced, and have come to expect, what they perceive as punishment.

Conversations with pupils here, consistent with the work of others (Miller, Ferguson &

Byrne, 2000; Wise, 1999) suggest that such pupils can often hold fairly strong and uncompromising opinions about the origins of problems and about the unfair way in which they have been treated by the school system. Furthermore, there were signs that within the current organisation the school experiences difficulties in providing quality pastoral support, at least in this year group, in a manner that Cooper (1993) and Lines (2002) suggest applies to many schools. It is proposed that, for some pupils therefore, the revised SFBT model developed here could be a more appropriate approach to support and that frequently the attached EP might be best placed to assume a lead role. It would be imperative, however, that initial consultation should make specific reference to ongoing systems for communication with school personnel. Although comparatively costly in terms of EP time available to a school, this level of individual contact has the potential for permitting a purposeful alliance with a relatively detached adult and for promoting a sense of agency, even in those pupils considered most at risk of exclusion.

At the same time, it does not rule out the possibility of teacher involvement, if only to encourage a sense of empowerment through affirmation of an action plan constructed by a pupil. Indeed, there was some evidence in this study to suggest that involvement with the approach does not necessarily involve a serious challenge to the position already held by at least some individual teachers. Although in the present study such involvement occurred in an unplanned way, it would be an interesting extension of this research to further develop the potential role of interested teachers. The school's Education Achievement Zone funded Learning Support Unit, with its full-time staffing and its particular role in respect of pupils who are struggling to cope with mainstream arrangements, could provide one natural and opportune focus for further development. Such active participation, albeit by specialist teachers, might be a first step towards the adoption of solution-focused approaches by school based staff as one aspect of the support they offer. Another possibility might be involvement of the learning mentors, with

their increasing presence in secondary schools and their individual style of support for Key Stage 4 pupils. This, of course, also incorporates an extended EP role along the lines proposed by, for example, Watkins & Wagner (2000), Stratford (2000) and DfEE (2000). Involvement at the level of staff training and systems development might, of course, also offer further opportunities to engage with a school in consideration of some of the influences on pupil behaviour highlighted by the pupils themselves – teaching style, differentiation of learning tasks, pupil groupings etc. Although the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) continues with its predecessor's convention of categories of SEN, perhaps the explicit statement that, in considering pupil progress, the interaction of a range of ecosystemic factors should be taken into account could provide some leverage for change and a more common and interactionist discourse for supporting and including pupils who experience difficulties in school.

7. Reflections on Methodology

Issues related to the appropriate methodology for a study such as this were discussed in a previous chapter, with some of the potential advantages and difficulties noted. It seems pertinent to briefly consider, in retrospect, those which these became evident through the course of the study.

The 'outcome' strand of the study was important, in the sense of the desirability of achieving satisfactory conclusions to intervention, for both pupils and teachers. The more central questions however, for the research to have any value beyond this study, were those relating to understanding of process – that is, to the revisions needed to the initial model and the manner in which it was possible to apply this in a school setting. Given this, and the constantly evolving and unpredictable nature of context and extraneous variables, there seems little reason to question the appropriateness of qualitative research methodology.

Of course, the EBTA research guidelines would see the framework adopted here as lacking sufficient rigour to demonstrate effective outcome from the SFBT model. On the other hand, the aim of this study was not to demonstrate a quantifiable superiority over other models of intervention, using inappropriate positivist methods, the apparent driving force of much of the work currently undertaken within the mental health field. Instead there were dual intentions, of achieving change and at the same time developing greater understanding of the factors likely to promote such shift, in the circumstances which pertained. Even taking into account the, sometimes, limited range of generalisability associated with action research methods (Robson, 1993; Bogden & Biklen, 1998), it should still be possible to use the understanding achieved here, as reflected in the revised model, as evidence based practice. At the very least it could form the basis for

further development in this and, perhaps, similar school settings in response to the needs of pupils who find themselves at risk of exclusion.

In fact, the action research framework that guided the study was critical to the development of the final model and, as a consequence, to any successful outcome. The capacity for variation in response to emerging circumstance meant that pupil need could determine patterns of intervention, both individually and collectively, in a manner which avoided the tensions experienced by Atkinson (1994), between this and rigid methodology. Within this paradigm a revised SFBT model evolved which itself incorporates features of action research - the flexible use of key techniques such as exception-finding combined with the overriding SFBT principle of responding to individual need, even where the cycles of evaluation follow paths beyond more traditional SFBT lines. Furthermore, the pupils themselves held the key role in determining these exploratory paths of action, evaluation and review.

Within the context of this action research framework, the most notable dilemmas concerned the practitioner researcher role, and the influences of the conditions under which the study took place. For the period of intervention, the researcher was based almost full time within the school, although with additional responsibilities not directly related to the research. From the school point of view this meant frequent, although cursory, informal contact with the practitioner, and of course this was his primary role. Familiarity seemed to add to the perception of him as someone who could be expected to share the discourses of deficit and discipline and who would naturally hold an allegiance to fellow professionals, that is, to teachers. There was certainly a sense of being expected to adopt what Mertens (1998) refers to as a 'supervisor' or authoritarian role. This perspective was supported further by the nature of the contractual relationship between the researcher and school. While this was not of the stakeholder-evaluator

variety (Robson, 1993) it did mean that, in addition to the usual accountability to what might be considered a service user, some aspects of the researcher's work were actually managed by the school. Fortunately, although the questions of professional independence and boundaries were occasionally debated with the project manager, they did not become barriers to the ongoing interventions. This was particularly important, as the conflicts of discourse reported here were not simply matters of minor difference in professional stance. SFBT engages with pupils on their own perspectives, but the predominant ethos of the school at the time of the study, and its development, was one of 'problem children' and discipline. While they were able to tolerate the researcher's approach, teachers were unable to engage with SFBT at that time. Again, however, this did not become an obstacle to the conduct of the study, although it would be fair to say that the lack of involvement of teachers in intervention meant that the issues were never actually aired. This failure to engage effectively with school personnel was, in fact, a weakness of the study and further development of the model, involving school systems to a greater extent, would need to address this more directly.

Just as the teachers had expectations of the researcher, so too would the pupils, about his authority, his allegiances and the action he might take during the course of the sessions. There was a potentially counterproductive undertone of power (Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000; McLeod, 2001), which needed to be acknowledged and addressed. Because of their starting point of natural suspicion (Cooper, 1993) the pursuit of alliance became crucial, not only to the model, but also to the pupils' active participation in sessions – and therefore to the study.

One of the main advantages of having a regular base in the school was that it offered easier access to the pupils, and to informal contact with individual subject teachers, than would normally be the case for an EP, what Robson (1993) refers to as insider and

practitioner knowledge and opportunities. It was probably also true that this facilitated greater understanding of the context in which the study took place, a benefit recognised by Cohen, Mannion & Morrison (2000), even though the researcher had been a regular visitor to the school for a number of years. On the other hand, there was the danger of what Verma & Mallick (1999) refer to as 'contamination' from in-depth prior knowledge, and it was not always easy for the researcher to avoid taking a view about situations discussed during sessions. The researcher had access to information, for example, about pupils' learning difficulties; family problems; previous school histories and to anecdotal, staff room interpretation by teachers about their 'extreme behaviour'. Conversely, he also had knowledge of problems associated with SEN/Pastoral support systems, of historical dealings with 'difficult' pupils by individual teachers, and even of some senior management views about their competence in these matters. It was difficult, therefore, for the researcher to avoid adding a personal interpretation to reports by both pupils and teachers. Thankfully, the SFBT model itself helps limit the influence such 'theory counter-transference' (Duncan, Hubble & Miller, 1997) might have on intervention, with its emphasis on solution building and its specific exclusion of diagnosis – although the researcher was always conscious of the need to resist a natural inclination to attempt to 'understand' a problem by considering all of the available 'evidence'.

There was one further significant issue, concerning the professional role of the researcher as practitioner and the nature of the model itself. Heron (2001) argues that there are six categories, or forms, of counselling intervention. Three of these, he suggests, can be grouped together as generally 'authoritative' in their approach and feature guidance, advice and direction. The other three he terms 'facilitative' intervention, characterised by the intention of enabling a client to become more autonomous. He argues that it is important to have both aspects in a healthy counselling relationship.

SFBT proponents would dispute this idea and lay claims to belonging entirely to the latter, although within the context of the current study, given the researcher's normal role and status within the school, it would be virtually impossible to achieve total exclusion of the former. The researcher did ultimately have some personal and professional responsibility for the well-being of these vulnerable pupils, which would have overridden all other considerations if circumstances had warranted, although this turned out not to be the case. Perhaps in everyday situations in school an appropriate balance would be a predominance of the facilitative features, and a conscious tempering of the authoritative. There was certainly a need to maintain a constant awareness of the somewhat instinctive but well intended temptation to offer advice, as a caring adult talking with sometimes confused and anxious adolescents.

Finally, there is some personal frustration here on two counts. The first of these concerns the fact that parental contact proved to be much less productive than had been hoped, if only at a level of celebrating the apparent improvement in most pupils' situations at school. It is impossible not to think of this as anything but an opportunity lost – for the pupils, parents and school. The second regret is at not being able to report acceptable levels of success for all pupils who participated in the study, and it is acknowledged that the 'common factors' research would be at least as likely to attribute failure to achieve goals to factors relating to the skills and actions of the researcher as a practitioner as it would to the SFBT model itself. Nevertheless there is also satisfaction at having played some part in supporting vulnerable pupils to attain their goals of ensuring continued inclusion in their local community school, and it would have been interesting to have undertaken a more systematic and in-depth analysis of their own views on the process. It would be equally satisfying if this study were to add, even in a small way, to the generally growing recognition and understanding of the potential value of SFBT approaches in schools, evident in the increasing number of professional

development conferences and of published case study reports of work by EP's in the U.K.

8. Conclusions

The research outlined here was conducted in the context of an inner-city comprehensive school, whose catchment area has been described as being amongst the most deprived in the country (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000). At the time of the study the school was also considered by Ofsted as having Serious Weaknesses and was previously subject of Special Measures, a status imposed on the school in part because of its struggle to work effectively with pupils felt to present behavioural difficulties. An opportunity arose for the researcher, working as a school based EP, to attempt to simultaneously develop and evaluate a model of intervention which might be used in support of such pupils. Because of their particular vulnerability at age phase transfer, the focus of this study was National Curriculum Year 7, the academic year in which they entered the school.

As had been the case in the two years prior to the study, there was again a small group of pupils who had been described by their primary schools as experiencing longstanding difficulties, and for whom the transition to secondary school was already becoming problematic during the first term. Most of these pupils were also making only limited progress in curriculum areas, another repeating theme. Because of their age, and the importance of successful negotiation of this enormous educational milestone, the group were particularly at risk. Indeed they had already spent periods excluded from their new school within the first term, and were described at the time of referral as being in danger of permanent exclusion. The situation at the time was characterised by teachers and, as it later transpired, pupils wanting change but with conditions acting directly against this – pupils feeling disengaged and powerless, and teachers frustrated at the lack of impact of increasingly punitive disciplinary measures.

Taken as a whole, the relatively extreme combination of school setting and pupil profiles presented a context not represented in the SFBT literature at the time of the study.

One option for the researcher would have been to use methods associated with, for example, behaviourist or psychodynamic principles. These approaches are, of course, underpinned to a greater or lesser extent by discourses such as discipline, deficit and pathology. They are also based on the assumption that pupils can be 'helped' to see things as adults do or else that they can be 'made' to do something that they don't want to do. Instead, the decision was made to adopt an SFBT model which, respectfully and pragmatically, avoided power struggles with involuntary adolescents, recognised them as competent, offered them acknowledgement for their successes and focused on specific goals. Furthermore, this no-blame approach, viewing pupils as capable of assuming responsibility for finding solutions rather than as responsible for problems, broke with the discourses usually encountered by those with a reputation for 'causing trouble'. The open recognition of the interactionist nature of behaviour also acknowledges the genuine range of potential influences on a classroom setting and the equal contribution that others, including teachers, can have on a problem situation. Rather than attempt to understand or control these variables the approach used here aimed to support individual pupils to construct solutions, based on already existing successful experiences. The action research framework within which this support was provided focused on three main questions, related to:

- Satisfactory outcome for pupils, and prevention of continuing exclusions.
- The most appropriate model for use in individual intervention with pupils.
- The extent to which the model could be integrated into school support systems, and EP working practices.

One outcome measure, based on the pupils' stated goals, would be their continued attendance at school. A further indication of improvement in the situations of concern

would be the expression of satisfaction by both pupils and their teachers. It has been argued here that, although there are particular difficulties in attempting to determine 'successful' outcome in relation to behaviour, the available data from teachers and from pupils themselves suggests that there was mutually acknowledged improvement in a large number of areas previously perceived as problems. This is not to suggest that the SFBT approach was wholly responsible for change, or that the improvements were universal. It would not be unreasonable, however, to conclude that the intervention did at least have some influence, given the timing of the improvements and the comments pupils made by pupils - that the sessions with the researcher had been helpful to them in achieving change in their school lives. It would also be fair to suggest that the level of improvement was at least as extensive as that claimed by solution focused practitioners in other settings, although it would of course have been interesting to be able to look at the longer-term impact. One final comment in relation to outcome concerns the question and the suitability of the approach with pupils experiencing learning difficulties. Although some of the pupils did not always find it easy to articulate their thoughts and feelings in the rather abstract way that was perhaps demanded by an interview situation, this did not preclude their active engagement in the process. It would be a useful future exercise to engage in a greater level of process discussion with such a group of pupils.

In terms of the model itself, a number of interrelating factors have been described which, it is suggested, combined to cumulative effect in purposeful intervention with pupils. In fact, Miller & Duncan (2000) suggest that this is actually the major strength of SFBT - the manner in which the approach utilises the range of factors historically associated with positive outcome for all models of therapy. One of these, the useful contribution that pupils can make in utilising personal strengths and experiences to help shape positive outcome in their school lives has also been championed elsewhere (Rudduck & Flutter,

2000; Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000), but is all too often denied by institutional practices (Gersch, 1996). In the first instance then, it was considered crucial to this study that account was taken of the personal views of pupils about the situations in which they found themselves from the outset – including their enforced contact with the researcher. Even though they had agreed to meet with the researcher they were quite clearly 'involuntary' in the terminology of SFBT literature. It could not simply be assumed, therefore, that they had arrived at the first session ready to participate in an intervention process of any sort, and it would have been easy to engender a reluctance to do so. In short they had no reason to, and were not ready for, change.

The unconditional acceptance of their perspectives on situations, framing their actions in terms of justifiable protest, before even beginning to consider alternative ways of dealing with the 'intrusive problems' (without them having to acknowledge any contribution to the situations concerned) appears to have been particularly important in encouraging initial interest in the process. This alliance seemed to underpin all subsequent collaboration, and emphasises the importance of feelings and relationships in a model of intervention, in a way that is overlooked by much of the outcome research reported earlier. The first steps towards progress here were undoubtedly those directed at encouraging the pupils to engage in what, in SFBT, is usually referred to as a customer relationship. This has also been described here as movement from a state of 'precontemplation' to 'contemplation' and in developing 'preparedness' for change. One important contributor to this state was recognition and acknowledgement by the pupils of potential personal benefit, and was followed by a conscious decision to attempt change. The other was the formulation of appropriate and credible strategies that might switch the balance in their perceptions of themselves as the victims of problems to a situation in which they might begin to assume some control. Conversely, where intervention was least successful, this change talk was not properly achieved.

The decision not to view SFBT as the rigid application of a predetermined sequence of techniques appears to have been critical in supporting the pupils to achieve this position of readiness. The pupils' initial responses led to a decision by the researcher to incorporate variation on the original model, in keeping with the action research paradigm, and the eventual development of a model determined by circumstance and need. The objective for the researcher became one of finding the appropriate model, not determined by setting as a 'school version' of SFBT, but for the individual pupil, in this setting. It was also not possible to simply import, in its entirety, a model researched and developed elsewhere, or even to employ a theoretical hybrid – in this instance the initial model – without further refinement. Interestingly, even Lipchik (a member of de Shazer's original Milwaukee team) has recently (2002) expressed her regret about the way in which SFBT has been 'misunderstood' (p6) and promoted in a formulaic and mechanical fashion. In the same way, it cannot be assumed that, even within the same school, the exact processes of the revised model would transfer to another pupil group although alliance, readiness for change, and the flexible employment of solution focused technique, should remain the main focus.

Despite the individual differences in the detail of pathways, there were common features across pupils that might well feature in work with other pupils in similar circumstances. Very early in the process of intervention, for example, the pupils all insisted on engaging in problem-talk, and so this was accommodated in full, in contrast with the more traditional SFBT position. Similarly, their immediate attribution of blame for problems elsewhere, and the ongoing revision by most pupils of their theories of change indicated that they had not, at the time, been sure about the precise nature of the problems - another factor which had not been anticipated on the basis of research literature but which, on reflection, might not be surprising from pupils expecting a more directive approach. The use of a flexible model allowed the pupils time and the opportunity to

develop a clearer and comprehensive picture of life in school, through a combination of action, observation and reflection. The time spent on revisions might have implications for the 'brief' nature of intervention, but successful outcome was of greater importance here than the number of sessions required to achieve this. It may be, of course, that the process of problem clarification could be made more efficient through, for example, the use of a structured questionnaire in order to facilitate direct comparison between subject areas.

In taking the time needed, however, and allowing for changes of direction rather than forcing solutions, pupils in the present study were eventually able to clarify what, for them, were exceptional lessons, generally without the use of the miracle question. Consistent with their initial attributions as to causes of problems, however, they experienced early difficulties in identifying and generalising aspects of their own successful behaviour in these situations and so first attempts at solution tended towards being somewhat speculative. The real steps towards solution were taken as they began to recognise some individual contribution to exceptional instances within 'problem' lessons, through linking their own behaviour to that of others. Once they could begin to see themselves as relatively competent there was an increased sense of agency, they were able to realise their own resources, and then to employ these in strategic action. Although it was never an aim, there were also concurrent instances of pupils reporting increased understanding of social exchange within a classroom, an experience which might even serve them in other situations, and a development worthy of further study in its own right.

In addition to the problem talk and the ongoing review of theories of change, a further notable discrepancy between the initial and revised models was the incorporation of a technique more usually associated with Narrative Therapy than with SFBT. The

spontaneous externalisation of problems by pupils was dealt with in a manner that offered a focus for action but which respected their theories of change, although the identification of exceptions to these problems still remained the mainstay of the model. While not anticipated this was a significant variation on the initial model. Nevertheless, the adoption of techniques drawn from other social constructionist approaches is seen by some authors, as already noted, as fitting comfortably within the boundaries of solution focused work and there may be some value in pursuing this idea in further research and development of the model. Indeed, O'Connell (1998) actually sees experimentation and integration of techniques as a natural process in the evolution of any approach to intervention, and the development of an effective school based solution focused model was precisely the aim of this research.

For the pupil with whom the current model could be said to have achieved least success, an option might have been to consider even greater variation, perhaps following the pathway offered, for example, in the model of Sagesse & Foley (2000). Its employment of directed tasks however, (Molnar & Lindquist, 1989; Selekman, 1993), designed to actively disrupt problem maintaining patterns of interaction, would have represented a major diversion from one of the most important and fundamental principles of this study, that of pupil-determined action. While problems were dealt with as externalised, this conceptualisation of them was accepted, rather than proposed, by the researcher. Directed tasks would have moved the research into a further phase, with action actually suggested to the pupils. Although it might be worth consideration as a future adaptation in appropriate circumstances, this would have been beyond the boundaries set for this particular research.

The final area of study revolved around the issue of compatibility with everyday EP working arrangements within the school systems and, as Zimmerman & Beaudoin (2002)

point out, the discourses of schools are frequently at odds with a social constructionist approach. Although some success was achieved in this study using the SFBT model individually, this might be less feasible in the context of more usual arrangements for working in the school, and more careful attention would need to be given to links with its structure, organisation and systems. Issues worthy of consideration have been noted already, and the fact that the present study did not do so represents one clear limitation on its findings. Curriculum access, and ongoing pastoral support for pupils experiencing both learning and emotional and social difficulties, for example, are likely to have been highly influential factors on outcome for a number of the pupils. It seems quite likely that the difficulties experienced by the researcher in relating to systems of communication and support within the school, which often appeared to be inconsistent and incohesive, were offset to some degree by the opportunity for relatively frequent and intensive work with pupils. It also allowed for a model in which there was no challenge to pupil views, an important contributory factor to successful outcome with this group, and one that might easily be threatened by the open expression of teacher opinion based upon pupil focused attributions. On the other hand, the lack of involvement by teachers means a greater risk of pupils returning, unsupported, into a system ill-prepared to help them maintain progress. As Dessent (1992) remarks, while individual EP casework has an important function and can form the basis of a more generalised effect within a school, it can equally compound the organisational and institutional problems and become 'part of the problem rather than part of the solution' (p.40). In any event, the level of contact offered in this study would be available to only a very few pupils through normal working conditions, without a significant change in the balance of workload negotiated with the school. Furthermore, such an emphasis on intervention with individual pupils might prove to be somewhat inconsistent with the movement by the researcher's service, in the context of a national trend (Watkins, 2000; DfEE, 2000), towards a consultative model of delivery, although the specific allocation of a proportion of EP time to a brief therapy

team (Kellock & King, 2000; King & Kellock, 2002) is an interesting resolution of these dilemmas.

In practice, therefore, it seems an important next step that this aspect of the overall approach should be further developed, notwithstanding the complexities and inconsistencies inherent in the school systems. Despite the difficulty experienced in engaging school systems, some of the more successful contact with teachers during the course of this study offers reason to believe in the value of, and potential for, future development at individual casework level using existing school structures. It might be possible, for example, to undertake further evaluation of a combination of levels of involvement by an EP, in collaboration with key support teachers, from consultation through to direct individual work. Paradoxically, the very use of the term SFBT would need to be given careful consideration in attempts to promote the model. 'Therapy' in this context carries with it medical connotations of deficit, treatment and expert. While the term is simply a reflection of the origins of the approach, such association seems to conflict with the notion of a social construction of problems which can be addressed without resorting to expert interpretation. If teachers are to be encouraged to adopt the approach, and the potential role of parents might also be helpfully explored, it will be important to ensure that they too feel capable. A more appropriate and empowering terminology, perhaps involving language such as 'solution focused', 'supportive' or 'purposeful' interview/conversations would be more consistent with a pastoral discourse and less likely to meet with hesitancy.

At a systems level, it seems reasonable to assume that these ideas could be addressed in conjunction with the broader EP role of school development work aimed at strengthening school and family systems for identifying, supporting and monitoring the progress of the particularly vulnerable pupils represented in this school year by the

subject group. Although it represents a serious challenge, particularly in the context of what can appear to be the conflicting message of the standards agenda (Thomas & Loxely, 2001; Rustemier, 2002; Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2001), the satisfactory resolutions for both teachers and pupils in this study might equally provide a basis against which to promote the concurrent emphasis on the development of inclusive practices (DfES, 2001b; Booth & Ainscow, 2000, 2002), inherent in the concept of a solution focused school.

9 Personal Reflections

The earlier chapter on methodology referred to the potential conflict over identity that can sometimes be experienced in the course of practitioner research. In an attempt to achieve a degree of objectivity in this account, the term "researcher" and personal pronoun "he" have been used throughout this document. One potential disadvantage of this grammatical convention, however, is that it could leave an impression of detachment and distance from the human exchanges that actually constituted the work undertaken. Indeed, it may well be the case that such a position of neutrality has the potential to lessen credibility, in that it might detract from the notion of 'thick description' - also referred to earlier as a key factor in relation to credibility in qualitative research. In this final chapter, therefore, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on some of my own personal experiences as a researcher, an educational psychologist and as an individual over the course of this study.

From the outset, I need to point out that I did not embark on this study with the confidence of an authority in the use of SFBT, even though my interest in solution focused approaches had begun a number of years earlier. My first contact with the concept had actually been through a whole service development day provided by the Brief Therapy Practice in the mid-1990's, and I was immediately attracted by its apparent simplicity, its positive and purposeful orientation, and its non-coercive style. Over the next few years I was fortunate enough to be able to attend further presentations by such respected and eminent figures in the field as Steve de Shazer, Yvonne Dolan and Scott Miller. I can vividly remember their convincing, and at times evangelical, accounts of the effectiveness and benefits of a solution focused approach. There was never an occasion when I returned from such an event and did not feel inspired and curious about the possibilities for applying what I had heard to my own work. There was, equally, never a time when I did not experience some doubt about whether the methods developed in

very different situations could be transferred to my own. There was certainly relatively little research evidence of other EP's having achieved this, a situation which apparently still pertains (Stobie, Boyle & Woolfson, 2005), although some early explorative writings were beginning to appear in professional journals and in early collective works such as *Solution Focused Thinking in Schools* by Rhodes & Ajmal (1995). As a consequence, my forays into SFBT were limited to carefully selected occasions, when what appeared to be favourable circumstances arose during the course of my everyday work. I was finally persuaded to take the plunge after listening to John Murphy, another motivational speaker, give an account of his own successful employment of solution focused methods with high school pupils in the USA. For the first time I could see clear similarities between the settings relating to a specialist in the field and my own. It seemed tremendously important for me to find out, once and for all, what value the approach might have and to explore how best I might utilise it in everyday work. A systematic research study seemed the appropriate means by which to address my growing interest, and the school-based project in which I was then engaged provided the opportunity for serious examination.

I felt at the time that an action research framework would be most appropriate methodology for the study, with its simultaneous focus on both verification and discovery. Despite the drive by clinicians to gain respectability through their, usually imperfect, attempts at approximation to randomised controlled trials using SFBT, I was convinced of the importance of placing the interests of pupils above the demands of an irrelevant positivism and that successful outcome had to be the prime aim. At the same time, I was of the view that it might be of real value to explore and develop a model of SFBT that was tailored to my situation and which, I hoped, would therefore have resonance for other EP's. Although I saw the need for a basic framework, in the form of an initial model based on best practice as described in the literature, I also felt that I

should be ready to continually review this in the light of experience. I believed that my research would have some validity and be acknowledged as reliable so long as I could provide a detailed description of my methodology, and that it would draw credibility from professional colleagues on the basis of commonality of context. The practitioner researcher role was an inevitable consequence of the context of the study, and the situation dictated that I would need to undertake both roles if it was to be realised. In any event, it suited my purposes to take on this dual role. The whole basis of the intervention would be housed within a social dialogue and, for the experience to inform my own future practice, it would be critical for me to experience the interaction at first hand. On reflection, I feel that the overall methodology was validated on the basis of having satisfied, to a reasonable degree, both strands of its dual purpose. I would certainly want to suggest to anyone interested in studying the use of SFBT in similar circumstances that there is much to be gained from employing case studies, as practitioner researchers, because of the manner in which this allows direct access to the complexity of relationships and processes important to, and inherent in, individual intervention.

In terms of the impact of the intervention, I have already commented on the shortcomings in the outcome data. Even so, I feel that verification – that SFBT can be used effectively with adolescents facing exclusion from school - was achieved, and I would like to believe that my involvement with this group of pupils did help achieve some positive change in their school situations. To do so always gives me a tremendous sense of personal satisfaction, a motivating force for anyone who considers themselves a member of the helping professions. Sadly, it will always be a regret that, for one pupil in particular, improvement seemed never to be sustained and that somehow I didn't manage to engage him in a helpful search for solutions. It seems to me, in retrospect, that my decision to effectively limit the boundaries of discovery was perhaps an error of judgement. As I will explain further, below, my expectation was that it might be unhelpful

not to allow some deviation from the initial model in order to accommodate individual need, should this be required. This turned out to be the case, and for the most part appeared to assist the process of intervention. On the other hand, I did place limits on the extent to which this would be permitted. Firstly, I felt that the results of this research would have greater validity if it could be demonstrated that all of the necessary resources for solution arose entirely from the pupils themselves, without specific action directed from an adult. Secondly, in the interests of demonstrating maximum efficiency, no teaching staff would necessarily need to be actively involved in the intervention process. Perhaps a further influential factor was my own lack of confidence about using solution focused approaches in previously untested situations. The disadvantage of my cautious tactic, however, was to effectively turn the action research framework for this pupil into little more than an evaluation of an, albeit flexible, model that worked for others – the very starting point that I had ruled out in the first instance. With the benefit of hindsight, I have no doubt that I could, and should, have been even bolder in my tentative steps beyond the security of the initial model, and more daring in my willingness to integrate solution focused and other techniques, without feeling that this would somehow compromise my work. Ironically, I actually committed the cardinal sin of advice-giving anyway, in a moment of well intended compassion during an especially depressing session with MC. The main compensation I can draw from this experience with MC is that, even though he received two fixed term exclusions during the course of intervention, he did not reach the point of permanent exclusion.

Despite this frustration, what I was attempting to do was to achieve a balance between the emerging needs of pupils and the development of a model circumscribed by a basic framework, which would therefore also allow me some meaningful and systematic investigation. While the data on outcome was inevitably subjective, it was nevertheless recorded and collated in a manner which naturally loaned itself to simple statistical

analysis. Although this study utilised a primarily qualitative methodology, a case can still be made for the use of empiricism in order to measure effect in such circumstances (Todd, Nerlich & McKeown, 2005). In doing so, I feel that I have been able to present a reasonable case for concluding that, overall, satisfactory progress was attained, and would argue that similar research studies would also benefit from being able to include such outcome data, in the current culture of educational accountability and evidence based practice. As I have already noted, however, the validity or credibility of this statement would have been significantly enhanced by a greater level of confidence in school based data sources, as well as corroborative support from other key figures such as parents/carers. Furthermore, in any repetition of this study I would also see it as important to engage in a more detailed exploration of pupil views on process rather than simply focus on outcome – especially in attempting to establish a clearer link between outcome and the process of intervention. There were, of course, positive comments from pupils about the experience of individual sessions. One girl, for instance, began to request lunchtime sessions as a means of safe haven from the hustle and bustle of the school yard and commented:

'It's good because I don't get a telling or shown up in front of others. You don't shout at me and it's nice to come here at lunchtime...I can't get into trouble. Can I bring a friend with me because she wants to stay out of trouble as well?'

(Unfortunately the request had to be politely declined, although I was able to persuade her friend to join a lunchtime art club as a constructive alternative.) There were also comments which gave me encouragement that my methods were actually helping promote change, such as:

'I like using the scales. They tell me where I'm up to and how well I'm doing.'

and, on the issue of empowerment:

'I feel like I can do something when I come into school now. I don't have to just wait until B. starts to call me names. He used to try to get me into trouble with Miss every French lesson but now I know how to deal with him.'

I do feel, however, that in my preoccupation with achieving positive outcome and detailing an appropriate model, I missed an opportunity to use such comments as a platform for a methodical exploration of potential causal links and their views on the possibilities for ongoing development of the model. I would be keen to give greater attention to this in any future study.

Dealing with the information on process which was available, the nature of the evolving model itself, proved to be a rather more complicated exercise than straightforward numerical calculation. As already noted, I had anticipated that for individuals there might have been some variation from the initial model. I had also expected to be able to measure and evaluate such deviation. In my attempt to identify regularities – 'patterning' (Robson, 1993) - I had devised templates for analysing initial and subsequent sessions with the pupils against the initial model (Appendix 10). My method was to replay the tape recordings of single sessions and to detail on the templates the stages and techniques as they emerged. (The templates were set out to reflect the regularity predicted by the initial model, itself informed by my review of current literature). This information would also be complemented by parallel case notes which recorded the main content of each session. The tape recordings proved to be highly successful, in allowing me to rerun the sessions at leisure and take the necessary time to transcribe information. Above all, the tapes enabled me to focus almost exclusively on process, without having to be distracted by content. I must confess to having abandoned the templates fairly rapidly, however, as it became apparent that there seemed to be as many exceptions to the rule (of following

the initial model) as there were signs of the rule being followed - and the exceptions themselves were quite individualised. My prompt for this change of direction was simply the extent to which ad hoc notes and overwritten memos began to dominate any ordered notes within the format of the template itself. I therefore decided that it might be more informative to turn to what Robson (1993) refers to as chronological analysis or, more impressively, 'time-ordered meta matrices'. What this meant, in practice, was that I procured the exclusive services of our family kitchen table for two days, covered with size A3 sheets of paper (an extract is included as Appendix 11) and produced time lines, mapping sequences of sessions for individual pupils and setting these alongside pathways for others as a visual display. Doing this allowed me to achieve an overall pictorial representation of individual and collective case studies through which I could chart the process sequences for individuals, and compare them directly with others. In fact, the actual mapping out itself seemed to help clarify the information recorded in longhand – perhaps not dissimilar to the idea (Walker, 1985) that writing can actually help the reflective process in analysis. Even though the picture simply confirmed that the pathways were indeed individual, convoluted and complex, this is not to suggest that there were no common features in terms of sequence and technique. More critical was the need to be guided in their use by the fundamental principles underpinning the SFBT approach, and the flowchart depicting the revised model (Fig. 3) is the product of this analysis. As the sessions proceeded, therefore, the 'mini cycles' of action and evaluation for individual pupils had become increasingly influenced by their own decisions and at one level, therefore, so had the direction of the research itself. Although I was not in a position to utilise this process analysis during the course of intervention, as I had intended, the retrospective analysis has nevertheless informed my conclusions about a revised model.

This systematic reflection on the whole progression of intervention left me with impressions, not necessarily related to what I had previously considered to be the most likely significant aspects of process, which continue to inform my personal views on the use of solution focused methods with children and adolescents. One of these is simply that, in the circumstances in which my work takes place, pupils typically do not arrive at an initial session with an EP prepared for what solution focused (or any other) approaches have to offer. While this should not, and was not, a surprise to someone with my years of experience, I would still have to say that I have never before thought so carefully about the nature of my engagement with adolescents who find themselves in conflict with their teachers. I would like to think of myself as someone who relates relatively well to adolescents, and I have certainly been guilty of 'collusion' with them on many previous occasions in order to 'prove their innocence'. Until now, however, I suspect that I have never fully considered the extent to which there might be important differences between what might be called a 'relationship' and an 'alliance' in this context - and on the ways in which my behaviour as a 'therapist' might promote or detract from the latter. I was struck throughout my contact with pupils by the need for conscious effort on my part to minimise the influence of undeniable power differentials, both on my own behaviour and on the perceptions of the pupils of me as an authority figure, and to exclude any potential inference of blame from conversation. Similarly, I now see the whole question of preparation for change as hinging on perfectly valid pupil constructions of the meaning of social interaction, and can make a serious claim to have genuinely sampled the experience of 'working the other side of the fence' (Selekman, 1993). Because of its importance, coupled with the difficulties encountered in attempting simultaneous analysis of process, in any future research I would take more trouble to consciously reflect on the ongoing development of alliance, and would also seek a different form of peer supervision specifically designed to support me to articulate my

thinking at a researcher, rather than just practitioner, level in order to achieve some degree of concurrent triangulation.

I would also suggest to others that this approach to supervision might be a particularly useful response to dealing with other problematic and recurring tensions naturally inherent in enacting this dual role of practitioner researcher. Throughout the period of this study, I had a very real sense of Biott's (1996) 'identity confusion' as a practitioner researcher. While I was able to control a conscious switching of identities from practitioner to researcher between sessions, the issue was frequently much more confused during the course of sessions with pupils. I had prepared and planned for between-session switch as carefully as I could. I had a predetermined routine which I tried to follow rigorously, and I kept parallel records. These records focused solely on content during sessions and were jointly written and agreed with the pupils concerned. I focused on process later, replaying the tape alone, and in the beginning this felt to be a fairly detached and objective way of approaching one aspect of the dual role. In general, however, I felt that I was never simply in one role or the other. I was clearly more of a researcher between sessions, where I took more considered actions - as in the decision not to use the miracle question, and the acceptance of externalisation as a viable technique within a changing model. What was happening at these times was that ongoing process analysis and evaluation between sessions was feeding back into the model in subsequent meetings. As such, the research was guiding my practice. In hindsight, there were even points when my adherence to the researcher role probably prevented me from taking effective action. I had set myself certain constraints, and it was probably this which narrowed my range of responses to the problems brought to sessions by M.C. Despite my attempts at consistency, however, I did eventually draw less on the ongoing process review and more on personal judgement when my data analysis systems began to fail me. There were also distinct occasions during sessions,

for example with M.C., when I acted entirely on instinct and the 'intuitive thinking' to which Atkinson (1994) refers. My personal feelings were certainly prominent at the point when I tried to offer him advice, in direct contradiction to the path that the researcher in me might have chosen to follow. Even at less critical times I was often guided by my feelings, informed presumably by previous experiences, about whether or not it might be helpful to completely accept the unanticipated turns made by pupils. I often had little time to think and felt that I simply had to act.

Perhaps the anxiety induced by confusion was unnecessary (maybe even helpful) in the end, and I managed to achieve sufficient balance between systematic working and intuitive risk-taking to create a context for learning and progressing in my understanding as an individual. While I trust that my very interest in solution focused approaches serves to demonstrate my views on pupil competence, I have also been reminded that there are skills to be learned if intervention is to be successful. The methodology of solution focused approaches was developed primarily with willing adults and, I believe, there are good reasons not to simply assume that children have had the opportunity to perfect the necessary skills for engagement in a kind of dialogue that they may have rarely encountered in schools, or the confidence to trust strange adults who are afforded respect elsewhere on the basis of professional status. The curt response

'No, I don't know what the problem is!'

speaks for itself on the matter. Furthermore, is it reasonable that I should expect an eleven year old to be able to offer an instant, and considered, reflection on the highly complex nature of social interaction when I, along with the rest of the adult population, am able to constantly repeat my misjudgements in the course of relationships with others? It would also be dishonest of me not to make similar comments about the influence of my own prior experiences and my own need to reconstruct previously

developed 'expertise' in, for example the problem solving approaches which had strongly influenced my training and previous work as an EP. It would be equally untrue to imply that I am not still engaged in a process of learning, as I attempt to further extend my skills in SFBT. One immediate development for me in using the approach with secondary age pupils, for example, has been to introduce the idea of a matrix in early sessions in order to help pupils assess situations across a number of subject areas in a more focused way, an idea which appears to have helped with fine tuning during problem definition. I also discovered during the course of this research that what might appear to me to be an exception may have little value unless pupils can take credit for its existence. As a consequence, I have been more inclined to ask pupils to undertake observational tasks between sessions where appropriate. This, in turn, appears to have sometimes helped streamline the critical process of identifying exceptions and envisaging solutions.

I am also continuing to work on what I see as the value of a solution focused approach with teachers and other adults working in schools, partly in response to my experiences during this study and, in addition, because of my conviction that the approach has much to offer to other professionals working with young children and adolescents. Sadly, I was unable to engage teachers within the boundaries of the current study to the extent that I would have wished, even though I believed that my aims in this respect had been anything but ambitious. Although I have argued that the revised model did support positive change for pupils, it remains the case that I did not manage to find ways of feeding recognition of pupil success into the school systems in a manner that might have provoked reflection on the systems themselves. The action research, therefore, became disappointingly restricted to the individual model of intervention, while the context remained largely untouched. A lesson from this study for others, then, must be to stress

the importance of involving key figures from a school in planning and evaluation, perhaps even negotiating the active participation of interested teachers.

While I had little choice but to accept this situation once the study had started to take shape, at personal level I cannot help but feel frustrated about the fact that, because of circumstances, the focus of research became narrowed. Given my extended and intensive contact with this particular school, it was difficult for me at the time not to experience a level of individual disenchantment at this failure. I had planned the research study with high hopes that my work would – or could be made - compatible with school systems, on the basis of the previous interest in their development by the senior management team. I was subsequently amazed by what I perceived to be a rapid change in both culture and practice following the departure of one key individual. Large schools such as this are complex institutions. On reflection I had underestimated the dynamic nature of the school's operations, and had presumed that the situation in which I was to work would remain relatively static and predictable. Looking back, the school was actually evolving even during the reconnaissance phase of the action research.

While I was still planning the study, the future of the vice principal with whom I had negotiated was being reviewed as part of the school's budget cuts. This individual who had valued my support for the school over the years had structured a whole project bid for funding around my personal availability, and saw me as making an important contribution to the senior management team. Even without his immediate influence, I had never envisaged that my perceived role could so quickly have become so restricted. His departure six months before the study began resulted in a shift in power base and decision making responsibilities within the school, some marked change in values and priorities, and consequently expectations from me as an EP. This ultimately placed constraints on me as a researcher and challenged my research at both a practical and ideological level.

Another complicating challenge to me as a researcher, again related to my position within the school, added a further dimension to the identity confusion issue - that of being both a researcher and an insider. The merits or otherwise of 'insider knowledge' were discussed in the earlier methodology chapter. Of particular concern to me however, in my current situation, was the question of whether or not I really was an insider. In one sense I certainly was not. I had a separate professional identity from every other person in the school, belonged to a distinct and separate agency and received my supervision from them. I worked to the standards set by the Educational Psychology Service and my professional code of conduct, and this often felt at odds with the predominant culture of the school. Despite my strong feelings about this, however, I could make no claim to be entirely detached or impartial. I was working within, and so must be influenced by, school culture even though I did not belong to it or necessarily subscribe to all of its values.

There certainly seemed little doubt that teachers saw me as an ally acting on their behalf in their struggle to control unruly behaviour, even though there were occasions when I believed that individual members of staff might have played a significant role in the creation and maintenance of problems. I had, after all, observed many of them teach. Unfortunately I was no longer in a position of influence and I felt restricted in what I could do about this now, other than to work with the pupils and share their social construction of the causes of problems. I sometimes even felt a professional alienation from the context, with me following one discourse and everyone else another. This inevitably created some of the problems of communication, and there were times when I actually felt quite isolated, despite the fact that I was always welcomed in the school during my involvement with the pupils, and the view was often expressed that my individual casework services were valued. My failure to engage particularly well with the systems meant that there was sometimes a sense of me working in quiet opposition to school systems, almost to the point of deceiving them as I worked alone in my office, secretly

acting out my own agenda. This represented perhaps the most significant change of direction of my overall action research strategy - from one of developing an individual model of intervention which engaged with and complemented school systems to one of development of an individual model only, and one which could be effective almost in spite of school systems. Despite my sense of distance, it was still highly unlikely that the pupils would see me as anything but an ally of the school at the outset and I knew that I would need to demonstrate my allegiance to their own cause. I have gone to some length already in attempting to explain my approach to dealing with the issue of alliance, and its critical importance to effective engagement and outcome.

I am not convinced that I ever fully resolved the questions of identity, but there were times when I was less conscious of them and when they were less of an intrusive problem. Working alone, for instance, at least I was able to control much of my own destiny and this allowed me to pursue my main aims without serious obstacles. In contrast with this, I also took a great deal of pleasure and encouragement from even the small glimpses of interest shown by individual teachers in what I was trying to achieve, and this has served as motivation for me to continue to explore some of the ideas for greater systems involvement raised in the conclusions chapter - although from a more obvious and comfortable position of visiting practitioner and outsider. I am no longer the EP for the school in which this research was conducted, but have enjoyed some success with solution focused consultation elsewhere. In secondary schools I have been able to share pupil perceptions of their strengths and 'areas of exception' with SENCO's and heads of year in order to encourage the reframing of a more balanced picture of performance. In primary schools, where consistency and acknowledgement of responsibility are often easier to achieve, I have found that the idea of a solution focused classroom observations, and the subsequent feedback around previously unnoticed exceptions and pupil and teacher strengths, can help generate a positive atmosphere of

mutual respect and cooperation. I have also enjoyed the opportunity to provide training in solution focused approaches on behalf of the LEA. These sessions have attracted interest from mainstream and special school teachers, support services, and from the rapidly developing profession of learning mentors keen to extend their counselling skills.

Insofar as this training is concerned I feel no reticence, and see no disadvantage, in sharing techniques and at the same time strongly emphasising what I now perceive to be the critical mindset of a solution focused approach and the fundamental importance of its underlying principles. Whether or not the opportunity to explore my ideas through a research study have actually brought me full circle on this matter is an interesting question for final reflection. A term which appears to be becoming something of a metaphor for the current state of psychotherapy outcome research is the 'Dodo Bird Verdict' (Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll). The pronouncement 'Everybody has won and all must have prizes.' has come to represent in literature (Luborsky, Rosenthal, Diguier, Andrusyana, Berman & Levit, 2002) the notion that what is important in therapy is a systematic application of those common factors (Duncan & Miller, 2000), described earlier, which underpin successful therapy, regardless of model – and so the majority of outcome research reports success. Furthermore, it has been suggested (Taibbi, 1996: Wampold, 2001) that individuals are likely to choose a theoretical framework that is aligned to their own personal views about people and the process of change. Perhaps the final, probably vital, contributing factor to any success achieved here, then, was my commitment to an approach which embodies my own personal values in techniques and principles that seek the accomplishment of the common factors. The potential for transfer to other situations, for similarly curious EP's and others, will almost surely be best measured from that point.

References

- Adams, J.W., Snowling, M.J., Hennessey, S.M. & Kind, P. (1999) Problems of behaviour, reading and arithmetic: Assessments of comorbidity using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. British Journal of Educational Psychology 69, 571-585
- Ainscow, M., Booth, T. & Dyson, A. (2001) Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools: A Collaborative Action Research Network. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, April 2001
- Ajmal, Y. (2001) Introducing Solution Focused Thinking. In Ajmal, Y. & Rees, I. (eds) Solutions in Schools. London: BT Press
- Allen, J. (1999) Actively Seeking Inclusion. Pupils with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools. London: Falmer Press
- Altrichter, H., Posch, P. & Somekh, B.G. (1993) Teachers Investigate Their Work. An Introduction to the Methods of Action Research. London: Routledge
- Atkinson, S. (1994) Rethinking the Principles and Practice of Action Research: the tensions for the teacher-researcher. Educational Action Research 2 (3) 383-401
- Ayers, H., Clarke, D. & Murray, A. (1995) Perspectives on Behaviour. London: David Fulton
- Banks, V. (1999) A Solution Focused Approach to Adolescent Group Work. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy 20 (2) 70-82
- Bannister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. & Tindall, C. (1994) Qualitative Methods in psychology. A Research Guide. London: Open University Press
- Barton, L. (1999) Market ideologies, education and the challenge for inclusion. In Daniels, H. & Garner, P. (eds) Inclusive Education. London: Kogan Page

Berg, I. K. (1997a) SFBT Outcome Studies. www.brieftherapy.org.sfbtstudies.htm

Berg, I. K. (1997b) Hot Tips. www.brieftherapy.org/hottips.htm.

Bertolino, B. (1999) Therapy with Troubled Teenagers: Rewriting Young Lives in Progress Indianapolis: Wiley

Beyebach, M. (2000) European Brief Therapy Association Outcome Study: Research Definitions. www.ebta.nu/sfbt-researchdefinition.html

Beyebach, M., Rodriguez Sanchez, M.S., Arribas de Miguel, J., Herrero de Vega, M., Hernandez, C. & Rodriguez Morejon, A. (2000) Outcome of Solution Focused Therapy at a University Family Therapy Center. Journal of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 116-128

Biott, C. (1996) Latency in Action Research: Changing perspectives on occupational and research identities. Educational Action Research 4 (2) 169-183

Bloor, M. (1997) Techniques of validation in Qualitative Research: a Critical Commentary. In Miller, G. & Dingwall, R. (1997) Context and Method in Qualitative Research. London: Sage

Bogden, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (1998) Qualitative Research for Education. An Introduction to Theory and Methods. (3rd edn) Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Booth, T. (1993) Raising standards: sticking to first principles. In Dyson, A. & Gains, C. (eds) Rethinking Special Needs in Mainstream Schools: Towards the Year 2000. London: David Fulton

Booth, T., & Ainscow, M. (2000, 2002) Index For Inclusion: Developing learning and participation in schools. Bristol: CSIE

Brown, L. & Coleman, M.C. (1998) Index of Personality Characteristics. Austin, Texas: Pro-Ed Inc.

- Burden, R. (1997) Research in the Real World: An evaluation model for use by applied psychologists. Educational Psychology in Practice 13 (1) 13-20
- Burgess, R.G. (1993) Biting the hand that feeds you. In Burgess, R.G. (ed) Educational Research and Evaluation for Policy and Practice. London: Falmer
- Cade, B. & O'Hanlon, W.H. (1993) A Brief Guide to Brief Therapy. London: Norton
- Canter, L. & Canter, M (1992) Assertive Discipline. Santa Monica, CA: Lee Canter Associates
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1983) Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research. Geelong, Victoria: Deacon University Press
- Children Act (1989) London. HMSO
- Coffey, A. & Coffey, P.A. (1996) Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies. London: Sage
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000) Research Methods in Education (5th Edition) Routledge. London: Falmer Press
- Cole, T., Visser, J. & Upton, G. (1998) Effective Schooling for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. London: David Fulton
- Connell, J.P. & Kubisch, A.C. (1999) Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects and Problems. <http://www.aspenroundtable.org/vol2/Connell/htm>
- Conoley, J.C. & Conoley, C.W. (1990) Staff consultative work in schools. In Jones, N & Frederickson, N. (1990) (eds) Refocusing Educational Psychology. London: Falmer Press
- Cooper, P. (1993) "Learning from pupils' perspectives". British Journal of Special Education 20 (4) 129-133

- Cooper, P. (1999) Changing perceptions of EBD; maladjustment and beyond. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties 4 (1) 3-11
- Cooper, P., Smith, C.J. & Upton, G. (1994) Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: Theory to Practice. London: Routledge
- Daniels, H. & Garner, P. (eds) (1999) Inclusive Education. London: Kogan Page
- Daniels, H., Visser, J., Cole, T. & de Reybekill, N. (1999) Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Mainstream Schools (research report 90). London: HMSO
- Davie, R. (1986) Understanding behaviour problems. Maladjustment and Therapeutic Education 4 (1) 2-11
- De Jong, P. & Hopwood, L.E. (1996) Outcome research on treatment conducted at the brief family therapy center, 1992-1993. In Miller, S.D., Hubble, R.A., & Duncan, B.L. (1996) (eds) Handbook of Solution Focused Brief Therapy: Research, Theory & Practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- de Shazer, S. (1985) Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy. New York: Norton
- de Shazer, S. (1988) Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy. New York: Norton
- de Shazer, S. (1991) Putting Difference to Work. New York: Norton
- de Shazer, S. (1994) Words Were Originally Magic. New York: Norton
- de Shazer, S. & Berg, I.K. (1997) What Works? Remarks on research aspects of Solution Focused Brief Therapy. Journal of Family Therapy 19, 121-124
- de Shazer, S. & Molnar, A. (1984) Four useful interventions in brief family therapy. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy. 10 (3) 297-304
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications

- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000) Indices of Deprivation. www.odpm.gsi.gov.uk
- DfEE (1999) Social Inclusion: Pupil Support. London: DfEE
- DfEE (2000) Educational Psychology Services (England): Current Role, Good Practice and Future Directions. Report of the Working Group. London: DfEE Publications.
- DfES. (2001a) Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. DfES Publications
- DfES. (2001b) Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs. London: DfES.
- DfES (2003) Permanent Exclusions from Maintained Schools in England 2001/2002. www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000427/index/shtml
- Dessent, T. (1988) Adapting behavioural approaches to the local authority environment. Educational Psychology in Practice 3 (4) 24-28
- Dessent, T. (1992) Educational psychologists and 'the case for individual casework'. In Wolfendale, S., Bryans, T., Fox, M., Labram, A. & Sigston, A. (eds) The Profession and Practice of Educational Psychology. London: Cassell
- Dowling, E. & Osborne, E (eds) (1985) The Family and The School: A Joint Systems Approach to Problems with Children. London: Routledge
- Duncan, B. L., Hubble, M. & Miller, S. D. (1997) Psychotherapy With Impossible Cases: Efficient Treatment Of Therapy Veterans. New York: Norton
- Duncan, B. L. & Miller, S. D. (2000) The Heroic Client: Client-Directed, Outcome Informed Therapy. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Duncan, B. L. & Miller, S. (2001) The Client's Theory of Change: Consulting the Client in the Integrative Process. www.talkingcure.com/reference2htm

- Durrant, M. (1995) Creative Strategies for School Problems: Solutions for Psychologists and Teachers. New York: Norton
- Dykes, M. A. & Neville, K. (2000) Taming Trouble And Other Tales: Using Externalised Characters In Solution Focused Therapy. Journal Of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 74-89
- Eakes, G., Walsh, S., Markowski, M., Cain, H. & Swanson, M. (1997) Family centred brief solution focused therapy with chronic schizophrenia: A pilot study. Journal of Family Therapy 19 (2) 145-158
- Egan, G. (1990) The Skilled Helper. A Systematic Approach to Effective Helping. Pacific Grove, Calif: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.
- Eisner, E.W. (1998) The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice. London: Merrill. Prentice-Hall International (UK)
- Elliott, J. (1991) Action Research for Educational Change. Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Eslea, M. (1999) Attributional styles in boys with severe behaviour problems: A possible reason for lack of progress on a positive behaviour programme. British Journal of Educational Psychology 69, 33 – 45
- Evans, M. (1999) Teachers' attitudes towards disruptive behaviour and their use of internal referral. Pastoral Care in Education 17 (4) 29-38
- Every Child Matters (2003). Norwich: The Stationary Office
- Franklin, C., Corcoran, J., Nowicki, J. & Streeter, C. (1997) Using client self-anchored scales to measure outcomes in solution-focused therapy. Journal of Systemic Therapies 16 (3) 246-265
- Frederickson, N. (1990) Systems approaches in educational psychology practice. In Jones, N & Frederickson, N. (eds) Refocusing Educational Psychology. London: Falmer Press

- Frederickson, N., Cameron, R. J., Dunsmuir, S., Graham, B., & Monsen, J. (1998) Professional Training in Educational Psychology: Then, Now and in the New Millennium. In Frederickson, N. & Lunt, I. (eds). Professional training in educational psychology: The next 50 years, 2-16. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.
- Frederickson, N. & Cline, T. (2002) Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Diversity: a textbook. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Frederickson, N. & Lunt, I. (eds). (1998) Professional training in educational psychology: The next 50 years, 2-16. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.
- Furman, B., Ahola, T., Birn, S. & Terava, T. (1999) Kids' Skills: Handbook of Solution-oriented Problem Solving with Children. Helsinki: Brief Therapy Institute
- Galvin, P., Mercer, S. & Costa, P. (1990) Building a Better Behaved School. Harlow: Longman
- George, E., Iveson, C. & Ratner, H. (1990) Problem to Solution. London: BT Press
- George, E., Iveson, C. & Ratner, H. Brief Therapy Applications in Education. Brief Therapy Practice Information Sheet. London
- Gersch, I. S. (1996) Involving children in assessment: creating a listening ethos. Educational & Child Psychology 13 (2) 31-48
- Gersch, I.S., Holgate, A. & Sigston, A. (1993) Valuing the Child's Perspective. A revised student report and other practical initiatives. Educational Psychology in Practice 9 (1) 36-45
- Gersch, I.S. & Nolan, A. (1994) Exclusions: what do the children think? Educational Psychology in Practice 10 (1) 35-45
- Gingerich, W.J. & Eisengart, S. (1999) SFBT Controlled Outcome Studies. www.gingerich.net/SFBT/research/default.htm

- Gingerich, W.J. & Wabeke, T. (2001) A Solution Focused Approach To Mental Health Interventions In School Settings. Children & Schools 23 (1) 33-47
- Goss, S. & Mearns, D (1997) Applied pluralism in the evaluation of employee counselling. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling 25, 327-244
- Greene, G.J., Mentzer, R.A. Pinnell, S. & Niles, D. (1998) Miracles, dreams and empowerment: A brief practice note. Families in Society 79 (4) 395-399
- Greenhalgh, P. (1994) Emotional Growth and Learning. London: Routledge
- Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989) Fourth Generation Evaluation. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage
- Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research. London: Sage
- Gupta, R., Stringer, B. & Meaker, A. (1990) A study of the effectiveness of home-based reinforcement in a secondary school. Educational Psychology in Practice 5 (4) 197-200
- Hammersley, M. (1984) The paradigmatic mentality: a diagnosis. In Barton, L. & Walker, S. (eds) Social Crisis and Educational Research. London: Croom Helm
- Hammersley, M. (1993) On the Teacher as a Researcher. In Hammersley, M. (ed) Educational Research: Current Issues. London: Open University /Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd
- Harker, M. (2001) How to Build Solutions at Meetings. In Ajmal, Y. & Rees, I. (eds) Solutions in Schools. London. BT Press
- Heron, J. (2001) Helping the client. A creative practical guide. London: Sage
- Hobbs, C., Todd, L. & Taylor, J. (2000) Consulting with children and young people: Enabling educational psychologists to work collaboratively. Educational and child psychology 17 (4) 107-115

Hopkins, D. (1985) A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research. Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Hoyt, M.F. & Miller, S.D. (2000) Stage-Appropriate Change-Oriented Brief Therapy Strategies. In Hoyt, M.F. Some Stories Are Better Than Others: Doing What Works in Brief Therapy and Managed Care. Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel

Hubble, M.A., Duncan, B. L. & Miller, S. (1999) The Heart and Soul of Change: What Works in Therapy. Washington: American Psychological Association

Imich, A. (1999) Delivering Educational Psychology. Educational Psychology in Practice. 15 (1) 57-64

Jones, N & Frederickson, N. (1990) (eds) Refocusing Educational Psychology. London: Falmer Press

Jordan, K.B. & Quinn, W.H. (1994) Session two outcomes of the formula first session task in problem and solution focused approaches. American Journal of Family Therapy 22 (1) 3-16

Kellock, I. & King, E. (2000) Development of a brief therapy team. Educational Psychology in Scotland. 5 (3) 15-19

Kemmis, S. (1993) Action Research. In Hammersley, M. (ed) Educational Research: Current Issues. London: Open University /Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

Kinder, K., Wilkin, A., Dorrington, C. & Hogarth, S. (1999) Raising Behaviour 3. A School View. Slough: NFER

King, E. & Kellock, I. (2002) Creating a Solution-Focused Counselling Team. Educational Psychology in Practice 18 (2) 103-111

Korman, H. (1997) On The Ethics Of Constructing Realities.
www.angleterre.com/biz/sikt/oneth.html

- La Fountain, R.M., & Garner, N.E. (1996) Solution focused counseling groups. Journal for Specialists in Group Work 21 (2) 128-143
- Lambert, M.J. & Bergin, A.E. (1994) The Effectiveness of Psychotherapy. In Bergin, A.E. & Garfield, S.L.(eds) Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behaviour Change (4th edn) New York: Wiley
- Laveman, L. (2000) The Harmonium Project: A Macrosystemic Approach to Empowering Adolescents. Journal of Mental Health Counseling 22 (1) 17-31
- Leadbetter, J. (2000) Patterns of Service Delivery in Educational Psychology Services: Some implications for practice. Educational Psychology in Practice 16 (4) 449 – 460
- Lee, M. (1997) A Study of Solution – Focused Brief Family Therapy: Outcome and Issues. The American Journal of Family Therapy 25 (1) 3-17
- Lee, M.Y., Greene, G.J., Mentzer, R.A. Pinnell, S. & Niles, D. Solution Focused Therapy and the Treatment of Depression: A Pilot Study. Journal of Brief Therapy 1 (1) 33-49
- Lindforss, L. & Magnusson, D. (1997) Solution-Focused Therapy in Prisons. Contemporary Family Therapy 19, 213-222
- Lines, D. (2002) Brief Counselling in Schools. London: Sage
- Lingard, T. (2001) Does the Code of Practice help secondary school SENCO's to improve learning? British Journal of Special Education 28 (4) 187-189
- Lipchik, E. (2002) Beyond Technique in Solution-Focused Therapy. Working with Emotions and the Therapeutic Relationship. New York: The Guildford Press
- Litrell, J.M., Malia, J.A. & Vanderwood, M. (1995) Single-session brief counselling in a high school. Journal of Counselling and Development 73, 451-458
- Long, M. (1988) Goodbye behaviour units, hello support services. Educational Psychology in Practice 4 (1) 17-23

- Luborsky, L., Rosenthal, R., Diguer, L., Andrusyana, T.P., Berman, J.S. & Levitt, J.T. (2002) The dodo bird verdict is alive and well – mostly. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice 9 (1) 2-12
- McDonald, A.J. (1994) Brief therapy in adult psychiatry. Journal of Family Therapy 16, 415-426
- McGlone, C. (2001) Wrapping New Narratives in Golden Paper: Solution-Focused Work with Pupils, Teachers and Parents in Mainstream Primary Schools. In Ajmal, Y. & Rees, I. (eds) Solutions in Schools. London: BT Press
- McKeel, A.J. (1996) A Clinician's Guide to Research on Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. In Miller, S.D., Hubble, R.A., & Duncan, B.L. (1996) (eds) Handbook of Solution Focused Brief Therapy: Research, Theory & Practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- McKeel, A.J. (1999) A selected review of solution focused brief therapy. www.enabling.org/1a/sft/review%20mckeel.htm
- McLeod, J. (2001) Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy. London: Sage
- McNamara, E. (1992) Motivational Interviewing: the gateway to pupil self-management. Pastoral Care September, 22-28
- McNamara, E. (1998) Practice of Pupil Self-Management: a Form Teacher's Manual. Ainsdale, Merseyside: Positive Behaviour Management
- McNiff, J. (1988) Action Research. Principles and Practice. Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Maxwell, A.J. (1992) Understanding Validity in Qualitative Research. Harvard Educational Review 62 (3) 279-300
- Mertens, D.M. (1998) Research Methods in Education and Psychology. Integrating Diversity with Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. London: Sage

- Metcalf, L. (1995) Counseling Toward Solutions: Working with students, teachers and parents. New York: Center for Applied Research in Education
- Metcalf, L. (1999) Teaching Toward Solutions: A Solution Focused Guide to Improving Student Behavior, Grades, Parental Support and Staff Morale. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing
- Metcalf, L. & Thomas, F. (1994) Client and Therapist Perceptions of Solution Focused Brief Therapy. A Qualitative Analysis. Journal of Family Psychotherapy 5 (4) 49-66
- Miller, A. (1996) Pupil Behaviour and Teacher Culture. London: Cassell
- Miller, A. (1999) Squaring the Triangle. Pupil behaviour, teachers and parents – and psychology. Educational Psychology in Practice 15 (2) 75-80
- Miller, A. (2003) Teachers, Parents and Classroom Behaviour. A Psychosocial Approach. Glasgow: Open University Press
- Miller, A., Ferguson, E. & Byrne, I. (2002) Pupils' causal attributions for difficult classroom behaviour. British Journal of Educational Psychology 72, 27-40
- Miller, A., Ferguson, E. & Moore, E. (2000) Parents' and pupils' causal attributions for difficult classroom behaviour. British Journal of Educational Psychology 70, 85-96
- Miller, G. & Dingwall, R. (1997) Context and Method in Qualitative Research. London: Sage
- Miller, S.D. (2000) Stage-Appropriate Change-Oriented Brief Therapy Strategies. In Hoyt, M.F. Some Stories Are Better Than Others: Doing What Works in Brief Therapy and Managed Care. Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel
- Miller, S.D. & Duncan, B.L. (2000) Paradigm Lost: From Model-Driven To Client-Directed, Outcome-Informed Clinical Work. Journal of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 20-34

- Miller, S.D., Hubble, R.A., & Duncan, B.L. (1996) (eds) Handbook of Solution Focused Brief Therapy: Research, Theory & Practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Miller, S.D., Duncan, B.L. & Hubble, R.A. (1997) Escape From Babel New York: Norton
- Molnar, A. & Lindquist, B. (1989) Changing Problem Behaviour in School. New York: Jossey-Bass
- Morgan, A. (2002) Beginning to use a narrative approach in therapy. The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work 1, 85-90
- Morrison, J.A., Olivos, K., Dominguez, G., Gomez, D. & Lena, D (1993) The application of family systems approaches to school behavior problems on a school level discipline board: an outcome study. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling 27, 258-272
- Morton, J. (1996) Helping children contribute to learning plans. Educational & Child Psychology 13 (2) 23-30
- Murphy, J. (1994) Working with what works: A solution focused approach to school behaviour problems. The School Counselor 42, 59-65
- Murphy, J. (1996) Solution Focused Brief Therapy in the School. In Miller, S.D., Hubble, R.A., & Duncan, B.L. (1996) (eds) Handbook of Solution Focused Brief Therapy: Research, Theory & Practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Murphy, J (1997) Brief Interventions for School Problems. New York: Guildford
- Murphy, J. (1998) Solution Focused Counseling in the Middle and High Schools. http://www.counseling.org/&news/volume_2/0101b.htm
- Murphy, J. (2000) Solution Focused Intervention for School Problems. International Presentation, Edinburgh September 11/12
- Murphy, J. & Duncan, B.L. (1997) Brief Intervention for School Problems. New York: Guilford Press

- Nau, D.S. & Shilts, L. (2000) When to Use the Miracle Question: Clues From a Qualitative Study of Four SFBT Practitioners. Journal of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 129-135
- Nelson-Jones, R. (1988) Practical Counselling and Helping Skills. Helping Clients to Help Themselves. London: Cassell
- O'Connell, B. (1998) Solution – Focused Therapy. London: Sage
- Office for Standards in Education (1996) Exclusions from Secondary Schools 1995/96. A Report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. London: The Stationary Office
- O'Hanlon, W.H. & Weiner-Davis, M. (1989) In Search of Solutions. New York: Norton
- Osborn, C. J. (1999) Solution-Focused Strategies With 'Involuntary Clients': Practical Applications for the School and Clinical Setting. Journal Of Humanistic Education And Development 37, 169-181
- Prochaska, J.O. (1999) How Do People Change, and How Can We Change to Help Many More People? In Hubble, M. A., Duncan, B. L. & Miller, S. D. Heart and Soul Of Change: What Works in Brief Therapy. New York: Norton
- Ponec, D.L. & Dickel, C.T. (1999) School Counseling and Referrals: A Negotiated Beginning. TCA Journal 27 (1) 44-55
- Provis, M. (1992) Dealing With Difficulty: A Systems Approach to Problem Behaviour. London: Hodder & Stoughton
- Redpath, R. & Harker, M. (1999) Becoming Solution–Focused in Practice. Educational Psychology in Practice 15 (2) 116 – 121
- Rhodes, J. (1993) The Use of Solution–Focused Brief Therapy in Schools. Educational Psychology in Practice 9 (1) 27-34
- Rhodes, J. & Ajmal, Y. (1995) Solution Focused Thinking in Schools. London: BT Press

- Riddell, S. & Brown, S. (1994) Special Educational Needs Policy in the 1990's: Warnock in the Market Place. London: Routledge
- Robson, C. (1993) Real World Research. A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers. Oxford: Blackwell
- Roland, N. & Goss, S. (2000) Evidence Based Counselling and Psychological Therapies: Research and Applications. London: Routledge
- Rosenberg, B. (2000) Mandated Clients and Solution Focused Therapy: 'It's not my miracle'. Journal of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 90-99
- Roth, A. & Fonagy, P. (1996) What Works for Whom? A Critical Review of Psychotherapy Research. London: Guilford Press
- Rudduck, J & Flutter, J. (2000) Pupil Participation and Pupil Perspective: 'carving a new order of experience'. Cambridge Journal of Education 30 (1) 75-89
- Rusteimer, S. (2002) Social and educational justice: the human rights framework for inclusion. Bristol: CSIE
- Sagesse, M. L. & Foley, F. W. (2000) From Problems Or Solutions To Problems And Solutions: Integrating The M. R. High And Solution Focused Models Of Brief Therapy. Journal of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 59-73
- Schofield, J.W. (1993) Research Methods. Increasing the Generalisability of Qualitative Research. In Hammersley, M (ed) Educational Research: Current Issues. London: Open University /Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd
- Scott, D. & Usher, R (1999) Researching Education. London: Cassell
- Siegel, S. & Castellon, N.J. (1988) Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences. (2nd edition) New York: McGraw-Hill
- Selekman, M. D. (1993) Pathways to Change: Brief Therapy Solutions with Difficult Adolescents. New York: Guildford

- Selekman, M. D. (1997) Solution-focused therapy with children: Harnessing family strengths for systemic change. New York: Guildford
- Shilts, L. & Reiter, M. D. (2000) Integrating Externalisation and Scaling Questions: Using Visual Scaling to Amplify Children's Voices. Journal of Systemic Therapies 19 (1) 82-89
- Silverman, D. (1997) Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice. London: Sage
- Sklare, G. B. (1997) Brief Counselling That Works: A Solution Focused Approach For School Councillors. London: Sage
- Stearn, H. & Moore, S. (2001) Developing Secondary Solutions: Educational Psychologists and Schools Working Together. In Ajmal, Y. & Rees, I. (eds) Solutions in Schools. London. BT Press
- Stobie, I. (2003) Processes of 'Change' and 'Continuity' in Educational Psychology – Part II. Educational Psychology in Practice 18 (3) 213-239
- Stobie, I., Boyle, J. & Woolfson, L. (2005) Solution-Focused Approaches in the Practice of Educational Psychologists. School Psychology International 26 (1) 5-28
- Stratford, R. (2000) An analysis of the organisational constraints on educational psychologists working at whole school level: The opportunity of inclusion. Educational and Child Psychology 17 (1) 86-97
- Sundman, P. (1997) Solution-focused ideas in social work. Journal of Family Therapy 19 (2) 159-172
- Swain, J. (1995) The Use of Counselling Skills: A Guide for Therapists. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann
- Taibbi, R. (1996) Doing Family Therapy. New York: The Guildford Press
- Talmon, M. (1990) Single Session Therapy: Maximising the Effect of the First (and often only) Therapeutic Encounter. San Francisco: Jossey Bass

- Taylor, M. (1994) Action Research. In Bannister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. & Tindall, C. (1994) Qualitative Methods in psychology. A Research Guide. London: Open University Press
- The British Psychological Society (2000) Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles & Guidelines. www.bps.org.uk/documents/Code.pdf
- Thomas, G. & Loxley, A. (2001) Deconstructing Special Education and Constructing Inclusion. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Thorne, H. & Ivens, J. (1999) Brief Interventions With Students With Emotional And Behavioural Difficulties. Educational Psychology in Practice 15 (2) 122-127
- Triantafylliou, N. (1997) A solution focused approach to mental health supervision. Journal of Systemic Therapies 16 (4) 305-328
- Verma, G.K. & Mallick, K. (1999) Researching Education. Perspectives and Techniques. London: Falmer Press
- Wagner, P. (1995) School Consultation: Frameworks for the Practising Educational Psychologist. London: Kensington and Chelsea Educational Psychology Service
- Wagner, P. (2000) Consultation: developing a comprehensive approach to service delivery. Educational Psychology in Practice 16 (1) 9-18
- Wagner, P. & Gillies, E. (2001) Consultation: A Solution-Focused Approach. In Ajmal, Y. & Rees, I. (eds) Solutions in Schools. London: BT Press
- Walker, R. (1985) Doing Research: a handbook for teachers. London: Methuen
- Wampold, B.E. (2001) The great psychotherapy debate: Models, methods and findings. Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Watkins, C. (2000) Introduction to the articles on consultation. Educational Psychology in Practice 16 (1) 5-9

- Watkins, C. & Wagner, P. (2000) Improving School Behaviour. London: Sage
- Weiner-Davis, M., de Shazer, S. & Gingerich, W.J. (1987) Building on pre-treatment change to construct the therapeutic solution: An exploratory study. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy 13, 359-363
- West, J.F. & Idol, L. (1987) School consultation (part 1): an interdisciplinary perspective on theory, models and research. Journal of Learning Disabilities 20 (7) 388-408
- Wheeler, J. (1995) Believing in Miracles. ACCP Review & Newsletter 17 (5) 155-261
- Wheeler, J. (2001) A Helping Hand: Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry 6 (2) 293-306
- Wheldall, K. & Merrett, F. (1985) The Behavioural Approach to Teaching Package. Birmingham: Positive Products
- White, M. & Epston, D. (1990) Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends. New York: Norton
- Williams, G.R. (2000) The Application of Solution Focused Brief Therapy in a Public School Setting. Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families 8 (1) 76-78
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994) Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, Interpretation. London: Sage
- Wolfendale, S., Bryans, T., Fox, M., Labram, A. & Sigston, A. (1992) (eds) The Profession and Practice of Educational Psychology. London: Cassell
- Zimmerman, J.L. & Beaudoin, M (2002) Cats Under the Stars: A Narrative Story. Child & Adolescent Mental Health 7 (1) 31-40.
- Zimmerman, T.S., Jacobson, R.B., MacIntyre, M. & Watson, C. (1996) Solution-focused parenting groups: An empirical study. Journal of Systemic Therapies 15 (4) 12-25

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Initial Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix 2 - Teacher Questionnaire, post-intervention

Appendix 3 - Initial Teacher Ratings

Appendix 4 - Teacher Problem Descriptions

Appendix 5 - Final Teacher Ratings

Appendix 6 - Combined Teacher Ratings

Appendix 7 - Teacher Supporting Comments

Appendix 8 - Pupil Strategy Sheets

Appendix 9 - Research Diary Extracts

Appendix 10 - Process Analysis Templates

Appendix 11 - Chronological Process Analysis Extracts

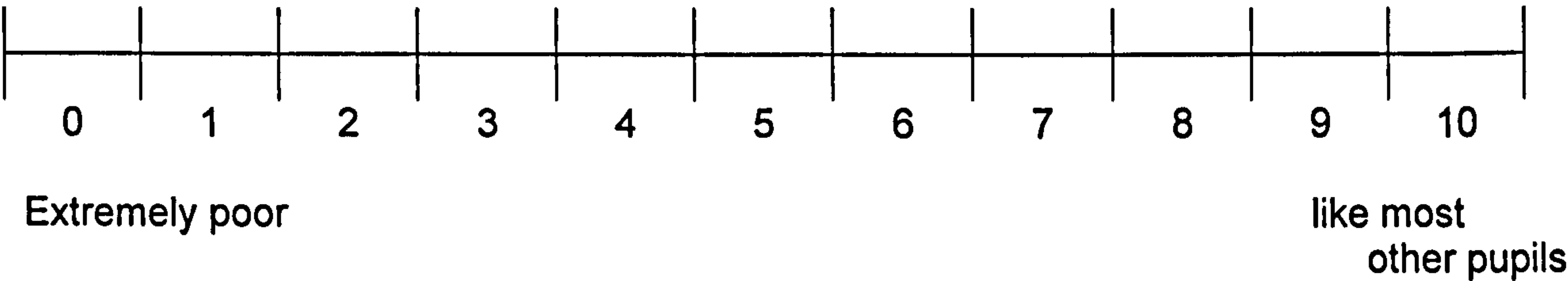
Appendix 1

Year 7 Progress Report – Behaviour Project

I am currently working with this pupil and it would be very helpful if you could complete and return the following questionnaire.

Child's Name:_____ **Tutor Group**_____

1. How would you rate this pupil's behaviour in your lesson?



2. What particular difficulties have you encountered?

3. What particular strategies have you used that you feel have been helpful?

4. Under what circumstances has this pupil's behaviour been least problematic?

5. What particular strengths have you noted in this pupil?

Thanks - Dennis Wilson

Appendix 2

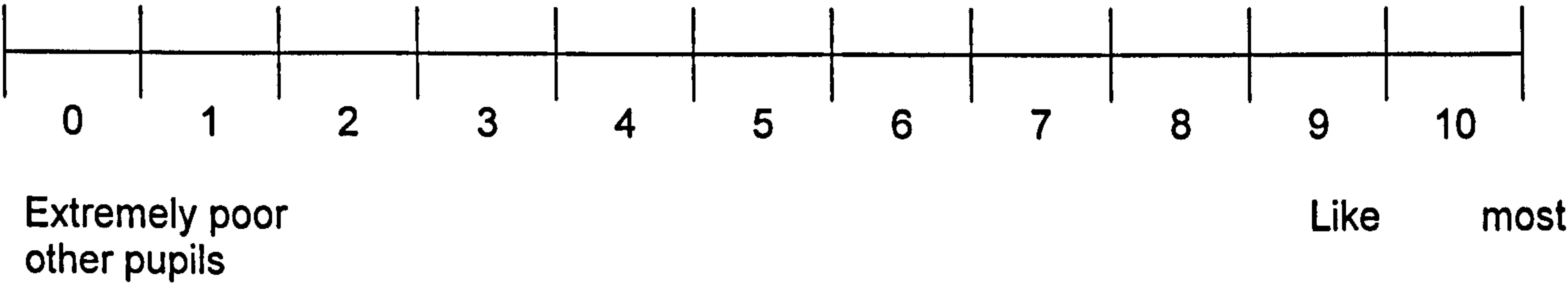
Year 7 Progress Report – Behaviour Project

Dear Colleague,

A number of weeks ago I asked for your views on this pupil. Since that time I have seen him/her on a number of occasions, and we have worked on an individual plan that he/she felt would help improve their situation in school. I would be very grateful if you could again provide a rating, and offer any comments you feel might be of value, about your recent experiences with them.

Child's Name: _____ **Tutor Group**_____

1. How would you rate this pupil's behaviour in your lesson?



2. What improvements have you noticed?

3. What particular strategies have you used that you feel have been helpful?

4. Under what circumstances has this pupil's behaviour been least problematic?

Thanks once again. Please feel free to approach me if you would like to discuss any concerns.

Dennis Wilson

Appendix 3 Initial Teacher Ratings

		P U P I L												
		TB	MB	TC	MC	PD	RH	CJ	AL	RR	SR	DMc	AH	JMc
T E A C H E R	AD			10										
	AHN												7	
	AK										5		6	
	CC					10								10
	CF	-			-		-			-			-	
	CR		6			8			6					9
	CSA	6					3			-	-		3	
	CW			-									7	
	DBR					9								10
	DC		7		4				6	6			6	
	DM				-						?	-		
	DP				6					3				
	DR					10			4	3				8
	DRI	2			3		8			2	?			
	DT	-					-				?			
	EH				5			2		8	1		3	
	GL					-		-			?	3		
	HAB		9											
	JF				8					5				
	JG	2					-			-	?			
	JH													
	JHW											8		
	JN					-								-
	JSW			8	3	9				1				7
	JW	-					-	10			5			
	KBA	3					8	8			6	6		
	KD						3	6			?	5		
	KJ	0												
	MC		3/7					7	1/5		8	3		
	MCO	-		?			-				?	9	-	
	MD	-	8		-		9							
	ME			10										
	NHO				5					5			6	9
	OB		-	-					-			-		
	PCH				-					-				
	RB												-	
	RK	-	8	?		-		9	9		?	-	-	
	RL		9						10					
	RO	-					-						5/8	
	RR		-						-					
	SCL		1						4					
	SRA												4	
	SRY	6				-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-
	TC												2	
	VG		4/5						4/5					

- denotes no return / denotes range of scores ? denotes staff unable to offer comment

Appendix 4 Teacher Problem Descriptions

NAME: A H

TUTOR GROUP: 7HR

DATE:

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
EH	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">poor concentrationslow to settlereluctant to write	<ul style="list-style-type: none">gets wound up by othersactivity prior to lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">supporting him in written work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">working away from others	
CW	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">poor concentrationworks slowly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">difficult class			<ul style="list-style-type: none">works quietly when he starts
DC	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">poor literacy skillslacks confidence to trypoor peer relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">poor attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">regular attentionsit away from bad influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">working away from others	
NH	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">won't engage in classroom discussioninattentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">individual attentionsetting work target for lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">simple, clear tasks	
TRO	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">limited skillspoor concentrationeasily distracted and drawn into situations		<ul style="list-style-type: none">simple, achievable tasksoffer personal supportclose monitoringfirm, fair handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">working away from others likely to be antagonistic towards him	<ul style="list-style-type: none">enjoys praisetries hard when he's happyhas a pleasant side
AH	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">poor concentration		<ul style="list-style-type: none">clear rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">away from those with behaviour problems	
CS	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">disturbing others		<ul style="list-style-type: none">seating him on his own	<ul style="list-style-type: none">oral work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">willing to help others
SR	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">refuses to follow instructionsannoys others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">others draw him into trouble	<ul style="list-style-type: none">seating planpositive dialogueindividual attentionchat before lessonkeep behind if problems		

AK		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• doesn't participate in discussion• doesn't do homework• little attention to detail• rather vacant – on Ritalin				
TC	2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor concentration• easily distracted• 'flies off handle'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• very poor literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• targets for that day		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• can be friendly• enjoys talking about his life and family

NAME: ALTUTOR GROUP: 7BF

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
MC	2-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• constant talking• distracting others• argumentative• doesn't listen to instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• needs constant attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• seating alone, at front• individual attention• positive encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• with close teacher attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• wants to be helpful
DR	4-5	(Pastoral) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shouts out• has to be the one to answer questions		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• talk to him quietly alone		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good general knowledge• bright
RK	8					<ul style="list-style-type: none">• bright and musical• tries hard
SC	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rushes work to be first finished and then disrupts		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• praise• responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when away from other disruptive pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• bright• good knowledge
DC	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• disruptive• silly		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• with adult attention		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• friendly• sense of humour• confident• will have a go
VG	4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• attention seeking• inability to sit and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• need for attention• need to stand out	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• seating close to teacher• responsibility• individual attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• loves responsibility• loves to read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• willingness to help others• good reader
CR	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• talks too much• interrupts teacher• won't let others answer questions• wanders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• needs short tasks – becomes disinterested	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• like to do jobs• praise• seating along, near teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• short tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• helpful• pleasant manner• sense of humour

AL	10++			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• allow him to lead group• give him responsibility• likes to know he's valued – responds well to positive reinforcement.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• enthusiasm• leadership• problems solving• ability to make decisions
----	------	--	--	--	--	--

NAME: D McTUTOR GROUP: 7HS

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
GL	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• takes the 'huff'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• very slow writing. becomes frustrated if he feels he can't keep up & work is untidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reassure him• praise efforts• individual time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when he feels he can cope with tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when settled he really tries hard
KD	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• shouting• tormenting others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the set mix• need for attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• one to one help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• with teachers attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• enthusiasm when reassured and confident
KB	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• failure to comply with simple instructions• fidgety• reluctant to complete written tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• short attention span	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• repeating instructions• threats of sanctions for non-compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• oral work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• participates keenly in oral work• enthusiastic if interested in subject matter
MC	10	(Pastoral OK) Reports from others include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• bullying• racist comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• unstable home life• limited literacy – frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• consistent reminders of expectations• praise, merits• personal approach		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• generally affable• apologetic after an event
JW	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• refusing to work		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sits along, near teachers• praise• regular monitoring and positive feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• after recognition of his work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good knowledge of maths• friendly• good oral work

NAME: MBTUTOR GROUP: 7BS

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
HAB	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention seeking• Work avoidance• Takes time to learn		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend Netball club• Specific praise• Allow time to understand		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good at sports
MC	3-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very moody• Poor relationships• Struggles with simplest tasks• Can be verbally aggressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning difficulties• Home problems• Poor social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual attention• Positive feedback• Give responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When she's getting on with peers• When she can manage task	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can work well when motivated
RK	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs individual attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work in group or pair		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keen to please• Tries hard
MD	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shouts out• Small problems become major• 'Carries world on her shoulders'• Attention seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doesn't think before speaking• Craves attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appreciates humour and personal style	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When she's busy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If monitored will complete work• Oral contribution when appropriate
SCL	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No pride in work• Poor presentation• Catalyst for disruptive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading & writing very difficult for her• Poor attention span• Poor concentration leads to interfering with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continual encouragement• Rewards• praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On one-to-one basis• When other children are not around	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tries to please for short periods
DC	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor listening skills• Wants to talk rather than converse• Poor concentration• Attention seeking		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage work individually then offer support• Praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tightly structured lesson• Plenty of attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resilient• Friendly

VG	4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inability to sit and work• Wanders• Cannot read or write• Easily huffed• Distracts others• Feigns illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problems coping with conversation• Needs 1-1 attention• Poor concentration span• Frustration / embarrassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If working jointly with another pupil• Individual attention wherever possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral work, at which she can succeed (no reading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoys success• Loves to help to do jobs
CR	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immature• Giggly• Written work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty of tasks• Lack of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lots of praise• Special jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical sessions• Sessions with end product• When she experiences success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good sense of humour• Responds to encouragement praise and personal interest
RL	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cause of conflict in small groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not treated fairly by other girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give her time to talk over problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extremely keen to contribute.

NAME: MCTUTOR GROUP: 7BI

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
DP	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stirs up trouble with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• holds grievances against other children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• clear rules re: talking in class		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• better ability than others in group
NH	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• calling out answers• poor attendance• rushing work• not completing tasks		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• individual help• clear work targets• clear rules		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• able, knowledgeable
JS	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor motivation to complete tasks• gets involved in trouble needlessly		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• praise• rules• consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• tasks not involving reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• able• helpful
JF	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor arguments		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sit alone• clear instructions• structured work• praise		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• can stay on task• enjoys praise
DC	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• peer relationships• argumentative, insulting / provocation to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• is also provoked and name called	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• separating him• sit with him, help him stay focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when he is in a good frame of mind• when he arrives settled• when closely supervised	
EH	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• aggressive towards others• attention seeking• shouting out	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feels he gets blamed – aggression• lacks confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• working alone	
DR	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• answers back• antagonistic towards others• name calling• can be lazy		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• get him involved in lesson quickly• let M read for class		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• able• sense of humour

NAME: R HTUTOR GROUP: 7BS

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
KB	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no oral participation		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• general classroom management		
DRI	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fighting• little attempt to engage with work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lacks confidence• needs support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• involve him in group activities• individual attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when distanced from boisterous pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• polite and co-operative• sense of humour
KS	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• argues and fights		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• moving seats		
MD	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• winds up others		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• keep away from J Tams• when working alone• check his understanding of task on individual basis• constantly check and praise• firm but fair approach		
CS	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• quiet and withdrawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• on report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• can sit and work independently

NAME: **R R**TUTOR GROUP: **7BI**

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
DP	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when work is perceived as difficult• if criticised he sulks and can become confrontational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor self esteem• weak interpersonal skills• poor attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEN support 2 x wk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when work is familiar and less threatening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• takes pride in work
NH	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor attendance• class participation• discussions Q & A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor self esteem• previous schooling – disaffection		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• differentiated writing tasks	
JS	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor concentration• little self belief• easily distracted		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• praise• ignoring attention seeking behaviour• explaining rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• one to one supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• helpful
JF	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• staying on task• peer relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sit alone• address him directly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• structured lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when engaged will complete tasks
DC	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• argumentative• insulting to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lacks confidence• insecure about his social position	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• praise• encouragement• assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when not provoked by others' jibes• structured, quiet setting	
DR	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• can't build relationship with him• shouts out• refuses to work• answers back		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• get him on task quickly		

NAME: **T B**TUTOR GROUP: **7BR**

DATE: _____

Teacher	Rating	Difficulties	Contributing factors	Strategies	Least problematic	Strengths
SRY	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">poor concentrationdisrupts others	Primary school experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Talking quietlyPraising workGiving her jobs	Form Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">wants to have effort rewarded.
DRI	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">out of seatchewingdistracts othersrarely completes workrude & aggressive to staff and peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">large groupslanguage / literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">vary seatingSEN support	when given a specific duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">values responsibility
JG	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">out of seatlateinterpreting instructionsdistracting othersnot completing work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">arrives late	<ul style="list-style-type: none">individual attentionindividual questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">when engaged on task	<ul style="list-style-type: none">keen to answer topic related questions once engaged.takes pride in her work
KBA	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">out of seattalking / distractingaggravates otherslacks interest	used to getting her own way	<ul style="list-style-type: none">sit aloneconstant monitoring	less structured lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">helpful and polite
KJ	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">not listening to instructionsdistracting othersoff taskthreatening others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">not bringing kitnot liked	<ul style="list-style-type: none">one to one talk at end of lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">when on report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">good motor skillsreasonably talented
SA	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">aggressive towards peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">says she can't control her anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">sit alonetalk outside of lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">when on reportwhen made to feel helpful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">helpfulloves praisemerits

Appendix 5 Final Teacher Ratings

		P U P I L												
		TB	MB	TC	MC	PD	RH	CJ	AL	RR	SR	DMc	AH	JMc
T E A C H E R	AD													
	AHN												4	
	AK													
	CC													
	CF													
	CR													
	CSA	7					2						4	
	CW													
	DBR													
	DC		5		4				4	7			6	
	DM													
	DP				7					2				
	DR				2				4	3				
	DRI	5					7							
	DT													
	EH				5								4	
	GL											8		
	HAB													
	JF													
	JG	5					7							
	JH													
	JHW											10		
	JN													
	JSW				2					3				
	JW													
	KBA	5					8					8		
	KD													
	KJ	2												
	MC		8						8			9		
	MCO	9					10					10		
	MD													
	ME													
	NHO													
	OB													
	PCH									4				
	RB													
	RK													
	RL													
	RO													
	RR													
	SCL		4						6					
	SRA													
	SRY	7												
	TC													
	VG		5						5					

Appendix 6 Combined Teacher Ratings

		P U P I L															
		TB		MB		MC		RH		AL		RR		DMc		AH	
T E A C H E R	AD																
	AHN															7	4
	AK															6	-
	CC																
	CF	-	-			-	-	-	-							-	-
	CR			6	-					6	-						
	CSA	6	7					3	2							3	4
	CW															7	-
	DBR																
	DC			7	5	4	4			6	4	6	7			6	6
	DM					-	-							-	-		
	DP					6	7					3	2				
	DR					-	2			4	4	3	3				
	DRI	2	5			3	-	8	7			2	-				
	DT	-	-					-	-								
	EH					5	5					8	-			3	4
	GL													3	8		
	HAB			9	-												
	JF					8	-					5	-				
	JG	2	5					-	7								
	JH																
	JHW													8	10		
	JN																
	JSW					3	2					1	3				
	JW	-	-					-	-								
	KBA	3	5					8	8					6	8		
	KD							3	-					5	-		
	KJ	0	2														
	MC			3/7	8					1/5	8			3	9		
	MCO	0	9					0	10					9	10	-	-
	MD	-	-	8	-	-	-	9	-			-	-				
	ME																
	NHO					5	-					5	-			6	-
OB			-	-					-	-			-	-			
PCH					-	-					-	4					
RB															-	-	
RK	-	-	8	-					9	-			-	-	-	-	
RL			9	-					10	-							
RO	-	-					-	-							5/8	-	
RR			-	-					4	6							
SCL			1	4													
SRA															4	-	
SRY	6	7					-	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	
TC															2	-	
VG			4/5	5					4/5	5							

Appendix 7

Teacher Comments On Improvements - Final Ratings

A H

- Responding better to praise and encouragement
- Not as cheeky - back answering
- Is prepared to reason a bit more

- Small improvement in ability to focus on task
- Can remain on task a bit longer

TB

- Much quieter in class
- Staying in her seat
- Less likely to distract others
- Less aggressive towards peers
- Often tries to sit away from trouble
- Constantly working on task
- More aware of consequences of unsuitable behaviour
- Seems to now realise that her behaviour was unacceptable
- Has made measurable improvement in her behaviour
- No longer leaves lessons without permission
- Great improvement in her behaviour
- Better response to warnings and instructions
- Now eager to take on responsibilities - now the group's equipment monitor
- Greater pride in her work

D Mc

- He never causes any bother and is quite helpful to the others
- Getting on better with the group
- Much less surly and aggressive
- Less inclined towards moodiness and sulking
- Eager to please
- Will apologise and conform if challenged
- Responds to praise
- Has been trying to behave
-
- Complying with requests
- Now gets on with his work well

RR

- Has responded well to praise, and encouragement
- Signs of opening up
- Starting to develop relationships
- Work showing improvement
- Much better work recently
- Recent improvement in his motivation and standard of work
- Incidents slightly down
- Shouts out less
- Calmer in class
- Starting to settle

AL

- Has good days when it is obvious he is trying to behave and please teacher
- Responding quicker to reprimand
- More aware of class limits and trying to reach class standards
- Can be very likeable

RH

- Behaviour very good
- Works quietly throughout lessons
- Attendance at lesson has improved
- Enthusiastic

MC

- Improvement if T not there

(No positive comments - most say he has deteriorated)

MB

- Has settled
- Less sulky
- Fewer mood swings
- Less 'huffy'
- More willing to listen
- Improvement in behaviour, although inconsistent

Appendix 8 Pupil Strategy Sheets

A H – 7HR Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting A:

- A is least problematic when he is working away from others, especially those likely to antagonise him or present difficulties themselves.
- Provide him with firm, fair handling.
- Monitor him closely and offer some personal attention.
- Set him a work target for the lesson. Give him simple, achievable tasks.
- Involve him in oral work.
- Chat with A before a lesson. Keep him behind to discuss problems, away from an audience.

In his work with the Behaviour Project A has decided that he would like to try to improve his classroom behaviour by:

1. ignoring others if they provoke him
2. complete his work tasks

A has poor concentration and limited academic skills. He can also demonstrate weak interpersonal skills. Staff feel that it is worth making the effort to encourage a positive relationship with him even though A may not find this easy. He enjoys praise, is willing to help others and tries hard when he feels comfortable.

AK – Y7 Manager

A L – 7BR – Classroom Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting A in class.

- Be explicit about what is acceptable behaviour in class.
- Seat A alone, or as far away from potential distraction as possible.
- Monitor him through the course of a lesson. Some staff ensure that he sits near to their own desk.
- Give him short tasks.
- Give him individual attention when you can.
- Talk to him quietly, alone.
- Praise him and give him positive encouragement.
- Give him responsibility when possible. He likes to be helpful and to know that he is valued.

In his work with the Behaviour Project A has decided that he would like to try to improve his classroom behaviour by:

- Responding to teacher requests rather than answer back
- Not distracting others
- Completing work

Please encourage him in his efforts to achieve this.

While A's behaviour can be disruptive and irritating, staff have found that he will respond to a positive approach. He has a sense of humour and is generally considered to be a friendly boy. He is relatively able, has a good general knowledge and can make a valuable contribution to a lesson.

AK – Y7 Manager

D Mc – 7BS – Classroom Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting D in class:

- Give D consistent reminders of expectations.
- Sit him alongside or near to you.
- Regularly monitor his work, and given him feedback.
- Reassure him. D is very concerned and sensitive about his poor reading skills.
- Repeat instructions for him.
- Use a personal approach.
- Give him some individual attention.
- Offer him praise and merits.

In his work with the Behaviour Project D has been working on how to improve his behaviour. He is trying to:

- ignore others in class
- sit near to a teacher and away from children whom, he feels, provoke and distract him
- completing his work, and asking for help when he needs it.

Please encourage him in his efforts to achieve this.

D is least problematic when he feels he can cope with a task. When he is confident he will participate in class and work enthusiastically. He does have some difficulties in relationships, with certain individuals, which can lead to conflict. When he becomes upset it is often better to allow him to calm himself quietly than to confront him. While he is likely to have occasional flare ups he is usually apologetic afterwards.

A K – Year 7 Manager

M B – 7BS – Classroom Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting M in class:

- Ensure that work/tasks are at appropriate levels.
- Engage her in oral work and support her with demands on literacy skills.
- Allow her to work in a group or pairs where this is viable.
- Give her time to understand new concepts.
- Offer her individual attention or personal time when you can.
- Give lots of praise and encouragement and acknowledge her efforts.
- Utilise her natural desire to please – give her special jobs or responsibilities.

In her work with the Behaviour Project M has decided that she would like to try to improve her classroom behaviour by:

1. Sitting away from potential areas of conflict in class.
2. Attempting to complete all her work.
3. Ignoring distractions from others during lessons.

While M is likely to continue to experience some difficulties it would be helpful to her if you could take any opportunity to acknowledge her efforts to achieve these objectives.

AK – Y7 Manager

M C – 7BI – Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting M:

- Ensure that classroom rules are carefully explained
- Set clear work targets, with structure
- Ensure that he has listened to and understands instructions
- Get M involved in the lesson quickly
- Consider best seating arrangements
- Spend some time with him. Help him to stay focused. M works best when closely supervised
- Encourage and praise him

In his work with the Behaviour Project M has decided that he would like to try to improve his classroom behaviour by:

1. Not shouting out
2. Not arguing in class
3. Ignoring others who he perceives as provoking him.

M sometimes finds himself in difficulties because of poor peer relationship. He will typically blame the other party concerned and this can then lead to confrontation with staff. It is often better to speak with him later in a calmer manner when he is less wound up. He will usually respond to this approach.

AK – Y7 Manager

R H– 7BS – Classroom Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting R in class:

- Make classroom rules clear.
- Offer a firm but fair approach to classroom management.
- Move seats if necessary. Staff have found that R often works best away from boisterous pupils.
- Involve him in small group activities when appropriate.
- Regularly check his understanding of a task.
- Take the opportunity to offer him some individual attention.
- Praise his efforts.

In his work with the Behaviour Project R has found it difficult to identify particular features of his own behaviour which he might easily change and will readily blame others for his problem. He does, however, respect what he perceives as 'fairness'. He is also willing to accept the monitoring which the report card provides, and is concerned that this informs his parents about 'good' behaviour in school.

A K – Year 7 Manager

R R – 7BI Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting R :

- Direct SEN support towards R where this is available.
- Sit him away from distractions and address him directly.
- Provide him with work which is appropriately differentiated and recognises his difficulties in reading and recording. He needs short, structured tasks.
- Get him on task quickly.
- Explain classroom rules to him.
- Give him some individual attention and encourage him to stay with a task. Try not to criticise R's work as he will perceive this as personal. He is particularly sensitive about his poor academic skills and easily feels threatened.
- Praise his efforts. R has experienced very little success in school and has little self belief.
- Try to involve him in whole class activities, even though he may be reluctant, without pressuring him. He is insecure about his social position.
- His difficulties in communication can lead to frustrations. He sometimes need time and help to express himself.

In his work with the Behaviour Project R has decided that he would like to try to improve his classroom behaviour by:

1. Doing as teachers ask
2. Not throwing books when frustrated
3. Complete all work this he is able to do independently.
4. Request help appropriately if he gets stuck.

R has missed a tremendous amount of schooling although his attendance is better than at primary school. He is unsure of himself socially and has very poor academic skills. If he feels he can't cope he is likely to react emotionally – he is likely to 'misbehave' or else withdraw and stay away from school altogether. He needs to be handled sympathetically, within the context of a well managed classroom.

AK – Y7 Manager

T B – 7BR – Support Strategies

The following is a summary of the strategies and approaches which staff have found helpful in managing and supporting T:

- Seat T alone, or as far away from distraction as possible.
- Monitor her regularly through the course of a lesson.
- Give her individual attention when you can.
- Talk to her quietly, perhaps at the end of the lesson.
- Praise her achievements – she particularly values recognition, responsibility and merits.
- Make use of her report card scoring – to acknowledge good lessons, and to review those which haven't gone so well.
- Contact pastoral staff when necessary. They are in regular communication with T's parents.

In her work with the Behaviour Project T has decided that she would like to try to improve her classroom behaviour by:

1. Trying to complete her work.
2. Putting her hand up rather than shout out.
3. Ignoring what she sees as provocation and distraction by others.

T experienced difficulties in her primary school and her problems are long standing. Even though she will try to reach her objectives it is unlikely that this will be achieved quickly or without setbacks. While T will continue to need to be regularly reminded about the boundaries of acceptable behaviour it will be equally important to praise her for her attempts to conform.

AK – Y7 Manager

Appendix 9 Diary Extracts

How int DVC. Mum surprised
at some positive teacher ratings -
Need to build on this. \Rightarrow systemic
work involving parents?

Mum aggressive & feels
isolated. Described long history.
Feels previous attempts at solution
have been negative/punitive.
Understands this, and shows
those feelings so need to manage
D., but also protection of her
son. Suspect she's rarely heard
positives about school. - No agreed
strategies with school - only threats
of exclusion.

How int R.C. - Mum
describing her experiences with WGC
largely in negative terms - punitive
response is her perception. As
above, feelings of protection mixed
with recognition of difficulties
in her own problems. - feels
blamed rather than supported
by school. - No agreed strategies -

parents' responsibility to ensure
good behaviour.

From the two I've completed
 so far the HQ feels a bit
 redundant. I've spent time
 trying to encourage them to
 describe something which doesn't
 exist in great detail - it's not
 clear if there and both T &
 A have come back to social &
 hard (or any) anyway. It feels
 confusing. Perhaps because the
 exceptions are real, and are
 there already. It will be
 less contrived just to use
 them anyway. If they're
 good it's about as well
 towards.

Re-Ri H : When I met him
 on corridor last week he was particularly
 difficult to engage in conversation. May
 have been worried about who I am,
 but raises question of ^①verbal ability &
 ability to 'chit', elaborate etc and
^② children with learning Diff's generally.
 I could offer R. some problems for
 us to solve - is this SFBT? Is it
 an adapted form of SFBT? Is it
 valid? Is it what others eg
 Ajmal have done? If I don't
 do this will he be able to
 participate, making SFBT an in-app.
 method for children like him? If
 I supply him with problems will he
 not assume the 'ownership' necessary?
 Does it matter? Can I persuade him to
 accept ownership (esp. with teacher
 supplied information to support it)?

Is this something which has to be
 accepted with children - developmental
 issues - as in supplying constructs
 in PCP?

What if R's reluctance continues
and is based on his perception of
the relationship - If this relationship is
as critical as is suggested in
research, will it detract from
SPB? process? Do I need to build
on this in a deliberate way? I
already explain that I'm not a
teacher, and children don't get
into trouble when they see me (which
I assume is what they anticipate).
I never tell them off or criticize
them. I try to help them relax
by not doing it talk about problem
& 'good practice' - problem free
talk, listening & reflecting, empathizing etc)
How will R's responses to me compare
with eg. M.B. who already
knows me and has experience of a
positive history with me or A. Cannon
who wants to talk and is confident
in handling problems (has had a
lot of success, including FSS in
'Anger Management' etc).

My initial contact with P. makes me wonder about children who will deny problem. May be for a number of reasons:

- means getting into more trouble
- habitual response
- don't trust me (of relationship)
- immaturity
- ability
- Generally, an involuntary client.

Skinner, & Murphy & Duncan go for what would client get out of T. getting off back on 'Columbo & prove T wrong! May be better simply to introduce a problem situation if child can't/won't identify one rather than reach an impasse in children who are used to being told off sitting in an 'important office' with a man of an authority - big desk etc. Would also tie in

with idea of systemic work - i.e. anty between child & T - clash of beliefs \Rightarrow compromise on agreed goal. If so, it would be helpful (general practice as EPJ as well as now) to get staff ratings early. Would also allow me to help identify exceptions in children who might also find difficulty doing this.

Also, Teach of verbal skills -
(see BAS scores / CAT scores) - feels
like I'm putting pressure on them
if I try to get too much
elaboration \equiv putting pressure on
them in class \rightarrow resistant &
uncomfortable.

Frequent ~~updates~~ now for M + me + daily check by Y + R. with R. I find myself offering advice + support - is this a sign of my ^{sub} feeling that I should do this, rather than focus on his solutions if they're not working - dilemma - don't want to become a nagging extra teacher, but I feel responsible for him - Researcher/Practitioner difficulty. - Showing empathy, saying "I can understand how she (Keri) would make you feel."

M + shows signs of being 'down', and maybe getting up - feel need to boost him.

R. at crisis situation - now - 'one week to prove himself', and already has some O's on his report card. Had a chat about what was happening. Usually I've tried to avoid giving advice, but felt I had to talk to him about how others perceive what's happening, and how this will determine what happens to him. One 'kissing a girl' incident ended with a week of excellent lessons - this is a problem of I used "magnifying glass analogy"

Powerful person - M. absolutely
full of herself and ethereal.
M. taking control - telling me
what she had decided to do -
taking great pleasure in her
drawings. Empowered her - made
her realize she could do
something about A.'s behavior
which could lead to her behavior
being 'good', and teachers
recognizing this. Talked through
her strategies.

* Cancelled mtg with Nth -
 probably 17/12 was cancelled -
 only allows a learning pack to
 discuss children, in an
 extremely rushed way - often
 cut short or cancelled - no
 time or desire to plan for
 individual children! seen as
 irritants to control rather than
 individuals needing support.

I haven't attended a single
 review - any of Target QP to
 date - At least one of them
 has a statement - \therefore the school
 hasn't organised a single review.
 What happens is child gets sent
 home (not excluded) and parent
 comes in. School talk with parents
 but don't think to write me, or
 even inform me.

Re Systems: I'm finding it hard to know where to fit in school systems for plans for children. There seems to be no time to review children individually. Could I talk to NtH about adding to IEP's? Would Aik be interested in Pastoral Support Plan? I could collate information from teachers re strategies. I could incorporate strategies for primaries - How do the two compare? How do IEP's reflect what's said about pupil behaviour?

Reading B. Borden re SLARE model - Solting - I can change my own practice, but have much less influence over the school culture. The Y7 setup has no system of Programme Planning or Review. No record is kept of intervention* - no joint planning unless COP planning, and even then SEN Dept has no means of supporting children with ESD

* 'Intervention' is 'discipline' - punishment. Limited range of strategies available (∴ lack of experience & training?). Children reported: detention, shouted at, exclusions, parents told & report card.

D.C. - with his history,
 school have nothing in place
 except 'Emergency provision'. - Some
 adds nothing other than pass on
 info. - ~~no~~ Targets but no Plan -
 Patrol exist - to things go wrong,
 but no Plan, of any sort recorded

in his file - just details of
 incidents and Targets.

Today's mtg with D.N.C. is
~~was~~ cancelled - without
 informing me! No wonder

Parents complained to me
 of this kind of response
 they encounter. How do
 staff talk to parents - and
 when? - when their children
 are in trouble, and no other
 time? This also reflects on
 me. because it conflicts with
 promises I've made. I don't
 believe that acting alone
 is best, but what else
 can I do?

Re recent mty wth ^{KS317} ~~the~~ - tried
to encourage notion of Action
Plans in children's files - but
she wants instead is some
recommendations about children
and a record of what we've
done wth children left in file
for reference - as an archive.

No culture here of meetings/planning
for children - purely reactive
system.

Appendix 10 Process Analysis Templates

Session 12

Interview Analysis

Name D. Mc

Date 25/1

① Historical - at Deland.

Problem Definition

Theory of Change - Perceptions of

- Nature of problem
- Causes
- Failed Solution Attempts

trying to get the teachers getting them out →

② Current Action - seeing someone at home - behavior chart.

Goal Setting

Positive

Negative:

- Stop doing something

- Others to stop - making life difficult for

Harmful

'I don't know'

Involuntary Client - comments: Sure - 'knowing?'

By end of Session, being happy for next step motivated.

Problem Definition - further clarification

M Question

Nature

- Positive
- Impossible
- Others to be different

Long time spent on clarifying and elaborating in parent's point of view - what's happening, not get D. Mc's point.

Elaborate

- Details
- Competence/Any difficulties

Behavior - gets frustrated at children & not being able to do work. - gets angry with children who tease him - call him 'tramp', 'cracker', 'mental'!

⑤ Goal Setting Again - Refining - 4 Points

① Not known out of school, becomes "stay in school"

→ ~~blaming~~ blaming D. for previous problems.
D. said I. S.

→ Described current soln. attempt (home support, not school)
- clear detail - Reward chart - heavy financial
incentive (- 'retroband, holidays') Says it's worked
so far but then goes on to describe himself as being
helpless & change his intolerance(?) of others and angry
reactions - contradiction? - or is it that the chart
flashes his motivation, but no strategies.

→ his by making him do a subject he finds hard (French)

<p>(6) Exceptions</p> <p>'Very often' means 'Always'</p>	<p>Identifying — "Never"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content Need for prompts? — (Yes) — but still 'never' — 'always' get worked up — will learn! → <p>Elaborate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content Competence <p>Able to do this now We'd had examples pointed out to him.</p>	
<p>(7)</p> <p>(8)</p> <p>Scaling</p> <p>(9)</p>	<p>Empowering — pupil explanation — How did you not get worked up yesterday?</p> <p>Elaborate, Re-eval — Blame him!</p> <p>Rating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal Worst Current — 'S' — considered judgment. 	<p>Praise</p>
<p>Solutions</p> <p>(10)</p>	<p>Move to <u>Next</u> level — <u>Design</u> A problem →</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptions How Confidence Rating Obstacles to success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description/Elaborate Responses Competence 	

'what about yesterday? - you report and suggest you didn't list anyone: "I managed to ignore them".
Further down led to another example "And 5
two examples you've thought of"

→ black & white view - all / nothing.
Couldn't ~~not~~ define 'next step' - instead,
I suggested we should simply "try to get to 6".

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS BEYOND FIRST SESSION

Session 4

Name A. - th

Date 22/4.

Eliciting

①

What is better or different?

②

Identify/Elaborate

③

Nothing

Competence

Amplifying

Identify and describe reciprocity in response to question.

Nature

Competence

Reinforce

How did you?

Competence

(Start over)

Scaling

Where are you today?

Where would you say you are (if appropriate)?

Remember last time?

Improvement

How have you...?

How have others reacted?

Next step

How?

Confidence rating

Dangerous?

Possible Response

How has my response been?
- happy
- giving me jobs
- not calling me
- off

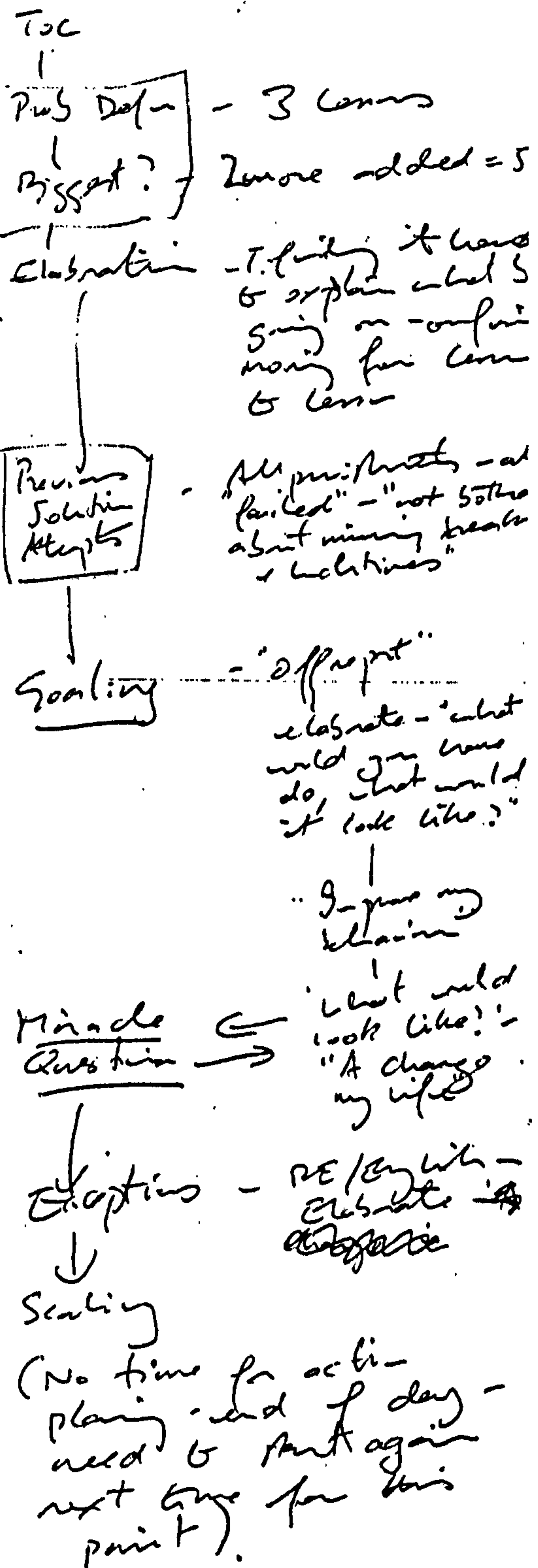
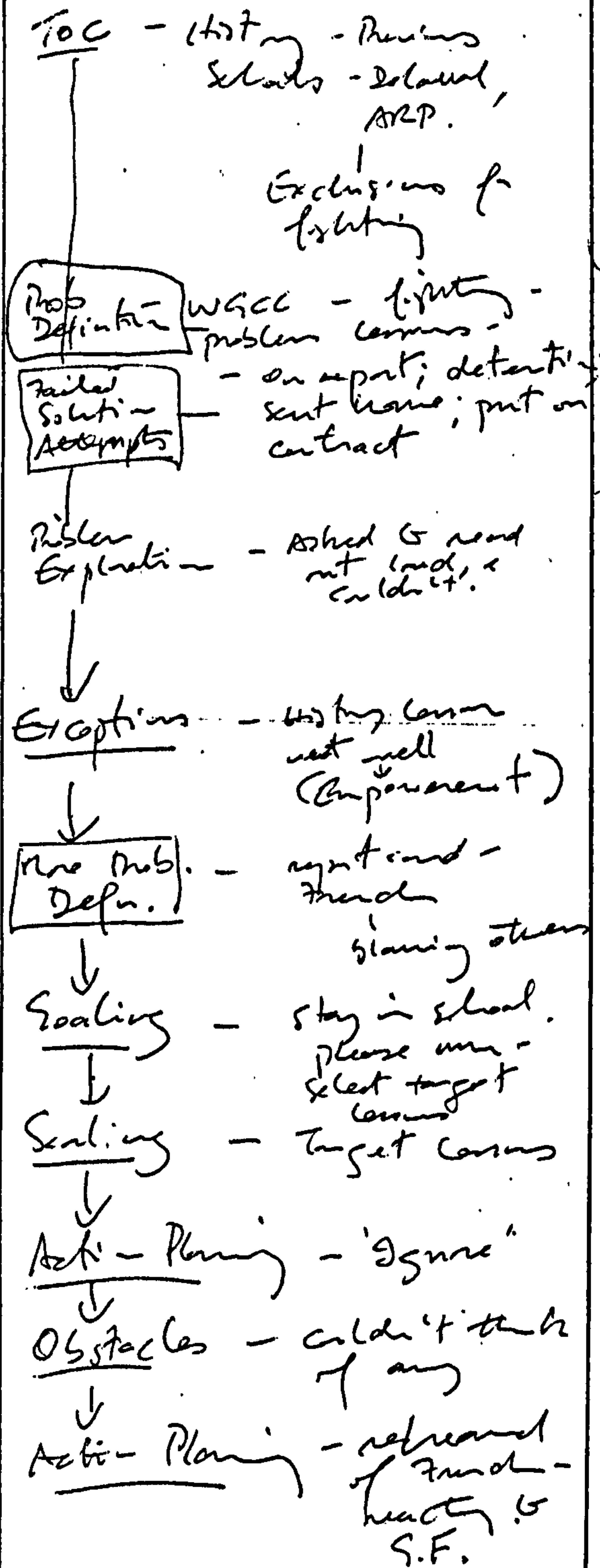
Overall
- RE - to make a point about importance
- 10'

He did 25 just →
- given me jobs - I go to work early after work - help out.
- How was that made a difference?

⑥ what's made the difference (theory of change)? - "giving just been good."
⑦ Overall Goals

→ getting on with my work

Appendix 11 Chronological Process Analysis Extracts



Scaling (Review)

Att

- ok, but was drama teacher, blamed him for not teaching properly, not the right G reform to write.

Problem Defn (new prob)

- Drama - angry about teacher - long period spent problem, trying to find a goal he might be prepared to work towards.

Exceptions - listing going well

New Prob (Defn)

- Friends - teacher's fault - "responsible for his behavior" (Angy session)

Scaling

- Included Friend

Target

- short term - good report next two days

Enfin Overall Goal

- get off report.
- go G see something.

Rehearse Strategies

Scaling

MB

- Scaling, RE = 10 rather = 1

Empowering

- focusing on 10 how did she achieve these

Exceptioning ('Best of' temptations)

- Elaine, Empowerment
- ..how did you
- ..what happened
- ..Then what did you do

Next Steps (Action Planning)

- she was
- & we see report card + scaling in G unit for - was suggestion
- .. go with it

Rehearse Strategies