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School of Education
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Transition: by bridging through education

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

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This research thesis considers the broad notion of transition and examines the transitional context of children joining school to start their full time compulsory education in Britain at four years old. Emerging theoretical ideas are explored within the context of a local study.

This thesis examines recent literature about children starting full time education by considering briefly the history of young children at school and by reflecting upon the starting age of compulsory education in England and Wales and comparing it with other countries. Consideration is given to the importance of the transition period for the child, parents and school and issues for children, parents and educationalists are explored. Research into the induction of children to full time education focusing on the impact of that transition period is used to consider the general themes and models surrounding the notion of transition.

The research collected data in two phases. Phase one sample data was collected over eight months and focused on interviews with parents and children were the children were about to start full time education. Phase two data concentrated on interviewing a second sample of parents whose children were due to start full time education at the same school a year later than the phase one sample children.

Through analyses and interpretation of the research data consideration is given to the notion of impact and broader themes, such as, the social background of the children; sibling factors and pre school experiences.

The thesis proposes the new notion of 'bridging' within a three step transitional model. Each step (introduction; bridging; assimilation and learning) forms part of a cyclical ongoing process. The bridging step is made up of eight key elements and these elements either in total or in part are factors in how bridging takes place and reflect how the transition process actually takes place as people, events and actions create a 'bridge' from one set of experiences to another.

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Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

A transition is a discontinuity in a person's life space.
Adams, Hayes and Hopson 1976, p.5

Transitions are important times in the lives of all people. The transition to school is one of the first major transitions children make and the way it is managed sets the stage not only for children's success at school, but also their response to future transitions.
Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.1

Aim

The key research question of this thesis is "what is the impact of transition to full time education on young children?" This research focus gives the researcher the opportunity to explore notions surrounding the idea of transition through the transition of young children to full time education. It also provides the opportunity to explore emerging theoretical ideas within the context of a localized impact study. The openings are created through using a localized study as the vehicle for as assessment of the impact of the experiences.

This thesis examines recent literature about children starting full time education by considering briefly the history of young children at school reflecting upon the starting age of compulsory education in the United Kingdom and comparing it with other countries. The research considers the importance of the transition period for the child, parents and school and the need for a flexible approach to the transitional period. The thesis examines the role of parents in the transition process and refers to practical issues for class teachers and schools. It draws together recent research into the induction of children to full time education, focuses on the impact of that transition period and considers the general themes and models surrounding the notion of transition, and relates them to the research. The thesis provides evidence for and comments on the context and methodology of the research into the impact of the transition process to full time education upon the child. It considers the notion of evaluating the impact and findings in terms of the impact of the transition process and identifies emerging themes around the notion of transition. The thesis draws conclusions by referring to the research and recent literature and by making recommendations as appropriate. These recommendations are for theories linked to transition and for School A, the local study school. The theoretical recommendations will add to the body of knowledge, understanding and awareness of transition in general and transition to schools in particular.

The aim of this research is to examine the impact of transition on children as they start full time education and to explore emerging notions and issues surrounding the transition theories. Whilst there has been some research into the transition of children to

school notably that of Thompson (1975); Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979) and more recently Dockett and Perry (1999a + b) and Fabian (2000) the research has focused on tracking a group of children and their parents once they are at school and recalling retrospectively findings on the transition process. This research follows groups of children and their parents through a range of induction programmes in the few months before and during their transitional move to full time education. The research of Ledger, Smith and Rich (1998) did focus on the children's views over a period of time through the induction process to full time education however this research used a "natural conversation "(Ledger, Smith and Rich 1998, p.8) approach and the children were all taking part in the same induction programme. The later research (1998, 1999 a + b, 2000) took account of the children's views,whereas earlier research relied more on the ratings of teachers about the children.

Barnes summarised current research on entry to school by commenting

> children are attending school who are too young or too immature to benefit from formal schooling and who are being deprived of appropriate pre-school experiences; therefore, the school must offer these experiences and in order to do that they must adopt a policy of flexible procedures and provision and of sensitive responses. We are back to individual needs.
>
> Barnes in McCail 1987, p.42

Central to Barnes' summary is the issue that lies at the heart this research, that is: what is the impact on the child of that transition into their Reception class and the world of full time education, and what is the current theoretical thinking about the notion of that transition process?

Impact

This impact study, which focuses on a local case study, explores transitional theories through examining the impact of three differing 'induction to school programmes' within an infant school context. Diem (2002) notes that "impact is the difference we make to people's lives as a result of the programs we conduct". Within the context of this research this thesis considers the evidence of the impact of these differing programmes upon the behaviour of the children as they make the transition to full time education. Shar (2003) comments that assessing impact is all about "how well resources have been transformed into meaningful outputs". Within this research context the resources will be the three 'induction to school programmes' and the meaningful outputs will be the evidence of differing behaviours that may be associated with, or partly with, the outcomes of those programmes.

Starting School

Sharp summarised recent research into the school starting age in her paper to the Local Government Association (1/11/02). Below and overleaf the core messages in her paper are synthesized. They have been annotated to relate to relevant research.

- Six is the common age for children starting school world wide (European Commission 2002; Ball 1994; Bertram and Pascal 2002; O'Donnell et al 2002).
- The UK has a younger school starting age (five) and many children start school at four (DfES 2002).
- The UK uses an age-based system of school entry and tends to keep children in year groups with others of the same age.
- Children who enter school later because of teacher recommendation tend to be younger in the year group, boys and children from ethnic minority backgrounds (Zill et al 1997 reported in Sharp 2002).
- There is a lack of conclusive evidence concerning the benefits of starting school at different ages (Daniels et al 2000; Tymms et al 1997, 2000).
- Teaching more formal skills early (in school) gives children an initial academic advantage, but that this advantage is not sustained in the longer term (Hutchison and Sharp 1999).
- There are some suggestions that an early introduction to a formal curriculum may increase anxiety and have a negative impact on children's self esteem and motivation to learn (Elkind and Whitehurst 2001 reported in Sharp 2002).
- Research carried out in England and Wales showed that children who are older in the year group (autumn born) achieve better results than their summer born class mates (Tymms et al 1997, 2000). This appears to be largely a function of age / maturity when taking the assessments rather than a result of differences in length of schooling.
- Within year group differences appear to have an educationally significant impact on attainment throughout the primary phase (Hutchison and Sharp 1999).
- A small scale American study suggested that disadvantaged children experiencing three different pre-school curriculums all made initial gains, but there were longer term differences in 'real-life' measures. Children who had experienced a more academic, teacher led curriculum at age four were experiencing more problems as adults than those who had experienced a play based curriculum with more opportunities to choose their own learning activities (Schweinhart and Weikart 1998).
- Children from homes where they are exposed to books, and to adults who enjoy reading, tend to read earlier. Children who can read early do better later, but formal teaching of reading skills at an early age does not appear to give children a lasting advantage (McQuillan 1998).

Sharp 2002, p.4-20

Sharp concluded that

> what we can say is that a later start does not appear to hold back children's progress...and there would appear to be no compelling educational rationale for a statutory school age of five for the practice of admitting four year olds to school reception classes.

Sharp 2002, p.20

This thesis focuses on what the children say and experience and what the parents say and experience and to a lesser extent what the educators say and experience. It follows the experiences of a group of twelve children and parents during the transition to full

time school who experience three different 'induction to school programmes'. It therefore allows not only the experiences to be tracked but the experiences of the children and parents to be compared. The three different groups follow a different induction programme thus enabling comparisons and comments to be made regarding the effects of the various induction programmes and their relative impact. The research period starts before the beginning of the formal induction programme, continues during the induction programme and concludes the end of the children's first term at school. The research covers a period of eight months in the children's lives. This research does not assume that this period of eight months is the period of transition; rather the research takes a 'snap shot' during this eight-month time frame. This eight-month time frame may well be part of or the totality of the transition phase for each particular child.

Broad Research Context

In the wider national context Early Years Education is currently on the educational and political agenda. Extensive funding has been made available by central government for maximum class sizes of 30 in Infant Schools (statutory since September 2001) and for Early Years Excellence Centres e.g. The Haven Centre, Gosport, Hampshire. Since 1998 places at nurseries for four year olds have been subsidised. As children in England are starting formal education younger, aged four, and in a more formalised way e.g. through Excellence Centres, nurseries or Reception classes, there is a need to research further the impact of earlier transition into the world of full time education at school. Campbell (2000) notes that parents too are concerned about the implications of recent early years initiatives and the effects on their children's transition to full time education (Campbell 2000, p.3).

Local Context

The context for this thesis came as a result of two situations. Firstly the increasingly high profile raised nationally for Early Years Education and secondly my interest in the notion of transition which was initiated by my masters degree research and a desire to further the research into the broad idea of transition within an education context. The fact that a local Infant school had recently changed their 'induction to school programme' for Year R pupils was fortuitous as it provided the opportunity for using the data from the school's new induction processes. The context offered the perfect opportunity for the follow up of emerging ideas following on from my masters research namely the idea of 'bridging' within the transition process and to reflect upon this emerging notion during localized impact research into the transition to full time school at School A.

Below are the contextual details of School A. In April 2001 the Headteacher wrote to parents outlining the new pattern of entry for pupils starting school in Year R:

After consultation with parents, children, other professional and Early Years staff I have decided to change the pattern of entry for children starting school here in September 2001 for the following reasons:

- because of an extended staggered start to school, the well organized pre-school childcare that children have received is disrupted for up to four months
- children who attend afternoon sessions at school are often tired by the time they come and we need to make provision for them at a time of day when they are fresh
- some children who attend playschool, or another provider for half the day, as well as school, have three systems to operate (home, school and another provider)
- the staggered timetable is confusing for everyone
- support for children with special needs has to be organized later than I would like.

So, for the above reasons, from September this year, all children will begin full time school by October 7th after a period of half days.

Head teacher's letter   School A April 2001

It is with the permission of the Governing body of the Infant school that School A is referred to. School A believes that a school that reflects upon its practices through parental and pupil consultation as well as broader research should celebrate this process and use it as part of the evaluation of the evolving organization. All the names of the school staff, parents and children referred to within this research are confidential. The school staff are referred to by their role and the parents and their children are referred to by codes within the methodology but have fictitious names within the later text. The children and parents were allocated codes for ease of collating and analysing the data. The fictitious names were created to aid the reading of the text and to acknowledge that this research is about human beings in a real life situation and leaving the children as codes would seem strange in this context.

School A is a County Foundation Infant School for children aged 4-7 years located in south-central England. There are 240 pupils in 8 classes. It serves a large village and surrounding rural areas with a published admission number for Year R of 80. It believes that

> all children are different - they have a diversity of experiences and skills and learn best through first-hand experience just have they in the first four years of life.
>
> School A 2001, p.2

The school states that its aims are

- to provide a happy, secure and caring atmosphere where all children are treated with respect and can play and learn without fear or injury
- to recognize everyone's achievement and successes
- to encourage children to achieve high standards of learning and behaviour
- to develop a positive attitude towards learning

- to show increasing confidence, concentration and perseverance
- to provide a balanced, broad curriculum which will enable children to develop enquiring minds, understand the world around them and acquire new knowledge and skills
- to encourage parents to participate in the life of the school and to be involved in their children's learning
- to show respect for themselves and others

School A 2001, p.2

The aims of School A are considered in greater depth at the end of this chapter. They are considered so that they can be understood within the context of wider educational theories and aims within English education today.

School A writes in detail about its admissions procedures in the School Prospectus

> ....children are admitted to School A in the September of the academic year in which they have their fifth birthday. Visits are arranged in the summer term before the child begins school and in general guidelines provided by southern central England County Council for part time and full time are followed, although individual patterns of entry can be negotiated. Meetings are held with parents and pre-school providers to ensure that children are familiar with the school, its Early Years staff and routines before they begin school. Home visits are carried out early in September before the children begin. Children are admitted from other schools if there are places for them.

School A 2001, p.7

The School Prospectus goes on to outline in further detail the admission policy for the school with particular reference to the year 2001/2002. This policy makes the criteria for admissions clear and gives formal deadlines for applications to the school.

> ....with reference to children admitted into year R in September 2002, the governors of school A will consider first all those applications received by the published deadline of 12 noon on Friday 18th January 2002. On-time second preference applications will only be considered after all on-time first preferences have been considered by the governing body. Late applications will be considered from midday on Friday, 22nd February 2002, once all on-time and second preferences have been considered.

School A, 2001, p.7

Of course a clear fair admissions policy is essential for all schools but especially for School A as it is a very popular oversubscribed school. For the past 3 years more places have been applied for at the school in Year R than are available. More parents apply for their children than there are places in Year R and there is usually a waiting list for each of the three year groups of parents wishing to send their children to the school. The

admissions policy is also helpful as it makes clear the start of the research process as the children and parents to be invited to join in this research, in phase one and two, could not be identified, and then approached by the researcher to take part in the impact research, until places at the school had been formally offered to them by the school.

The staff and Governors at School A understand that they have a responsibility to the children in the school and their parents to make the transition to full time education as smooth as possible. The researcher also feels that there is a need to ensure that the full time compulsory part of a child's education is seen as a transition from learning at home to learning within the school environment.

On a personal level this thesis allows me to reflect on a career in two Education Authorities and three Headships. It gives me the opportunity to reflect upon the good practice of my first teaching post in a Nursery class within an Infant School. It allows the luxury of continuing my masters degree study theme in greater depth and allows for the chance to carry on the 'buzz' engendered by continuing to study and research.

Consideration of theories of education

Earlier (page 6) the text noted the aims of School A and referred to later consideration of those aims within a wider context. This section considers the theoretical background to the aims of School A and considers that background in the context of English primary education in 2002/3. This section ties together the earlier text about the broad context and the local context. It seeks to contextualise School A within a wider theoretical framework even beyond national educational boundaries.

Within English national primary education there is more and more formal assessment of children to test their understanding and also, in particular at Key Stage 2, their knowledge. These Standard Assessment Tests (SAT's) are not only seen as a measure of what the children know against a national average, that is, National Curriculum attainment Level 2 for children aged seven and Level 4 for children aged eleven, but they are also seen as a measure of the success of a school in terms of the overall SATS results for the cohort of children in Years 2 and Years 6 in any particular academic year. As children join the school they are assessed during their first year of full time education against the Early Learning Goals which are seen as landmarks of achievement. These assessments are used as 'baseline' judgments about the children's abilities for when they move into Key Stages 1 and 2. The numerical data generated by the children's achievements is used to measure the child's individual progress against agreed national norms (National Curriculum Level Descriptors) and is also used to measure the performance of the school. The aims of School A reflect the approach they are taking towards educating children in their local context yet clearly School A is also part of the bigger picture of primary education nationally in England.
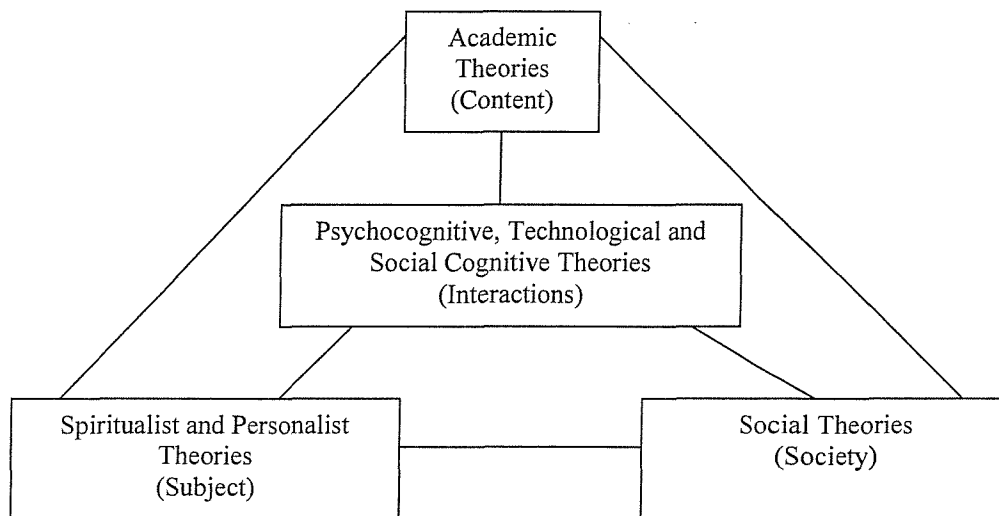
Bertrand (1995) classified educational theories into seven categories. He commented, "we need to classify educational theories because there are so many that it is difficult to understand them" (Bertrand 1995, p.2). He acknowledged that other scholars have classified educational theories in other ways notably those of Hameline (1971); Ardino

(1980) and Joyce, Weil and Showers (1992). Bertrand organised educational theories around four polar elements

- The subject (the student)
- The content (subject area, discipline)
- Society (others, the world, the environment, the universe)
- Pedagogical interactions among these three poles (the instructor/ teacher, communication technologies)

Adapted from Bertrand 1995, p.3

Bertrand argued that the key theories of education can be arranged within these different components as seen in the diagram below:

```
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │   Academic   │
                    │   Theories   │
                    │  (Content)   │
                    └──────┬───────┘
              ┌────────────────────────────┐
              │ Psychocognitive, Technological and │
              │    Social Cognitive Theories │
              │       (Interactions)        │
              └────────────────────────────┘
  ┌──────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
  │ Spiritualist and Personalist │      │  Social Theories │
  │        Theories          │──────│    (Society)     │
  │        (Subject)         │      │                  │
  └──────────────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
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Figures 1.2 Contemporary theories of education according to the four components

Bertrand 1995, p.4

Whilst each theory is complex I have tabulated the key elements of each of Bertrand's seven categories on the pages overleaf. I have also tabulated the key values, structural elements, authors and sources. It is possible to look at those details and to consider how the aims of School A relate to specific theories, if indeed they do, and also to consider how the broader educational context for School A fits within Bertrand's seven categories.

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Theory	Description	Values and structural elements	Authors	Sources
Spiritualist	Also called metaphysical or transcendental, concerned with the spiritual dimension of life on earth and by the meaning of life. The individual should learn to liberate himself from the known and go beyond his limits in order to rise to a spiritual level that is considered higher. Energy comes from within and the individual needs to master their internal energies.	Spiritual values inscribed in the individual , metaphysics, Tao, God, intuition, spiritual dimension of the cosmos, cosmic consciousness, perennial philosophy.	Bucke; Capra; Eliade; Emerson; Ferguson; Fotinas; Harman; Henderson; Jung; Lao-Tzu; Leonard; Maslow; Suzuki; Thoreau.	Religions, metaphysics, Eastern philosophies, mysticism, Taoism, Buddhism, perennial philosophy, cosmic consciousness.
Personalist	Also called Humanist, libertarian, nondirective, organic, impulsive, free or open. Based essentially on notions of self, liberty and personal autonomy. The individual learner should master their education through using internal energies. Teacher as role of facilitator – with focus of self actualization of the child.	Growth of the individual, unconscious, affectivity, desires, impulses, interests, the ego.	Adler; Angers; Fotinas; Freud; Lewin; Maslow; Neill; Paquette; Pare; Rogers.	Humanist psychology, personalism, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, open education, romantic humanism, naturalism, non-deterministic free school.
Psychocognitive	Concerned with the development of cognitive processes in students, such as, reasoning, analysis, problem-solving, representations, prior conceptions, and mental images. Cognitive theorists concerned about the internal processes of the mind whilst behaviourists interested in the effects of the environment on learning.	Learning process, prior knowledge, spontaneous representations, cognitive conflicts, pedagogical profiles, prescientific culture.	Bachelard; Bednarz; Garanderie; Giordan; Larochelle and Desautels; Piaget; Taurisson.	Piagetian psychology, cognitive psychology, constructivist epistemology, developmental psychology, cognitive development.
Technological	Also called techosystemic or systemic. Focus on the improvement of the message through the use of technology. "Technology" covers a broad interpretation, e.g. compute; TV; video disc; tape recorder; internet. Focus on creating new	Information, communication, technologies, computer science, computer assisted instruction, artificial intelligence, instructional design, intelligent learning environment	Banathy; Bertalanffy; Bordier; Briggs; Carroll; Cunningham; Dick and Carey; Gagne; Glaser; Landa; Mager; McMahon; O'Neill; Paquette; Pregent; Skinner; Stolovitch.	Cybernetics, systemics, communication theory, behaviorism, cognitive psychology, systems theory, artificial intelligence.

	hypomedia environments with artificial intelligence and virtual environments. Based on computers processing information and research on the interactions between humans and computers.	systematic approach to teaching, construction of knowledge.		
Social Cognitive	Focus on cultural and social factors in the construction of knowledge and those conditions of teaching and learning. Some focus on social interactions of cooperation whilst others stress cultural foundations for education. Strong interest in environmental influences upon learning, such as, peers and role of teachers, group dynamics and democratic decision making.	Culture, social environment, milieu, social determinants of knowledge, social interactions, cooperative teaching, cooperative learning.	Bandura; Brown; Bruner; Clancey; Collins; Cooper; Doise; Duguid; Gilly; Gredler; Houssaye; Johnson and Johnson; Joyce; Kagan; Lve; Lefebvre-Pinard; McLean; Mugny; Palincsar; Pea; Sharan; Sims; Slavin; turiel; Viau; Vygotsky.	Sociology, anthropology, psycho sociology.
Social	Based on the principle that education should help us resolve our social, cultural and environmental problems. The primary role of education is to prepare children to find solutions to these problems. Themes include social and cultural inequalities, segregation, elitism, environmental problems, the negative impact of technology and industralisation and the deterioration of life on our planet.	Social classes, social determinisms of human nature, environmental and social problems, power, liberation, social changes, empowering education, liberatory education, critical teaching, multicultural democracy, progressive education.	Apple; Aronowitz; Bourdieu; Dewey; Forquin; Freire; Giroux; Grand-Maison; Illich; Jantsch; Lapassade; McLaren; Passeron; Rosnay; Shor; Sleeter; Stanley; Toffler; Young.	Sociology, Marxism, political science, critical theory, ecology, feminist studies, environmental sciences.
Academic	Also called traditionalists, generalists, classical. Focus on the transmission of general knowledge. Traditionalists want education to have a classical content yet generalists emphasise general education stressing a critical mind and flexibility. The teacher transmits content and the child assimilates it. Focus on constant striving for excellence and maximum effort into study and work.	Content, subject matter, disciplines, logic, reasoning, intellect, Western culture, traditions, Greco-Roman humanism, classical works, essentialism, liberal arts, critical spirit, basics, general education, critical thinking.	Adler; Bloom; Domenach; Ethier; Gadbois; Gilson; Henry; Laliberte; Lavallee; Marsolais; Paul; Scriven.	Classical literature, classical realism, philosophy, general education, culture, liberal arts, humanities; critical thinking.

Details summarized from Bertrand 1995, p.5-8, 9-10, 29-33, 51-54, 75-78, 103-107, 139-140, 189-192, and 223-225.

The previous details show the complexity of the educational theories even once they are put into seven categories. Each category is not a discrete theory band on its own as Bertrand acknowledges when he comments on the Social Cognitive category "to be sure, they have left nothing out!" (Bertrand 1995, p.139). So considering the aims of School A sounds a lot easier than it is in reality. Whilst the aims it could be argued are clear as they are stated on paper and published in the school prospectus the way those aims take shape in the classroom and around the practices of the school are not clear from the words on the paper. Any examination of those aims based on the published words the researcher would argue can only be superficial.

The aims of School A do not appear to fit neatly into one of Bertrand's seven categories. They acknowledge elements from at least three of the categories namely, Psychocognitive Theories, Social Cognitive Theories and the Social Theories of education. The school aims "to provide a balanced, broad curriculum which will enable children to develop enquiring minds, understand the world around them and acquire new knowledge and skills" (School A 2001). It seeks to prepare the children to be ready for the social world outside of school. The school has in its aims key social themes, "to develop a positive attitude towards learning; to provide a happy, secure and caring atmosphere where all children are treated with respect and can play and learn without fear or injury; to recognize everyone's achievement and successes; to show respect for themselves and others and to encourage parents to participate in the life of the school and to be involved in their children's learning." These social themes within School A's aims would link with Social Cognitive and Social Theories, particularly Social Cognitive Theory as it stresses the social dimension of learning.

Within the Social Theories Sapon-Schevin and Schniedewind (1991) and Shor (1992) write about the need for an "empowering education, centered on participation, which encourages students to feel positive" (Bertrand 1995, p.152). This links with School A's aims of developing a positive attitude to learning, respect and the recognition of achievement and successes. These aims of School A would also link with the Psychocognitive Theories approach of teachers acknowledging children's prior learning and learning processes. Both Psychocognitive Theories and Social Cognitive Theories focus on learning and within the aims of School A, learning is mentioned four times.

Within the assessing and testing culture that has evolved in England since the 1990's the school is placed within a broader educational context, which values the transmission of knowledge. School A does not focus its aims on specific standards or knowledge but refers to the pursuit of learning as one of its aims when it says "to encourage children to achieve high standards of learning and behaviour." Throughout England there has been a 'back to basics' trend and a focus on literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge. This is evidenced by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies introduced for all primary schools and those strategies being introduced in to secondary schools in key stage 3 in September 2003. Progress towards goals, especially within Literacy and Numeracy frameworks, is constantly being measured. Children have literacy and numeracy targets as too do their teachers, schools, Local Education Authorities and Central Government. There is an ever-increasing focus on accountability and testing.

Thompson on Newman (6/2/02) categorises these practices as part of the theoretical approach of "Essentialism" whilst following Bertrand's seven theories, it could be argued to be more like the elements of the Academic Theory.

In terms of the educational theories that relate to School A the school seems to have elements within its aims that relate to Psychocognitive, Social Cognitive and Social educational theories yet as a school in England in 2003 the broader national educational system seems to focus more on an Academic theory approach. One is left wondering about the conflicts that these theories might have for each other. The educational theories may or may not be opposing in their nature but the aims of School A are rooted in individual achievement, enquiry and understanding, whereas the outcomes for Academic theorists are more rooted in specific knowledge transmission and attainment. It is within this national educational context of assessment and testing and the local context of individual achievement, that the research in this study takes place focusing on exploring notions surrounding the idea of transition through assessing the impact of the transition of young children to full time education.

Setting the scene

This section sets the scene with regards to children entering full time compulsory education. It establishes why and how children go to school so that the notion of the transition to school is set within a broader historical context. It considers briefly the history of children going to school and the age at which children start school both in England and Wales and internationally.

In England and Wales infants from the age of three were admitted to schools throughout the nineteenth century. For many children this meant attending Dame schools or Monitorial schools. Some children attended the free Kindergartens set up by charitable trusts for slum children in Salford, London and Edinburgh. In 1816 Robert Owen, as manager of a cotton mill in Scotland, pioneered the New Lanark Infant School. The children were divided into two age groups (two to four year olds and four to six year olds) before they went into the schoolroom at age seven. The emphasis was on outdoor play, nature study, music, dancing and geography.

The National Society for the Education of the Poorer Classes in the Principles of the Established Church set up in 1811 influenced these infant school curriculums. In 1833 small state grants were offered towards the building of schools and in 1858 a commission was established that resulted in testing pupils at age seven and paying teachers according to the pupil's results and the pupil's level of attendance. Over a hundred and fifty years later this notion once again has a familiar ring to it through the introduction of Performance Management into schools in September 2000.

In 1870 both Houses of Parliament debated the compulsory school starting age. The argument that won, it seemed, was based upon economics in that "the difficulty was to obtain education without trenching on the time for gaining a living: beginning early and ending early would present a solution," (NEU 1870, p.441-2) and the entry to school at the age of five was established. Woodhead (1989) points out that the school starting age was not decided on the basis of any child development criteria or even on educational criteria.

By the late nineteenth century it is estimated that 41% of working class children aged six to ten attended grant-aided elementary schools (NEU 1870, p.6). The young children of the middle classes were educated at home by tutors or in private fee paying schools.

In 1870 School Boards were established so that new schools could be financed through low fees, local rates and central government funds, whilst voluntary schools would be funded by the church. An Act of 1876 forced compulsory school attendance on children over five. In 1893 the employment age for children was raised to eleven and in 1918 the statutory school leaving age was raised to fourteen.

In 1931 and 1933 the Hadow Reports initiated the idea of a 'primary education'. The 1931 Report recommended that infants (three to seven year olds) and juniors (seven to eleven year olds) should be taught separately with a curriculum focusing on natural activities, training and formal instruction in basic skills. The 1933 Report recommended special facilities i.e. premises and staffing ratios for very young children in primary schools. In the 1944 Education Act there became an obligation for Local Authorities to

provide nursery classes. Whilst the statutory school starting age was to remain at five, most children started school in the term after their fifth birthday thus determining whether they had six or nine terms of infant schooling. The Plowden Report CACE (1967) recommended that children should be part of a system which offered nursery education, first schools for five to eight year olds and middle schools for eight to twelve year olds. This reflected a move towards a more child centred approach to the education of young children which was defined earlier in the Hadow Reports.

During the 1960's and 1970's parents became more involved in activities at primary schools and in the Education Act (2) (1986) parents became one quarter of the composition of a school's governing body. During 1976, the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, gave a speech focusing on the purpose of education and the standards needed by the country. He raised issues about teaching methodology and spoke about the need for a "core curriculum of basic knowledge" (Anning 1991, p.7). In 1979 the Department for Education and Science (DES) published "A Framework for the School Curriculum" which noted that the Secretary of State

> should seek to give a lead in the process of reaching a national consensus on a desirable framework for the curriculum and consider the development of such a framework a priority for the education service.

> DES 1979, p.6

During the 1980's there seemed to be a flood of curriculum documents focusing on the 5-16 age range continuum. In 1989 infant schools came into particular focus as the National Curriculum was introduced for five year olds. In September 2000 the Foundation Stage Curriculum was introduced for children aged three to five thus enabling a curriculum entitlement for children from age three to age sixteen.

The Foundation Stage curriculum reflected the move towards the reality of a lowering of the school entry age whilst the full time education entry age for children remained at age five. Whilst children do not statutorily have to be at school until the term after their fifth birthday the reality is that many children are. Certainly in south central England most children are in school during the year in which they are four. This may be full time attendance or part time leading to full time by the end of the school year. Of the Foundation Stage of education Margaret Hodge MP wrote it "will make a positive contribution to children's early development and learning" (DfEE 2000 Foreword). Tate, the Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, commented that

> the establishment of a foundation stage is a significant landmark in funded education in England. For the first time it gives this very important stage of education a distinct identity.
> DfEE 2000 Foreword

This curriculum reflects the growth in both childcare provision (i.e. private, social services day nursery provision) and educational provision (i.e. day and sessional nurseries / playgroups) for children aged three upwards. This Foundation Stage curriculum has become a national expectation for children attending these provisions. The DfEE guidelines note that

most children are expected to achieve the early learning goals (these are statements of achievement within the curriculum) by the end of the Foundation Stage. Practitioners should plan a curriculum that helps children make good progress towards these goals.

<div align="right">DfEE 2000, p.6</div>

The DFEE acknowledged that the transfer to full time education was a transitional time in a child's life when it noted of transfer practices

- The parent is encouraged to stay with the child as part of the process of transition between home and the group.
- When the child transfers to primary school she (the practitioner) liaises with the receiving school.

<div align="right">DfEE 2000, p.12</div>

Starting School in England and Wales and Comparison with Other Countries

This section examines the age of starting compulsory schooling in England and Wales and compares this with selected countries abroad. An examination of the data provides an interesting insight into the context of the young child in England and Wales joining the world of full time education. This country is one of the three countries in Europe, as reported in Ball (1994) that starts compulsory education at the age of five.

In 1967 The Plowden Report noted three pertinent points about the starting age of compulsory education in England and Wales. It commented "it would seem wise, therefore to continue to relate school entry to school chronological age" (CACE 1967, p.137) and further that "we, therefore, recommend that the statutory time by which children must go to school should be defined as the September term following their

fifth birthday" (CACE 1967, p.139). It also noted evidence that "as we have seen, the other countries of the world, with few exceptions, favour a later age than ours" (CACE 1967, p.138).

By 1994 Ball commented that "over 75% of children are being admitted to primary schools before their fifth birthday" (Ball 1994, p.32). He goes on to clarify that figure stating that,

> policies on early admission vary between Local Education Authorities. In the past, it has been usual for children to be admitted at the start of the term in which they will become five: these children are known as 'rising-fives'. But the trend towards once-yearly admissions has led younger term in which they will become five: these children are known as 'rising-fives'. But the trend towards once-yearly admissions has led younger four year olds being admitted to Reception classes.

> Ball 1994, p.33

Pugh summarizes the reasons for a move to early admissions as:

- Falling primary school rolls in the 1970's and early 1980's which led to spare space
- A cheaper way of expanding provision in the face of an inadequate amount of nursery provision
- Pressure from parents for their children to start school as soon as possible
- Concern that Summer-born children underachieve throughout their school career and that all children should have the same length of time in school
- A more recent financial argument, that four year olds bring with them £1,100 worth of voucher funding.

> Pugh 1996 Chapter 4

Sharp (2002) comments that those in favour of children starting at an early age argue

> that young children are capable of learning the more formal skills inherent in the school curriculum and that starting school early enables children to get a head start on learning. In addition, it is argued that an early start provides an opportunity for children from less advantaged backgrounds to make up deficit in their academic skills. Early school age is also thought to be popular among parents (a survey of parents who moved their children from pre-school playgroups to school at four found that most were happy with their decision (Blake and Finch 2000)).

> Sharp 2002, p.1

However it should be noted that not everyone is in favour of earlier admissions to full time education as concerns have been raised about the appropriateness of a formal school environment for such young children. Indeed does the earlier start to formal education have any long term advantage and might children possibly be damaged by it in the short and long term? As an educational professional with a holistic view of children I find myself considering whether the young child is missing out on something whilst they are at school. Are they missing out on being young?

De Lemos (1977) argues for earlier school entrance for children in an attempt to compensate for the educational disadvantages of children whose homes have failed to offer them early stimulation. Hedges (1978) however, revealed that children entering kindergarten under five tended to have more learning, social and emotional problems than older children. His research also revealed that whatever the minimum starting age may be, children who enter at the lower level IQ limit have more problems and achieve less than children of a similar IQ who enter at the latest possible age.

Most compulsory state elementary / primary schooling in Europe starts at the age of six or even seven, as in other parts of the world (for example, Japan – aged six and America aged six to eight years old.)

Compulsory age of starting school in European countries, 2002	
Four	Northern Ireland
Five	England, Malta, Netherlands, Scotland, Wales
Six	Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain
Seven	Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Sweden

European Commission. EURYDICE and EUROSTAT (forthcoming) 2002

Many countries also offer a range of pre-compulsory school age provision for those children who do however not remain with their parents. In England and Wales this includes nurseries, both day and sessional, playgroups and child minders with 65% of three to five year old children attending publicly funded services. In France 95% of children aged three to five attend ecoles maternelles and in Italy 90% of three to five year olds attend full time provision six days a week. In Germany 77% of three to five year olds are in a pre-school provision (Data from Ball (1994)).

Most countries of the world also favour a school starting age of six (Ball 1994; Bertram and Pascal 2002; O'Donnell et al 2002; Woodhead 1989; West and Varlaam 1990).So not only is the starting age in England low by European standards it is also low by

world standards. Also it is worth noting that in reality whilst the starting school age may be five children often start school much earlier as they join Reception classes in the year in which they are five. So, for example, my youngest daughter was born on 1/6/99 and joined her Reception class in September 2003 when she was four years and three months old.

Sharp (2002) quoted the DfES (2002) in her research when she noted that

> in January 2002 99% of the English four year olds were attending some kind of educational provision, with 59% of four year olds in infant classes.

<div align="right">Sharp 2002, p.2</div>

These figures may actually be higher as the data is based on a return gathered in January 2002 and is in relation to the population of children born in the calendar year from January to December rather than in relation to those born during the academic year September to August.

All this data raises the issue of how can one tell when a child is ready for full time school, as there is a starting school range from 5 to 7 years. Szreter, reporting in Ball (1994, p.65), writes that in earlier times there was a view that children who could touch their (left) ear by stretching their (right) hand over their head were ready for school! The age of five was chosen as the starting age for education in the Elementary Education Act (The Forster Act) of 1870. As most children then left school at age eleven to work in factories, the children received six years elementary education.

There has been much research on school readiness most of which tends to discourage an early start to formal schooling. Barnes argued that the real debate is concerned with those who advocate a response to individual needs and those who argue for compensation for deprivation. He concluded that the Reception class teacher

> must treat the children as individuals, providing instruction and support in accordance with individual differences in school readiness, in an informal setting.

<div align="right">Barnes in McCail 1987, p.41</div>

This is a real challenge for the Reception teacher in a primary school!

It is perhaps timely to reflect at this point upon the fact that children enter school in England and Wales so comparatively young. If they were not at school so young would there be the need for the formal arrangements that schools make for children to take part so that they can become familiar with the school and its routines? Given that children do go to school so early in England and Wales it is perhaps not surprising that this formal notion of transition exists. There is no written statutory expectation or given right that the young child has to go through a process of induction into full time education. Rather there is a set of activities that have evolved as good educational practice that parents ritually expect their child to be involved in. Ritually because they, the parents, as children, were involved in some kind of 'induction to school

programme' and because there is an expectation that these events will take place perpetuated by word of mouth shared experiences and reflections.

It is also worth noting that despite the earlier paragraphs' comment about the transition to school and age issue transitions occur without being dependent on age. At some point that transition to school would, within the current English educational system, have to take place. That children make a transition from home to full time education seems in no doubt but what does seem to be an issue of debate is the timing of that transition in terms of the age of children (not their maturity) and the transition processes/events that take place.

Several issues are raised by the fact that young children are in formal full time education namely:

- The Foundation Stage curriculum is seen as a set of experiences, an entitlement, for all. Is it appropriate for all? Can it be differentiated enough to match all children's needs especially those of the younger child? Children start their Foundation Stage experience at different stages in their own development so it needs to be carefully tailored to suit their individual needs. This individual need could also be part of how they (the child) make the transition from full time preschool care, be that a pre-school provider or with parents at home to the full time school setting. As the children are, in England and Wales, increasingly younger when they start school, literally just after their fourth birthday for some, can all their range of needs be met.....physical, social, emotional?

- Younger children in school – are they emotionally, socially prepared or 'ready' for this group experience? Tizard and Hughes (1984) emphasised the need for young children to have a close and intense relationship with someone who knows them well and shares a common life with them like a parent not a group or even keyworker. They noted

> we believe that persistent intellectual curiosity is a particularly prominent feature of four year olds. This is because of the flexible and incomplete structure of their conceptual framework, and also because of the children's growing awareness of their, any confusions and misunderstandings that occur. At an earlier stage in their development children lack the ability to express their difficulties. At a later stage, their conceptual framework is better able to cope with their experiences. But between the ages of about three and five, a state of intellectual disequilibrium exists.

> Tizard and Hughes 1984, p.42

> Tizard and Hughes argued that the one to one relationship is key to the child and that this cannot be replaced by being part of a group. At pre-school the child is part of a group of 6 or 8 with a named key worker and at school in the year R class is part of a group of 30 with usually a teacher and teaching assistant so there is a ratio of 1-15. These early educational social groupings do not allow for that special one to one relationship, bond or time of shared experiences that a parent has with a child.

- There is also the consideration of the provision for younger children, that is, the resources for buildings; staffing ratios; the length of the day, and the quality of the overall provision. There are many concerns related to having young children in school. Are the buildings adapted to their needs with low door handles, low level toilets and wash down facilities, small scale play apparatus, easily accessible buildings for children with mobility difficulties and pushchairs? Is there enough room for them to play and experience a full range of activities both indoors and out of doors – sand, water and paint, role play, climbing frames, bikes and space to run around? Is the space adequately staffed both in terms of agreed ratios but also in terms of experience and qualifications? Does the staff have the appropriate training and are they constantly training and keeping up to date with early child care issues? How is the school day structured? Is there plenty for the children to do safely? Are there opportunities for the children to rest each day? What about the quality of the experiences organized for the children both in terms of the apparatus used and the activities organized for the children to take part in?

- Another issue is that of whether there will soon be a curriculum from birth? This may sound a strange statement but for children in day nurseries from the age of 4 months this may be not that far from the truth. To be part of the government funding for four year olds they must offer the Foundation Curriculum and thus the nursery must be open to formal inspections. So the provision for children aged 4 months olds to 4 year olds in day nurseries is inspected not only in care terms but also in relation to the educational provision provided. Is this very structured environment really what society wants for its youngest children?

- What about the child's *free spirit*? (researcher's italics) Can a child be, or should a child be encouraged to join a public social system from the age of three when Tizard and Hughes have argued there is still much "disequilibrium"? Is there the 'space' within the education system for the children to be themselves and to explore the world around them at their own rate?

- Hedges (1978) argued that there is no research to show that an earlier starting age for starting school enables greater ultimate achievement yet sixteen years later the Start Right Report by Ball wrote that,

> the latest finding is that "over the lifetimes of the participants, the pre-school programme returns to the public an estimated $7.16 for every dollar invested."

Ball 1994, p.6

In summary children in England and Wales are starting school at an increasingly early age. They are amongst the youngest in Europe when they start full time compulsory education (Ball 1994, Sharp 2002), yet there is little consensus as to whether they are 'ready' for that early start to formal education or indeed benefit from it either in the short term or long term. Crucial to starting on that formal education journey, at whatever age, is the impact of the transition between home and / or pre-school

experiences and the world of the primary classroom. The next chapter considers research into the practical aspects of the transition of children into full time education. It looks at practical issues identified by the researcher through personal experience and through literature research.

Chapter Two

The first impressions that children have of school may affect subsequent attitudes as "memories remain with us and may still affect our behaviour many years later."

Pascal 1990, p.1

Practical transition issues

This chapter examines some of the practical considerations that are necessary when considering the transition of children into full time education. It starts with thoughts on the importance of this period of transition for the child, parent and school and notes comments on the need for induction programme flexibility for the child during the transition to school period. It goes onto refer to Dowling's research (1995) which focuses on the roles and responsibilities of parents during the transition period and summarises with a consideration of issues for classroom teachers and schools.

From my own perspective as an experienced headteacher I consider there are many good reasons why a planned transition period is important for young children joining full time education. My list, below, is not in any hierarchical order nor is it exhaustive – it is merely the summation of my thoughts.

Child Need

- The child in full time education will be away from their main carer for the whole day, for most days of the week. This may be the first time that this has occurred.
- The child will be with 'strangers' – new people that are not part of their immediate family or adult friendship group. They may not have met these new people before.
- The child will become part of a large group of children of up to 30. Usually, in year R, they will be part of a ratio of 1-15 with a teacher and teaching assistant but they previously would have related as an only child or sibling in the family context or with a small group with a child minder and/or may have been part of a bigger group, of 6 or 8, at a playgroup or nursery.
- The child is joining a new community: an established community with agreed routines, timings and rituals. These routines will be particular to the context that the child is joining and will be new to the child - even though they may be very established within the classroom and school context. All of these routines and rituals may be new or even alien to the child. The child may find the school context culturally challenging to them because of their upbringing or family beliefs.
- Each child has their own needs, emotional, physical, intellectual and yet they will be part of a greater grouping – the class. There is the concern of how every individual need for each child will be met with 30 children and 2 adults. How the child can receive the nurture and care they each need. How, for example, the child will feel being part of a large group without the one to one relationship or

small group interactions, and how they establish what their needs are to the adults.

- The child is at the start of a new time in their life which will last at least twelve years in a formal school setting, that is their compulsory education.

Parent Need

- There is an opportunity for parents to refamiliarize themselves with the world of school which they may have not been in contact with since they left school. For many parents the last time they were at a school was when they were at school themselves. So going to school with their child may evoke memories of their school days. Usually parents recall their secondary school days as these are the nearest to them in the sense of recent experience. Parents are often surprised at the small scale of the buildings and apparatus for the children and the bright attractive nature of the Reception classroom.
- There is an opportunity for parents to find out information about the school routines, expectations and systems, for themselves and on their child's behalf. It may have been sometime since the parents were in contact with any school and each school has its own routines and requirements so for parents there is a great need to find out information. Information to help them as parents but also information that they will need to help their child, for example, reading book routines and days for their child to bring in their PE kit for sports activities.
- There is an opportunity for parents to share information about themselves and their child and their expectations, needs and aspirations for their child. As the children go to school there is a time for parents to share the milestones that the child has made in their life so far. Parents may also share any concerns that a child might have, such as phobias or any medical concerns.
- There is an opportunity for parents to build a partnership, based on trust and shared care for the child with the school.

School Need

- There is an opportunity for the school to assess the readiness of the child for the world of primary education and to plan for that child accordingly. With initial assessments about the child and their whole range of needs, the openings can be made to ensure that the child makes that smooth transition into full time education. These assessments will usually be very informal and may involve talking with parents and/or pre-school providers about the child. They may involve a home visit to the child's home and may involve some observations of the child interacting on pre-school visits.
- There is an opportunity for the school to assess the child's individual needs and how their induction into primary education can be managed. Once the school has established the child's needs a transition programme to suit them can be established that best matches their needs.
- There is an opportunity for the school to share information and procedures with parents and children.
- There is an opportunity for the key carers in school to introduce themselves informally to the child and parent before they start school full time. This may be

through a series of events at the school or through visits to the child's home before they formally start school.

- There is an opportunity for the school to build a partnership, based on trust and shared care for the child, with the parents.

The bullet points above reflect my thoughts about practical transition issues. Wider evidence extends these practical transition issues to consider flexibility, the role of parents and the thoughts of the school.

Flexibility

Sharp's concern is about ensuring that all children's individual needs are catered for. She noted that in order for the considerations of all to be catered for, primarily the child and especially younger children

> schools should make sure that entry policies take the needs of the youngest children into account (e.g. staggered and part time attendance), staff should be sympathetic to parents of younger children experiencing problems in settling in, and should react flexibly to meet their concerns.

Sharp 1995, p.3

Parental role

Dowling (1995) wrote about the "introduction to school" stating that all schools should create the opportunities

- For all parents to become more aware of the educational value of life in the home;
- To recognise, respect and support the vital role that parents and carers play in their child's progress and development; and
- For all parties to recognise the value of working in harmony to support the child.

Dowling 1995, p.19-20

Dowling noted that

> new parents and children need time and opportunities to become acquainted with the school accommodation and what happens inside it.

Dowling 1995, p.22

As Dowling commented, the parents' last experience of primary school may have been during their school days and "both parents and child will have misgivings, anxieties, hopes and expectations in regard to starting school" (Op.cit, p.21). To ease the introduction to school and the anxiety she noted that many schools offer their pre-

school children a home visit. Cousins noted four year olds reactions to the home visit were that

> all the children valued highly the opportunity for this personal link. They perceived the teacher as coming to meet them, to see their toys and share their interests.

> Cousins 1990, p.28

Dowling draws together the home visit and pre-school visit as enabling the child to become familiar with the school prior to entry thus ensuring that the "trauma of the transition is minimised" (Dowling 1995, p.23). She notes that they enable the children to become acquainted with school life as spectators so that they can then have the confidence to become participants.

The School

The Reception class teacher has a key role to play in the practicalities of the transition process as the children arrive at school from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a wide range of experiences. Dowling and Dauncey (1984) argue that the teacher needs information about these backgrounds so that they can arrange a smooth transition into the school and likewise the parent and child need information as

> familiarity with the school before he starts will give the child an idea of what to expect and may be help him to cope more easily with change.

> Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982

The NFER study (1982) found that the smoothest transitions from home to school were the result of gradual change, when people, places and things were increasingly familiar and the child felt a sense of security. This transition was aided by the sharing of information and by pre-school providers understanding how their respective settings impacted upon the child. As the NFER study commented,

> in pre-schools....children have unlimited choice of the available activities while the adults supervise or become involved from time to time. In Infant classes.....children are engaged in prescribed activities while the teacher is actively involved with the class as a whole.

> Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982, p.72

Downey and Dauncey (1984) took a practical approach to suggestions of transition ideas for schools when they suggested

- Home visits
  Following a letter from the class teacher a visit can be made to the child's home to meet them in an environment that they are familiar and comfortable with.
- Pre-school visit

An opportunity for the child and / or carer to visit the school to see it
'in action'. Often playgroups, nurseries also visit in small groups.

- Welcome parties
  An opportunity for parents to be invited into the school without their
  child possibly an evening event to share information and view the
  building. Families can also be welcomed to family assemblies prior to
  starting school.
- Invitation to school events
  Parents and pre-school children can be invited to special assemblies,
  plays or parties to familiarize themselves with the school from a
  spectators point of view.
- Written information
  By law parents need statutory information about the school but
  schools may also develop induction booklets or school starter packs.
- Liaison with other personnel
- Teacher visits to nurseries and playgroups
  To observe individual children and routines. To share good practice
  and information about children due to go to school.
- Visits by playgroup and nursery staff to school
  To see the school in session and to identify different practices and thus
  be enabled to prepare the children who will be going to school.

Downey and Cleave 1984

Brown and Cleave (1994) focused on the actual amount of time spent at the school
during the transition period and suggest a gradual start to school life

Possibly through a series of 1 hour visits building to half days, then
including the lunch break and building to full days – or -

- All new entrants admitted over two days;
- A third of the class admitted daily for three days;
- All the class admitted at half hourly intervals during the morning throughout
  the week;
- Small groups admitted on alternate days;
- Children part time until they are of statutory age;
- Children part time for the first half term;
- Total flexibility based on negotiation between the Headteacher, teachers,
  nursery nurses and parents.

Brown and Cleave 1994, p.8

Research by Kagan and Neuman (1998) drew together ' lessons from three decades of
transition research'. This summary of American research in to the practical issues
surrounding the transition of children to school reflected on the methods and outcomes
of research to draw 'lessons' that could be learned. In examining the research Kagan and
Neuman state four main 'lessons'. Firstly, that the research, "most notably from the
National Transition Study," (op. cit, p.371) showed few schools or districts actually
focus on the transitional process. Secondly, that despite the fact that transitional

processes were not focused on there were practices that could aid successful transition, for example, "The Head Start Transition Project". Thirdly, that research showed that transition efforts were difficult to evaluate because of "scant data" (op. cit, p.371), projects not being "fully implemented or are constantly being modified" (op. cit, p.371) and other "transition efforts have been short-lived, preventing long-term evaluation" (Op.cit, p.371). Fourthly that research has shown that the method of implementation, evaluation and methodology of the studies had complicated the research, for example

> the traditional strategy of commissioning researchers from outside the educational hierarchy to design and oversee the implementation efforts may not be well suited to effecting durable systemic change in primary schools.

Kagan and Neuman 1998, p.372

Kagan and Neuman (1998) concluded that there were "significant barriers to implementing and evaluating transitions" (op. cit, p.372). Perhaps, more significantly on the lack of focused recent research regarding the induction of young children to school, they commented

> showing the public the clear links between transitions and related early childhood results may be important to garnering public and financial support; however, to date, early childhood leaders have failed to capitalize on the attention being paid to readiness and early development and learning as a means to promote transition programs and research.

Kagan and Neuman 1998, p.372

Bearing in mind the comments previously noted of Kagan and Neuman (1998) that research often does not focus on the transitional process, the next chapter considers research into transitional models and the transitional process. It looks at models and applies them to the time of making the transition to full time education. Through discussion it applies those generic models to the specific transition time of going to school.

Chapter Three

Transitional Models

The transition to school sets the tone and direction of a child's school career

$$\text{Pianta and Kraft-Sayre 1999, p.47}$$

At the end of the last chapter Kagan and Neuman (1998) noted limitations to the research on the transition to school process carried out in America in the last 30 years. This chapter explores aspects of two transitional models and their relation to the context of starting school for young children. This chapter puts the transition to school research into the wider framework of transitions as a whole.

It is perhaps worth noting that all children starting school come from a variety of cultural and family backgrounds and contexts. They all bring to school with them a wide range of past experiences. It is difficult when writing not to make assumptions about what an 'average' child starting school might be like in the sense of their previous experiences, family and cultural background. In addition the idea of culture can mean many different things. It may literally mean children and families from a range of different cultures such as children and families from a range of ethnic origins or it may mean religious cultural influences or cultural influences within regional localities. Again the idea of the family can vary, for example, a unit of mother, father and child / children may not be any type of norm, and the notion of family may reflect families with single parents; other relatives as carers; children in foster care or those in the care of the Local Authority. These are all notions of the concept of the family so there is a need for this research to be sensitive to any assumptions made by it within this study.

Transitional Theories

Hopson and Adams in Adams, Hayes and Hopson (1976) describe a transition as a "discontinuity in a person's life space" (Op.cit, p.5). The Oxford English Dictionary defines a discontinuity as "want of continuity, an interrupted condition, a break or gap." It could be interpreted from this definition that transitions are a discontinuity, that is, a break or change in the routine of life's existing pattern. The transitions interrupt the current state of affairs, so for a child making the transition to full time education their existing pattern or routine is changed or interrupted by the transition to a new pattern. It may be that the child is going regularly to a pre-school provider or is cared for at home by a parent or other carer and their every day pattern is interrupted by the transition to school programme leading to a new pattern of going to school each week day. The transition therefore may be rather like a slip road off the motorway to join another motorway going in another direction. During this transition, that is the journey along the slip road, 'bridging' events / actions / interactions take place to facilitate that

transition, that discontinuity, so that a new continuity can be established , that is, the journey in the new direction is started.

Hopson and Adams (1976) acknowledged that there is no clear model of transitional behaviour that allows testable hypotheses to be drawn from it mainly because there is no model that draws upon a range of disciplines. They noted that transitions in research have been seen as part of the research project rather than as research project in themselves and that whilst transitions may have been examined in different disciplines there has been no drawing together of the different transitional aspects from different disciplines to form one clear model. They argued that for most people "there has been, or will be, a rapid acceleration in the number of transitions encountered in all aspects of their lives" (Op. cit, p.7) and that these transitions will result in "some degree of stress and strain" (Op. cit, p.7). They concluded that there will be more people with stress and strains in their lives and therefore a greater understanding is needed of the notion of transition in all aspects of everyone's lives.

This chapter considers further the research of Hopson and Adams (1976) to put together some considerations in a formal way about the transition process. Wherever it is possible these considerations are put in diagrammatic form for ease of understanding for the reader. Where the diagram or table already exists the due credit is given. Other diagrams and tables are of the researcher's own creation to aid understanding and representation in this thesis. Formal model suggestions are used as a way of considering the transition to full time education as a transitional process in an objective way rather than, as later, more subjectively through this research thesis.

Hopkins and Adams noted that for an experience to be classed as transitional there should be

1.	personal awareness of a discontinuity in one's life space **and**
2.	new behavioural responses required because the situation is new, or the required behaviours are novel, or both.

adapted from Adams, Hayes and Hopkins 1976, p.6

They suggested that sometimes a person can undergo a transitional experience without being aware of the level of discontinuity or the level of the new behavioural responses involved. Indeed from my experience as a Reception Class teacher, some children seem to make the transition to school very easily but it is often later, for example, several weeks into the first full time school term, that their reactions start to show through. Often this shows in not wanting to come to school or unsettled sleep patterns and bed wetting at night.

Hopkins and Adams offer four types of transitions for consideration

1.	Predictable-voluntary
2.	Predictable-involuntary
3.	Unpredictable-voluntary
4.	Unpredictable-involuntary

adapted from Adams, Hayes and Hopkins 1976, p.6

Predictability is defined according to whether the transition can be anticipated or not. In the context of this research the researcher would say that the transition of a child to full time education would be a 'predictable-involuntary' transition. 'Predictable' because the decision for children to go to full time education whatever the age is enshrined in the law of the land yet 'involuntary' because the children have no choice but to go. The researcher is sure that given the choice many would choose not to go! Indeed in Marshall (1998, p.10) a tearful five year old on his third day at school is noted to have commented....."I didn't want to join anyway!" It is worth commenting that the predictability about going to school is really predictability on the parents' part. It is the parent of the children who can predict that their child will be going to school even before their child is born as that is the national and cultural norm and expectation. For the child there is no such predictability as the world is new to them and they are being guided through it by their carers.

In considering further aspects of transition and the notion of a model, it is very important to be clear about the meanings of key vocabulary. It is important so that meanings are consistent and can be understood by a variety of readers rather than being subject to interpretation. Below are some of the key words used during the work of Hopson and Adams and Nicholson (1990).

Word	Definition
Transition	A perceived discontinuity in a person's life space
Event	The stimulus that creates discontinuity
Mover	The person who is experiencing the transition
Stress	The pressures of external factors on the person
Strain	This is related to a person's response to stress and is therefore a variable. To some degree this will be unpleasant and the person would not usually want to be experiencing it.
Coping	Managing feelings, by using them or not being overwhelmed by them or producing effective behaviours as required by the new situation.

adapted from Hopson and Adams (1976) and Nicholson (1990)

Hopson and Adams argued that whatever transitions take place they will trigger a cycle of reactions and feelings that is predictable. This they suggested has seven phases. In reflection upon their work, I believe that their later commentary could be added as an eighth phase and so it has been added in to the diagram. Whilst they considered the reactions to be cyclical they did not represent them that way and they recorded them in text rather than in a diagram format. I have chosen to record them in the linear diagram overleaf;
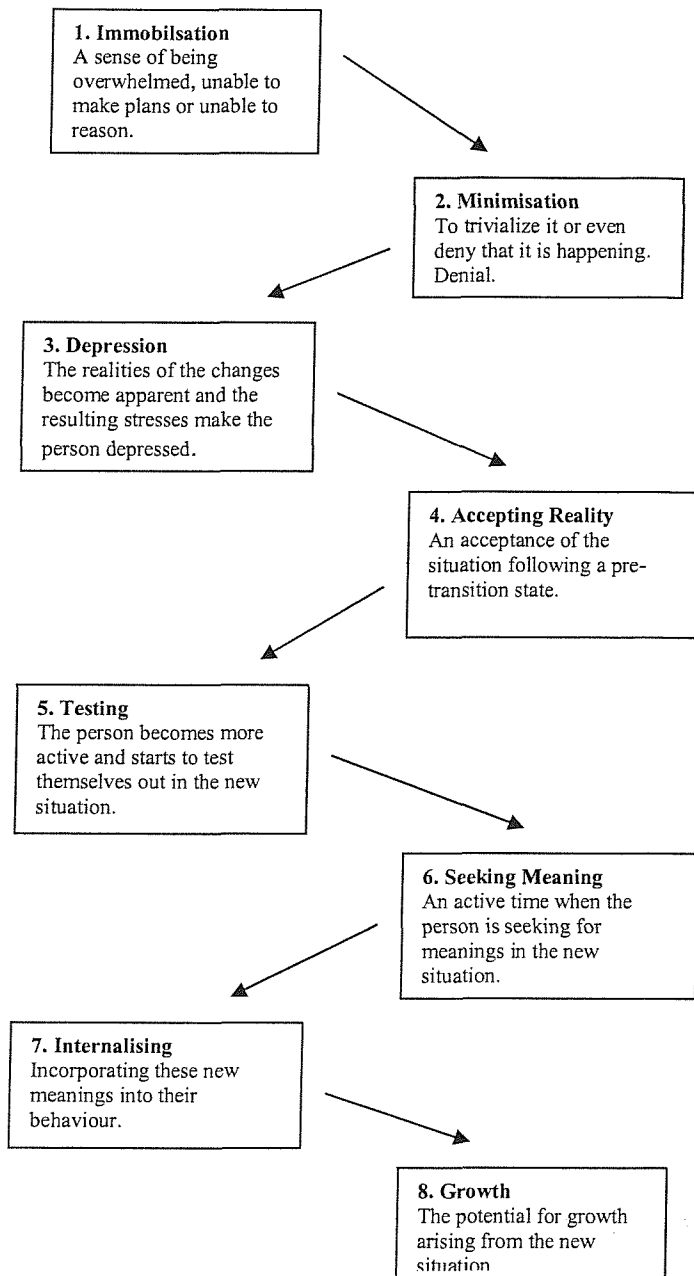
The transition cycle
adapted from Hopson and Adams 1976 p9-13

This cycle, as described by Hopson and Adams, seems familiar to me as I can apply it to myself and my experience both of life and as a professional teacher. Hopson and Adams set out to find a model that would apply to all situations whatever the context. I have seen clearly elements of this cycle in my own life as a student at school, at college and through a series of jobs. It relates to the changes that happen as one gets married and has children. It relates too to the cycle of emotions and states when moving home and relocating. In professional terms I have seen colleagues move through this transition cycle and reflecting back over 20 years of teaching have seen children of all ages go through this cycle too. Marshall writes of the transition process for young
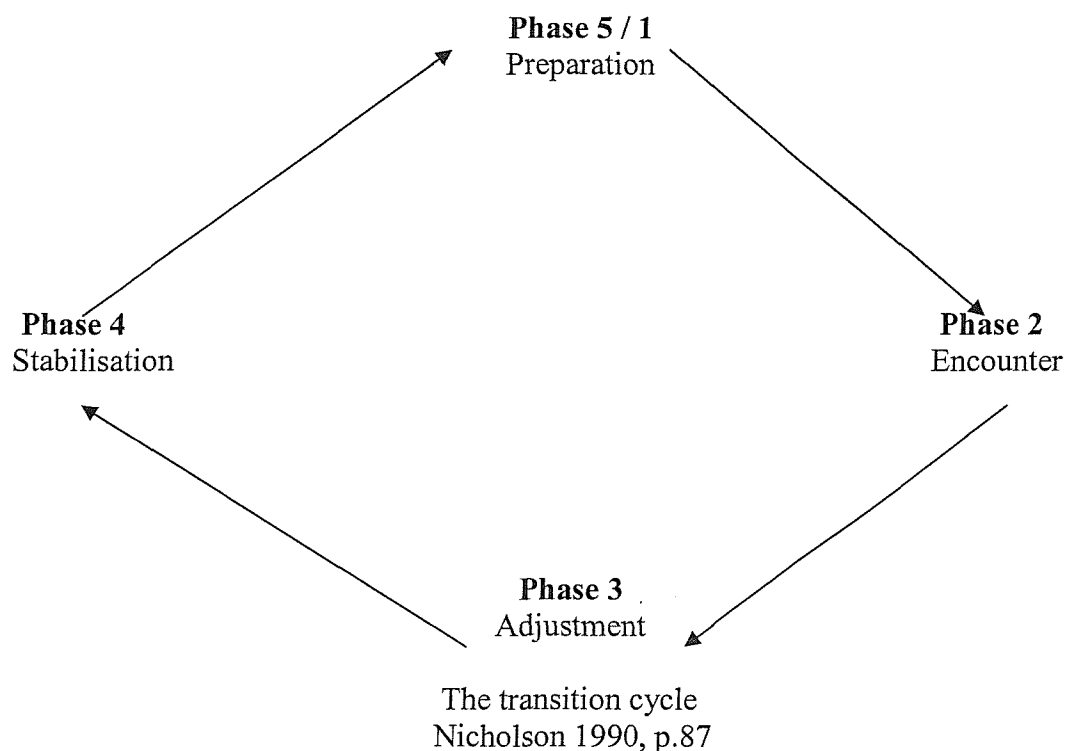
children joining full time education that "such changes can be very stimulating and valuable learning experiences" (Marshall (1998, p.27). The Plowden Report also acknowledged this phase in the cycle but also gave a note of caution when it noted

> children, like adults, enjoy and are stimulated by novelty and change. The first day at school, the transfer to 'big' school are landmarks in the process of growing up. Even when children are apprehensive, they look forward to change, but, if change is to stimulate and not to dishearten, it must be carefully prepared and not be too sudden.

CACE 1967, Para 427

Whilst there seem to be many positive aspects to Hopson and Adams model I have some concerns about it. It may be a simple model but the number of phases seems to make it overly complex. It could be argued that Phase 1-Immobilisation could be followed by a second phase – Phase 2 - Bridging- that incorporates Hopson and Adams Phases 4 and 5, namely Accepting Reality and Testing. Hopson and Adams Phases 2 and 3 I suggest are emotions within the movement between the new Phase 1 – Introduction and the new Phase 2- Bridging. In this second stage the transition is explored and tested. Elements within this 'bridging' phase help to make the transition a growing reality. Hopson and Adams Phases 6 and 7 then could form one phase of assimilation and learning. At this phase the person is seeking meaning and understanding as Hopson and Adams note but it is also the 'growth point' hence the focus on learning at this new Phase 3. The model seems too complex and to have too many stages. I also question the predictability of the phases - both the phases themselves and the order of those phases. Specifically I wonder if all people do experience a phase of depression in any transitional time or if the phases need to happen in that order or even with equal timeframes.

Nicholson (1990) referred to the transition cycle as a "systematic general framework" (Op. cit, p.87) and drew a cyclical model to explain the view that the end of the transition is also the start of a new transition so that the person is always at some point on the transition cycle. Nicholson argued that movement around the cycle is continuous as "each experience of transitions, in some way, affects one's future experience of transitions" (Op. cit, p.87) so that Phase 1 is also Phase 5 (see diagram overleaf).

Phase 5 / 1
Preparation

Phase 4
Stabilisation

Phase 2
Encounter

Phase 3
Adjustment

The transition cycle
Nicholson 1990, p.87

Relating Nicholson's model to the school context, and the notion of Phase 5 becoming Phase 1 seems to make some logical sense. Children join school in Year R and no sooner have they made this transition than they, it could be argued, are being prepared for being in Year 1 and then onto Year 2. During Year 2 much is made of the preparation for Junior School in Year 3 and by Year 6 there is preparation for Secondary school. One could argue that the whole of their school time is a time of preparation and transition ready for the world outside school...'the real world'. It is worth noting that whilst this ongoing cycle of transitions is taking place that some transitions may be more significant than others. Within the educational context the transition to Year 3 from an infant school; Year 7 from a Junior school and from sixth form to university will be more significant than making the transition between year groups within the same school or campus. By their very nature these significant transitions are 'bigger' transitions as they involve not only a change of year group but usually a change of location, friendship groups and level of expectations of work.

Aspects of the Nicholson model are thought provoking - in particular the idea in the model that the transition starts with preparation. This preparation may take two types, emotional and physical, in terms of activities or events. It may combine a mixture of the two. Transitions may have a preparation time but do all transitions have a preparation time and therefore can this be a part of a generic model? One could argue that with planned transitions, such as a change of job or going to full time school there could well be a time for a preparation phase (which may or may not be utilized for preparation) but with unplanned transitions this wouldn't be the case, for example, with a sudden bereavement or sudden redundancy.

In the previous paragraphs there are several assumptions made about the notion of transition that need exploring, clarifying and recognizing. Firstly, the notion that transition follows a cyclical model as suggested by both Hopson and Adams and

Nicholson and secondly, the notion of a time frame for the transition process. The cyclical model is preferred by Hopson and Adams and Nicholson and it would seem to make logical sense. Although they are the models referred to in this research does not preclude other notions that may suggest that the transition process is not cyclical in its nature. The previous paragraph assumed that the transition to Year R is complete as children join Year 1 and that Year 2 is the sole time for preparation for the transition to junior school. Again there is also an assumption about Year 6 that it is the start of the transition time for getting ready for secondary school. This may be in fact the case but it should not be assumed as an absolute fact or notion without some discussion. It should be said that this pattern of year groups is not consistent throughout the country, as many children attend all through primary schools with classes from Year R to Year 6 and many children attend First and Middle schools that have a variety of year group formats, for example, First being Year R to Year 3 and Year 4 – 7 being a Middle school, or indeed, Year R to 2 in one school with Years 3 to 7 in another.

Whatever the format, the assumption that one year group time is a time frame of transition to another cannot be assumed. It cannot be assumed that transition in general happens in a clear cut way or in a clear cut obvious time frame with a certain start or finish. It may well be that transitions are gradual, ongoing, individual or even perpetual in their nature. It may well be that the transition cycle isn't straightforward in that a person moves through suggested phases in a progressive way. Perhaps there is scope for the notion that although there may be phases a person may move forward and backwards within a transition cycle, may not complete the cycle or may exit the cycle at any phase.

Having examined the cycle of transition and the models of Hopson and Adams and the later evolution of the model of Nicholson. I will now consider the effects that transitions have on people and how they cope with those effects. In considering the effects of transitions it is worth remembering that all transitions will have an effect and that those effects are not necessarily negative ones. Many effects can be positive both in the short and long term. Children might settle well and easily at school, work hard throughout their school career and achieve a satisfying and rewarding future career after they have left school. However every transition brings with it, Hopson and Adams (1976) argue, some strain as a result of the stress of the situation or situations. Strain can be affected by a number of factors:

- The physical stress tolerance of the person
- The number of stressful events happening at one time
- The importance of the events (value) to the person
- The intensity of the stress
- The duration of the stress

adapted from Hopson and Adams 1976, p.15

So for a child going to school full time there will be a number of factors affecting them depending on themselves and their tolerance to stress and the circumstances they find themselves in. They may have lots of other stresses in their lives: parental divorce or separation; a house/area move; joining a school where they are not with any of their established friends; a new baby in the family; an older sibling changing school at the

same time....the list of factors in a young child's life can go on...a bereavement; loss of a favourite toy or pet. For some children the expectation of going to 'big school' alone can be a stress as the family may have been building up to the event in their lives. This may be because this is the first child to go to big school or the last child or because the family places a high value in their lives on the importance of education.

The stress and strain for a young child starting school may show itself in many ways. The child may go off their food or even refuse to eat. This in itself may be a consequence of the stresses upon them or their way of drawing attention to those stresses but may not be seen as a direct causal effect. The strain on the child might be more overt in the sense of a child not wanting to get up out of bed for school or not wanting to get dressed for school. The child may be tearful at leaving the family home. The child may be tearful once at school and not want to leave the carer that has brought them to school. It may firstly not show in the sense of being an overtly recognizable outward sign or event. It may be that the child becomes withdrawn, quiet and reflective. As with many situations how those stresses and strains manifest themselves are often related to the individual and their own tolerances and context. Some people react more overtly and quickly to stresses upon them whereas others may internalize the stresses and / or any reactions to stresses may take time to manifest themselves.

During the transition cycle there will be strains that need coping with. The person will need to try to manage the strain in the way that best suits them or at which they are most capable and they will need to cognitively adjust to the new situation that they find themselves in. Questions like; what do I have to do to fit in? Do I want to fit in? What is the best behaviour in this new situation? What do I want from this new situation? These might be some of the questions that young children ask of themselves as they make that transition to the world of full time education.

Hopson and Adams suggested that there are proactive and reactive ways to coping with the strain of the transition process. Proactive strategies would include the controlling of stimulation in the environment perhaps by introducing the child to school a stage at a time with a series of events like pre visits, visits to the school for events like stories and summer fairs. Each time the child visited school different activities could be gradually introduced so that the first visit might just be to hear stories but the second visit might include an activity as well as a story and the third visit might also include the opportunity to play outside. Personal stability zones are also noted as a proactive coping strategy. This would include the stability situation set up for a child during the transition to school full time such as the same adult accompanying them on visits to the school and the same adult agreeing to meet the child in the same agreed place after each visit or after each of the first few days at school, such as a bench on the school playground. This way the child knows that a familiar person is going to have a familiar, yet new and pre agreed, routine with them. The child has the security emotionally of knowing that a routine has been set up for them in particular, be that through one person or though one routine. Once the personal stability is established it can then be altered in times of need so that the child can be picked up at the end of the school day by a different adult as long as they meet the child in the agreed familiar place, for example, the red bench on the playground.

Situational groupings Hopson and Adams suggest are a further way of coping with strain and indeed during the transition to school process often children go to school in

groups. Often the children from the same pre-school provider visit the school together. Indeed the opportunity to go to a pre-school provider may also be a proactive way of managing the strain of the transition process to full time education as there would have been time for the child to get used to the times away from their parent or carer and times within a larger social group than that of their immediate family. Some infant and primary schools visit pre-school providers to find out about children's friendship groups so that they can ensure that as the individual child joins the school they are in a grouping with a familiar friend from pre-school. Hopson and Adams refer to this as anticipatory socialization so that there can be a gradual adjustment to the discontinuity. Reactive strategies they suggest would include a withdrawal from the new situation and a disengagement from the situation. I have seen, as both a Nursery and Reception class teacher, children withdraw into themselves and be unable, or choose not to engage in the situation by either not physically partaking in activities at school or being physically present but not engaging verbally in the class experiences. These children have withdrawn from the situation. They may be physically in the room or space but they are not interacting with the activity or people around them.

When a person, adult or child finds himself or herself within a transition process there are conscious cognitive decisions that they can make. The child starting school is responsible for their own actions and one of the decisions that they may make is to make no decisions. Hopson and Adams suggested that making decisions however small can reduce the strain within a situation. Often with a small child giving them a choice, however closed, tight and teacher directed in its outcome, can help to relieve the strain of a situation, to enable the child to move forward with their decisions and give them apparent or real ownership of the situation and of themselves within the situation. For example a child who is not keen to go out to play outside can be given the choice of going out to play with either one or two friends. The end result is that the child goes out to play but they have made their own decision within the situation to move it forward to a resolution.

As a final issue within the whole notion of the transition process Hopson and Adams noted that a transition is dependent upon three elements namely

      1. Pre-transitional body.
      2. Post-transitional body
      3. Mover

      Hopson and Adams 1976, p.22

In the context of going to school full time it could be said that the pre-transitional body could be the pre-school providers, child's parents and / or siblings, depending on the context of the child's situation and pre-school experience. These people or places are where the mover (the child) is coming from in the transition process. They are the starting point for the transition and are moved away from. The post-transitional body could be the school as this is the place where the 'mover' is going to. The school is the end point in the transition process – the destination. In people terms the post-transitional body may be the class teacher or teaching assistant as the 'mover' moves from the care of and relationship with the parent to the care of and relationship with the class teacher. The mover in this transitional context is the child moving through the

transitional process by moving from the pre-school situation to the full time education in school.

This chapter has explored two transitional theories in terms of the transition to full time education context. It has acknowledged the strengths of the models, for example, the cyclical nature of transitions within the context of this research and also examined the weaknesses of the models, for example, the over complication of the Hopson and Adams model. The following chapter goes on to explore Hopson and Adams three elements (pre-transitional body; post-transitional body and mover) further by considering the transitional process from the viewpoint of the mover, the child; the pre-transitional body, the parent; and the post-transitional body, the educators. Throughout the three sections of the next chapter broader theoretical themes are explored within the context of going to school full time. These themes include notions of losses; environmental change and control vulnerability; role transitions and emotions and transitional stress.

Chapter Four

Transition – Points of view

The child's point of view

> Children have much to contribute to the transition process. Generally, they are very aware of what is happening around them as they start school and keen to share this with others. Listening to children talk about what starting school is like for them, or to what they think it will be like, and responding to the issues they raise is one way in which adults can help to make the transition process to school smooth and enjoyable.
>
> **Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.1-2**

Chapter two noted Kagan and Neuman's (1998) comments about the limitations to the research on the transition to school process carried out in America in the last 30 years. Chapter three went on to examine two models of transition that this transitional research into the transition to school process is set within. This chapter goes further to consider more recent research outside America and some research that would fall into the time frame Kagan and Neuman refer to. Mindful of Kagan and Neuman's conclusions, the research quoted in this thesis focuses clearly on the transition process to school and research that is complete and concise in itself as a piece of research. One of Kagan and Neuman's observations was that research was often not "fully implemented" (Op.cit, p.371). The research that is considered in this chapter into the transitional process has been carried out by researchers who are educationalists or at least work in, and have an understanding of the world of education. The research represents the most up to date research on that aspect of the process in that it has not been taken on further by later research, so the date of the research does not detract from the relevance of the methodology or indeed the findings, even though some of the research referred to was carried out in the 1970's.

Some research referred to is quantitative like that of Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979) and Thompson (1975), whereas, other research referred to is more qualitative in its approach, for example Ledger, Smith and Rich (1998), Dockett and Perry (1999 and 1999) and Fabian (2000). The thesis considers a wide range of research papers and outcomes and whilst there is research into the transition to school process, mainly currently in Australia and New Zealand, there appears to be no current research that tries to use in its style the notions associated with a quasi-experimental approach. The research explored within this thesis does not use a quasi-experimental approach in gathering qualitative data but it does use some of the notions of this method in its style and approach to setting up the research situation.

This section considers current research and broad themes and models that focus on the child's point of view of the transition to school process.

Dockett and Perry (1999b) centred their research on the notion that as thousands of children start school each year they are key people in researching the process of the transition to school. Dockett and Perry noted, "some children experience excitement as they start 'big school', other report disappointment when the experience differs from their expectations" (Op.cit, p.108). They acknowledged that when children start school they bring with them a wide set of experiences and understandings and that it is therefore not surprising that they experience the transition to full time education in different ways. It was their notion that "it is vital that the voices of the children be heard" (Op.cit, p.108) and to enable this to happen through their research, they carefully phrased their questions to young children so that they were able to answer clearly their recollections and feelings. Underlying their research was the belief that the reflections of the young child have much to offer the transition process.

The researchers based in Australia, interviewed groups of parents, teachers in pre-school providers, teachers in schools and children who had just started school, children who were just about to start school and children who had been at school for some time. They carried out focus group interviews with 50 children aged four and a half to five and a half. The children were interviewed in groups of three or four within four weeks of starting school at one of two school sites. The interviews followed the same format of open-ended questions with some prompts as necessary and the interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. The children's responses were then coded based on eight categories; knowledge; social adjustment; skills; dispositions; rules; physical; family issues and educational environment. The codings were used as a way of managing the wealth of responses from the interviews. They chose to categories the responses so that the responses could be organized and analysed. There were 351 responses codable from the 50 interviews. The dominant categories were rules and dispositions. Each of these categories had the most responses. The children responded most about the rules and conventions of the classroom and school and on how they were feeling about situations.

Rules

The majority of the responses by the children about rules focused on conventional rules (Vartuli and Everett 1998). The children were concerned about the routines of the classroom like "we sit on the floor and when we hear the triangle, then we have to stop" (Dockett and Perry 1999, p.113) and physical and verbal actions, such as, "stay in your proper chair" and "don't be cheeky!"(Op.cit, p.113). There were also rules expressed about the wearing of uniform, following the teacher's instructions and being good and not being naughty. It should be said that not all the rules expressed were negative as one child noted," you get lots of stickers if you sit down" (Op.cit, p.113).

The 103 responses from the children referred to as dispositions were analysed in terms of negative and positive responses. Most responses were positive using words and phrases like,"happy", "fun", I felt good." The lesser frequency comments included, "I felt a bit scared", and "I just want to stay home..." (Op.cit, p.114). Children referred to the separation from their parents, for example a child was reported as saying," some children cry when they come to school, 'cause they want their mums" (Op.cit, p.115). This theme of separation or loss is one that is returned to later in this section.

Overall Dockett and Perry (1999b) concluded from their research that the strong focus by the children on the rules and conventions in their responses gives clues to what the

classroom and school look like to the children. They did, however acknowledge that the dominance of the number of comments about conventional rules may have been because of the timing of the research, namely when the children are just starting school and teachers are establishing with their new pupils the expectations and routines of the classroom and school. Dockett and Perry also drew attention to the fact that the children made comments about other children at school. Sometimes there were concerns about, "big kids" (Op.cit, p.116) and the nature of interactions with them whilst other children focused on friends and the importance of having and making friends. One child is reported as saying, "big school is better than preschool cause I can make up lots and lots of friends" (Dockett and Perry 1999b, p.4). Dockett and Perry summarised that "for children, friends at school are of major importance" (Op.cit, p.116).

Loss

In considering the theme of loss Weiss noted that, "moving away from people, with whom social bonds had been established, no matter what the reason for the move, is likely to produce distress" (Weiss 1990, p.3). He noted two sorts of relationships related to loss: those of relationships of attachment, for example a parent, and relationships of community, like those of the family. He commented that relationships of attachment provide "individuals with a sense of security" (Op.cit, p.4) and that they maintain an individual's sense of morale and "sense of self relatively constant" (Op.cit, p.4). Weiss wrote in detail about the loss of an attachment figure in a person's life and this could be like the situation children find themselves in when they join the school full time as it is then that they are fully separated from the prime carer at home during the day. He noted that the inaccessibility of the attachment figure, or parent in the case of a child, makes the person feel vulnerable to feelings of intense insecurity. He explained that the attachment figure becomes of special importance when the person is in a new situation, like the move to full time education. In Dockett and Perry (1999b, p.115) a child is recorded as saying, "some children cry when they come to school, 'cause they want their mum." Weiss used the example of someone working alone at night and feeling threatened and wanting to be with their attachment figure. He noted that the reassurance of security, as an aim of the attachment figure, seems to be gained by hearing, seeing or touching the attachment figure but that it can also be attained by knowing that the attachment figure will soon be there again. For the child starting school the knowledge that their parent will collect them at the end of the school day or session would be reassuring, indeed a child in Dockett and Perry (1999b, p.115) is reported as saying, "I knew my mum would pick me up in the afternoon."

Weiss (1990) considered the notion of substitute attachment figures, and this is an interesting notion as teachers are in 'loco parentis' with the children in their care during the school day. He wrote that "attempts to substitute other figures fail, no matter how ideally the other figures behave" (Op.cit, p.5). So it seems from what Weiss suggests that the teacher is possibly no attachment substitute for the distressed child that is starting school. He also commented that the separation from an attachment figure can produce pining, anger and distrust and that this separation needs to be managed so that these feelings do not build up. These thoughts could again support the transition practices of slowly building up the amount of time at school and could also support the views of parents who see the use of pre-school providers as a gradual stepping stone to full time school by being a gradual stepping stone away from themselves as full time carers. Finally Weiss noted that with bereavements often people are told, "you don't get

over it, you get used to it!" (Op.cit, p.6). He wondered if you can recover from this loss or is it an "adaptation, or accommodation" (Op.cit, p.6) instead. Perhaps this is the situation for the young child as they join school – from their point of view – they never get over the loss of the intensive contact with the carer but they do get used to it.

Roles

In Dockett and Perry (1999a, p.3-4) the children expressed their view about the differences they expect between going to school full time and their pre-school experiences. They expected to fulfill different roles and thus do different things. Big school was associated with growing up and new more grown up experiences at school. One child recorded that she, "wanted to come (to big school) so I wouldn't hear the babies crying at pre-school anymore" and another noted that, "I was really bursting to go, I liked it because I wouldn't have to sleep!" (Op.cit, p.3). They expected to "play games and have fun and make new friends" as well as "do homework everyday" (Op.cit, p.3). Oatley (1990) wrote about role transitions and every day life and defined a role as a "dynamic conception, a pattern that articulates one person's actions with those of others" (Oatley 1990, p.70). He commented that role transitions can be either "enlivening or stressful" (Op.cit, p.71) and referred to the earlier work of Goffman (1961) who explained that a role involves a set of rules.

Oatley also commented that roles are "plans of a social kind" (Op.cit, p.74) and that a role is one part of a joint plan which we enact with one or more people. Clearly as the child goes to school the role they play will change from the role they play at home or indeed at pre-school, as the situation they find themselves in at school is different and so too are the players. Oatley went on to note that when a role transition occurs there is also an emotion that occurs with it often resulting from the transition. This focus on emotions could also tie in with Dockett and Perry's research where the children interviewed gave their feelings about the transition to full time school. Many felt positive about the move to full time school whereas some felt negative. One child is noted to have said, "I felt special", another commented, "I like school because I like playing and finding some friends" whilst another is reported as saying, "I felt scared and I cried because I was shy" (Dockett and Perry 1999b, p.114). Oatley also suggested that emotions can be temporary roles in themselves and act as "the means of making the transition from one relatively stable role to another" (Op.cit, p.77).

It seems from the work of Oatley and Goffman that roles enable us to be effective in controlling a limited aspect of our world, and to sustain a self in relation to the other people with whom we interact. Oatley commented

> if habits and the familiar are denied us, or if we are cast suddenly into
> an unfamiliar role, then it can be as if the world crumbles. Practised
> actions and stored knowledge become useless. We become clumsy,
> unable to act in a coordinated way, ineffective.

Oatley 1990, p.78

For the child going to school full time there needs to be a carefully managed time of transition so that emotions and actions can be explored, practiced, refined and new roles in the new situation learned. Indeed Burrell and Bubb note

> children need to feel secure and happy in order to deploy all their faculties fully to meet the challenges presented to them through the school curriculum.

<div align="right">Burrell and Bubb 2000, p.58</div>

Environment

From the children's point of view they are faced with changes in their immediate environment when they start full time education. Fisher in Fisher and Cooper defined change as

> an abstract representation of a situation where there is removal of the known, familiar, predictable or secure, and replacement by the new and the different. This conceptualization encompasses routines, objects and people and social relationships.

<div align="right">Fisher and Cooper 1990, p.54</div>

Fabian (2000) argued that physical surroundings can have a significant influence on behaviour. McGavin (2001, p.14) commented that our physical surroundings have an impact on the way we behave because every aspect or our surroundings sends out subtle psychological messages. Cleave et al noted three elements of the physical environment which they argue are important for children

> the scale of the child's setting, the range of his territory, and the limitations on his movements within it.

<div align="right">Cleave et al 1982, p.39</div>

Marshall stated that "children coming straight from home may be overwhelmed by the scale of the building" (Marshall 1988, p.28) and Woolfson commented that those children who have attended playgroups usually do so in small self contained buildings used "only by children who are close to each other in age" (Woolfson 1993, p.12). Barratt also wrote about the physical environment for children starting full time school by noting that the first class may include a wide age range of children and the children joining the school for the first time might need support with this. Barratt notes

> prior knowledge of the building, organizational patterns, people or activities gave both children and parents more confidence in that they were able to think about, anticipate and therefore have some control over the new experience.

<div align="right">Barratt 1986, p.96</div>

Dowling (1995) urged caution with making generalizations about children and their prior experiences before coming to school full time. He further observed that many children will have experienced a range of transitions prior to visiting school but they will all have reacted to those transitions in different ways.

Control

To follow Barratt's notion of control in the environment Fisher defines control as "power or mastery over the environment. An individual with control can act to change or reverse situations which are disliked" (Fisher 1990, p.55). Fisher argues that even the perceived loss of control in a situation can create negative responses perhaps like the negative feelings described by young children in Dockett and Perry (1999b). Fisher noted that control in one environment may not be the same in another and that the child's ability to control an environment may not be transferable to a new environment. Thus

> a child used to being looked after at home by devoted parents might have evolved a means of ensuring comfort and progress by control over the parents. This form of control would be less appropriate in an environment of strangers.

> Fisher 1990, p.57

So the child joining a class of 30 strangers with one or more strange adult might not be able to control the situation or if they can they may, at least, perceive that they cannot. Further, a child who has only used a limited amount of controlling strategies might not have the range of strategies, that is, the ability, to be in control in the new situation. Fisher observed that

> an overprotected child might have learned to rely on a specific domain of control which later becomes inappropriate because of the new environment. A self-sufficient child, by contrast, might have skills readily adaptable to coping with an environment no longer dominated by parents.

> Fisher 1990, p.57

Fisher concluded that the person with the most advantage in a new environment would be one with personal control skills suitable for coping with the demands of a new environment or "interpersonal skills which enable the benefits of help from other people to be readily accessed" (Op.cit, p.57). She also noted of the transition to school full time process that

> pre-move exposure to the new environment should be beneficial in enabling the individual to assess its psychosocial features, and to consider ways of establishing desired conditions following the move.
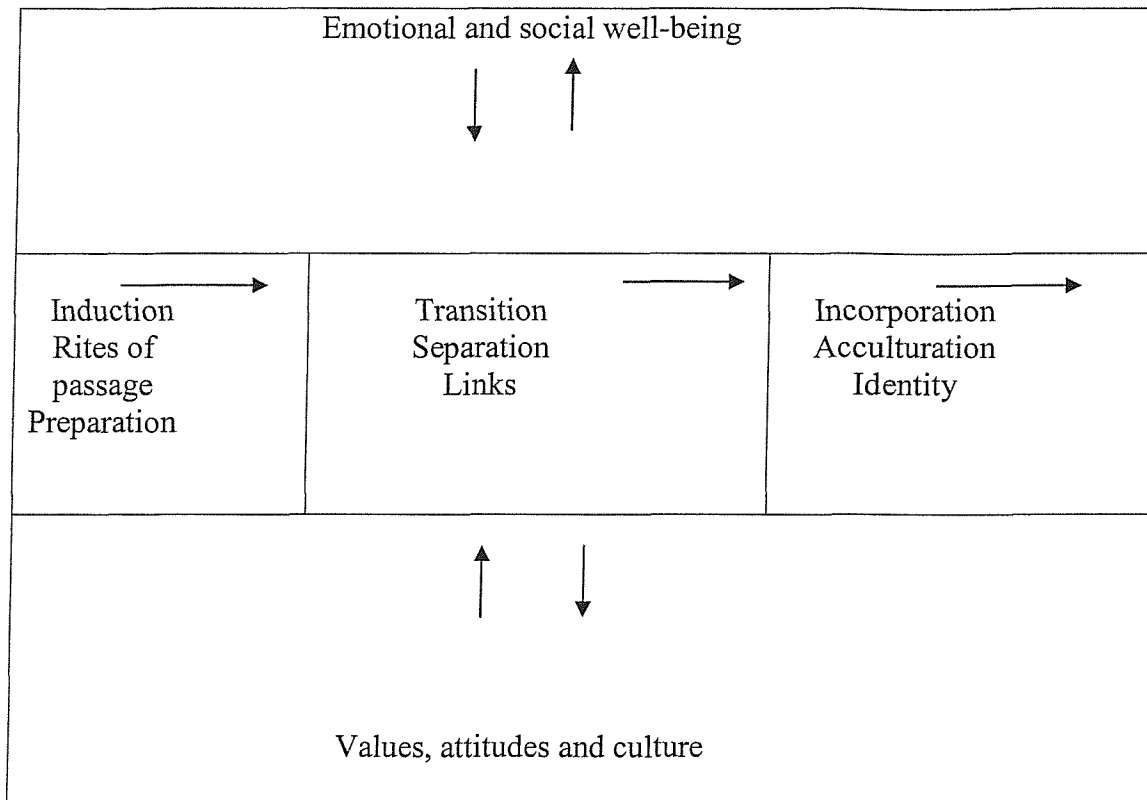
> Fisher 1990, p.58

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Friends

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that the critical link between the two environments of home and school is the person who establishes the link in the first place. He suggested that the move into the new environment can be made most successful if the child is taken into the new environment accompanied by a person from the 'old' environment. He commented the company of the child's mother for pre-school visits could enable the child to have a role model and be a *bridging link* (author's italics) between the two environments. Bronfenbrenner also puts forward the idea that starting school with a friend is likely to give children increased confidence in an unfamiliar new environment.

Hartup's research stated that "friends set the emotional stage for exploring one's surroundings" (Hartup 1991, p.1). It was noted that those children who started school with a friend were happier than those who were separated from their friends or who did not have a close friend. Friends, in a large school, were often inadvertently parted on admission as they were put into different classes, whereas children who started school with children of a similar age and in a class without older children became a cohesive group.

Culture

From the child's point of view Bruner (1996) suggested that the culture of the school and family will influence the child's behaviour as they make the transition to full time education. Bruner proposed that participation in the culture helps in understanding the culture. In this way it is absorbed without conscious thought through 'osmosis'. Bruner commented that by taking part in the life of the school the children construct their own realities and meanings and adapt them to the system thus acquiring the school's way of perceiving, thinking and feeling. Tharp and Gallimore noted that this is like Bruner's 'handover principle' where the child moves from spectator to participant and begins to take responsibility for task performance (Tharp and Gallimore 1998, p.101).

In commenting about the culture impact upon a child, van Gennep stated that a child is helped to pass through the transitional stages from pre-school to full time school by making friends and becoming part of a group help. Van Gennep wrote that making friends "enabled the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined" (van Gennep 1960, p.3). Van Gennep wrote about the transition to full time school as a rite of passage and as such he argued this rite of passage would theoretically include rites of separation, transition and cooperation. For children starting school these might start with the buying and trying on of the new school uniform, entering the school building for the first time, the first meeting with the class teacher and classroom assistant and the first separation from their parent. These cultural influences upon the child as they start the process of going to school on a full time basis Fabian draws together in the model overleaf.

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┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Emotional and social well-being                       │
│                                                                  │
│                    │     ↑                                        │
│                    ↓     │                                        │
│                                                                  │
├─────────────────────┬──────────────────────┬────────────────────┤
│        ──────►       │         ──────►       │        ──────►     │
│  Induction           │  Transition           │  Incorporation     │
│  Rites of            │  Separation           │  Acculturation     │
│  passage             │  Links                │  Identity          │
│  Preparation         │                       │                    │
├─────────────────────┴──────────────────────┴────────────────────┤
│                    ↑     │                                        │
│                    │     ↓                                        │
│                                                                  │
│            Values, attitudes and culture                         │
└────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Influences on the transition to school

adapted from Fabian 2000, p.144

Fabian's diagram shows the passage of transition from left to right from induction rites through to incorporation. It attempts to show in diagrammatic form the influences that bear upon that transition of the emotions, values, attitudes and culture. It attempts to show the two way nature of those influences by use of the arrows going to and from the central transition line. Because it is a simple linear model it somehow makes the influences too crude and implies that they mainly take place during the transition, separation, and links time. This model does not reflect the intricacies associated with emotions, social well-being, values, attitudes and culture. It fails to acknowledge that they are also interlinked. It maybe argued that the diagram would have been better using a way of showing that these influences are two way (may be two way vertical arrows) and that they pervade the whole transition period (may be horizontal arrows along the width of the upper and lower boxes).

What the children want parents and teachers to do

In Dockett and Perry's research (1999a) the children identified specific tasks that they wanted their parents to do to help them settle at school. They suggested: helping do names; buying uniform and finding out where the school office was (Op.cit, p.4). From their pre-school providers the children wanted teaching about letters; teaching to say "thank you" and practice at packing up a desk or locker. From their teachers the children identified that they would like the place to be set up "nice"; to be told what to put in their lunch boxes and some "making activities before we start school" (Op.cit,

p.4). The children had certainly got clear views about who could help them and what help they needed.

This section has focused on the mover's point of view and has explored their concerns about rules, loss and friends. It acknowledges that for the children the emotional influences through people and the rules and conventions are very important. The next section goes on to examine transitions from the point of view of the pre-transitional body – the parents.

Transition - the parents' point of view

> The first thing to acknowledge is that starting school can be a
> daunting experience for any child.
>
> Woodhead 1989, p.16

> The transition to school may require that the family organization
> changes. It also means that parents may spend more time at
> school. For some parents, school is an unfamiliar environment
> that may not hold positive memories. Just stepping into this
> environment can be challenging for many parents, and this needs
> to be recognised by all concerned.
>
> Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.8

In the research of Cleave, Jowett and Bate (1982) "And so to school" thirty-six children and their parents were visited by the researchers before and after they had started school. The researchers carried out interviews with the parents and sought their views about their attitudes to school and their hopes and fears for their children's success.

The big step

Most parents, in the study, stated that they saw going to school as a "big step" and tried to avoid the subject at home or referred to it as little as possible. Families with older siblings naturally talked about school in their every day conversation. The majority of the parents had visited their child's new school, accepting an invitation from the school to visit during the term before the child's entry. Most of these visits were during the day so that parents and children could see "normal activities in progress" (Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982, p.95).

Independence

Most parents felt that starting school would be easier for the child if he could do certain things for himself. In the research of Dockett and Perry (1999a) parents saw their child's move to full time education as a sign of growing independence and life outside the family context. Parents commented on "how grown up the children looked in their uniforms" (Op.cit, p.7). Parents identified four key independence tasks; "being able to cope with himself away from his mother; getting dressed; eating dinner and going to the toilet" (Cleave et al 1982, p.96). The parents in the 1982 research study commented that there was a wealth of hints given to them to help them with their child starting school. Below and overleaf are some of them:

- Parents to parents
  Take your child to school and be there to meet him.
  Go with your child into the classroom.
- Pre-school staff to parents
  Don't pressure him to achieve too much too soon.
- Infant Headteacher to parents
  Accustom your child to being away from you.

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> Bring your child past the school and let him watch the children playing in the playground.

<div align="right">Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982, p.97</div>

Parents also felt that they had ideas on how the school could ease the transition from home of pre-school provider to full time school. They suggested

> let the children visit more often before they start; show them around and tell them where everything is; let parents go into the classroom with their children; be lenient on their eating habits.

<div align="right">Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982, p.97</div>

Parental feelings

A month after the children had started school the target children's parents were re interviewed. Most mothers had seen the transition as a "milestone in their own lives " (Op.cit, p.98) and had also referred to "feelings of gladness, sadness and apprehension" (Op.cit, p.98). A third of the children were portrayed by their parents as settling into the routine of school life easily whereas the rest were described as not as keen. The children who were not keen were described as, "tearful, tired and afraid" (Op.cit, p.98).

The study concludes by noting that

> it is not clear how far parents' attitudes, anxieties and misapprehensions affect their childs' transition to school. Some children seemed remarkably unaffected by their parents worrying and fussing. But our study indicates that children who settled in with no apparent difficulty were more likely to have older siblings who had attended the school before them.

<div align="right">Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982, p.104</div>

The study echoes its conclusions through its recommendations. It suggests that parental interests should be maximized so that children can be supported in an informed way and that parents and staff at school should try to have more insights into each other's worlds. In practical terms the recommendations return to the results of the study when stating:

> the family can be a powerful source of continuity and support particularly to children with older siblings in the school. Where none exists, substitutes may be found in the form of friends, neighbours or pupils selected to look after new entrants.

<div align="right">Cleave, Jowett and Bate 1982, p.105</div>

<div align="right">48</div>

Information

In Fabian's research (2000), based on the starting school experiences of 50 children at two different schools, the parents' chief concern was wanting to "know about the school and its systems" (Op.cit, p.148). The research noted that the information that parents sought had to be carefully managed as

> too much information, if it is given very rapidly or the terminology used is unfamiliar then this might be potentially harmful to the induction process as it might alienate parents.

Fabian 2000, p.148

Fabian concluded that the information given to parents during induction visits should be accessible in both quality and quantity and that this would be more likely to "help parents in their understanding, give them confidence and reduce stress"(Op.cit, p.148). Fabian noted that too little information may lead to "parents' emotional disharmony" which may in turn affect their child's ability to settle at school (Op.cit, p.148). Fabian listed a vast array of ways that could be used to inform parents, such as, videos, pamphlets, photographs and interactive CD-ROMs. Hay (1997) commented about the written information available for parents noting that it should be "clear, readable, relevant and informative" (Hay 1997, p.75).

Through Fabian's research the parents also articulated the importance of the first meeting for parents at the school. The parents commented about the size of the cohort and that the bigger the cohort of children due to join the school the greater likelihood of the initial meeting for parents being formal where parents would be treated as a group rather than individuals. The parents suggested that the smaller cohort meetings encouraged them to feel welcome and thus they gained confidence in the school system.

Social Concerns

In Dockett and Perry (1999a) parents were most concerned with how their child would settle to school from a social point of view. They were concerned about the separation from their child so that their child would not be "too upset, not crying, and having friends" (Op.cit, p.5). Parents wanted their child to 'fit in' rather than stand out and wanted them to be accepted by their peers and teachers. Indeed one parent was noted as saying," I hope the teacher likes her" (Op.cit, p.6). Parents wanted to know how to talk to teachers and how to ask for what they needed as well as how to follow the teacher's instructions. As compared with the earlier research of Cleave et al (1982) there was a low level of concern from parents about their own social adjustment, that is, how they themselves would manage to separate from their child especially on the first day.

Emotions

The parents in Dockett and Perry's research (1999a) believed that the child's positive attitude towards school was a critical factor for successful transition to full time education. The parents acknowledged that the children did feel anxious and worried but overall the children were "eager to join the big kids; willing to have a go; keen to be

there" (Op.cit, p.6). Parents saw this positive emotion and attitude as their responsibility. They also recognized their own need to be positive about the transition time for the children and the need for teachers to be positive about the transition process and practices too. Dowling (2000) noted that parents want their children to be confident and to be 'normal' and know what to do, and are sometimes surprised at how well their children cope (Dowling 2000, p.1). Fabian (2002) referred to Pugh et al (1994) when she wrote on the issue of confidence that

> parents have an influence on their child's levels of confidence during the transition. Indeed, parental confidence is the key to much of their child's success.

Fabian 2002, p.23

Physical Concerns

Many parents commented on how their children would cope with the long school day and the fact that the child would not be able to sleep during the day. This research, which took place in Australia, (Dockett and Perry (1999a)), perhaps reflects the cultural norm of the country as in England and Wales most children would not be having a daily sleep on a regular basis by the time they were of school age either at home or within pre-school provision. Parents in the research group were also concerned about travel for some children who lived a long way from the school and the length of travel to school on top of the tiring school day. For some children there were also after school care concerns with parents working long after the end of the school day. The majority of parents were concerned about practical issues such as, would the child remember to, "keep her fluids up" or "have access to soap" (Op.cit, p.7). Dockett and Perry wrote that

> many parents noted that eating a packed lunch was unfamiliar for children, and knowing what and when to eat was difficult. Reports of children eating all their food at recess were not uncommon!

Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.7

Family Issues

Parents were concerned about the effect on the whole family of a child starting full time school. They recognized their responsibilities of "ensuring that children get to school by a specific time each day, with everything they need, having completed homework or other tasks" (Op.cit, p.7). They identified the problems associated with getting everyone in the family to their place of work or school on time each day. One parent is noted in Dockett and Perry (1999a) as commenting that just getting out of the house on time was a major achievement.

Questions

The questions asked by parents Dockett and Perry (1999a) noted "reflected a desire to be active participants in their children's education" (Op.cit, p.8). Parents were uncertain about their role...can I go into the classroom?....will I be allowed to help? They were also concerned for their children's well being with such questions as; will they

cope?....will they keep up with the others in the group? Whilst parents by the time of the Australian research had already chosen the school for their child to attend there were still concerns raised by parents as to whether they had chosen the right school for their child and whether the educational environment they had chosen was the right one for their child's needs.

Like the children, the parents clearly have a variety of expectations and concerns about the transition to full time education. The previous section has focused on some of the children's concerns and this section has focused on the parent's concerns. In Mapa, Sauvao and Podmore's (2000) research they refer to the study by Sauvao (1999) where parents and teachers viewed the transition to school process from different perspectives. Sauvao's research in the Pacific Islands group noted that "parents generally saw Samoan language development" as an important part of the transition process whereas "teachers showed that curriculum continuity" was uppermost in their minds (Sauvao 2000, p.2).

It is interesting to note that within this section many of the parental concerns were similar to their children's in that they were concerned about the emotional and social impact of the transitions. These were the emotions and social concerns for themselves as parents and the emotions and social concerns for and of their children. The third section in this chapter examines the transitional time from the point of view of the post-transitional body – namely the educators or the school.

Transition - from the educator's point of view

> Educators...can help make the transition positive if they listen to children take their concerns seriously, and consider the experience from a child's perspective.
>
> Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.5

> The child who is ready for school and hence makes a satisfactory initial adjustment to it is more likely to be successful in the rest of his educational career.
>
> Thompson 1975, p.128

In considering the transition to full time education from the point of view of the educators - primarily the teachers, some of the research that is referenced is now quite old, that is Thompson,1975, but it is still relevant to refer it. The work of Thompson has been used by later researchers as the basis for their work, such as, Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979). This section makes reference to three main sets of research which focus on the views of the educators in the transition to school process.

Four notions of adjustment

Thompson (1975) reports about the development of an instrument to measure a child's initial adjustment to school. It is used to explore the differences between children with and without pre-school experience and the effect of that on their adjustment to school. The research involved teachers using a rating scale to rate children early in the second half of their first term at school. Thompson acknowledges the limitations of using untrained raters, that is, the teachers but believed that "this appears the only practical method of gathering information about children of this age" (Op.cit, p.129). The rating scale considered three mains areas of behaviour that Thompson indicated were indictors of how well a child was coping with school. She identified

1. His personal emotional adjustment
2. His social adjustment
3. His attitudes and behaviour in response to the intellectual demands of the school

Thompson 1975, p.130

The instrument used consisted of 20 items each to be rated on a 4 point scale. The scale included, for example, settling in school; use of play materials; need for teacher's approval and verbalizing abilities in schoolwork. The pilot study focused on the Reception classes of 10 schools and 137 children and the main study focused on 11 schools and 353 children. From the 20 scales four clear trends appeared in the teachers ratings of the children as they made the transition to full time education. They were notions of school readiness; competence in social relations; personal maturity and verbal ability. Interestingly there was no significant difference in the ratings of the children who had been to a pre-school provider as compared with the children who had not been to any pre-school provision before going to school full time. Thompson concluded that the different aspects of the rating scale, particularly the key four

identified through the teachers' scores, are not independent and that any adjustment to school rating would need to be an overall score rather than a series of inter-related scores.

This research identified several issues. Firstly, the notion of teachers as raters was problematic because as untrained raters their judgements would be prone to be subjective; indeed Thompson identified that when the mean scores for the pilot and main study were compared. The teachers of the main study children had rated their children more favourably than the pilot teachers had rated theirs. Secondly, there was a desire to try and quantify the adjustment to full time education though Thompson concluded that the research's notion of separate scores to quantify was not useful and perhaps an overall measure was necessary. Thirdly, in Thompson's research there was a recognition that it was difficult to gain data from the children themselves because of the age of the children and their ability to verbalise their thoughts. Dockett and Perry researching over 20 years later would refute this as the main data collection for their research was the children themselves. They noted, "children who have just started school usually have vivid recollections of what happened on their first day" (Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.2) and "generally, they (the children) are very aware of what is happening around them as they start school and keen to share this with others" (Op.cit, p.1). Perhaps the change in emphasis using the children's recollections for the evidence reflects a greater understanding that children can contribute to research about what happens to them and that their views are valuable. Perhaps it also reflects the growing ability of researchers to develop better research tools, such as questions, that are framed so that children can access them and thus answer them clearly.

Time of entry to school

The research of Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979) also focused on obtaining the ratings of teachers about the children after they had been at school for half a term. Once again this research emphasized that it was based on the views of the teachers of the children. According to the teachers most of the 260 children in 11 schools showed some kind of "emotional disturbance" (Op.cit, p.189). A boy was described as, " generally anxious....seems unhappy most of the time...can't settle at things" and a girl was reported as "bright and capable ...but talks at the one or two word level...has tantrums in the class, disruptive" (Op.cit, p.189). The research identified that boys had more difficulties than girls and that "the children joining in January tended to join larger classes, and were more likely to be in a minority group joining an already established class" (Op.cit, p.191). In discussing their results Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis commented that for the teacher

> the task is so much easier when the children are new together, and she
> can devote all her time to settling them in and showing them how to
> use the school and the classroom. In contrast, when a new group joins
> in the middle of the school year the teacher must divide her time
> between settling the new children and continuing school work with
> the established group, and even when the new ones are settled she
> may still have problems in preparing lessons and activities which are
> suitable for both groups.

> Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis 1979, p.194

Certainly within the southern central area of England this issue has been resolved; as the practices of allowing new children to join the school three times a year has been changed to one entry period during September. Usually this entry is 'staggered' over a period of time. However this is not the case in all parts of England and Wales and some Education Authorities still have a three-term entry policy for children as they join full time education. It would also be fair to say that teachers now, in 2003, are certainly more accustomed to preparing work for differing abilities in their classes. Indeed it would be an expectation for teachers currently to 'differentiate' the work that they set for the children in their class to take account of the children's differing abilities, learning needs and preferred learning styles.

Social Adjustment

In the research of Dockett and Perry (1999a) the educators were most concerned about the "children fitting in" (Op.cit, p.9). The teachers identified that fitting in meant to them the children's ability to

1. follow directions
2. take guidance from adults other than parents
3. operate as part of a large group
4. do things independently and not require the teacher's constant attention
5. adapt to changes in their routine
6. know how to talk to teachers.

Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.9

Teachers noted that the interpersonal adjustment of the child was very important so that they could

> separate easily from their parents, that is, not crying or being upset for large parts of the day and interact positively and cooperatively with other children.

Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.10

In the research the educators acknowledged the difficulties that parents would have during the transition to school period for young children and teachers were concerned that some parents would have,"the ability to 'loosen the reins' more easily than others" (Op.cit, p.10). In the light of this the educators recognized the need for them to make positive relationships with the children and their families, and they noted they amount of " effort"; "exhaustion" and "organised chaos" (Op.cit, p.10) in themselves that was needed to make the transition to full time school be as effective as possible.

Skills

Whilst the teachers mentioned the fact that the children joining the school environment needed to be able to manage as part of a group, they mainly emphasized the need for the children to " assume responsibility for their own possessions and actions" so that they could " identify their own things; toilet themselves and dress themselves" (Op.cit, p.10). Teachers also mentioned other skills that the children needed such as those of

"paying attention for periods of time", "being able to cut out" (Op.cit, p.10) and other fine motor skills. The teachers mainly focused on the practical skills that would enable the children to quickly fit into the routines of the classroom. Like the parents, they were concerned about the children being independent.

Attitude

The teachers were keen to teach children who were "excited" and "happy" (Op.cit, p.10) to be at school, but more so they were concerned that the children should be friendly and have a "willingness to have a go" and "be confident in interactions" (Op.cit, p.11). They were concerned about the level of positivity of the children in their approach to their activities and tasks.

Physical

In the research by Dockett and Perry (1999a) teachers were very concerned about the length of the school day and week for the young children joining them. They were concerned about the tiredness of the children and the need for them as teachers to consider building in rest periods for the children during the school day. The teachers were concerned about the stamina of the children and their need to ensure that the children could access the full range of opportunities throughout the school day. This concern was one shared by the parents' responses within the Dockett and Perry research, as they too were concerned about the length of the school day and it being too tiring for the children.

Roles, attitudes and relationships

The research of Ledger, Smith and Rich (1998) followed sixteen children during an eighteen month transition period to full time education. The researchers interacted with the children through "natural conversation" (Op.cit, p.10) however; "as the topic of school did not often surface spontaneously, direct questions were used to access their views" (Op.cit, p.10). The research focused on the children's ideas and attitudes towards school and how those ideas and attitudes changed over a period of time. Each child took part in the same 'induction to school programme'.

Ledger, Smith and Rich concluded that

> the development of warm, reciprocal, balanced relationships between
> the adults in the microsystem of the early childhood centre, school
> and home could help make the transition a less stressful and
> demanding time for children.

Ledger, Smith and Rich 1998, p.10

Overall, educators in schools have a wide range of concerns about the children when they first start school. They are concerned primarily about the children's behaviour, their ability to fit in and their disposition to the social world of the Infant classroom. They are concerned about the children's emotions and social well-being. In many respects this echoes the concerns of the children as they too are concerned about the rules and knowing what to do in the classroom and about social relationships. It also

echoes the views of the parents who were mainly concerned about the emotional and social side of the transition to school process both for themselves and their children.

This chapter has drawn together the concerns about the transition to full time education from three view points, namely from the children's, parents' and educators' points of view. It is clear that whilst there are overlapping themes, the agenda for each view point is different and the whole notion of the transition to school is complex if all the parties concerned and all the varied agendas are to be satisfied.

The following chapter gathers together a range of view points and comments about elements of effective transitions by reference to a broad range of international research.

Chapter Five

Effective Transition

> Effective transition programs focus on establishing a sense of community among the participants, a sense of belonging, acceptance and adventure.
>
> Dockett and Perry 1999b, p.13

> Kindergarten (the first year of school) is a context in which children make important conclusions about school as a place where they want to be and about themselves as learners vis-à-vis schools. If no other objectives are accomplished, it is essential that the transition to school occur in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners.
>
> Bailey 1999, p.xv

This chapter builds of the views of the children, parents and educators to explore the idea of effective transition and what that might mean. Each of the stakeholders involved in the transition process brings their own expectations and experiences to that process. Within the process of transition they all play a part to make the transition as smooth and effective as possible for the child thus ensuring that the child quickly settles in to the life and routines of their new environment.

Parents

Her Majesty's Inspectors in 1993 noted that a key feature of effective transition was the engagement of parents in the process. They commented

> enlisting the help of parents is a key feature of effective transition. In the best circumstances, the schools inspire parents to support the educational progress of their children at home and at school. In such schools, the Reception class teacher often becomes an important educational ambassador to parents: a role which involves much more than simply transmitting useful information about such matters as admission arrangements and school routines.
>
> HMCI 1993

Lombardi (1992) also acknowledged the role that parents play in effective transition process when she wrote

there is also growing recognition that parent involvement is a key to a child's success and should be encouraged as children move on to elementary school.

Lombardi 1992, p.1

School Organisation

The concluding statements of the research of Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979) draw attention to the way that the entry to school for children is organized as a feature of effective transition. They suggested that all the intake of children should start school about the same time and thus have the same length of time at the school. This, they proposed, would help children overcome some of their difficulties when starting school especially those children who were showing the greatest "emotional disturbance" (Op.cit, p.189). They wrote that there is "a strong case for careful consideration and evaluation of different ways of organizing the school intake" (Op.cit, p.189). This consideration has taken place in recent years and many schools have moved towards bringing in the year R intake of children together in the early part of the Autumn term, as discussed previously on pages 58 and 59..

Scaffolding

Fabian (2000) identified "certain factors" (Op.cit, p.151) which she argued "support children and help them build a shared history together and work towards a joint future" (Op.cit, 151). Fabian identified four key features of effective transition namely

1. learning behaviours and systems by watching others
2. making the transition with a friend
3. talking with those who have experienced a similar transition
4. teachers helping children to make friends by using children's names and through paired activities.

Fabian 2000, p.151

Fabian wrote about the strength of learning from one another especially from children who are already established in the classroom routines and activities. Many schools introduce their year R children gradually into the classroom routines over the first half term of the autumn term. This approach enables groups of children to learn classroom routines and systems so that they can in turn 'model' those routines for the next group of children who are being inducted into the year R class. Many schools contact pre-school providers, as commented earlier, so that they can ensure that established friendships are enabled to continue and flourish thus allowing both children in the friendship to have the benefit of each others support during the transition to school process. Some schools offer 'buddy' systems for older new entrants where, for example, year 6 children are befrienders to Year 3 children. They write to them before they join the school, meet them on their transition practice day, greet them on their first day at the new school and are a constant point of reference for them throughout the school year. Fabian noted that the four features (page 62) helped children scaffold through their transition and gave them strategies that they could use in future transitions

in their lives. She also noted that whilst children may find it difficult to join a mixed age, established class the

> social organization of a mixed age class is effective in helping children to make better sense of the culture of the class and understand what to do, thereby functioning better as learners.

<div align="right">Fabian 2000, p.151</div>

Communication

Fabian also suggested that in order to support the child the communication from the school is vital. She commented that the "quality and quantity of communication is critical to harmony, both before and during transitions" (Op.cit, p.151) and noted that too much information or indeed too little information for parents can be "misguiding or unhelpful" (Op.cit, p.151).

Teacher's Attitude

Fabian wrote that the most important part of the transition process was the "attitude of the teacher" (Fabian 2000, p.151). She commented that "high quality experiences in a calm atmosphere with opportunities to see what the school is about are more likely to be successful" (Op.cit, p.151). This notion of the attitude of the teacher is paramount in several ways. The teacher's attitude to the children as they join the new class is very important. There needs to be a balance struck between being authoritative and in charge and being supportive and alongside the children as they grapple with new routines, people and expectations. There needs to be an air of positivity and expectancy of the fun of the learning and joint educational journey that they are embarking on together – teacher and children. It should be said that by using the word teacher this does not undermine the vital role that the teaching assistant plays within the early years classroom. This professional partner with the teacher plays an equal role in the eyes of the children and is another vital key to providing the calm, positive attitudes within the learning environment.

Friends

Fabian (2000) commented that it is advantageous for children to begin school"with a friend or know someone who is already at school who has gone through the induction process"(Op.cit, p.152). Dockett and Perry (1999b) also wrote commented on this aspect of effective transition when they wrote, "in terms of facilitating children's transition to school, adults would do well not to overlook the importance of having a friend nearby" (Op.cit, p.116). Mapa, Sauvao and Podmore (2000, p.7) recalled that 70% of parents involved in their research commented that "the children settled very well because having siblings at the school helped". Corsaro (1985); Faulkner and Meill (1993); Ladd (1990); Ladd and Price (1987); Patrick (1995); Rizzo (1989) all noted that "knowing other children in the class provides a sense of continuity for the new entrant" Ledger, Smith and Rich (1998, p.7).

In the rest of this chapter two detailed pieces of research are referred to as they spell out features and guidelines for effective transitions. Dockett and Perry (1999b) refer to

seven key features which they expand to ten guidelines in their later work published in 2001 whilst Lombardi (1992) identifies three key characteristics of effective transitions.

Seven Key Features then Ten Guidelines

Dockett and Perry (1999b) summarised in their research that effective transition is characterised by seven features

- extensive planning in order to develop a programme specific to a particular group of children, families and community context
- recognition of the importance of each participant in the programme
- collaboration among children, families, school staff, including the staff in prior to school settings
- a sound early childhood philosophical base which incorporates a commitment to the diversity among children and families, school and community contexts
- ongoing interaction among the participants
- input from the broader community in which the school and families exist, e.g. playgroups, community health professionals
- involvement of staff from across the whole school, such as, school liaison officers, teachers from other grades, school office staff.

Dockett and Perry 1999b, p.12-13

These seven features were extended in their work published in 2001. In "Beginning School Together: Sharing Strengths" they drew together the work of colleagues to focus on ten guidelines for effective transition programmes (Dockett and Perry (Ed) 2001, p.v-vii).

1. establish positive relationships between children, parents and educators.

Corrie commented about teachers' relationships with children as being fundamental for "children's positive school outcomes" (Dockett and Perry 2001, p.2). She noted that teachers who accept the importance of their relationships with children and parents are alert to signs of difficulty and quickly devise strategies to help positive relationships. Corrie acknowledged the long term impact of the crucial relationships when she wrote,

> children with secure relationships may feel anxious about starting school. However, they are able to share their fears with their caregiver, knowing that this person will comfort and protect them from risk when they need it. Children with insecure relationships may find that starting school is a challenge that overwhelms them because they cannot trust others to respond to their needs or keep them safe from danger.

Corrie in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.2

Corrie also noted that previously it was thought that negative effects of children's early relationships fade with time, but "compelling research shows that children

with insecure relationships may experience enduring social, academic, and behaviour problems" (Cummings, Hennessy, Rabideau and Cicchetti 1994; Dodge, Pettit and Bates 1994; Fonagy, Target, Steele and Steele et al 1997; Pianta 1997 and Op.cit, p.5). She concluded that

> adopting a relationship-based view of classrooms helps teachers to develop supportive and sustaining relationships that enable all children to enjoy a positive transition to school. Seeing relationships as they key to this transition can help teachers and parents to find ways to build on children's competencies as motivated learners, collaborative peers, and good friends.

Corrie in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.8

2.   Facilitate each child's development as a capable learner

The growth, development and learning that has occurred before the child starts school needs to be recognized as well as the impact of the child's environment on these issues. Effective transition recognizes the role of the family and other educators and seeks to collaborate in ways to build upon the child's experiences argued Dockett and Perry. Children are also recognized as capable learners who bring with them a wide range of learning experiences. Grotberg, in Dockett and Perry (Ed) 2001), noted that

> if the child's questions are dismissed, if he or she is unable to take the initiative to accomplish things, or is rejected by those he or she seeks to help, the child may feel guilty, unworthy, or naughty.

Grotberg 1997, p.29

3. Differentiate between 'orientation to school' and 'transition to school' programmes.

Glazier wrote about two programmes – 'orientation to school' and 'transition to school' – both with different functions. She commented that orientation programmes were often designed to help children and parents become familiar with the school setting. They involved a tour of the school, meeting relevant people in the school and spending time in a classroom. Often these programmes were characterized by presentations to the children and parents.

Transition programmes, Glazier described as often including orientation time, but tending to be longer-term and more related to the individual needs of the children and families. She wrote that:

transition programmes can be of indeterminate length, depending on a particular child or parent's needs. They recognize that starting school is a time of transition for all involved and may be planned and implemented by a team of people representing all those involved in the change.

<div align="right">Glazier in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.15</div>

She commented that

it is crucial that this initial year of school provides a bridge for all key players and that a foundation for learning is laid in a school community that reflects and values each member.

<div align="right">Glazier in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.15</div>

4.   Draw upon dedicated funding and resources

These resources may include people, time, materials and the space in which to operate the transition programme activities. Docket and Perry wrote that "effective transition programs, and the resources which ensure their viability, should be priorities of both prior-to-school and school settings" (2001, p.22). They also commented that these programmes should be seen as "a form of investment in the future of children and their families" (Op.cit, p.31).

5.   Involve a range of stakeholders

Educators, parents and children should have an input into the transition programme. Teachers and staff from pre-school and the new school context have valuable insights in to the child to add to those of the parents. Indeed the children, themselves, can indicate areas or interests that either concern them or that they would like to have more experience of. Dockett noted that

involving children in the planning of transition programs recognizes them as competent and capable, and demonstrates the levels of trust and respect we encourage young children to develop.

<div align="right">Dockett 2001, p.32</div>

6.   Are well planned and effectively evaluated

"Effective transition programs do not just happen" (Rose and Emmett in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.41) and indeed they are based on detailed planning and have clear objectives agreed by all the parties involved in the programme. The effectiveness of the programme can therefore be measured against these objectives. If there are clear ideas of what a successful programme will look like at its inception of the programme then the activities and events within it can better be shaped to meet those outcomes. So if an outcome of a transition programme is that all the children know their way around the early years rooms, activities can be planned to ensure that they have plenty of opportunities to learn where activities are

based and resources and staff can be located. Activities can be designed to ensure that the children play games to learn where the toilets and cloakrooms are. Thus carefully planning with agreed success criteria can ensure that successes are built into the programme.

7.   Are flexible and responsive

Well planned programmes can be responsive to the needs of all those involved in the transition. Clearly for the programmes to be responsive they need to know and understand the needs of those taking part in them. Kingwill and Fegan tie together the flexibility of the transition programmes with the needs of families and family life. They commented that

> social, cultural and economic factors influence the ways children's families guide them in their early years. These factors also determine the support that families can give their children and the availability of prior-to-school and school options. Programs that recognize the unique contexts of community and family life, and which aim to build upon existing strengths and local networks, are more likely to succeed than those which ignore these aspects. "Experience suggests that to make successful inroads...policy and practice must be informed by the reality of family existence."

> Kingwill and Fegan in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.48

8.   Are based on mutual trust and respect

Clancy, Simpson and Howard commented (2001) that

> where programs evolve and operate in a climate of trust, and where the perspectives of all participants are respected, open communication is likely to develop.

> Clancy, Simpson and Howard in Dockett and Perry 2001, p.56

They suggested that just as children function best in situations where they feel psychologically and physically safe, adults who feel their ideas and views will be listened to are likely to contribute to the transition programme in significant ways. As the children begin to join the school their parents will know the children best. They will know the things that their child is feeling positive about and likewise the things that are really concerning their child and indeed themselves. A sensitive school can engage with the parents early in the transition process to ensure that those positives are used to help allay any fears. An early meeting with new entrant parents to get their feelings and concerns can help shape the transition to school programme for the whole intake or for specific children. Programmes can be tailored to meet individual needs. A parent who says that their child or they are concerned about the size and scale of the school building could have extra pre-school visits for themselves and their child or as part of a

small group with other children who have similar concerns. A particularly timid child may need extra home visits to reassure them about the safety and trust that they can put in the teacher and teaching assistant. The openness of communication at an early stage can be vital to the building of trusting relationships with parents and then ultimately through the parents to the children.

9.   Rely on reciprocal communication among participants

Reciprocal communication recognizes that parents, as well as educators, know a great deal about the children they teach or care for. Children, too, know a lot about themselves and how they learn, and how they respond in certain situations. Collaboration based on open communication establishes a context where the educational needs of the child are uppermost in the minds of all involved.

Canella echoed this guideline writing that

> to hear those who have often been ignored, silenced, and even perceived as having no voice, we must accept them as real, legitimate human beings....the diverse everyday lives of young human beings, and the voices of their families and communities in those everyday lives, must be accepted as legitimate, multidimensional, and worthy of being heard.

Canella 1997, p.166

Diffily and Morrison, whilst acknowledging the role of the child, and the importance of their voice in the transition to school processes and programmes, also emphasised the level of expertise of the child's parents. They wrote

> parents are the foremost experts on their own children, and they have boundless love for their daughters and sons. We are eager for them to share with us what they know about their children. We want to know what their child's life is like outside the classroom and what they as parents care about.

Diffily and Morrison 1996, p.111

10.   Take into account contextual aspects of community, and of individual families and children within that community

Dockett and Perry commented that a contextual framework focuses attention on the ways children are influenced by, and in turn influence, the context in which they exist. In this framework, they argue, the responsibility to become 'ready' for school rests not with the individual child but with a community. The contexts in which children live are influenced, they noted, by issues such as socio-economic status, geographical location, cultural diversity, work patterns, language backgrounds, disability and other special needs. Above all they concluded, in this tenth guideline for effective transition to full time school, that "it is imperative that differences among individuals and individual families within each community are recognized and valued for the richness they bring" Dockett and Perry 2001, p.vii.

In their 2001 publication, building upon the seven key features (1999b), Dockett and Perry emphasised that the main focus of the transition to full time school process should be establishing a sense of community through building trusting relationships rather than an emphasis on an academic focus.

Three Key Characteristics

Lombardi (1992) suggested that effective early childhood services must share three key characteristics namely "developmentally appropriate practice, parental involvement and supportive services for children and families" (Lombardi 1992, p.1). She concluded that

> it is through these that we will eventually move beyond a concern for transition and ensure continuous and effective services throughout the early years.

<div align="right">Lombardi 1992, p.4</div>

The transition to full time education is a major time for children and their families. They are starting on the journey of formal education...a journey that will last at least twelve years. For most children and their families this will be the first major time of transition their lives and as such it will be viewed with a mixture of emotions, such as, anticipation, excitement, worry and apprehension. All of the research referred to has noted the importance of this transition particularly as it "sets the stage, not only for children's success at school, but also their response to future transitions" (Dockett and Perry 1999b, p.1).

Perhaps the importance of effective transition to full time education is made very clear by Entwisle and Alexander (1993) when they commented about the long term effects of early failure and unhappiness at school. They noted that

> early failure and unhappiness at school is likely to lower self-esteem, and if it continues can result in a social cost in later years.

<div align="right">Entwisle and Alexander 1998, p.7</div>

Several key themes emerge from this examination into effective transition. The role of others in the transition process is given a crucial role both by Fabian, Dockett and Perry and Ledger, Smith and Rich. Communication and trust between all stakeholders is another theme as is the positivity of attitudes within the early years setting.

Having looked at the international, national and local context for early years education, considered two transition models and looked at the transition to school from a variety of view points, the next chapter outlines briefly the context of the research within this thesis and goes on to examine the methodology of the research.

Chapter Six

Research Methodology

Local Context

In considering the research question (What is the impact of transition to full time education on young children?) and the opportunity for exploring broader emerging themes around the notion of transition it is important to set this research in context. This research has been carried out within a school in a southern central England Local Education Authority. In this authority in the summer of 2000 there were 14,235 children in 591 Reception classes in Infant or Primary schools. By law children have to start school at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. However in this authority schools can offer places to children from the beginning of the autumn term (1st September) following their fourth birthday. In the 'A Parents Guide to Applying for a School Place for the School Year September 2000-2001' it also states, "it may not be possible for schools to reserve places to allow later entry" (Local Authority Guidance 2000, p.10). This policy was introduced into this southern central England authority in September 1993 and provides the opportunity for all children to start school in the September of the academic year in which they are five years old. To facilitate the new policy the County Council provided funds to improve staffing levels to ensure that there was one teacher and classroom assistant per class and developed both indoor and outdoor facilities to meet nursery specifications.

Drummond (1994) led an evaluation of this authority's earlier admissions policy based upon two hundred hours of structured observations carried out in fifty schools by ten experienced headteachers. One hundred children were observed and she concluded her evaluation with a Report in 1995. This Report identified nine issues ranging from training; planning; curriculum development to staffing ratios. This Report focused on the actions of the children once at school and did not address their induction into the world of the school.

The 'Parents Guide' for parents this year (which refers to itself as 'a composite prospectus') outlines how a child's admission might look

> Birth dates
> Between 1/9 and 31/12: he will be attending on a full time basis by the end of September.
> Between 1/1 and 31/3: he will be attending at least five sessions a week by the end of September and full time from the Autumn half term.
> Between 1 / 4 and 31/8: he will be attending five sessions a week by the end of September 2000 and full time by the start of the Spring term in January 2001, at the latest.
> <div align="right">Local Authority Guidance 2000, p.10</div>

This seems to be written as guidance as the actual timings for individual children and individual schools in my experience seem to vary. This is perhaps explained when the brochure goes on to note

after talking with you, the Headteacher will make the final decision on your child's admission arrangements, taking into account

- How ready your child is for school
- The number of sessions he is ready for
- When it is appropriate to move from part time to full time attendance

Local Authority Guidance   2000, p.10

The brochure makes no reference to induction programmes for children other than referring to part time then full time attendance. It gives parents of children starting school for the first time no indication of what, if any, induction process or period they or their child could expect to be part of.

It is this southern central England context that the research uses School A as a vehicle for examining emerging transitional themes and as an opportunity to consider the impact of the transition programmes within the school. School A is in southern central England and is a County Foundation Infant School for children aged 4-7 years. There are 240 pupils in 8 classes. It serves a large village and surrounding rural areas with a published admission number for Year R of 80.

Following the revised programme, established in September 2001, children are admitted during the academic year in which they are five through a staggered induction programme. This staggered programme of part time attendance is the culmination of an induction process that starts in the February, prior to their September start at the school, when the parents receive a confirmation letter offering their child a place at the school.

The Admissions policy of School A is in line with that of the Local Education Authority in that it admits children who live in the catchment area as a first priority with medical grounds and siblings at the school as lesser categories.

After the letter confirming their child's place at the school parents receive a further letter outlining the details of the "entry arrangements". The letter starts with identifying the groupings of children. It states

Autumn born children are those born between 1st September and 31st December
Spring born children are those born between 1st January and 31st March
Summer born children are those born between 1st April and 31st August

Headteacher's letter to parents School A 2001

The letter then goes onto outline the programme for the summer which includes:

- Series of tours of the school in operation in April and May
- Story time visits in May and June
- Weekly activity library sessions at the school in June
- Evening parents' meeting in June
- Morning for all the children to visit the school in July

After the August holiday the children begin at the school following the timetable set out below.

5-14 Sept	Children stay at home and will be visited by their class teacher and learning support Assistant.
16-20 Sept	All children come to school until 12 noon.
23-27 Sept	All children come to school for the morning and stay for lunch and are collected at 1.15pm.
30Sept-4 Oct	Autumn born children stay all day (including lunch) Spring and summer born children stay for the morning and lunch.
7[th] Oct	All children come to school full time.

Whilst this seems like a rigid timetable the headteacher also notes in her letter to parents that

> if you would like your child to begin full time school at a later date than the 7[th] October, he/she can continue to attend for mornings only until he/she is felt to be ready for full time or the term of his/her fifth birthday.

> Headteacher's letter to parents   School A 2002

Of Research

Of research Borg (1963) stated that

> research is a combination of both experience and reasoning and must be regarded as the most successful approach to the discovery of the truth.

> Borg 1963, p.5

Mouly (1978) said of research that it

> it is a most important tool for advancing knowledge, for promoting progress, and for enabling man to relate more effectively to his environment, to accomplish his purposes, and to resolve his conflicts.

> Mouly 1978, p.42

This sums up well the approach within this thesis. This is an opportunity, through the collection of evidence, to focus research on emerging transitional themes. It is further an opportunity to use broad literature research and research data generated from a local study at School A to study the impact of three induction programmes. This research focuses on a single site case study within which a number of data collection methods have been used.

The results of this thesis will add to the body of knowledge about transitions but will also enable School A, as a by product of the research, to reflect upon its own practices. School A has not identified a problem and sought to evaluate it but an issue of concern has been raised by the school which can be explored through the medium of this research project. From the researcher's point of view this thesis is an opening for original thinking about the transition to school processes in a broader theoretical context. It is an opportunity to think generically about the transition process through studying the impact of three induction programmes in the specific context of School A.

Having established the theoretical dimension and local context of this thesis the next section goes into detail outlining the research methodology.

Planning the research

Whilst there seems to be no set approach to planning research Cohen, Manion and Morrison identified that the

> research design is governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose". The purposes of the research determine the methodology and design of the research.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.73

They argued that it is possible to identify a "set of issues" (Op.cit, 73) that researchers need to address so that "a general set of research aims and purposes can be translated into a practical, researchable topic" (Op.cit, p.73). This they noted is important so that "the terms of the research and the mechanism of its operation" can be "ironed out in advance if it is to be credible, legitimate and practicable" (Op.cit, p.73).

Morrison (1993) wrote about four main areas of a research planning framework. I have taken his four areas and put them into the table below including a definition of each area.

Orienting decisions	Strategic decisions; set the general nature of the research.
Research design and methodology	Practicalities of the research.
Data analysis	The mode of data analysis to be employed.
Presenting and reporting the results	The form of reporting the research.

adapted from Morrison 1993, p.74

Within this context the following framework for this thesis was developed:

- subject of research

- rationale

- research problem

- key theories

- basic design/structure of study

- methodology

- data analysis

- choice of site

- reporting

This research framework would form the 'skeleton' for the research plan. The plan was the initial thoughts and explorations taken to the Governors of School A for the feasibility of the research to be discussed, approved and access agreed. Almost by definition the research plan might not be the final process outcome as the plan is a means of "harmonizing the planned possibilities with workable, coherent practice" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.73). Indeed Cohen, Manion and Morrison commented that

> in planning research there are two phases - a divergent phase and a convergent phase. The divergent phase will open up a range of possible options facing the researcher, whilst the convergent phase will sift through these possibilities, see which ones are desirable, which ones are compatible with each other, which ones will actually work in the situation, and move toward an action plan that can realistically operate.

> Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.73

They further noted that while the research may not always

> unfold according to the plan, it is important to have thought out the several stages and elements of research so that coherence and practicability have been addressed within an ethically defensible context.

> Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.90

For the researcher there is a reassurance in this quote because often the research will evolve during the research period, particularly the field research, because of emerging issues resulting from the on-going findings of the research. In that context there may need to be a revision of later stages of the field research to pursue emerging themes or further field research may be need to be undertaken to test out new hypothesis.

The research plan for this thesis was as overleaf. As a plan it was in a working note format initially as it was as summary of initial thoughts and design ideas. In this thesis the plan has been expanded into full text.

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Research Plan

Subject of Research

The subject of the research was to focus on transitions. The research would start broadly by looking at transitions in general terms then specifically through the time of starting school and the impact of the transition process on the young child starting full time education.

Rationale for the study

The rationale for the study was in three parts. The first part was to create the opportunity to explore emerging themes around the idea of transitions through an impact study and to examine the idea of 'bridging' through the transition to school setting. Secondly, to create an opening for a more in depth study following my work for my MA (Ed) dissertation. This allowed for a greater in-depth focus on transition theory building on previous research into how children are inducted into primary school. Third and finally an Infant School, local to where I worked, had recently (for Sept 2001) changed their induction to school processes for the Year R pupils and they wished to evaluate the impact of those new processes.

Research problem (key issues/questions)

The key question for this research focused on transition and on the transitional time of entering full time education - What is the impact of the transition / induction process on children in the first term of their primary education?

Key theories to be explored

Within the research there was a key focus on transitional theories. This involved broad notions of making transitions and then taking those transitions into the specific educational context and then in an even more detailed way into the transition between home/pre-school provider and full time education.

Basic design/structure of study

The basic design of the research was to follow a chapter format to guide the organizational structure of the final research thesis. The chapters are identified in the table overleaf.

Methodology

Within the considerations around the methodology of the research there were several issues that needed full consideration. Firstly, there was a need to consider the ethics of experimenting with the lives of young children. There needed to be an awareness of the ages of the children and the surrounding ethical issues needed to be explored fully within methodological considerations. Secondly I needed to consider how my role in the research may influence on the outcomes of the research work. Thought needed to be given to how I, myself, as the researcher, might be impacting upon the research by my interest in the subject. Further thought also needed to be given to how the research itself may affect the research outcomes by raising the profile of the transition to school time with the families and children involved in the school based induction programmes.

Thirdly there was a need to explore through the thesis the notion that there was to be no control group within the research. To clarify there was no group of children involved in the research that were having no transition programme to school. Whilst there was no experimental approach planned within the research, consideration needed to be given to the fact that all the children in the research location were entitled to an induction programme into full time education and so at no point was it to be suggested in the research plan that any children should be deprived of this entitlement for the sake of the research.

Within the thesis, fourthly, there needed to be a discussion about how to measure impact. There were no pre measurements or post measurements as such in this research so the notion of impact would need to be carefully explored. The children's and parents' responses would be vital to that impact evaluation and there would need to be careful analysis and assessment in term of current research and in terms of emerging notions, especially bridging.

Fifthly, the whole research methodology needed to be flexible to adapt the research methodology to allow for the exploration of emerging ideas and notions. It may have been that there was a need to test out emerging ideas or notions further in extended research within the same or similar context or within the same or a different time frame. Sixthly, within the research there would also be a need to try, as much as possible given the variables, to create comparative groups of pupils so that the impact of the differing programmes could be evaluated.

Seventhly, within the breadth of the research context the researcher needed to be aware that the research context involved a real life situation. As the researcher, I needed to be aware of myself both within the research and within the real life situation that the research was set it. Indeed the ideas of Max Van Manen (1998) would need to be more fully thought about and considered.

Eighthly, there were consent issues within the research which needed evaluating before the research could take place. Consents would need to be given by the parents and the school and consideration needed to be given to the idea of who would give the consent on behalf of the individual pupils. Tied in with the consent issues there were also issues of confidentiality of names and information. These issues needed careful thought as they affected not only the families, the individual pupils, and the school but they also affected the research gathering processes itself in terms of gathering and recording and storing data and how the final thesis might be written.

Finally, but not least, there needed to be consideration of the pupils at the heart of the research. Within the research there was to be an underlying desire of wanting to enable the children to reflect upon the transition to school process at their level and within their understanding. This desire led to reflections by the researcher into issues surrounding how to engage the young children in the research process and the best method to do that. The children needed to be engaged in a practical interactive way. Consideration needed to be given to the best way to do this. The best way had to be thought of in terms of the children's age and maturity and in terms of achieving usable outcomes for the purposes of the research. It was important to remember that some children would be three years old at the start of the first stage of the research process.

One key method

This was an impact study within a single site local case study which used a number of data collection methods namely interviews through groupings of children. Some ideas were taken from the semi-experimental approach but this was not a semi-experimental research project. There was the idea of having different groups of children with similar characteristics who take part in different induction programmes in a school setting so the outcomes (impact) of these programmes could be compared. Within this approach the groups of children were not be totally comparable because of the children's own life experiences and because the research did not take place in a controlled environment. The research did not set out to have 'equal' groupings or a controlled environment but it merely acknowledged using ideas with in this approach as a framework for the methodology.

3 groups of children were established. Each group made up of children due to start infant school. Each group of children took part in a different induction to school experience. 4 children took part in Induction Experience A, 4 children in the Induction Experience B and 4 children took part in the Induction Experience C.

The main data collection method was to use a structured interview with each child and parent. There will be four opportunities to interview the children and parents in phase one:

- Once the child's place at the school is confirmed
- At end of the school's formal induction process
- At end of the child's first full time week at school
- At end of the child's first term at school

Phase two will allow for two interview opportunities with parents in March and September.

In trying to establish some kind of comparability between the groups of children four main concerns would need to be considered. Firstly, whether or not the child had had any pre-school experience e.g. nursery or playgroup or whether the child had remained at home with their parent or carer. Secondly, whether or not the child had older siblings and thus has some previous knowledge and contact with the school or any school and its systems. Thirdly, whether or not the child had already had any contact already with the school, for example, pre visits when the school was being selected by parents. Fourthly, and finally the age of the child would need to be considered. That is whether the child was older in the year (autumn born) or whether the child was younger in the year (summer born). The age of the child in many schools affects the pattern of induction programme with autumn born children often starting school full time earlier in the autumn term. Summer born children often follow a pattern of part time attendance in the autumn term building up to full time attendance within the autumn term.

Another aspect to be considered was the need to identify the children and the need to gain the various consents. This would all need close liaison with the school and particularly the headteacher. Children could not be identified until they had formally been offered places at the school in February and their parents had accepted the place on their behalf.

In order to consider the impact of the induction programmes there needed to be some way of assessing the differences that the interviewees (children and parents) reflected during and after they had taken part in the school's formal induction programmes. The table overleaf attempts to formalize how the qualitative data might be gathered and comparisons sought.

Whilst it is difficult to quantify the information and influences 'going into' a child at anyone time from the whole wealth of life's experiences that it is experiencing at any one time the table tries to simply note that for the purposes of this research study the only input from the school in a formal way is noted as Programme A, B or C. The weakness with this methodology is that there are so many variables that could affect any formal results in the sense of outcomes. Also it is hard to quantify or measure the child's state before the induction programmes in order to make comparisons and thus have any measurable outcomes:

Group Name	Symbol	Induction Programme	Responses
Group A	0(1)	Package A (basic)	0(2)
Group B	0(3)	Package B (extra home visit)	0(4)
Group C	0(5)	Package C (extra home visit and visit to pre-school provider	0(6)

The idea of the table is to show how the responses could be compared given the previous discussions about the group comparabilities. Thus 0(1) could be compared with 0(2) to give the Group A responses, that is, the change in the actions or activities or understandings of the children (parents) or the responses of the children (parents) to programme A. Thus 0(3) could be compared with 0(4) to give the Group B responses, that is, the change in the actions or activities or understandings of the children (parents) or the responses of the children (parents) to programme B. So that finally 0(5) could be compared with 0(6) to give the Group C responses, that is, the change in the actions or activities or understandings of the children (parents) or the responses of the children (parents) to programme C.

This qualitative approach to data gathering would allow for the children and parents to give their personal reflections within the semi structured interview format. In effect the research methodology was to track 12 children and their parents for their verbal reflections during 4 stages (eight months) of the transition to full time education process. The flexibility of the methodology would also allow for this approach to be used in Phase two of the research with a second set of parents whose children are also making the transition to full time education at the same school but a year later.

Data Analysis

When considering the data (generated by the interviews with pupils, parents and teaching staff) there needed to be a balanced approach to the data quantity. There needed to be enough data to be meaningful and give enough evidence for final suggestions but not too much to be practically unmanageable. I needed also to consider the use of Information Communication Technology software to aid the collation and sorting of material collected. This would help to make the data processing more manageable. The appropriate software programmes needed to be chosen. It might be useful to collate information on spreadsheets therefore enabling the tracking of data and the looking for emerging trends.

The data would also need to be coded for ease of usage once it was all collated together because there would be so much data. This would also allow for anonymity for children and parents throughout the data analysis stage. The data analysis processes also needed to allow for the comparison of the responses of the different interviewees in each induction group. This would enable some comparisons between the different groupings to take place.

In order for the data to be used in a practical and manageable way the responses would need to be recorded and stored so that they were easily accessible for analysis. The use

of a dictaphone and hard copy transcripts would make analysis easier although it would still be time consuming and would need to be tackled in a methodical way.

The analysis of the outcomes needed to be presented in a readable way. The codes used for the children and the parents in the gaining data stage could be replaced at a writing up stage with fictitious names for ease of reading the final text and to acknowledge that the data was from real families. Further at the presentation point of the final thesis the way the outcomes were to be presented needed to be concise yet give enough detail and examples as to evidence any assertions.

In practical terms I needed to be methodical and systematic in how I collated and kept the increasing amount of data that was collated as the research proceeded. Finally there was the safety of the information consideration that needed to be reflected upon. There would need to be created a way to ensure that at no point could any of the data or copies of draft thesis texts be lost. To ensure that no data or text was lost a simple system of keeping triplicate copies of all data and texts would be established. The information would be stored on computer disc, on a work based personal computer and on a home based personal computer. Whilst this would mean a duplication of activities in order to ensure that the three storage places were kept up to date it should prevent loss of vital information.

Choice of Site for research

An infant school local to the researcher's place of work had recently (for Sept 2001) changed its induction process for Year R children and wished to evaluate the impact of the new programme. This opportunity allowed the research into transitions to use the infant school situation to explore transition issues through assessing the impact of the three induction programmes. It was a real issue that the school wished to have evaluated as part of the school's self-evaluation processes. The research would therefore have a dual benefit of allowing transitional models and theories to be explored and allow the school the opportunity to have its practices researched by a person independent of the school staff.

The location of the research site was local to the place of work and home of the researcher. The parents and children involved with in the research all lived with in easy driving time or walking time of the research location. This ease of access would allow the researcher the time to make visits to the children's homes and the school within the working day and would reduce any wasted travelling time.

Reporting

A summary of research documentation would be made available to all participating families and School A. Should School A or any participating families wished to have copies of the full thesis then they will be made available to them by the researcher.

This research plan fits the purpose of the research, that is, to examine emerging transitional notions through the impact of the transition process on young children as they start full time education. It provides an initial research design and strategy that should lead to answering the research question. Of course, as with most things in life, this cannot be an absolute as much can happen during the research process to affect the

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research itself, for example, in this research context, children and families moving to new locations thus reducing the sample; emerging notions and issues developing that need further research and exploration; ideas to be explored and negated.

The next section builds on the research plan and considers a broader notion within the research. It considers the role that the researcher brings to the research by the very fact that they are human with a sense of self, a body to be viewed by others and a life full of experiences that can be brought to the research situation.

Understanding the Self

This section examines the notion of understanding the self and examines the notion in the context of this research project. It considers the public role that the researcher played within the context of the research environment and considers how the researcher needed to acknowledge her role both within the research and within the wider world of education that the research fits with in.

Stevens (1996) commented that as a person

> each of us inhabits a distinctive social world of lived experience. We are conscious of being (and are seen by others as being) a *particular person* with a particular past and with particular expectations of the future.
>
> Stevens 1996, p.2

As the researcher of this research project I am a particular person, of course, but I am also a different person to different people. To some I am a headteacher; a student; an employer; a colleague; a parent; a wife; a neighbour; a mother and a friend. Whilst I am seen as a person in these different ways they also mix together as, for example, I am a parent on parents' evening at my eldest daughter's school but could also be seen as a headteacher by my daughter's class teacher in that context too. In essence as a person we are all complex. Indeed we are the sum of our experiences.

The body is central to being a person as it is how we use our skills, communicate and relate to each other. Stevens (1996) noted that "it is on the body that our very existence as persons depends" (Stevens 1996, p.17). The body is also a very social matter as people respond to the person they see and the ways that people act towards us may influence the kind of person we think we are. Indeed Stevens (1996) said "other people give meaning then to our physical characteristics by the way they react to and regard them" (Op.cit, p.18). In carrying out this research I needed to be aware of how I was perceived in the eyes of the parents and children taking part in the research. Formal enough to be credible yet informal enough for the children to see that I was friendly, accessible, trustworthy and indeed alright to talk with. This clearly meant considering the way I dressed when I interviewed the parents and children, especially the first meeting, but also the way that I acted both overtly and through my body language. There was a need to consider every mannerism, word, phrase and emphasis. This may sound like a very sexist awareness but I believe that a male researcher in the same context would need to consider these same self issues too.

Stevens (1996) tied these two aspects together noting that "people form an intrinsic part of the fabric of our lives" (Op.cit, p.21) and that the kind of person we are and hope to become is "grounded in the social practices and the ways of thinking and communicating that we assimilate from the social settings in which we live" (Op.cit, p.21). So we have a self-identity and an identity as given to us by others.

"Our experience of being a person is composed not just of cognitions but of feelings too" (Op.cit, p.22) and these emotions are constantly there, either in the background or in high focus. How conscious of those emotions are we? To what extent can we control them? We also need to consider the impact that those feelings have upon ourselves, our

actions, or inactivity and how those feelings are perceived by others. This was an important concern for the researcher in the context of an interview situation particularly as the key interactions were with young children who by their very age and status were vulnerable. I needed to strike the balance between being friendly enough to gain the children's trust and so enable the children to respond to my questions yet formal enough for the children to realise that these interview events were important. It was also for their parents to see the importance of the validity of the research process.

Overall there is a sense where the biological and social and sense of self are all interwoven. The emphasis of these varies in different situations and over different periods of time as the way we view others and are viewed by others may vary due to the length of the interaction with others in a social context. In this research context I was known to the phase one children and families over an 8 month period. The range of the joint experiences, that is researcher and children and parents had ranged from no knowledge of each other to a fairly comfortable, trusting, professional, friendly knowledge. The quality of the shared experience of the interview process grew during the eight month research period. Perhaps the most profound notion about the self and a person's self knowledge is what Stevens (1996) referred to as the "mystery" (Op.cit, p.23). Stevens wrote

> we may have a sense of ourselves as being agents with some capability to self-determine what we do, it is also true that the person we are ultimately derives from factors outside our control. We do not choose our parents, the body we inhabit or the society in which we grow up. The coming into being of each of us and the particular person we are hangs on an infinite chain of chance events – on our parents meeting and their ancestors before them, on the precise moment of our conception and on one particular sperm reaching the ovum first; events that might have been otherwise and yet were not.

Stevens 1996, p.24

The reason for this exploration of self is to acknowledge that whilst we exist in ourselves we also exist and impact upon and influence the lives of others. This social existence is not always for us to control, even if we wanted to, but for the researcher working in a face-to-face situation with other human beings the sense of self and social position and social interactions must be considered. This level of consideration was high for the researcher but the researcher did not assume that all elements of themselves and / or their relations with others and the ways they were perceived by others could be controlled. By considering the issues of ones self-awareness can be heightened but not total control of actions, outcomes or destiny assumed.

In this research context the position of the researcher also needed reflecting upon because of the role in the local context of the research that the researcher played. This research focuses on educational issues concerning pre-school matters and the practices of an educational establishment, that is, School A. My primary employment was as a headteacher within primary education so I needed to not only consider myself and my social interactions, but the impact of my role upon both the children and the parents within the research project. The role of headteacher is representative of a part of the educational hierarchy in schools and is a role, in its context, of great privilege and

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influence. How I viewed myself in the research context and how I was viewed by the children and parents could have impacted upon the research in the level of importance the interviewees give to the research process and the detail and the quality of their interactions.

There was an added dimension in this research because not only was I a headteacher (perhaps significant because this research is rooted in a primary education context) but I was also the headteacher of a local junior school that the children involved in the research programme may well attend in future years. This possible immediate role in the future context of the families and children could have been seen as very powerful, awe inspiring or indeed threatening by the families. A lot would depend on the views and attitudes of the parents to education – both their education, education generally and their educational aspirations for their children. There were also factors about the parents and their views of the researcher based on local gossip or reputation and this would have varied with each individual and their interpretation of the information they had received and / or the experiences they had shared.

This section has considered the notion of understanding the self and has examined the notion in the context of this research. The next section considers, within the research methodology the issue of sampling and the validity of any sample.

Sampling and validity

This section builds on the fundamental under pinning ideas explored in the previous two sections and considers within the research methodology the issue of sampling and the validity of any sample.

Sampling

As Morrison (1993) made clear "the quality of a piece of research ....stands or falls....by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.92). Often researchers do not use the whole population relevant to their study for the research they wish to carry out. This may be because of the expense of such an undertaking or the timescale involved or the researcher's ability to access the whole study population. Thus data is often collected from a sub set or smaller group this therefore becoming the sample.

Bailey (1978) commented that in arriving at a sample to research it is important to have established the range of the whole study population to "assess how representative the sample is that they have drawn"(Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.92). In this thesis the sample chosen for the data is about 15% of the whole study population.

There are four key judgments that need to be made with regard to a sample and these are; the sample size; the representativeness and parameters of the sample; access to the sample and the sampling strategy to be used. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.92)

The sample size

Cohen, Manion and Morrison noted of the initial dilemma that "the correct sample size depends on the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under scrutiny" (Op.cit, p.93). However within this notion of 'fitting the purpose' there needs to be a balance between the minimum number of cases in the sample to examine the relationships between subgroups and the notion that the sample actually represents the target population. Further there needs to be an element of practicality as too large a sample might become unwieldy and yet too small a sample might be unrepresentative. The size of the sample might also be affected by the style of the research. A survey style may require a large sample whereas a qualitative style may require a smaller sample. Indeed the size of the sample may be constrained by other factors such as money; stress; resources and the number of researchers. Borg and Gall (1979, p.186) suggest that the sample size has to "begin with an estimation of the smallest number of cases in the smallest subgroup of the sample and 'work up' from that." Of course perhaps it goes without saying that the essential requirement of the sample is that it should represent the population from which it is drawn.

For this research the overall population available to study was the intake of 80 children into year R in School A. This population would have been too unwieldy to use in its entirety because there is a single researcher and the nature of the research style is to carry out structured interviews with the sample and their parent(s) four times during the research period. There would also have been too much data for the scope of this thesis to examine. Further as there is only one researcher and the researcher is working part time on the research whilst working full time, access to the population will be limited

by the constraints on the researcher and the availability of the population, for example the children might attend pre-school groups and their parents might work full time.

This single site case study research used several groups of children to be studied and their responses considered. In taking Borg and Gall's (1979) approach the minimum number of children per group to be studied and compared would be one thus giving a sample of three. This seemed too small a representation of the whole population of 80 and there were also several other factors to consider. What if a child / family had to withdraw from the research? What about trying to represent the variations with in the whole available population, for example, children who were 'older' when they went to school full time, that is, nearly five and those who were 'younger' when they went to school full time, that is, just four. Also some children may have been to pre-school providers before going to school full time and others may have not. Some children may have had a great deal of contact with School A before going to school full time because of perhaps siblings at the school or siblings who had previously been at the school whereas other children may have had no contact with school or indeed School A. Of course some children may represent several of these factors, for example, the child who attended a pre-school provider who already has a sibling at School A. It could be argued that this is an example of sampling error as "if many samples are taken from the same population, it is unlikely that they will all have characteristics identical with each other or with the population" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.96). Because of the number of variables it was almost impossible to account for them all in the representative sample so I tried to balance the practicalities of access and time constraints with the desire for the sample to represent the whole study population.

Finally, it was important to remember that because the sample is a representative group and therefore selected in some way the results of the research may not be able to be generalised beyond the usage of the case study school. In this case this seems acceptable as one of the purposes of the research is to enable School A to reflect on its practice rather than trying to make any broad statement about the transition to school for all children. In this context it should also be remembered that whilst broad generalizations may not be appropriate through the research process issues may emerge that can be translated into a broader more theoretical context. But it should be said that it would be totally unpractical for this research project, with its scale and time frame, to research into all the 2002/3 intake of children in this research context and so a sample may well be the best option. It might also be argued that the local study school in itself may not be a representative sample of all the children joining full time education during the academic year 2002/3.

The representativeness of the sample

It is important to consider whether the sample actually represents the whole study population. If the sample is to be valid it needs to represent the whole study population. This has been referred to in the previous paragraph. The sample number chosen of 12 - 4 per group - should allow for the main variables within the study population to be represented and allow for the chance that some children/families may not complete the research programme. It is, however, seemingly impossible to allow for all the variables within any given research context or research population of this research type. This has been discussed earlier and reflects the very nature of human kind and its multifacetedness.

The access to the sample

In carrying out research access to the sample needs to be both permitted and practicable. For this thesis access came initially via the consent of the Governing Body to allow the researcher to contact families of children who had been given places at the school for September 2002. The access to the children and their parents was applied for by means of a letter from the headteacher and then a letter from the researcher to the families directly asking for their consent to be involved in the research project. (See Appendix A1 and A2) The children having been identified through discussion with the Headteacher of School A using her knowledge of the children and their families to create a sample. There was also a need have a reserve list of children and families to contact should the initial 12 approached by letter not want to become part of the research project. It is important also to note at this point that the parents by giving their consent to being part of the project were, it could be argued, not a balanced or representative sample of the whole study population as by giving their consent they were maybe giving out a message that they were more interested in their child's education and transition to full time education than another parent who may have refused to join the research project or may have not even been approached. It could also be argued that because of my interest in the children's transition and indeed School A's interest the parents approached were being encouraged to be more reflective about the transition to full time education process than they would ordinarily have become. Perhaps this is not necessarily a bad thing. Furthermore the parents may have given their consent because of the role that I play in the local education community and the potential future role that I might play in the lives of their children. However and for whatever reason consent was given I was grateful for the parents' consent for their children and themselves to be a part of this research study.

The sampling strategy to be used

Schofield (1996) identified two main methods of sampling, they are, the random sample or the purposive sample (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.99). The features of these types are tabulated overleaf.

Method of sampling	Description	Types
Random	The chances of the members of the wider population being selected for the sample are known. Every member of the wider population has an equal chance of being included in the sample; inclusion of exclusion is a matter of chance and nothing else.	Simple random samples; cluster samples; stage samples, and multi-phase samples
Purposive	Each type of sample seeks only to represent itself or instances of itself in a similar population, rather than attempting to represent the whole, undifferentiated population.	Convenience sampling; dimensional sampling; purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

adapted from Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001. p.99-104

This research deliberately selected a particular section of the whole study population to include as the sample. As discussed earlier there was an attempt to make the sample representative of the whole study population yet also a manageable practicable sample. However Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) noted the caution of "the researcher targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself" (Op.cit, p.102). They commented that this type of research is often used in small scale action research or case study research as it is "less complicated to set up...less expensive and can prove perfectly adequate where researchers do not intend to generalize their findings beyond the sample in question" (Op.cit, p.102).

This research used purposive sampling as the cases were 'handpicked' to be included in the sample on the basis of the judgment of the researcher of their typicality. Indeed the sample was specific to the needs or purpose of the research in that the size was manageable and variables where possible had been controlled, for example, all the children attended a pre-school provision. It did not pretend to represent the whole study population.

The choice of which sampling strategy must reflect the purpose of the research, the timescales, the constraints on the research, the methods of data collection and the methodology of the research. The sampling type chosen needs to be appropriate for all of these factors if the research is to be valid. The sampling type and the sample

fulfillled these factors and allowed for the research to give the opportunity for enlightenment for the researcher and the opportunity to reflect upon the research process and outcomes in terms of new knowledge and / or new understandings.

Ethical / Moral Issues

When carrying out research that involves people and their lives and experiences it is important for the researcher to consider the ethical issues within the research process. Researchers need "to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects' rights and values" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, p.49). Indeed ethics itself has been defined as

> a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

> Cavan 1977, p.810

In this research there were a variety of issues to be aware of. There was the issue of the consent and co-operation of the subjects involved in the research. This informed consent is rooted in the subject's right to freedom. Informed consent is defined as,

> the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions.

> Diener and Crandell 1978, p.51

Informed consent within this research applied to the Governing Body of School A, the parents of children due to join School A who were sent letters about the research (see Appendix A1 and A2) and later interviewed and their children. Within the context of this research the parents responded on behalf of the children but also the consent of the children needed to be sought. This was a matter for the parents as to whether or not they spoke to their child about the idea of the research and gained their child's consent or whether in agreeing to be involved in the research the parents assumed the consent of their child. This was an important issue as "first, researchers consult and seek permission from those adults responsible for the prospective subjects; and second, they approach the young people themselves" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, p.52). Indeed Fine and Sandstorm commented

> our feeling is that children should be told as much as possible, even if some of them cannot understand the full explanation. Their age should not diminish their rights, although their level of understanding must be taken into account in the explanations that are shared with them.

> Fine and Sandstrom 1988, p.53

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In this research context the consent of the children was assumed to have been agreed by the parents and I started the research by thanking the children for their involvement and help as I tried to find out more about children going to school full time.

Bell commented "permission to carry out an investigation must always be sought at an early stage" (Bell 1987, p.42) and permission was sought from the Governing Body of School A, the local study school, to carry out the research. In the minutes of the Governing Body meeting of School A it is written

> Helen Paterson gave a talk on her research proposal on the induction process of children starting school, for her PhD. 'School A' has just instigated a new induction process and Helen Paterson would like to base her research evidence here. After her talk she left the meeting.
> After a short discussion it was agreed that Helen Paterson could go ahead with her research with the full support of 'School A'.

Minutes of the Governing Body meeting 6/9/01   School A

At this stage I was able to present my research credentials indeed Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) note that this point

> offers the best opportunity for researchers to present their credentials as serious investigators and establish their own ethical position with respect to their proposed research.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.53

Cohen, Manion and Morrison state that the researcher needs "to demonstrate that they are worthy, as researchers and human beings, of being accorded the facilities needed to carry out their investigations" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, p.53). As the headteacher of a local Junior school and the focus of the research being an issue that the headteacher and staff of School A wanted to evaluate this was not really an issue. But my role as the headteacher of a local school was to be a role that I needed to be acutely aware of. As Bell (1991) noted, "never assume 'it will be all right'. If you are an inside researcher, you will have to live with your mistakes, so take care" (Bell 2001, p.57). Also I needed to be aware of the impact of my role as headteacher and researcher on the conduct and outcomes of the research. Indeed Cohen, Manion and Morrison commented that social scientists

> generally have a responsibility not only to their profession in its search for knowledge and quest for truth, but also for the subjects they depend on for their work. What ever the specific nature of their work, social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.56

I also needed to be aware that I was asking parents and children about their experiences and views. I needed to respect their responses. When asking people for their

experiences and opinions I needed to trust that they had responded accurately and honestly. Furthermore, I needed to record their responses accurately and with integrity so as to respect the data they provided. It was important that confidentiality was maintained, that personal details were not asked for, or recorded, for example on the interview transcripts, and that guarantees were given as to how the data will be collated, recorded, stored, used and published, particularly in reference to the case study school and the individual parents and their children. Also that anonymity was preserved, that is, "the essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, p.61), so that "a participant's privacy is guaranteed, no matter how personal or sensitive the information is" (Op.cit, p.61). Indeed Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001), stated

> the obligation to protest the anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential is all-inclusive. It should be fulfillled at all costs unless arrangements to the contrary are made with the participants in advance.

<div align="center">Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias   2001, p.61</div>

It is important to remember that the transition to school is a sensitive time for parents and their children and also that the content and thus outcomes of the research, if the recommendations are taken up, could be fundamental to changes in induction practices in School A. Indeed "social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants" note Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001, p.56). It is important that I did not let my personal experiences, views and opinions affect the research. I needed to be able to keep a 'professional' distance from the data even though the subject matter and research question fascinated me.

Within the context of this research the permission to talk with the children was sought from their parents. It is important to note however some fundamental sensitive issues that must protect the researcher and the individual children and their families. In carrying out the research it was necessary for me to consider the practicalities of how the structured interviews with the children would be carried out. The fact that interviews were carried out as opposed to another method of gathering information from the children is discussed later. These interviews were carried out in the safety and comfort of the child's home initially with the time and venue agreed by the parents and as far as possible by the child as well. The third and final interviews took place at the school as by then the children were full time and it would be disruptive to newly establishing routines to interrupt them. It was also a concern of the researcher that the research was not too intrusive into the lives of the children and their families and the third and fourth interviews being held at home after a full day at school with other family commitments was decided to not be a good idea.

During the interviews with the child the parent was always present thus ensuring the safety and well being of the child and also the safety and the well being of the researcher. These considerations allowed for the protection of the child to be of the highest concern bearing in mind the age of the children, that is, less than five years of age.

I decided that the best way to make it clear that ethical and moral issues had been considered was to write an ethical protocol that could be shared and agreed at the earliest opportunity with School A and the parents of the children involved in the research. (See Appendix I)

Within this research there was also the concern that the children were being used for the primary data. This research moved on from the views and thoughts of teachers and asked the children directly about their experiences. Bearing in mind the age of the children, that is, under five, this needed to be done with a great deal of sensitivity.

In their earlier publication Dockett and Perry (1999a) noted that

> children have much to contribute to the transition process. Generally, they are very aware of what is happening around them as they start school and keen to share this with others. Listening to children talk about what starting school is like for them, or to what they think it will be like, and responding to the issues they raise is one way in which adults can help to make the transition to smooth and enjoyable.

> Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.1-2

Fabian (2002) noted that "children are experts when it comes to their own lives" (Fabian 2002, p.127) and Davie and Galloway commented

> there is now increasing recognition and acceptance that children's views and perspectives need to be heard both as an ethical imperative and also as a matter of practical utility and efficacy.

> Davie and Galloway 1996, p.3

It was also important to examine the morality of 'experimenting' with children's experiences during the induction period. Clearly because there is an entitlement for all the children at School A to have a period of induction to full time education then no true experimentation could take place in the sense of having a control group without any induction. However the research was influenced by some of the ideas and notions that form a quasi-experimental approach as all the children were part of an induction programme but the programmes varied for the different groups of children so that the responses to these different programmes could be evaluated. It was important to the children and their parents that there was a clear understanding from the outset of the research that there was a basic entitlement on the children's behalf to an induction programme into full time education at School A. The differing elements of the induction programmes also needed to be agreed by School A. There would be no purpose in trialling extended induction programme features if they could not be fulfilled by the school in future years due to lack of resources, should the results of this research favour extended induction programmes.

Within the scope of this research it was not possible to identify all the ethical issues that might be considered. This was mainly because of all the variables that pervade and influence our lives as human beings. These variables reflect us as individuals, they reflect our community, such as family groupings and indeed reflect our culture – be

that the culture of our country, race or society. In considering the major ones it enabled the researcher to have a greater awareness and understanding of the ethical dilemmas and moral issues within the research context of this study. Indeed as Cohen, Manion and Morrison wrote being ethically aware will help to induce a certain

> disposition that will enable them (the researcher) to approach their own more temperate projects with a greater awareness and fuller understanding of the ethical dilemmas and moral issues lurking in the interstices of the research process.

> Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.71

Validity and reliability

Validity

Within this research I have taken every opportunity to ensure that the research is both as valid as is possible and the results therefore as reliable as possible. However Cohen, Manion and Morrison noted

> it is unwise to think that threats to validity and reliability can ever be erased completely; rather, the effects of these threats can be attenuated by attention to validity and reliability throughout a piece of research.

> Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.105

Validity is clearly an important part of research because "if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless" (Op.cit, p.105). Gronlund (1981) commented that it is impossible for research to be 100% valid and that "validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than an absolute state" (Op.cit, p.105). It would seem therefore that the best the researcher can do then is to minimize invalidity and maximize validity through the research process. In this research every attempt was made by the researcher to ensure the validity of the research within the controls and constraints of the research context. It would be wrong to suggest that the research was 100% valid but as far as possible issues of validity were fully considered.

Internal validity concerns accuracy, as the findings must accurately describe the issue being researched. In ethnographic research the maturation of the subjects of the research is not a threat to the validity of the work as this is a key part of the research. Indeed in this research the children and their parents are interviewed four times over an eight-month period. This sampling method also allows for the researcher to "stay in the situation long enough for their presence to be taken for granted" (Op.cit, p.108). Cohen, Manion and Morrison also commented that the careful tracking and storage of information can "eliminate rival explanations of events and situations" (Op.cit, p108). Within this research each structured interview was taped recorded and transcribed. Each transcript was stored in a filing system so that the children's and parents' identity could be coded. The tape recordings were transcribed by a professional audio typist with clear instructions from the researcher for every word said to be typed. As the transcripts were

being typed by someone not present at the interview the body language, interplay between child and parent and any other subtleties of the language, for example, pauses and hesitancy, would not necessarily be recorded unless they were very obvious ones. It was also agreed that the researcher would check a random sample of the tapes and transcripts to ensure that the typing was an accurate representation of the interviews.

External validity refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population. In the case of this research the opportunities for were limited by the type of sampling method used, that is, purposive sampling. With this type it is hard to generalize from the outcomes of the data because of the selection of the sample. It is worth remembering that the sample method was chosen to fit the purpose of the research namely:

- for the creation of opportunities to reflect upon the notion of transition through this research and for the opportunities to look in a theoretical way at the 'bigger picture' of transition.

- for School A to reflect on its practice

One way to consider the validity of a piece of research is to look for triangulation opportunities

> triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one viewpoint.

> Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.112

Triangulation is also a "powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity" (Campbell and Fiske 1959, p.81-105) and can help "to overcome the problem of 'method-boundedness" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.113) triangulation increases the validity. In this research triangulation was achieved by carrying out structured interviews with both the parents and the children over a period of time. The views of the Year R teachers and headteacher were also sought. In this research the impact of the transition process upon the child was viewed by the child and from the parent's view of the impact upon the child. In the fourth part of the phase one field research stage the views were also sought from the teaching staff of the Year R children and from the headteacher of School A. Phase two of the research process enabled a selection of the following Reception Years intake of parents to be interviewed too. This reflective modification to the research process allowed for more in-depth exploration evidence and analysis in respect of emerging issues. It also showed the fluid nature and reactive nature of the research process. Four viewpoints of the same experience are explored. Denzin (1970) referred to this as 'methodological triangulation' as this research collected "data concerned with a time–related process from different groups at one point in time" and also data was collected "from the same group at different points in the time sequence" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.113).

Throughout this research every opportunity was taken to ensure the validity of the research process and outcomes. These have been summarized in the table overleaf.

Stages in the research process			
Design	**Data gathering**	**Data analysis**	**Data reporting**
• Appropriate time scale – 8 months; starting before transition programmes started and following through to completion • Adequate resources • Appropriate methodology • i.e. qualitative data through a loosely following a quasi experimental style but not method • Appropriate data gathering instrument – semi structured interviews • Appropriate sample • Demonstrating validity • Ensuring reliability • Avoiding bias	• Trying to avoid drop out of the respondents • Matching 'experimental' groups fairly • Ensuring standardized procedures for data gathering • Matching the methods to the concentration span and circumstances of the children and parents e.g. considering the children's age and maturity • Addressing factors about the researcher e.g. attitude; dress; style.	• Avoiding subjective analysis of the data • Reducing the halo effect (researcher's knowledge influence) • Recognizing extraneous factors which may affect the research • Avoiding making inferences and generalizations that the research cannot substantiate • Avoiding selective use of data	• Avoiding using data selectively and unrepresentatively • Indicating the context and parameters of the research in the data collection • Presenting the data without misrepresenting the message • Making claims which are sustainable by the data • Avoiding inaccurate reporting of data • Ensuring the research question is answered and emerging themes are explored

adapted from Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.116-117

Reliability

Cohen, Manion and Morrison provided a very clear definition of reliability when they wrote

> reliability is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents.

<p align="center">Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.117</p>

In essence for the research to be reliable it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found. In this qualitative research there were concerns about the replicability of the research. The methods employed, that is, a series of structured interviews with key questions could be used over and over again but the sample would be different. The results might be the same but the likelihood would be that they would be different because the sample would not be the same and the context of the sample would be different, for example, if the research were carried out in another school in another part of the country or even another part of the world.

Another way of looking at this notion of reliability would be if the interview was carried out again, say two weeks later, with the same sample would the results be the same? Again the answer would have to be no because of the nature of the study, that is, transition. During a transition period there is a constant change and development as new information is given to children and their families and they experience new interactions and events. If the time frame of the 'retest' interview was so short, say one day, then the likelihood of the results being the same would be increased. About this replication notion LeCompte and Preissle noted that the replication might include

- The status position of the researcher

- The choice of respondents

- The social situation and conditions

- The analytical constructs and premises that are used

- The methods of data collection and analysis

<p align="center">LeCompte and Preissle 1993, p.334</p>

Reliability was also been sought within this research by the setting up, as far as is possible, equivalent sample groups. Equivalence in this research was however relative to the context. The groups were set up by all the children having a pre-school experience and by two other factors of having or not having older siblings and by the sample child's birth date. Even within these variables there were several issues. The quality and length of the pre-school experience, the age and influence of older siblings, the fact that date of birth may or may not be a factor that can be seen as consistent. Is the younger child less mature? Is the younger child less able? There were also many factors that were not considered when making up the groupings that may or may not have affected the equivalence of the groups. The researcher had limited knowledge of

the background of the children and their families, and limited knowledge of the children's experiences other than those recorded on the child's admission to school form, which identifies siblings and pre-school providers. There were many aspects about the children and the families that the researcher did not know about and it could be argued should not know as this information was private to the individual family.

This research set out to gather qualitative data. Whilst the method is not quasi experimental it could be argued that the research used a method that allowed for comparisons to be made by examining responses. This approach had no control group, that is, no group of children not having any induction to school programme. Each child is entitled as a basic educational right to the same basic induction process to the school. This basic right is not set out in any national guidelines or code of practice but has evolved over years as good practice in primary schools. School A see the induction programme as a basic right for each child. One of the issues for the governors of School A to consider was the morality of this research in that some pupils were having an 'enhanced 'induction programme. They resolved this by knowing that each child was receiving a basic induction programme, indeed, the normal one offered and also that this was one of the key points of the research to examine the impact of the differing induction programme types. Each of the three groups of children, and their parents, to be interviewed was balanced as far as possible by factors that may affect the outcome responses of the research if the factors had all been in one group. These factors included the age of the child; whether or not the child had been to pre-school and whether or not there was an older sibling in the family.

Validity and reliability were also concerns within the key research instruments used, that is, structured interviews. In the rest of this section these notions are explored through the instruments that were used in this research.

Validity and reliability in interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison noted that with an interview the most important way of increasing validity is to minimize the bias. They suggested the following concerns should be addressed

- The attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer

- A tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in her own image

- A tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions

- Misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying

- Misunderstanding on the part of the respondent of what is being asked.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.121

In this research there was a need for the interviewer to try to remain detached from the content of the interviews and this was helped by the structure of the series of questions for the respondents to respond to. However this needed to be balanced with a need by the interviewer to engage with the respondent and make them feel at their ease so that

they felt that they could respond. This was particularly important because of the young age of the children and because certain courtesies would need to take place as the interviewing took place initially in the child's home. In recording the interviews the element of interpretation on the interviewer's part was reduced as the tape recordings were professionally transcribed but clearly there was a concern about them not being accurately transcribed and the audio typist having an interpreting role and this has been discussed earlier. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) commented about the influence of the researcher saying

> because interviews are interpersonal, humans interacting with humans, it is inevitable that the researcher will have some influence on the interviewee and, thereby, on the data.

Hitchcock and Hughes 1989, p.121

Silverman (1993) suggested that one way that reliability can be controlled is by ensuring that there is the same set of questions and sequence of words for each interview. Silverman (1993) commented that another way that the reliability of the interview can be enhanced is by piloting the questions, their wording, types and the order of the questions. Wilson and McLean (1994) suggested that the pre-testing of the questions is crucial to the success of the interview. They noted that the pilot serves to "increase the reliability, validity and practicability" (Wilson and McLean 1994, p.47) of the interview questions. The pilot serves to

- Check the clarity of the questions

- Gain feedback on the validity of the questions content

- Eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording

- Gain feedback on the type of question and its format

- Gain feedback on the appropriateness of the questions

- Gain feedback on the specific order of the questions

- Identify redundant questions

- Identify areas of misunderstanding

adapted from Wilson and McLean 1994, p.47

In this research the interview questions were piloted twice. Initially the questions were piloted using the feedback from the responses of a three-year-old child who was due to go to school full time in September 2002. This child was not due to attend School A but was of the same age group as the main research sample. The opportunity was also taken at this meeting with the child to pilot the questions for the parents with the mother of the three-year-old child. Access to the child and their parent was gained by the friendship I had developed with the family over a period of time. It was interesting to note the reactions of the child being interviewed as the conversation was not very fluid and this was a child who already knew me. This situation may have reflected several things...the strange formality of the situation perhaps or the quality of the questions.

The questions were then rephrased, reworded and re-ordered and piloted with another child who was already at school. The child was not at School A but went to full time school in September 2001 and was in her seventh week of full time education. The opportunity was also take to re-pilot the questions for the parent as well. These interviews were 'freer flowing' and this may have reflected the changes to the questions and / or the age of the child and the fact that the child had their current school experience to reflect upon. It may also have reflected the increasing confidence of the researcher in the research data collection method and reflected my own state of selfconfidence with the whole research process.

Questions used in this research

Below is the first draft of the questions for the child and parents and they are followed by the revised questions which were changed as a result of the piloting.

Questions for the child in the structured interview

1. What do you know about your school?

2. Do you know the name of your school?

3. Do you know the name of your Headteacher?

4. Do you know the name of your teacher?

5. Who else will you go to school with?

6. What is school like?

7. What will you do at school?

8. What will you wear at school?

9. Will you have lunch/eat at school?

10. Will you do any special things at school?

11. How do you feel about starting / going to school?

Questions for the parent in the structured interview

- How child feels about starting/going to school

- How parent(s) feel about child starting/going to school

- Preparation for school - actions/verbalizing

The questions for the child were put in a question format but the idea with the parent was to initiate a more free flowing discussion through a series of discussion prompts rather than questions. So the discussion points for the parent were kept in note form.

With regard to the questions for the child the first question needed to be changed to what do you know about going to school? This was a better opening question to set the scene and context and enable the child to have a broader range of experiences and knowledge to draw upon to be able to answer. With this being the first question a prompt was also introduced just in case it was needed! Questions 2, 3 and 4 needed to be moved to a later stage in the structured interview as they were more closed and in the pilot they 'shut down' the interview. They also needed to be changed from" do you know" to" what is the" so that the wording was clearer. Question 5 was changed from "who else will you go to school with?" as this could easily be interpreted by the child as the person taking them to school, to "who will you know at school?"

The discussion prompts for the parents needed framing into questions as they were too vague, and the pilot parent found the prompts difficult to respond too. I needed to remember that I knew quite a lot about the transition process but the parent might not and also the language that I used needed to be 'parent friendly' and not full of jargon. The prompts were rewritten as questions and extended. The final questions for the children and parents are below and overleaf.

Final draft of questions for children during the structured interview

1. What do you know about going to your school?
(prompt ...what happens at school?)

2. Who else will you know at school?

3. What is school like?
4. What will you do at school?

5. What will you wear at school?

6. Will you have lunch/eat at school?

7. Will you do anything special at school?

8. What is the name of your school?

9. What is the name of the Headteacher of your / the school?

10. What is your teacher's name?

11. How do you feel about starting / going to school?

Final draft of questions for parents during the structured interview

1.   How does your child feel about starting/going to school?

2. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?

3. How have you prepared your child for starting school?

4. How will / has the school prepared your child to join them?

5. How will / has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?

Rationale for the questions

The table below and overleaf identifies the rationale for the questions asked in the structured interviews. It makes the links between links with previous research in the field, mainly the work of Dockett and Perry, the elements of the bridging model and more general exploration questions.

Question	Rationale
Children 1.What do you know about going to your school? (prompt …what happens at school?)	To explore in a general way what the child knows about going to school. To explore what activities they know about To explore the concept of 'school' A broad opening question to set the scene
2. Who else will you know at school?	To establish what relationships they have at school and with whom (links with Hartup's research 1991 and Bronfenbrenner 1979) To allow for the hypothesis that relationships will develop whilst the research time frame is going on To explore existing relationships e.g. siblings, friends from pre-school To allow for wider thoughts to be voiced…may be about separation from carer. (links with loss notions of Weiss 1990 and Dockett and Perry 1999b) *Bridging element of Involving Others.*
3. What is school like?	To allow for an emotional/'feelings' response To allow for responses about the physical building (links with Fabian's research 2000 and Marshall's 1998) To build upon the first question
4. What will you do at school?	To allow the child to be able to say what they know about school based activities …type and range. To allow the child to respond in their own way…i.e. to allow for a wide scope of response…..a series of activities? talking about school as 'work'? talking about 'learning'? Building on questions 1 and 3 To allow an open response to allow for wider reflections about rules and conventions (links with Dockett and Perry's research 1999, Vartuli and Everett 1998)
5. What will you wear at school?	To establish what the children know about the formalities and conventions of being at school and in particular about their school.

6. Will you have lunch/eat at school?	To establish what the children know about the formalities and conventions of being at school and in particular about their school. (links with Dockett and Perry's research 1999a and anxieties about mealtimes)
7. Will you do anything special at school?	General question as a catch all for however the child would like to respond. To allow for their voice...
8. What is the name of your school? 9. What is the name of the Headteacher of your / the school? 10. What is your teacher's name?	Series of closed questions to establish what the children know before starting school and how quickly they know these facts. Questions 9 and 10 Related to question 2 in terms of relationships. (links with Dockett and Perrys' research 1999a about roles and Oakley 1990. *Bridging element of roles.*
11. How do you feel about starting / going to school?	To allow for an emotional/'feeling' response...linked to question 3 but more explicit with the way it is phrased.
Supplementary questions 11. How do you feel about being at school all the day now?	To build on previous question 11 to allow for a potentially different response now the child is full time e.g. tiredness (links with Dockett and Perry's research 1999a) Opportunity for children to reflect a difference between being part time and full time.
12. Before going to school all the time what things helped you to get ready for going to school all the day each day?	To explore with children idea of 'bridging'...what events/activities might have prepared them for going to school fulltime Opportunity for them to articulate about the induction to school programme (link could be made here between what child says and what the parent says of the child) *Bridging element of Programmes.*
Parents 1. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?	Opportunity for parents to give their impressions about their child and how they are emotionally prepared for going to school full time(link could be made here between what child says and what the parent says of the child. Link with Dockett and Perry's research 1999a and Dowling 2000) *Bridging element of Strains and Stresses, Control.*
2. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?	Opportunity for parent to share how they feel about their child going to full time education. How they feel about their child going for their child and in particular for themselves. (link with Dockett and Perry's research 1999a, and Fabian 2002) *Bridging element of Affecting Others, Physical Links, Strain and Stresses.*
3. How have you prepared your child for starting school?	Opportunity for parents to talk about what preparation they think it necessary and what they might have been doing/talking about with their child to prepare them. Opportunity to look for links with the whole family. Opportunity for them to explore the whole notion of the need or not to be prepared. *Bridging elements of Involving Others, Affecting Others, Time.*

4. How will / has the school prepared your child to join them?	To allow for parents to tell what they know about the school's induction programme (Link with Glaziers comments) *Bridging elements of Programmes.*
5. How will / has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?	To make the distinction between them being prepared and their child being prepared. To allow for an emotional response To allow for a family link responses. (link with research of Dockett and Perry 1999a) *Bridging elements of Programmes, Affecting Others, Involving Others.*
Supplementary questions 6. Overall how is the transition to school going?	To explore parental perceptions about the idea of transition and time frames for this transition (i.e. for their child at this school) and may be transitions in general Opportunity for an emotional response *Bridging elements of Programmes, Strains and Stresses, Roles, Physical Links, Time.*
7. What has been the impact of the transition activities provided by the school?	To explore explicitly parents views on the impact of the induction programme provided by the school upon themselves and their child To makes the links between the transitional activities and 'bridging' *Potentially all bridging elements.*
8. What in your opinion was the key thing or key things that helped your child successfully make the 'bridge' from pre-school/home to full time school?	To explore with parents the idea of 'bridging' and what they believed where the key elements that had impacted upon their child. *Potentially all bridging elements.*

Interviewing Young Children

Simons (1982) and McCormick and James (1988) identified that when researching in education there can be problems when interviewing children. Many of these seem common sense but they clearly need to be thought through by the researcher so that the threat of unreliability is reduced. Perhaps also I have an advantage in working with children for my entire 20 year professional career, and I have small children of my own so I am used to interacting with the age group of children within this research focus. Simons, McCormick and James drew attention to the following issues for consideration when interviewing children

- Establishing trust
- Overcoming reticence
- Maintaining informality
- Avoiding assuming that children 'know the answers'
- Overcoming the problems of inarticulate children
- Pitching the questions at the right level
- Choice of vocabulary
- Non-verbal cues
- Moving beyond the idea of receiving what children think the interviewer wants to hear because they want to please the interviewer and get it 'right'

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- Avoiding the interviewer being seen as a spy
- Keeping to the point
- The child interview being seen as less important than the interview with the parent

Simons (1982) and McCormick and James (1988), p.125

In this research the children were aged three and four. The younger children were aged three at the beginning of the field research process. For these children it was important to consider not only what information / evidence needed to be or could be gathered, but the method of its collection. The data collection method used needed to be sympathetic to the age, understanding and maturity of the children and yet be rigorous and valid enough to provide useable, sustainable evidence.

There are many creative ways to explore ideas and notions with young children, such as, role-play and acting out situations; the use of puppets to represent key characters; games and the use of pictures and drawings either pre prepared or drawn by the children. However, each of these is not without its limitations. Kaladjian (1996) comments that drawing exercises can help children "reveal thoughts and ideas that they cannot verbalize." (Op.cit, p.2) Yet Thomas and Jolly (1998) and Backett-Millburn and McKie (1999) acknowledge that using children's drawings can be problematic as their drawings are complex and can be ambiguous. In this impact study, drawings have not been used to explore the children's views, as they would be complex to analyse. Siegel and Gorey (1998) draw attention to the difficulties of using games with young children particularly if the information to be gained is of a sensitive nature. Whilst the information to be gained within this research study might not necessarily be sensitive the researcher did not see this method as a robust way of gaining the children's individual views on specific matters. Strode and Grant (2001) found within their research that the use of stories was a useful tool. They presented the children with vignettes, which allowed the children to talk about the similarities between their own situation and the scenarios in the pictures. This could have been a possible method of gaining the children's views within this research however there would have needed to be several vignettes and each one would have needed to be carefully constructed so as not to lead or bias the children with their thinking or responses. The researcher saw this method as too complex a method of working.

Kaladjian (1996) discusses working with young children in terms of visualizing the abstract. She focuses on the use of "visuals" with children to enable those who have a "limited understanding of abstract concepts and have restricted verbal abilities" to be able to understand beyond the literal. (Op. cit, p.2) It would have been possible to create a series of pictures about school life and encouraged the children to talk about the pictures. In addition it would have needed careful, skillful questioning to enable the children to draw any similarities or differences between the pictures and their own experiences. The researcher believes that this use of picture clues whilst interesting would have been overly complex, requiring the children to be involved in a variety of processes both talking about the pictures and then relating them to their own experience. There is also the danger that these young children would not have been able to move away from the picture stimulus that they had been given in terms of their

thinking and that access therefore to their own original thinking or feelings would have been inhibited.

I believe, through my experiences as a parent, teacher and headteacher that the best quality interaction comes through that of two individuals interacting together directly, that is, an interview. Clark, McQuail and Moss (2003) when exploring the field of listening to and consulting with young children, write about how interviews have been adapted for young children by a focus on the type of language used, the structure and the setting of the interview. Alanen (2001) acknowledges that children and young people almost expect to answer questions as part of their daily experience. Clearly, the quality and suitability of the interview depends very much on how the interview is structured in terms of language used and the setting and context for the interview. (The contexts of the interviews within this study are referred to in more detail later within this chapter.)

The skills necessary for working within an interview situation with young children are related to an ability to establish a safe, trustworthy rapport with a young child and to question carefully yet sensitively within the given question framework. Kaladjin (1996) referring to her work with young children states that they "need structure and ground rules" (Op.cit, p.2). She advises "keep questions direct, simple and precise" and "laugh a little" (Op.cit, p.2). This advice was certainly to be followed by the researcher. There are also the skills needed to quickly establish and also sustain the rapport / relationship with the young child so that the evidence base can be secured. Kaladjin (1996) comments " it's critical to establish good rapport…it's even more crucial with children" (Op.cit, p.1) It is a high-risk method but one which I felt confident to use yet I acknowledged the risks involved. One could argue it is a less creative method than the other data collection methods suggested earlier in this section yet on the other hand, one could also argue that I would have to be more creative and skilful in these one to one interview situations with the young children.

One way that the interview method in this impact study encouraged a rapport with the children and aimed to put them at their ease was for the researcher to use a stuffed toy character 'Bill'. Bill, a large kangaroo with a baby in its pouch accompanied the researcher to each interview and was portrayed as someone wanting to find out about going to school. Bill was introduced to each child and parent at the first interview. Bill was 'helpful' with the dictaphone machine used to record the interviews but was also mischievous as he would try and eat biscuits (provided at interviews 3 and 4) and would try and take the researcher's papers (See Appendix D5). Clearly this was all made possible by the role-playing antics of the researcher and the parents 'playing along' with the situation. Bill was a familiar character for the children to relate to each time the researcher met with them.

In the next section different data collection types are discussed and the research identifies the three key approaches to gathering responses used within this thesis.

Response Gathering

This section considers three main types of response gathering and identifies the key types used in this impact research project namely a localised study; the use of an approach which takes some notions from a quasi-experimental style in the sense of having comparative groupings of children and the use of structured interviews. This one key method approach that uses a variety of data collection methods endeavours to overcome the shortcomings that any one method of collecting data might have, as discussed earlier.

The local study approach was used because one of the research purposes was to examine transitions by examining the impact of induction to school programmes. This research could have examined several induction programmes at several schools in several parts of the country or even the world but as a researcher I needed to be practical with my use of time and the 'vehicle' for the research, School A, was genuinely interested in obtaining feedback on their induction to school programmes.

The use of structured interviews with the children and adults was chosen as a practical way of gaining responses during the 8 months of the research period and phase two research period. It allowed for comparisons of responses between each respondent and between each group of respondents following each programme. It needed the researcher to be highly skilled in her interactions with the young children to enable them to respond fully, as discussed earlier.

The use of ideas and notions loosely linked to a quasi-experimental style or approach was one chosen because the notions have several useful features that enabled the research to be organised in such a way that the responses could be analysed and compared with each other and emerging themes identified. This research however did not use a quasi-experimental method. The outcomes of each group were not measured as such, or scored in any way as to be directly comparative. The sample size was relatively small for a quasi-experimental method to have reliable results and measurements were not made of the input and output variables.

Case Studies

A case study is "a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle" (Nisbet and Watt 1984, p.72). It is the "study of an instance in action" (Adelman et al 1980, p.45). One example is of a defined system, like a school, a class or a child. The case study allows the study of real people in real situations enabling the readers to understand ideas more clearly rather than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Yet the case study, because it deals with clear concise situations, also allows for abstraction to occur and for general principles to be explored and developed further. Adelman et al stated that "a case study can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together" (Op.cit, p.72-3) One of the strengths of a case study approach is that it observes effects in real contexts. Indeed Sturman goes on to note that a key feature of the case study is that

human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them rather than being a loose connection of traits, necessitating in-depth investigation.

<div align="right">Sturman 1999, p.103</div>

Hitchcock and Hughes suggested that case studies are distinguished "less by the methodologies that they employ than by the subjects/objects of their enquiry" (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p.316). They also noted that the case study approach is "particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over events" (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p.322). Indeed in this thesis the events of the transition to school process would take place whether or not the research was taking place. This research however does affect the process by the very fact that the process is being researched, and the fact that two groups experienced an enhanced induction programme as part of the approach used. The research process itself also had a part to play in the transition process for the children and families in this research project because of the raised awareness of the transitions process by the projects focus and the quality of the extra interactions created by the research.

Hitchcock and Hughes suggested seven key features of a case study namely

1. Rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
2. Chronological narrative of events relevant to the case.
3. Blends description of events with analysis.
4. Focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.
5. Highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.
6. Researcher is integrally involved in the case.
7. An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report.

<div align="right">Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p.317</div>

They noted that case studies can be

- Set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case,
- Defined with reference to characteristics defined by individuals and groups involved,
- Defined by participants' roles and functions in the case.

<div align="right">Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p.319</div>

Clearly, this single site case study is bound by the institution as the children are all joining the same school in the same year group during the same transition to school period.

Case studies are set up to portray the 'what it is like' part of a situation and to catch the "close up reality and thick description," (Geertz 1973 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, 182) of the participants' lived experience, thoughts and feelings in the situation. Nisbett and Watt reminded researchers of some of the pitfalls in using the case study

method. They noted that researchers should avoid journalism; selective reporting; an anecdotal style; pomposity and blandness (Nisbett and Watt 1984, p.91).

Below I have summarised the strengths and weaknesses of the case study / local study approach.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Data is strong in reality but can be difficult to organise.	Results may not be generalisable except where other readers/researchers see their application
Generalisations are allowed either about an instance or from an instance to a class.	Not easily open to crosschecking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective.
Recognise the complexity and 'embeddedness' of social truths. They can represent the discrepancies or conflicts between viewpoints held by participants.	Prone to problems of observer bias.
Can form archive material for subsequent reinterpretation.	
Are a 'step to action'. They begin in the world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted by staff and put to use...as in this research situation at School A.	
Present research in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research reports.	
Catch unique features that may be lost in a larger scale research project.	
Can be undertaken by a single researcher...as in this research situation.	

adapted from Adelman et al 1980; Nisbett and Watt 1984 and Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.184

The case study or local study researcher typically observes the characteristics of a particular unit, for example, a child, class or school community so that one can

> probe deeply and analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belong.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002, p.185

In this research the case study or local study focused on the individual children and the parents, the teachers of the Year R children and headteacher of the sample groups of the Year R intake for School A 2002/3 and 2003/4. This research created opportunities for broader reflections upon the notion of transition and allowed for the exploration of emerging theoretical ideas. It also allowed for analysis of the interviews held with the children and parents within the three groups to help School A to understand better the transition to school process at the school by an examination of the impact of those programmes. Further, it enabled it to consider future transition to school programmes based upon the responses to the three different induction programmes set up within the research.

In this research, I as the researcher, take a non-participant role. I am clearly not part of the group and so the role of researcher is more formal and distant from the participants. Indeed King (1979) noted that non-participant observers "stand aloof from the group activities they are investigating and eschew group membership" in (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002, p.187). Whilst taking a non-participant role all the previously mentioned aspects of understanding the self need to be remembered and considered.

Questionnaires

Whilst this method of response gathering was not used in this research thesis it is important to explore the methodology in order to understand why it was not chosen. Wilson and McLean said that the

> questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting
> survey information, providing structured, often numerical data,
> being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher,
> and often being comparatively straight forward to analyse.

> Wilson and McLean 1994, p.2

They did note however, that the use of the questionnaire is not always so positive because of the time necessary to

> develop, pilot and refine the questionnaire, by the possible
> unsophistication and limited scope of the data that are collected, and
> from the likely limited flexibility of response.

> Wilson and McLean 1994, p.3

There are several types of questionnaires and Cohen, Manion and Morrison refer to a simple rule of thumb when they commented

> the larger the size of the sample, the more structured, closed and
> numerical the questionnaire may have to be, and the smaller the size
> of the sample, the less structured, more open and word-based the
> questionnaire may be.

> Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.247

It is perhaps also misleading to state that any questionnaire could be unstructured because of the very nature of the questionnaire. Indeed Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.248 noted that, "the whole devising of a questionnaire requires respondents to adhere to some form of given structure." Within these structures the researcher needs to consider the kinds of questions to be used and the response modes, such as, dichotomous questions; multiple choice questions; rating scales or open questions. Closed questions will prescribe the range of responses from which the respondent may choose (Wilson and McLean 1994, p.21) whereas open questions enable respondents to write a free response in their own terms.

It is not just the content and framework of the questionnaire that needs to be planned and prepared carefully, consideration needs also to be given to the layout and covering letter too. The questionnaire must be easy to read and attractive to the reader. Indeed addition, Verma and Mallick (1999, p.120) also suggest the use of "high quality paper if funding permits." The whole questionnaire must be piloted, as this is crucial to the questionnaire's success.

In this research, questionnaires were not used as they were too impersonal and the research was based on the accounts of the respondents during a very personal once in a lifetime experience, namely the transition to full time education. Also the questionnaire method would not have been appropriate because of the children's age and thus their ability to record their feelings and thoughts. Further, the researcher did not want great volumes of data to analyse rather what was sought was more in depth quality verbal responses from a sample of children and their parents.

Interviews

Kvale (1996) defined an interview as

> an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, seeing the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizing the social situatedness of research data.
>
> Kvale 1996, p.14

The interview allows participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. This was precisely why this method of response gathering was chosen for this research. The interview allowed the respondents the opportunity to give their view of their lived experience as they were living it, that is, as they lived through the transition to full time school process.

Kitwood (1977) suggested that there are three conceptions of the interview;
1. Potential means of pure information transfer and collection,
2. A transaction which inevitably has bias, which is to be recognise and controlled,
3. As an encounter necessarily sharing many of the features of everyday.

Kitwood 1977 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.267

Barker and Johnson (1998) further argued that the interview is a

> particular medium for enacting or displaying people's knowledge of cultural forms, as questions, far from being neutral, are couched in the cultural repertoires of all participants, indicating how people make sense of their social world and of each other.

Barker and Johnson 1998, p.230

Cohen, Manion and Morrison identified six purposes of the interview and in this research the interview was used to gather data so that emerging theoretical notions about the transition process could be explored through the local study issues and the impact of the induction programmes assessed. They noted that the interview could be used:

1. To evaluate or assess a person in some respect,
2. To select or promote an employee,
3. To effect therapeutic change, as in the psychiatric interview,
4. To test or develop hypotheses,
5. To gather data,
6. To sample respondents' opinions, as in doorstep interviews.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.268

In essence the common denominator is the transaction that takes place between seeking information on the part of one and supplying information on the part of the other. In this research the interview gathered information, which had a direct bearing upon the research purpose. It

> provides access to what is 'inside a person's head' and makes it possible to measure what a person knows, what a person likes or dislikes and what a person thinks.

Tuckman 1972, p.268

It can also test hypotheses or suggest new ones and can be used in conjunction with other research methods. This is particularly the case in this research study where at the third interview and fourth interview stage, new emerging ideas were explored. The interview has been defined as

> a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.

Cannell and Kahn 1968, p.527

Borg (1963) suggested that "the direct interaction of the interview is the source of both its advantages and disadvantages as a research technique" in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001, p.269). One advantage is that it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods however one disadvantage is that it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. Another advantage is the high response rate which Oppenheimer suggests is because "respondents become more involved and, hence, motivated" (Oppenheimer 1992, p.81-2).

There are many types of interview suggested by LeCompte and Preissle (1993); Bogdan and Biklen (1992); Lincoln and Guba (1985); Oppenheim (1992) and Patton (1980) but instead of endless lists of interview types Kvale (1996) sets the several interview types along a continuum. He argued that interviews differ in the openness of

their purpose, their degree of structure, the extent to which they are exploratory or hypothesis testing, whether they seek description or interpretation, whether they are largely cognitive-focused or emotion-focused (Kvale 1996, p.126-7). The main concern is fitness for purpose and that is why in this research the interview style was the structured interview. This interview type allowed for a basic structure to guarantee that the core content was covered but it also allowed for free flowing conversation, specific details and anecdotes to be provided by the respondents. In essence it was structured enough but not too much! It was more qualitative in its style. Kvale noted that this end of the interview spectrum can be described by its features like

> words; open-ended; responsive; capturing uniqueness; long term; continuous; capturing particularity; valuing quality; individuality; informality; looking for uniqueness; explanation; subjective facts; interpreting; looking from the inside; unstructured; ethnographic; illuminative.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001, p.272

This qualitative approach is identified by several key features which I have tabulated below.

Life world	Topic of the interview is the lived world of the subjects and their relation to it as in the transition to full time education.
Meaning	The interview seeks to interpret key themes in the life of the subject like the transition to full time education for the child.
Qualitative	Qualitative knowledge is expressed in normal language, there is no desire to quantify it.
Descriptive	Descriptions are sought of the subject's world.
Specificity	Descriptions of specific situations are sought not general opinions
Deliberately naiveté	There is an air of general openness towards the subject matter and resulting phenomena.
Focused	The interview is focused on particular themes and not either unstructured or over structured.
Ambiguity	Interviewee statements can be ambiguous thus reflecting the contradictions that happen in real life.
Change	The process of the interview may produce new insights that change the interviewee's view of matters.
Sensitivity	Different interviewees can produce different views on the same theme dependent upon their sensitivity to and personal knowledge of the interview topic.
Interpersonal relations	The knowledge obtained is from the interpersonal relations interacted in the interview.
Positive experience	This research carried out well can be a positive enriching experience for the interviewer and interviewee.

adapted from Kvale 1996, p.30

Kvale noted the seven stages of planning an interview-based research project. This has been referred to in detail to illuminate the stages of the development of this research project and concludes this section about interviews with some comments about the reporting of the interview-based research project.

Thematizing	The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of the transition to full time education process on the child as viewed by the child, their parent, their teacher and headteacher. Opportunities are also sought to explore emerging themes and notions in a broader sense about transitions. This clarifies the *why* and *what* of the research project.
Designing	This is the research proposal - the initial ideas and design of the research project. At this stage the idea was fully discussed with the Head teacher of School A so that the practicalities of the research could be worked out and agreed. At this stage the interview questions were piloted and amended.
Interviewing	A series of four lots of 12 interviews talking with children and their parents and latterly teachers and headteacher over an eight-month period.
Transcribing	An audio-typist transcribing the interview tapes with random checking for the researcher to ensure that all the interview is recorded for later analysis.
Analysing	The texts are then analysed for emerging themes particular to the research project and in particular to the individual children and the three groups of transition programmes.
Verifying	Looking for generalisations were possible that can apply to the whole notion of transition and to School A.
Reporting	Communicating the findings of the research through a written report such as this.

adapted from Kvale 1996, p.88

Kvale suggested several elements to the final research report hence the format of this thesis. He commented

a) an introduction that includes the main themes and contents; b) an outline of the methodology and methods (from designing to interviewing, transcription and analysis); c) the results (the data analysis, interpretation and verification); d) a discussion.

Kvale 1996, p.263-6

Experiments

The use of ideas and notions reflected in a quasi-experimental style or approach but not method was one chosen by the researcher because the approach has several useful features that enabled the research to be organised in such a way that the responses could be analysed and compared with each other and emerging themes identified. This research did not use a quasi-experimental method. The outcomes of each group were not measured as such or scored in any way as to be directly comparative. The sample size was relatively small for a quasi-experimental method to have reliable results, and measurements were not made of the input and output variables. However, the idea that three different groups could be set up with three differing programmes of induction came from reading about the quasi-experimental method and how aspects of it could be applied. It would be true to say that this method was not used in this research but ideas have been taken from the method and incorporated into this research study.

In summary, in this research the key question is - what is the impact of the transition to full time education? This research uses one main research method by focusing on a single site local study of School A. The local study enables emerging theoretical themes on the notion of transition to be explored, whilst also allowing for an assessment of the

impact of School A's transition to school programme. This research used some of the ideas and notions within a quasi-experimental approach to structure the research processes and data gathering processes. It also used structured interviews with a sample of children and parents during the transition to school process in the academic school year 2002/3 and parents in the year 2003/4. The teachers and headteacher are also interviewed in the first phase on the research. This research project is qualitative throughout in its methodology of gaining responses for later analysis and assessment.

The next section considers the practical issues of the research context; the practical sequence of events and the practical tools used by the researcher.

Summary of practical issues and actions.

This section summarises the response gathering and methodology issues, and also examines the practical considerations and solutions within this research.

Why interview children?

I suppose the easy answer to this is...why not! The research in the 1970's (Thompson (1975) and Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979)) was primarily concerned with the views of the teachers on pupil transition to full time education. Later research recognised the voice of the child and acknowledged that, with sensitivity the children could be asked about their views. Dockett and Perry (1999b) commented that

> the children interviewed certainly had much to contribute to the discussion about what starting school was like for them. They were quite able to recall feeling scared (or not scared), a bit unsure when they didn't know what was going to happen or when they were confronted with an environment containing a lot of other (often bigger) children.

> Dockett and Perry 1999b, p.117

They also noted that

> listening to children talk about what starting school is like for them, or to what they think it will be like, and responding to the issues they raise is one way in which adults can help to make the transition to school smooth and enjoyable.

> Dockett and Perry 1999a, p.1-2

Fabian also suggested that "children are the experts when it comes to their own lives" (Fabian 2002, p.127). Brooker (1996) noted interviewing children can have a positive effect on the children being interviewed. In her research she comments that

> the interviews revealed that the act of consulting children has its own positive effect on children's self esteem, independence and reflectiveness.

> Brooker 1996, p.12

Further, as the researcher, I had previously researched into the 'how' of induction to full time education by questionnaires to parents of children who had joined a primary school over a four-year period. One of the recommendations of that research was the notion of developing the research by involving the children. This research represents further development of the original research methods that I used in my initial studies into the transition to school process.

Sensitivity is clearly an issue when working with young children. Young children are vulnerable because of their age and level of maturity. They can also be at emotional risk during any interview because of the influences that an adult may have upon them. Young children are vulnerable to suggestion and I am aware of how children are very sensitive to particular factors, for example, the look of a person, their manner, what they wear as well as what the person actually says. Young children, whilst quite sophisticated in their understanding and use of language may not fully understand some of the intricacies of the meaning of language. This is noted not to devalue the young person but to be aware of any constraints on their understanding. I am very experienced in working with young children, both as a professional working can be very sensitive to status and role and whilst it is important to show the value put on the research and on their responses, I needed to endeavour that the interview situation was not seen as intimidating to the young child so that they might feel inhibited with their answers.

The initial interviews were planned to take place at the child's home to ensure familiar and comfortable surroundings with parents present. Clearly the relationship, professional yet friendly, the researcher establishes with the parents may well affect how the young child perceives the researcher and the quality of the relationship that the researcher is then able to establish with the child. The last two interviews were held at the school to minimise interruptions to the children's school day, as by then the children were at school full time. It also minimised the disruptions to the child's family life and range of after school activities. It could be argued that after school may not be the best time to interview a young child since they may be tired from a full day at school and unable to settle or concentrate for the duration of the interview. There may in fact be no 'best time' that suits all the children as they are individuals and as such may have totally different 'best times'. So the general premise of seeing them during the school day may have been the most feasible option.

Interview dates and times for the first two interviews were negotiated with parents so that they could be mutually convenient to the parents, children and the researcher. Interview times for the third and fourth interviews were negotiated with parents and the date was pre-determined in negotiation with School A. At all the interviews 'Bill', a large kangaroo stuffed toy, was present. He was seen by me as a way of talking with the children as Bill had come along with me to find out about going to school. Each child named the small stuffed kangaroo that was in the larger kangaroo's pouch. The stuffed toy and 'baby' were reintroduced at each meeting with the child and were present at the school based interviews. Indeed 'Bill' was in charge of the biscuits on these occasions. 'Bill' was used as a familiar object with the children and as a way of them remembering the context for the meetings. I saw 'Bill' as a 'bridge' between myself and each child, and as a 'bridge' or point of continuity between the different interviews. It could be argued that by using 'Bill' I was entering into a semi role-play situation with the children. The children were encouraged to enter into the semi role-play too by 'befriending' 'Bill', naming the baby and acknowledging his role within the interview situation. 'Bill' was said to be finding out about going to school and he was helping me with my finding out processes. He was portrayed as mischievous, as always trying to get more biscuits, and as a familiar 'face' within each meeting, He was a child centred point of continuity throughout the four sets of interviews.(See also Appendix D5).

Sample selection

Much has already been noted about this, but this chapter is concerned with the practical research issues namely of the sample identifying process. Each child in the academic entry year of 2002/3 Year R at School A was given a profile (see Appendix B) using the information that the school already knew about the child; its background; siblings; parents' occupations; pre-school experience. These profiles were drawn up after the parents had applied for a place at the school for their child and been offered a place at School A. These profiles were then used by the researcher, with the Headteacher of School A, to put together the three groups; A, B and C. Each group was composed of children who matched the variables of 'young' or 'older' child; some pre-school experience or none; no previous contact at the school or much previous contact and elder siblings at school or no siblings at all. Clearly, as there were only four children per group there was going to be some doubling or trebling of variables, for example, a child with two older siblings at school with a lot of pre-school experience and this could not necessarily be duplicated in each group. As Kerlinger (1970) noted every attempt should be made to make the three groups as balanced and matched as possible.

Whilst School A had places for 80 children to join them in Year R by March 2002, 77 places had been offered. Places were confirmed for 36 boys and 41 girls. The children for the research were chosen using the data provided on the school's admission form. This form clearly identified the name and age of the child, their address, position in the family, the ages of siblings and the schools they attend, and the child's attendance at any pre-school provider. From this information 12 children were selected. 7 girls were chosen and 5 boys. This balance of boys and girls reflected, as far as was possible, the balance of the September 2002 intake of children.

The children were selected according to the factors discussed in the methodology chapter. Consideration was given to their age (old – September-December birthday or young – April-August birthday), whether or not they had older siblings and therefore as a family had previous experience of the education system and local schools, and whether or not they attended any preschool provision. In considering the equivalence of the three groups, A, B and C, the children were selected to reflect the best equivalence of factors. The best was determined as the factors that could be most obviously determined from the information available, for example, age, older siblings and pre-school provision.

Below is a table outlining the profiles of the 12 children involved in phase one of the research.

Code for each child	Factors
A1 B1 C1	Old, no older siblings, pre-school experiences
A2 B2 C2	Young, have older siblings, pre-school experiences
A3 B3 C3	Old, have older siblings, pre-school experiences
A4 B4 C4	Young, no older siblings, pre-school experiences

From the table above it is noticeable that all the children have attended some kind of pre-school provision. All of the children starting school at School A in September

attended some form of pre-school provision. They attended local playgroups and nurseries during the 18 months before they were due to start School A.

Induction Programme Packages

This is clearly a sensitive issue as each child has a right to the induction programme offered by the school. This is not an absolute right or a Human Right but it is an educational good practice right within the English education system. In discussion with the Headteacher, staff and governors of School A, it was decided that the minimum induction package had to be the newly developed programme that the school was already using. Firstly, because this did not prejudice any of the children as had they joined the school at a time when no research project was taking place then this would be the induction programme on offer. Secondly, because School A wanted to evaluate their induction programme and its impact, it would have to be the induction programme currently being used which was used as the 'basic' one because the school was concerned about whether enhanced programmes had any different or enhanced effects upon the children's ability to make the transition to full time education.

Three packages were devised with A being the induction programme that the school was already using. The school also had to be sure that any package that was developed could be staffed and given the appropriate amount of time so these were also considerations when drawing up the three packages. Careful consideration was given to the elements added to Package B and C, namely an extra home visit and the extra activity of the school visiting the child at their pre-school. These were both major extra activities. Major in terms of funding and time commitment on behalf of the school and also major in the school's understanding of what events might well have an added positive impact upon the children during the transition to school process. The school believed that these activities would enhance the transition experience for the children and enable them to make the 'bridge' from pre-school and/or home to school more easily. This is what the school wanted to evaluate.

Group A (Package A (Basic))

- Home Visit Sept 2002
- Pre-school Visit set of 3 – summer 2002
- Pre-school library

Group B (Package B (Basic and extra home visit))

- Home Visit July (extra) and Sept 2002
- Pre-school Visit set of 3 – summer 2002
- Pre-school library

Group C (Package C (Basic and extra home visit and visit to re school provider))

- Home Visit July and Sept 2002
- Pre-school Visit set of 3 – summer 2002
- Pre-school library

- Pre-school interacting visit with teacher to either home or pre-school provision
  – *summer 2002 (extra)*

Response Gathering Process

The response gathering focuses on the local study of School A and through phase one of a series of four structured interviews with sample children and their parents over an eight-month time span. Phase two of a series of two interviews carried out with parents of children who were due to attend School A the following September to phase one children.

The table below outlines the interview schedule for phase one which follows the time line of the children joining the school full time. The research time frame did not assume that this eight months period was the transitional period for the children.

Number	Interaction	Time Frame
1	Once school place confirmed	March 2002
2	End of Induction Programme (i.e. full time attendance)	September / October 2002
3	End of first full week	October 2002
4	End of first term	December 2002

The interviews took place initially at the child's house because this was the familiar place for the child and their parent, but as the children joined the school full time they were held at the school with the parent joining the child at school for the interviews. All the interviews with the children took place with their parents present.

Parents were initially contacted by letter from the Headteacher of School A and then by myself (see Appendix A1 and A2). Once the parents had agreed to the children and themselves being part of the research project, I contacted them by telephone to arrange the first interview date and venue. (A 'back-up' list of children was also created by the Headteacher and the researcher so that it could be called on should any parent not want to be part of the research.) This phone call was the start of the rapport between the parents, child and myself and was the start of the building of relationships and trust. During this phone call the elements of the ethical protocol were discussed and the practicalities of where to meet, when and how the interviews would be conducted. A copy of the ethical protocol (see Appendix I) was given to each parent at the first set of interviews. I also discussed with parents, over the phone, how to prepare the child for the interviews. It was important that the child knew enough about me and the purpose of the interviews to be at their ease, but they should not be 'primed' with content or answers, as this would clearly invalidate the research. The parents were told the range of the questions to be used during the interviews but not the specific questions. It was suggested that the parents might want to talk to the child about a 'lady coming to see us about going to big school (or school) so that she can find out more about it'. Clearly, in the 'warm-up' part of the first interview with the child the setting of the scene with them was an important part of the trust and purpose inter-relationship between myself and child.

The first interviews took the longest time as relationships and purposes needed to be made clear and trust slowly developed. The relationship between me, the child and parent needed to be based on credibility and trust and the protocols agreed. There were also social etiquettes and graces to be observed as I was a guest in the family home and /or School A. It was also important for my safety that the situation was carefully approached and that I was at no time left alone with the child. I am clearly aware of child protection issues within the remit of my professional role. The relationships created were crucial to making a formal situation less formal yet still rigorous in the use of the research methodology. Indeed each set of interviews was rather like a test of my interpersonal skills with adults and children.

It is worth at this point acknowledging that it is difficult to gain full access to children's speech. Tizard and Hughes (1984) note that children's speech is severely constrained by the context in which it takes place, both physical and social. The relationship the child has with the interviewer can be liberating or intimidating and as Hughes and Cousins have reported (Perspectives 40, quoted in Desforges, 1989), the difference made by familiar or unfamiliar surroundings can be almost equally great.

At each meeting with the child and parent a structured interview took place with both the child and parents using the questions modified after the pilot. This was recorded by means of a hand held tape recorder and the tapes were clearly labelled with the date of the interview and the code of the child, for example, C3 (1).

Following the interviews the tape was given to an audio typist for transcribing. The brief given to the audio typist was to type every word and if it was inaudible to indicate this on the transcript. She was not asked to interpret the words or to show any emphasis when transcribing. It was agreed that I would sample tapes to check the transcripts for accuracy. Each transcript was titled with the date of the interview and the code for the child.

Hockett (1960) identifies 13 features that characterise human language and which distinguish it from other communication systems. He speaks of vocal-auditory channels; broadcast transmission and directional reception; rapid fading; interchangeability; total feedback; specialisation; semanticity; arbitrariness; discreteness; displacement; productivity and traditional transmission. Many, if not all of these features, would be present in the responses of the children and their parents and the inter communication between the researcher and the research participants. There would also be other features present, such as, those of unspoken language, features like, pauses; signs of uncertainty like stuttering; emotional responses, such as, the children checking facially with their parent before giving a response and the facial encouragement of parents towards their children to encourage them to respond; gestures made by both the children and the parents towards each other and the researcher. All of this unspoken language is very powerful in the messages that are given. It is worth perhaps taking the time to remember the powerful communication of Charlie Chaplin in the early silent movies when the emotions and storyline of the different events in the films were very clear because of the strong use of language in its unspoken form. There is also the use of social language in the inter-communication between the participants, the taking of turns to speak and the facial signs of encouragement given by the researcher through smiles and nodding of the head to encourage the children and the parents with their responses. It could be argued that the use of a dictaphone was an

inhibiter in this social language interplay but at least it allowed for the free flow of responses to be recorded in a way that did not stop the flow of the responses and allowed the researcher to fully interact both verbally and non-verbally with the respondent.

In this research the non-verbal or unspoken or social language was not recorded and so it could be argued that an important part of the children's and parent's responses was lost. This may be the case but the practicalities of the research are such that it is important to record in a practical way as much of the responses as possible and it would not be possible to record every aspect of the interactions. There were considerations made about occasions when the non-verbal language was so strong or striking that it should be noted to refer to later when examining the transcripts to add to the context of the typed up responses.

Storing the data

Following the transcribing of the tapes, the written text was stored in a lever arch file with card indexes for each child coded. Each section for each child stored the four interviews with them and their parent. There was also a section that contained the interviews with the teachers and headteacher. At the front of the file was an interview tracking sheet (see Appendix C) so that all the interviews and their completion dates could be seen at a glance. Each transcript for each child, parent and teacher was carefully coded based on the code of the child. There were 122 interviews in total. This means of storing the data meant that the work of analysing the data could be systematic and that the transcripts could be easily found and referred to. Each interview was also stored electronically both on floppy disc and on two computers in different locations. This duplication of the data stored was to minimize the chances of the data being lost or spoilt in any way. As discussed earlier, the children and parents were given numerical codes for ease of recording and analysing the data and so that I didn't get confused between real and fictitious names when recording and analysing the interviews. Fictitious names where added at the writing stage to make the text more readable and to acknowledge the human nature of the data. For the parents who took part in Phase two of the research their responses were coded as Ph2 (for Phase 2) and a different letter of the alphabet for each parent. They have remained coded this way in this final text.

Phase 2

As ideas emerged within the research it became clear that a second phase of research would be desirable to test out the emerging ideas and to add to the validity of the emerging theories. The second phase of the research was designed in the same way as the first but involved just parents and not children. The methodology was the same using an interview approach and interviewing them over a period of time, that is, from March 2003 through to September 2003. Each of the 12 parents was selected from the cohort of children that had accepted places at School A for September 2003. Each interview conversation took place on the telephone and was arranged to suit the convenience of the parents. Parents were chosen in consultation with the headteacher of School A and were initially approached by her for their consent to be involved in the project. (See Appendix A3 and A4)

Some testing of emerging ideas had taken place during the fourth set of interviews with the children and their parents. New questions were introduced to ask the children and their parents that explored further the idea of 'bridging'. In phase 2, two key questions were asked of the 12 parents. The questions were focussed on testing further notions of 'bridging' and they were designed as prompts to gain responses in the interview situation with the parents. The questions were firstly, for the March interviews at the start of the families formal involvement the with the school, "what things (activities/events/people) do you think will help your child make a smooth transition to full time education?" and secondly, for the September interviews when the child was coming to the end of the school's formal induction programme, "what things (activities/events/people) did help your child make that smooth transition to full time education?" Clearly, the second question also assumed that the transition to school had been smooth but during the interview process if references were made to the transition not being totally successful then this was the opportunity to sensitively explore these issues further.

The context for the second phase of the research was as similar as possible to the context of the first phase of the research so that some control elements could be assured. The control issues included:

- The children were due to attend School A the following September.
- The parents were parents of children due to join School A in September 2003.
- All the children were due to take part in Induction Package A, which was the school's normal induction programme.
- The parents were chosen by the headteacher and invited to take part in the research by the headteacher of School A.
- All of the children attended some kind of pre-school provision.
- Some of the children had older siblings whilst others had younger siblings and some had no siblings.
- The children's ages ranged from those that were older children, that is with autumn birthdays, to children who were younger, that is, they had summer birthdays.
- The same methodology was used to plan and gather the responses, that is, through a series of interviews based around a lead question.
- The research also took place within the same time frame as the first research stage that is after the initial contacts from the school and up to the time when the children were at school full time.
- The responses were recorded and analysed.

6 of the 12 children of the parents interviewed in phase 2 were 'younger 'children with 6 being born in the autumn term timeframe. All of the children had attended a pre-school provider before they started full time education. 4 had been to a nursery provision whilst 8 had attended playgroup. 5 of the children had older siblings whilst 7 had younger siblings or were only children. None of the parental occupations gave the parents any direct day-to-day contact with the school environment, that is, none of the parents were teachers or worked in a school in any other capacity, for example, teaching assistant or school administrator. All of the parents' occupations gave them a social class rating of Class 1 or 2.

Each of the parents was invited to have access, via the school, to the final research document and each of the parents was told in detail about the ethical protocol underlying the research project. Each of the parental interviews was recorded and transcribed in the same way as the initial phase of the research and the outcomes were also stored in the same manner. (See Appendix L)

Data analysis

Once all the data had been collated I set about examining the possible ways that the data could be analysed. I devised a list of analytical starting points and worked steadily through them. For example, examining the first set of interviews and then second set in sequence; by categorising the content of each set of interviews and the interviews overall; by comparing the outcomes of the interviews of each child and parent within each programme and examining the social background and parental occupation considerations. This methodical approach was to ensure that no way of analysing the data could be overlooked. I wanted to consider the data against itself, that is, to see how the 'story' for that interviewee developed; against others, that is, comparing like responses between interviewees and against other sources, that is, with other research outcomes. Sometimes the analysis started with more research so that the analysis could take place, for example, researching on the internet into social class categorisation issues so that they could be considered alongside the research data.

Each time an analysis was carried out it was based on the hard copies of the interview transcripts. These were collated in one ring bound folder for ease of access and reference. Whereever possible the analysis was linked to the transitional models and to existing research, for example, consideration of the emotions talked about by parents and referring this to Dockett and Perry's research. Whilst the data analysis needed to be thorough I was aware that the final thesis needed to be readable and not repetitive so the way the analysis was written in the final text also needed to be considered hence the use of fictitious names for the children in the later text. Whereever possible it was also important to give the evidence for a certain standpoint or assertion, for example, when writing about sibling factors and referring to the interview transcript of the parent of Rachel (4).

Whilst each part of the data analysis was carried out the different elements started to draw together towards the consideration of a new model. As these thoughts began to frame in my mind I jotted down on a note pad evidence and ideas as they emerged. These jottings would provide the framework for the penultimate chapter.

The following chapter examines the results of the 121 interviews and systematically considers the research evidence.

Chapter Seven

Analysis and Interpretation

The things I remember about starting school:
- **I had lots of visits**
- **People were bigger than me**
- **I was quiet because I did not know what to do, but the teacher helped**
- **I thought I was a big boy now!**
- **I learnt some work at kindergarten which helped me**
- **I knew my address and phone number**
- **I wanted mum to come to school with me**
- **I am not scared now. I like school.**

Lloyd Manning, aged 9 years (1998)
Childrenz Issues Vol 2, no:1 p.6

The key research question for this study is "what is the impact of the transition to full time education on young children?" The research also was initiated to explore the broader opportunities around the notion of transition and to allow for an exploration of emerging themes or ideas. It is at this point that it is worth considering the notion of impact and what kinds of outcomes this research might consider.

By impact the researcher is considering the effect of the transition process on both the individual children, the school and for broader issues. The effect of the transition process can be considered for the individual children and for the groups of children (A, B and C) involved. There may well also be effects, that is, an impact for School A and the parents of the children involved in the research. There might be broader issues that arise because of the research that need either further exploration or analysis.

It is worth also thinking about the notion of impact and the ways of considering it. The impact of an event or action may not always be linear or causal. The impact may indeed be multi-faceted, mediated or correlational. The impact may be direct or indirect. This notion of impact was discussed at the December 2002 meeting of the Governing Council of the National College for School Leadership. In considering the work of the college we discussed the lack of a tradition of measuring impact in the education system and talked about the complexities of the notion of impact. We talked about the fact that often it can take time for an activity or event to impact upon the participants and that considering impact can be a subjective as well as an objective process.

The impact itself may be tempered or exacerbated by other factors within the research context. By the very nature that the children are human beings and belong to family groupings with rich and varied experiences, the impact of the transitional activities may well be weakened or indeed enhanced. As with the ethical issues surrounding this research the impact of the transitional programmes has to be taken within the real life context and time frame for the children. Indeed one might argue that the external factors within this research cannot be controlled, as they are part of ongoing life and

possibly beyond even the control of the participants, that is, the families themselves. In this research the impact is considered over a period of time namely when the children first attend school full time and when they have nearly completed their first term at school. This 'snapshot' during the transition process gives exactly that - a 'snapshot' of the impact so far. The research could go even further and re evaluate the impact in a more long term view, for example, after the children have been at the school for a year or two or even track them throughout their compulsory education to gauge for the longer term impact.

One of the key aspects of this research was to evaluate the impact of the transition to school process and also to examine the whole notion of transition through emerging themes in the research. Whilst there is debate about how long the transition process takes and whether or not it is ever complete (later in this chapter), the time frame of this research suits the purposes of the research question and issues.

In this chapter the findings of this research, phase one and two, are analysed and assessed. In phase one for each of the twelve children, their views and those of their parents are tracked through the transition to full time education. Each set of interviews is assessed and the outcomes of the children with similar factors are explored and the outcomes of the three groups are assessed in terms of the responses of the children and their parents at the beginning of their unique induction programme and their responses at the end. In phase two, the reflection of the twelve parents are assessed and used to consider the research in its second stage – one of checking out ideas and emerging notions. In the final chapters themes identified earlier in this thesis are revisited and emerging theoretical notions are developed and shaped.

Through this chapter quotes are given from the interviews. Evidence is given from parents and from the children. Each child is referred to by their fictitious name and given a number code. The number code identifies the number of the interview. So Molly (3) references what Molly said in her third interview. Parents quoted are referenced through their child, for example, parent of Molly (3).

Interviews

Whilst appendix F is referred to in greater depth later in the text it is important to draw the readers' attention to it at this point. Appendix F draws together the outcomes from the four sets of interviews in a table format. It shows the transitions that the children made in terms of their knowledge and understandings of the school context. It summarises the parental responses and should also been seen with reference to Appendix M. It shows a holistic picture of the responses of the children and parents in phase one in a table format for ease of viewing. It is in the context of Appendix F that the detailed analysis and assessment takes place.

First set of interviews

It was a privilege to be allowed into the home and family life of the children and their families. Each family greeted me warmly and was ready to be involved in the research processes. Each of the initial interview meetings took about one hour. Much of this time

was spent explaining the research to the adult and to the child in their terms. The ethical protocol was given to each parent and discussed. The date and time and venue for the second set of interviews in September were also negotiated. Mothers were present at all the interviews and at three meetings fathers took part. All of the children were interviewed in the presence of an adult. All parents were interviewed with their child present.

Children

At this early stage in the research process some features began to emerge from the results of the interviews with the parents and their children. The children with older siblings, that is, siblings that had already made the transition to full time primary education, knew more about what to expect from school. It could be that they were more prepared because of the families' involvement with the older sibling going to school. Molly (1) (the first interview with Molly) was an exception to this as she had no older sibling but had a close relationship with a cousin who lived nearby and attended School A. Perhaps it would be fair to say that a close relative already at school seemed to be a factor in the level of initial knowledge the children had about going to school. Rachel (1) said that at school you did "writing and reading", she would wear "a top and a grey skirt" for going to school and would have "sandwiches – tuna" for her lunch at school. Molly (1) commented that there would be "lots of people" at big school and that "the children might be playing hard". She knew her cousin and a male friend would be at school with her and had some ideas about what kind of activities she would be involved in when she said "I think that I will – make sticky things and stuff". Simon (1) was very clear about what he would do at school when he commented about "playing and doing work". He knew in detail about the school uniform and predicted which class he was going to be in..." yes I'm going to be in Blue Class". (See Appendix D1)

Bruner (1996) argued that this participation in the culture of the school helps the young child to understand the culture. Tharp and Gallimore (1998, p.101) noted that this is like Bruner's 'handover principle' where the child moves from a spectator at the event(s) to a participant and begins to take responsibility for task performance within the situation. Fabian (2002) also made reference to the role that older siblings play in the transition process when she commented

> those with older brothers and sisters already at school sometimes play at 'schools'. They gain an understanding of the nature of school through listening to their older siblings, accompanying them to school each day or seeing school items, such as books that are brought home.
>
> Fabian 2002, p.21

In considering the children who have some already established associations with School A it is far too early to come to any conclusions about the success of any part of the transition process for them however, Cleave, Jowett and Bate (1982, p.104) commented that "our study indicates that children who settled in with no apparent difficulty were more likely to have older siblings who had attended the school before them".

In the research interview situation the older children were more able to respond to the questions asked of them. This comment is made as a reflection on their age and stage of their maturity. All the children were very cooperative though the younger children needed the reassurance of their parent. Often they sat on their mothers lap or very near them. They were less confident in the situation. This is just noted here as a reflection upon the process as for these children, aged three, the situation could have been very daunting. The interviews were very informal with most children responding well to the kangaroo soft toy that was taken along as a talking point and 'aid' to the researcher, and all of the children were very helpful me when my inadequacies with the dictaphone were explained!

Some of the children had very clear ideas about what school was all about. Tanya (1) said that it was about "learning" and Rachel (1) commented that school was about" writing and reading". Brooker (1996) noted in her research that, "the children agreed unanimously that school was for learning" (Brooker 1996, p.12). One child seemed concerned about the numbers of people at school and the size of the place as it was mentioned three times in his interview. He noted "there are lots of people go to big school" and he said "I think that there will be very big people as well" and later he commented "well, it's a bit big for little children".

All the children spoke positively about going to school. They said that it was "good and nice", "it's good", "I think it's quite great" (Natalie (1), Rachel (1) and Molly (1). As to how they felt about going to school, again were the children responded, all the comments were positive. They said "I'm really up for it" , "I am already a bit excited" and one child commented that she felt "proud" (Molly(1), Simon (1) and Natalie (1)). Fabian (2002) noted that "before starting school most children are looking forward to going", (Fabian 2002, p.19). However, Griebel and Niesel (2000) found that children only had a vague idea what to expect from school and were nervous and insecure but also convinced that they were going to do well. In this research there was no indication of the concerns that Griebel and Niesel noted. This is interesting given the context information at the beginning of this thesis about the age at which children start school in England. One could speculate that as there are some concerns about the starting age of full time education, that is, it is much earlier than other European countries, that there might be some negative consequences of that early start in terms of settling into the Reception class. There was no evidence of any settling in difficulties for the children within this research.

Two of the children used their known experience as a 'bridge' to the new experience. Molly (1) didn't know the name of the teacher of her class at Infant school. In fact she couldn't because at this point in the school year the class lists would not have been formed. So she used known information to answer the question. She brought part of her previous existing knowledge when asked about the new situation. Perhaps this was her way of 'bridging the gap' between the known (pre-school teacher) and the unknown (Infant school teacher). Molly (1) said "my teacher at pre-school is Miss G" in response to the question What will your teacher's name be at big school? Simon (1) when asked whether he will have lunch at school says "yes – but I don't at my little nursery and that's a bit more gooder than big school". Once again the child was answering the question by relating the context back to one that he was familiar with. This concept does not easily fit into the transition cycle as described by Hopson and Adams (1976,

p.9-13) or the cycle described by Nicholson 1990. This notion of 'bridging' is explored further in the next chapter.

The children's responses could be part of the scaffolding idea explored by Fabian (2000) although Fabian's research does not refer to the use of past experience to 'bridge' into the new. Fabian referred to "watching others; being with a friend; talking with others and the use of children's names in paired activities" Fabian (2000, p.151) but did not refer to the idea of using previous similar and familiar experiences to make the link between two situations. It could be that it is unique to this research situation and that it is a new part of the transition process that hasn't been fully explored. Another possible reason is that Molly mis-heard the question or didn't understand the question and that would explain their response. It could also be that Molly (1) thinks that all teachers are called Miss G or even that the child is trying to please the researcher but doesn't know the answer so they give the information, the answer, that they do know.

Parents

The majority of the parents said that they believed that their child was 'ready' for the move to full time school. "She's definitely ready to go", commented one parent with another stating "she's definitely ready for it" (Natalie (1) and Jane (1)). One parent noted of her daughter that "she's well ready and looking forward to being a big girl" (Molly (1)). Some parents were keen to explain that they felt that their child was ready to learn. One said "she's got past the stage of playing and she's ready to learn" Tanya (1), whilst another commented "he wants to learn" (Ben (1)). All of the parents said that their child was positive in their attitude about the idea of going to full time school. They commented about the child being excited..."I know that she's very excited – in fact she can't wait to start", "excited. She's very excited" and "he's very excited about it already" (Natalie (1), Rachel (1) and Simon (1)). They noted that their child was looking forward to it when they said "he's looking forward to it – he really is" and "it's an adventure to him" (Gary (1) and Ben (1)). Two parents felt that their child was not so positive about going to school. The parent of Jenny (1) noted, "I think she is quite anxious. She doesn't know what's going to be coming" and the parent of Stephen (1) said, "I don't know – he's quite concerned."

The parent interviews provided evidence of the ways the children had been prepared so far in the transition process to full time education. All of the children had attended some kind of pre-school, referred to as nursery or pre-school or play group. For some children, the amount of time they spent at pre-school was gradually being increased in preparation for full time school. One parent stated "she goes to play school – mornings Tuesday and Wednesday and all day Thursday. So we've tried a whole day to see how she goes. She takes her sandwiches. When she goes off for the day she's really excited. I think she will be ready to go" (Tanya (1)).

Many parents referred to the fact that they were talking with their children about 'big' school and what it would be like. They noted that "we talk about it in small details – like when you go to big school you will learn to read and write – just gentle things"

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and "we have talked about going to big school and what that might be like" (Ben (1) and Molly (1)). Fabian (2002) comments about this when she writes that

> parents can act as a transitional link between home and school, helping their child by talking about it and integrating the two worlds.
>
> Fabian 2002, p.102

Children with older siblings were reported as being already involved in the life of school and some in the activities of School A. "When H, the eldest one, brings his reading home she sits with her little book and does a bit of writing and some spellings" commented one parent and another noted "we've been to fetes at the school and things like that" (Jane (1) and Molly (1)). One parent recalled the voluntary work that she had been doing in School A and how her child was involved in that. She said "We've got his school uniform bits and he knows the teachers already as I've been getting the wet play boxes ready with Miss A. So he's getting to know the teachers" (Simon (1)). Parents with older children already in full time education recalled how the child being interviewed went with their older sibling to school each day as the elder child was being taken to school and how they also collected the elder sibling from the school each day. They felt that this too was part of the preparation for their child. As one parent noted "we walk to school, it's quite a walk but Bs always done it so....I think that she will be fine as she obviously knows that it is where B goes" (Tanya (1)).

Many parents recalled the kinds of activities they were doing with their children at home in preparation for going to full time school. They had visited shops to purchase school uniform and had encouraged the children to try it on. Parents talked about using pre-school books; doing colouring, counting; answering questions and taking the opportunity to develop learning ideas. "At home we do counting and colouring and things like that. When he wants a sandwich he wants it cut into four and then he wants it cut into four again", commented one parent whilst another said "she likes to read a lot and do drawing and writing" and another recalled " we have done things like, you know, little pre-school maths books" (Gary (1), Rachel (1) and Natalie (1)). One parent reflected that she felt she hadn't done much preparation herself. She commented" Not a bit – she goes to nursery" (Tanya (1)). Barrett's research (1996) tells of ways that parents tried to prepare their children for starting school by talking about it and shopping for new "shoes, bags or other clothing especially bought, made and labelled for school" (Barratt 1986, p.28).

The parents' own views about their child going to full time school varied. There seemed to be two levels of responses. The first was of anxiety and sadness. One parent noted that she was "petrified", whilst another commented that she was "sad...she's my last one" and yet another said "desperately going to miss her...she's a girl as well and my last one" (Ben (1), Rachel (1) and Jenny (1)). Elfer commented on this 'loss' writing that:

children's start at school is loaded with emotional uncertainty for
parents and makes an impact on their well-being due to feelings such
as 'losing' their child and having to learn how to cope without them.

<div align="right">Elfer 1997, p.14</div>

Many parents said that they felt strange about the situation. They said "it's going to be strange not having him about during the day" , "it's going to be very strange because being my first child it will be strange to not have him about as I'm used to (Gary (1)and Stephen (1)). The second level of parental response was of happiness linked to comments about the child being ready for school. "Happy" said one mother about her daughter going to school and "I'm happy. She'll be fine", said another (Jane (1) and Molly (1)).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children acknowledged that how the parents handle the transition to school process can affect how well the children adjust to school life. The NAEYC commented

> how adults handle transitional situations can set the stage for how
> well a child adjusts to other challenges in life. Those who love and
> care for children can help them adapt by making preparations in
> advance, clearly explaining the changes about to take place, and
> listening if doubts or fears develop.

<div align="center">www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1998/16.htm</div>

School

All the parents commented that at this stage in the transition to full time education process there had been no preparation for their child or themselves from School A. This was the response that was expected as all the first interviews took place before any of the formal induction activities had started. Some parents recalled that the pre-school groups had been approached by School A to ask the parents of children joining them in September 2002 to indicate up to six of the child's friends so that classes could be drawn up taking account of those friendship groupings. One parent recalled "all we've had is a list at play school of her nearest friends to fill in" and another stated "there was a letter from the pre-school asking about children that he knows so that they could go into the same class" (Tanya (1) and Gary (1)).

Natalie moves away

Between the first and second set of interviews with children and their parents, Natalie and her family moved location to another town and were therefore unable to carry on as part of the research group. Whilst this did not give the full twelve children for the research to follow and the full complement of children within each grouping for the research to compare the research sample is still valid. The sample was set up in such a way as to allow for the possibility that not all the children and the families would be able to complete the full research programme because of developments within the

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families that the research would and could have no bearing upon, such as families moving house. The researcher considered this possibility when setting the number of children and their families to be involved in the research programme. The possibility of the sample size reducing during the research programme and its effects were discussed on earlier in this thesis.

Second set of interviews

By late September all the children were at school part-time – mornings and had started to stay for their lunch. The children were collected by their parents at 1.15pm each day. During the second interviews with the children and their parents it was most striking that the children had grown in confidence tremendously. None of the children had seen me since April but I was welcomed into most homes like a friend of the family. The children were keen to speak into my 'talking machine' and remembered my incompetence at dealing with the technology of the Dictaphone and how 'Bill' would be able to help me. The children were confident in themselves and in the situation. By this time the children were nearly five months older and their growing confidence may have reflected maturity, the growth related to new experiences or even the familiarity with the interview situation and interviewer. They all seemed to have *'grown up'* (author's italics) a great deal since the first interviews.

Children

Most of the children by the second interview could recall specific activities that they were involved in at school. They were no longer talking in the general terms of the first interviews when they spoke about learning and doing. In talking about what do you know about school and what do you do at school they recalled "playing with the big Lego", "playing with the play dough" and some recalled specific tasks they had completed such as, "well I draw some pictures and things. I drew a picture of the sky and some black mud and some black clouds" (Callum (2), Gary (2) (Appendix D2) and Molly (2)). By contrast said very little about specific school activities and was more interested in talking about her uniform and her lunch (Jane (2).

All of the children could name at least someone else that they know at school. They all recalled the children's name. It is interesting that although they clearly knew new adults they responded in terms of other children. Many children could name three or four other children. When asked about what school is like the children that responded did so by relating a feeling or emotion saying that it was "fine" and "good" (Callum (2) and Jenny (2)).

All of the children talked in detail about their lunch arrangements and often recalled their lunch in some detail. This may have been because for the majority of the children this was the first week that they had stayed for lunch at school. "Yes – I had hot dinners today it was spaghetti," recalls Jane (2) whilst Ben (2) noted that he had "sandwiches, crisps, apple and a chocolate bar."

Few children knew the name of their school and the Headteacher's name but all of the children could recall their teacher's name. This was perhaps understandable as their teacher was the adult that they would have come into contact with most often although

according to the headteacher, every child says good morning to her on the way into the school building.

The majority of the children felt positive about attending to school. One child said that he felt "happy and a bit nervous sometimes" but most of the children made comments like "happy " and "fine" (Ben (2), Gary (2) and Rachel (2)). Molly (2) commented, "it feels really good and I want to go every day but my mum says that I can't!"

Parents

Some of the parents, that is the mothers, continued to speak very openly about their feelings of loss now that their child was a school. They spoke of their concerns for themselves now their child was at school and soon to be attending on a full time basis. The mother of Jenny (2) commented that "I think that I am at a bit of a loss so I am happy for her because she needs the school. I'm at a loss because I've got nobody to talk too." The mother of Rachel (2) said that "I'm getting used to it. She's just the last one and is good company and I miss her." The mother of Stephen (2) noted that "I felt very emotional about it for the first couple of days and bereft. But I'm getting used to it now but the next hurdle for me will be when he goes for full days." The parent of Ben (2) said that "I was apprehensive to start with but I feel absolutely fine about it. I was worried bit it is fine now". A parent commented "it is really strange not having him around especially for us. We don't know what to do with ourselves. It has taken some adjusting to" (Gary (2)). Other parents were clearly delighted that their child was at school commenting that "I feel fine and very positive too!" (Callum (2)). Molly (2) commented that she felt "very pleased - I feel very comfortable about it because she is ready for it".

Many parents felt that their child was feeling positive about starting school and noted comments like, "I think that he is fine and very positive. He is really enjoying it" Callum (2) and "she is very confident and enjoying it thoroughly" (Jenny (2)). Other parents acknowledged that their child felt anxious. The parent of Ben (2) commented that " I think that he enjoys going and looks forward to going but gets butterflies in his stomach" and the parent of Jane (2) said that "the initial going in is still a bit tearful but once I leave I think that she is fine."

By interview two, the parents had mixed views about the preparation for them given by the school. Some parents believe that there was no preparation for them as when the parent of Jenny (2) commented about the preparation saying that "I don't think that they do – they don't cater for mums as such. I think that you are just there to keep you on board." Yet the parent of Rachel (2) stated that "I think that them preparing her is preparing me. Because as she knows what's happening and knows the people then I'm quite happy. The main thing is that they prepare her and I'm quite happy with this – they've done it well."

With the range of activities and events prepared for the children as part of their induction to school programme all of the parents were able to recall what activities they and/or their child had taken part in. Different parents valued highly different parts of the induction programme. The parent of Ben (2) recalled the home visit before the school visit as being "really good. It really did him a lot of good." The parent of Stephen (2) noted that the visit to her son's playgroup offered to this family as they

were part of induction package C was helpful. She commented that "they visited the playgroup too. It was all useful. It was very helpful that they visited the playgroup to see him there." The parents of Molly (2) and Simon (2) felt that the information evening for parents was the most useful aspect of the preparation for them as it "was really useful. It let you know about practical things like where to buy the uniform" (Molly (2)).

Most parents had continued to prepare their children for going to school full time themselves at home since the first interviews. This took a variety of forms. Some parents recalled encouraging their children and reinforcing with them through talking what would happen at school whereas other parents had involved the children in specific preparation activities such as buying the school uniform and trying it on regularly during the summer holiday; "helping him with his counting, games like dominoes and snakes and ladders" and "teaching him how to dress himself......doing a little bit of reading with him and practising how to write his name" (Gary (2) and Simon (2)). Others like the parent of Jenny (2) acknowledged that they had done very little continuing preparation for their child and had tried to keep things very low key. She noted" basically not a lot- left it very low key. I didn't want her to be over excited about what was to go on."

School

The headteacher of School A reported that all the children had settled well into the life and routines of school life. The majority of the children came into school readily and many of them do this on their own leaving their parents at the school entrance door. This is substantiated by the parents' comments although one parent does admit that "she is quite happy to walk in on her own .....it's just me that follows her" (Rachel (2)).

Third set of interviews

These interviews took place in School A during the first week of full time education. They took place in a small room within the school and refreshments were provided. During the final question with the first parent interview in this phase of questions it became apparent that the parent considered the transition process to be complete. This was an interesting notion, so two further questions were added to the list of questions of parents in set 3 and set 4 of the interviews. The questions were:

- Overall how is the transition to school going?
- What reflections do you have on the transition process?

The questions were asked of each parent and were therefore consistent. They reflected the need for rigour in the interviewing process but also for flexibility. There was a need to be flexible to respond to the changing nature of the parental responses. It also allowed for the notion of transition to be explored further in a consistent way with all the parents.

The questions were deliberately open ended to allow for a wide possibility of parental response. They also encouraged parents to be reflective upon the whole ongoing processes that they and their child were involved in. Murphy and Torrance (1987)

commented about designing an evaluation and the need for flexibility in order to explore emerging ideas. They noted

> designing an evaluation is a continuing process. What variables deserve close attention will be discovered as the fieldwork proceeds.

<p align="right">Murphy and Torrance 1987, p.7</p>

Children

The children reacted well to being interviewed at their school. As each parent arrived at school, often with younger siblings, they went into a small room prepared for them with biscuits, toys for the children and 'Bill' the kangaroo to greet them. All of the children were familiar with Bill and his baby. This familiarity was used by the researcher to help the child establish and maintain a rapport with the researcher through the familiarity of the character 'Bill' and his antics, such as, trying to pinch biscuits and hiding the researcher's papers. The children often recalled the name they had given to Bill's baby at each interview and how commented the baby was stuck in Bill's tummy.

Some of the children appeared apprehensive as they joined their parents. The children were collected from their class by one of the school office staff. Once in the small room with their parents the children were relaxed and keen to eat biscuits and respond to questions. Some of the responses were less full than when they had been interviewed at home. Perhaps the responses were less full because in the first two sets of interviews the children had been at home in their own environment, whereas the room at their school, although made comfortable for them, would have been a strange environment for them to be in with their parents. Perhaps it seemed strange for the children to have their parents at school as during the transition programme the idea had been for them to feel comfortable at school with out a carer or parent. Further perhaps, despite the attempts by the researcher to not make the situation too formal, the children were intimidated by the formality of the interview situation in the school in a room by the school office and in apart of the school with which they were not yet familiar. It could also be that the children were just less responsive at school in this new environment. One child who was very chatty at home was very quiet at school and her parent commented on this noting that she was like a different child at school.

All the children were now attending school on a full time basis and so had a greater knowledge of what happened at school and during the school day. The children were able during these third interviews to be more detailed about what happened at school and what they did at school. Ben (3) recalled "playing in the sand" and Gary (3) recounted how he made a rocket at school. Tanya (3) was keen to talk about "colouring my busy book" whilst Stephen (3) told all about "playing with pirates and out on the bikes." Rachel (3) said that she had been "guessing the words in the fish" and proudly went on to say that "I got them all right!" Tilly (3) summed matters up by talking about "doing really hard work."

Most of the children were positive about their feelings for school. They said that they were "happy" and that "it's really fun" (Jane (3) and Tilly (3)). Some children did show caution in their feelings about school. Molly (3) said that school is "all-right – sometimes I feel like going home."

Through their interview responses the children were able to give individual insights into the world of school and how they saw it. Tanya (3) came into the school building after playtime when she joined her mother in the meeting room. She commented that the school was "very busy because when I came in from play there were so many people in the way!"

Parents

The parents felt that the children were positive about school but one parent recalled that Friday mornings were difficult for getting their child to school and another mentioned that their child had said that they didn't want to go to school. Several parents commented about their child being tired. "She is tired by Friday" noted the parent of Molly (3) and the parent of Tanya (3) said that "she is very tired but I'm pleased that she is so settled."

Most parents felt positive themselves about their child now being at school on a full time basis. "No problem – just fine" said the parent of Gary (3), which seems to sum up the overall parental attitude. The mother of Stephen (3) did add some caution though as she said that she was "still getting used to it". Indeed Elfer (1997) noted that for parents the child going to school will be a time when they, the parents, will have "to learn to cope without them" (the child) (Elfer 1997, p.14).

When asked about the parents continuing preparation with their child for full time education, most parents noted that they had either stopped preparing or they were following the schools lead or that they were encouraging their child generally. They identified that their role had changed from one of preparation to one of supporting their child. The parent of Ben (3) talked about her supportive role. She said that "I spend more time encouraging him now" and the parent of Callum (3) agreed by saying that she was "just going through the week" now with her child. Two parents felt very clearly that they had little preparation they could help their child with. The parent of Molly (3) commented that "I don't think that she needs anything really. She seems to know what it is all about" and the parent of Rachel (1) agreed saying "She knows what goes on and the routine. I can't prepare her any more now." In a supporting role the parent of Stephen (3) noted "we have more of a supporting role by doing his reading" and the parent of Tanya (3) stated "we are doing her reading each night." The parent of Tilly (3) summed up the support for their child saying that "we did talk a lot but now we are doing the stuff that comes from school."

Parents were very happy to give individual insights into the role with their child and how they had prepared them for full time school. The parents of Gary (3) commented "it was when he knew he was going all day....because he thought he was going until bedtime. So what we did one day was when it got to half three we said that this is the time that you will be out of school and coming home. With that he was fine as he could see that he still had 4 hours with us after he had come home from school."

Parents commented on the continuing preparation for themselves with the curriculum parents evening in September. Parents who had two children at the school reflected their difficulties in being at two meetings as the curriculum meetings for each year group took place at the same time. The parent of Simon (3) commented, "well there

was a meeting but because I've got two children at the school I couldn't split myself in half. So I decided to go to the Year 2 meeting........it would have been useful for me to go to the Year R but I decided that the Year 2 was more important." Most parents did not recall this evening but commented that the preparation for them by the school has stopped. Several parents referred positively to the communications from the school. The parent of Tilly (3) said that "the communication is very good via the newsletters and they always let you know what is going on." Indeed Fabian (2000) noted that the "quality and quantity of communication is critical to harmony, both before and during transitions" (Op.cit, p.151) and commented that too much information or indeed too little information for parents can be "misguiding or unhelpful." (Op.cit, p.151)

When asking parents about how the transition process was going there was a variety of responses. This was reflected in the notion of whether the transition to full time education had been complete in the view of the parents. The majority of parents believed that for their child the transition to full time education was complete because their child had started to attend school on a full time basis. The parent of Ben (3) said "I think overall he has done well now that part is over" (See Appendix D3). The parent of Callum (3) noted that "we have passed that now....we are there now." The parent of Molly (3) was quite clear when she said that "she has made the transition now she is full time." The parent of Stephen (3) acknowledged that transition had taken place but they were wary of it being totally complete. She commented that "I think that the transition has taken place because he is settled in and is doing well but I know things can change like they did for his brother." Ledger, Smith and Rich (1998) commented about children settling initially at school full time then becoming unsettled after a few weeks at school. They noted

> it was several weeks after children started school in this study that reports came (mainly from parents) that all was not well for their children.

Ledger, Smith and Rich 1998, p.10

The parent of Tilly (3) is clear that she feels her child will have made the transition to full time education after she returns to school after the half term holiday week. She comments "although she is full time I think the transition won't really be until after half term when she has to go back full time after the weeks break. That will really be the test of whether she has made it. She should fall back into the routine of now." This parent was quite clear about when she thought the transition to full time education would have taken place and she had clear criteria for knowing how to judge that transition had taken place.

The parent of Jane (3) was equally clear that in her opinion the transition to full time education had not taken place. She noted that "no transition is not complete because she still needs lots of support. She will need that support for a few months at least. She is still quite young and it is all new to her." One parent mentioned that she felt that the school had acknowledged that the transition to school period had ended, as there were no more preparation activities for their child. She commented about the school preparing her child for school saying that there are, "No more really they have just accepted that the transition to school has taken place" Simon (3). This notion of the

time frame for the transition process is explored further as a theoretical notion within the transition process later in this chapter.

The majority of the parents had positive reflections on the ongoing transition to school process. The parent of Callum (3) said that "the whole process has been very positive" and the parent of Stephen (3) noted that "he was well prepared – they (the school staff) were very welcoming." Some parents had concerns to reflect on the whole induction to full time education process. The parent of Tanya (3) commented about the early morning routines of School A saying that " I think that they expect a lot from this age.....to deal with their lunch box and then she needs to take her coat off and then she needs to change her book. There is quite a lot for a little one to remember." The parent of Rachel (3) had concerns about the timescales of the introduction to school programme particularly for her daughter who was attending a playgroup 3 days a week full time before the August school holidays. She noted "She was well ready to go to school when everyone went back and I think that the 2 weeks that she had at home with me made her not want to go whereas she was really keen to go and excited. She quite liked the 2 weeks at home and then she had part time which made it worse. The whole thing was really drawn out and it didn't help her at all. She had been going to play school 3 or 4 days full time so she was well ready for full days."

School

By interview three the children were all attending school full time. Parents were able to recall specific incidents that related to their child where they had been working with the school to resolve concerns. The mother of Simon (3) recalls settling issues as her child had had a "personality clash" with another child and recalled her involvement with the class teacher to resolve the issue. The parent of Gary (3) was able to talk about his son having a problem at lunchtimes, as Gary found the lunch hall too noisy. The parent worked with the school to resolve this and Gary was now having his lunch sitting next to his friend who stays for school hot lunches.

Fourth set of interviews

The fourth set of interviews took place in School A at the end of the first term of the children's full time education. By the fourth interviews key ideas were emerging from the research namely the notion of when the transition process would be completed or indeed if it had been completed already, and also the emerging idea of a 'bridging' phase in the transition process. Additional questions were asked of the parents and children to refine the research process to gain more information and hopefully greater insight into the emerging issues. I discussed with parents the emerging ideas in general terms for them to consider. Parents were asked about the impact of the transitional activities offered to them by the school in terms of themselves and the children. They were asked to consider the impact of what they thought were the key events/happenings/activities that had helped their child make the bridge between pre-school and full time school. (See Appendix D4 and D5).

The children were asked to reflect upon what things had helped them get ready for going to school all day each day. They were also encouraged to reflect back upon their pre-school time and look for similarities between pre-school and full time school. This

question was asked to tease out of the children whether they could articulate any links between the two settings. The question was not designed to prove anything in its self but more to gain an insight into whether the children could make that link and articulate that link. It was accepted that this was a hard activity for the children to be involved in and that the question might not reveal any thing new but it was an opportunity to pursue the emerging themes within the research with the children

These new questions arose because of the need to continuously reflect upon the outcomes of the research and the desire to explore emerging issues further. The questions did not undermine the results of the initial research and on going questions but rather added a depth to the questions by asking for more details about emerging issues and themes. They reflected the need to be continuously reflecting back on the research methodology and process, and the need to constantly refine the processes in the light of on going emerging research outcomes.

At this stage the views of the teachers of the Year R children were sought together with the views of the headteacher of School A. The teachers were asked about the individual children and how they had settled into the life and routines of the school, and for particular reflections on each child. They were also asked to make general comments about the impact of the three induction programmes from their point of view. The emerging themes of the timeframe of transitions and the notion of 'bridging' were briefly discussed with the staff of School A and they were asked to reflect upon these emerging themes within the context of the induction programme at their school. The headteacher was asked to reflect on her perceptions of the impact of the induction programmes in terms of the individual children and the broader view of the school as a whole. She was asked to consider issues that were emerging from the ongoing research.

Children

All the children by the fourth interview knew the basic facts that were asked of them about their headteacher's name, their teacher's name and the name of the school. All the children spoke clearly about their lunch time arrangements and what their school uniform consisted of. Several children were able to tell me about their forthcoming school Christmas play and the role they were playing in the production. There were a large number of angels! All the children could name many other children at school now but interestingly two children named children in older year groups. The school has a clear policy of mixing the year groups, for example, with team Golden Time, and this was evident in the names of the older children given by the children involved in the research. Tanya (4) said "he's in a different class but I don't know which one but I can still play with him."

The children were able to be much more specific when talking about what activities they were involved in at school. Clearly their experiences were broadening within the school context. Tilly (4) told me about "writing and doing letters by myself" and Tanya(4) spoke about " getting ready for the play on the stage."

The children were beginning to show and share their knowledge of school routines and expectations. Tilly (4) said we are going to do something special today and if we are quiet we get stars on the board." Vartuli and Everett (1998 , p.112) referred to this focus on the conventional rules of the classroom and Docket and Perry (199b)

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commented that this focus on the conventional rules may well be related to the timing of the research namely when the children are just starting school and teachers are establishing their expectations and routines with new pupils.

The children were clear now about the adults that they worked with at school and when asked the name of their teacher readily gave the names of all the adults in the classroom and also their work patterns. Tanya (4) said one "works in the morning and one works in the afternoon."

The children all found their extra question related to the idea of bridging activities very hard and in some respects it was badly worded by me as the majority of the children understood the question to mean how they got ready for school each day. Many children spoke about getting dressed for school and having their breakfast. However Rachel (4) did make the link between her pre-school and school context. She spoke about her computer saying "I didn't know how to do the computer much at play school but I do at school – I'm much better at it now." Tilly (4) was able to reflect back upon how she felt at play school when she said "I was just so excited and I wanted to go to school and when I was still four I wanted to go to school and I was still at play school." Jenny (4) commented "the hard work at my pre-school helped me get ready."

Parents

All the parents felt positive about their child being at school and stated that they thought their children were positive about going to school. All the parents spoke about the ongoing preparation now being listening to their child read each day at home.

They had mixed responses about the school and its ongoing preparation for them as parents. Some felt it had stopped but the parent of Jenny (4) acknowledged that there was"always information coming through and if you're not sure you can always ask." The majority of the parents who had or had had older children at the school did not attend the curriculum evenings provided by the school. The Year R teachers had noticed this trend and identified some of these parents generally as the ones who were unsure of some of the new systems and routines of the school. Some of these parents also did not attend the information parents evening for new pupils. One parent noted " I didn't go to that because I've done it before and it's just the same as I've done before...it's just about the dinners and uniform and what they expect from the children...so I know that" (parent of Jane (4)). Another parent felt that she lacked feedback from the school about her child's progress in this first term. She commented, I would have liked more contact with the school this term especially with his teacher....I would have appreciated this feedback about how he was doing" (parent of Simon (4)).

All the parents were positive about the induction programme organised by the school. The parent of Simon (4) commented that "it made the move go smoothly" and the parent of Ben (4) noted that there was a "very positive settling in period." All the parents noted that the transition to school for their child was now complete. The parent of Tanya (4) commented that it is "finished now she has got the routine." When asked about the impact of the transition programme on their child all the parents said that it had had a positive effect in helping their child to settle so quickly and so well. One parent acknowledged that the quicker nature of the new induction system used by the school, where the children are all full time by the half term holiday, was much better

than the longer induction programme to school which her elder child had previously been part of (the parent of Tanya (4)). The majority of parents noted that the home visit was for them and their child, in their opinion, the most important feature. The parent of Jane (4) commented "the home visit was useful as they feel safe because they think that person is coming to my home so obviously mummy trusts them so I must be safe at school with them."

When consulted about the notion of 'bridging' the parents were positive about the emerging idea. The parent of Callum (4) commented "I absolutely agree with the notion – it makes such sense." Parents considered what might have been key bridging events/activities/people for their child. The parent of Jane (4) spoke about the same activities taking place in both the pre-school and the school. She commented "they've started Jolly Phonics to do with reading at play school and it's the same as they do at school. The children have a folder and they do the same work at both places so it has prepared them to integrate, as they are not coming into really different work. Some of the work is the same as she did at play school and I think that this makes it easier and a link between the two places." Several parents spoke of the role that elder siblings had made in helping their child bridge between the two contexts. The parent of Jane (4) noted that "her brothers are here so she's been to school every day with them." The parent of Simon (4) commented that "having a sister at the school two years above him meant that for two years he was going to school to collect her and getting to know the teachers and that was the principle link for him." The parent of Tanya (4) said "I think having an older sister who had been through it already was really important. They went to the same play school so she was used to walking with her sister to school each day and to going to school events…..she knew that that was what life was all about." The parent of Tilly (4) spoke about the role of an older child living nearby, as her daughter is the eldest child in the family. She said "one of our neighbours has an older child and she had a younger sister in her class and the contact with her and her telling the younger girls all about school when they are playing and telling them what was expected was probably the biggest link."

Several parents acknowledged that they felt a combination of elements had been important for their child to make this 'bridging' link between pre-school and full time school. The parent of Ben (4) commented that it was a "combination of things – how pre-school prepared them, how the infant school prepared them and what they've done during the visits and how we have prepared him as parents. I think that it's not just one thing but a mixture of all these things." The parent of Jenny (4) identified three elements to this 'bridging' time when she noted "older brothers at school – seeing what her brother is doing and talking with him. Knowing that one of her brothers is in the next school so they can compare what each other did at school each day. Her friends from playgroup are here…they are not in her class but they are here and she still sees them. The programme that the children went through as they joined the school was really helpful to get her used to the people and the building." The parent of Callum (4) commented, "for him I can't out my finger on one thing. It has been a natural process and all those things that have been planned and not planned have made him so secure with the move to school."

School

The Year R teachers commented (See Appendix K) that they could not see any difference in the children as a result of their induction programmes. It was interesting to hear the reflections of the teacher regarding the child that had recently, not in September, joined her class and had joined the school in Year R without an induction programme. In this research it was not ethically possible to have a control group of children with no induction programme. Of course it could be that the child's reactions to starting school actually reflect that particular child and not the lack of induction programme. It is also the reaction of one child and so it would be less valid to make assumptions based just on their reactions.

The teachers varied in their responses to when they thought that the transition to school was fully complete for the children. At Christmas was discussed and at Easter for the younger children, but they agreed that may be the whole process was an individual one with the time frame being different for each child because of how they were as individual children and their own personal circumstances.

When discussing the idea of 'bridging' the teachers readily could see this as a valid notion as they noted that in their opinion the main 'bridging' event for the children, from the school's point of view, was the home visits as this was the time when the school went out to the child's own home and made the physical link between the two places. A teacher referred to the toys that a child brought to school as a comforter and reminder of home and thought that this might be a way of the child bringing that reminder of home into the school set up as a comforting way of linking the two places. (See Appendix N).

The headteacher of the school commented that all the children had settled well into the life of the school and she could see no obvious difference between the settling in of the three different groups of children. She had not noticed any difference in the behaviour or responses of the three groups, which might lead her to believe that the impact of the induction programmes for the three groups had been different.

She believed that the transition process really started for the children the minute they came into contact with the school and therefore it started earlier for those children who had an elder sibling who attended the school. (See Appendix J) She commented "I think that it many ways that is the deciding factor"and "they live with the message from their sibling all the time." She firmly believed that the children who had a sibling already at the school had an advantage in the transition to school process as for many of them they had been making this transition to school for a very long time, and the messages about school were also being reinforced at home via the elder sibling and the families prolonged contact with the school.

Whilst the headteacher felt that the transition to school process started for many children with siblings at an early age, she believed that all the children were settled by the October of their first term at the school. She acknowledged that in past years she would not have said the children had completed the transition to full time education until the Easter time but since the new induction programme trialled by the school for the past two years, she believed that the children had completed their transition to full time school by October.

When discussing the idea of the way that children might make sense of their new surroundings and routines she felt that the siblings again were the key to the children understanding the formalities and conventions of their new circumstances.

The headteacher also discussed the idea that for children joining the school who already were familiar with the school, possibly by having an elder sibling at the school, the induction programme wasn't totally necessary and it was more like a familiarisation programme. This idea very much ties in with Glazier who discusses two types of transitional programmes. This notion Glazier refers to as the 'orientation programme'.

Does kind of Pre-school matter?

In this research all of the children had attended a pre-school provider before they started school. One of the children attended a different sort of pre-school provider namely a day nursery whereas the rest of the children attended a playgroup. Could it be argued that this child was better prepared for starting school full time and that this pre-school provision made a difference to how he made that transition to full time education? Indeed was he more ready to start school?

In their research Jowett and Sylva (1986) considered what were the effects on working class children at school entry of attending either playgroup or nursery. The two forms of provision were chosen because they

> are the most common in Britain with approximately 20 per cent of
> children under five in local education authority nurseries and more
> than 40 per cent in voluntary playgroups.

<div align="center">Osborn et al 1986, p.22</div>

The results of the Jowett and Sylva research showed that when the nursery children were engaged in play activities they were more likely to do so in a "purposefully creative way than their playgroup counterparts" (1986, p.24). The nursery children devoted less time to free-play activities but gave more attention to formal 'educational tasks'. There was however "no significant differences between the nursery and playgroup children on social participation" (Op.cit, p. 26) although the

> nursery children are more likely to suggest a new activity or join in
> than the playgroup children, an initiation requiring a fair degree of
> social competence.

<div align="center">Jowett and Sylva 1986, p.27</div>

The nursery children were also found to be more likely to initiate contacts which used the teacher as an educational or social 'resource'. They were also more likely to persist with an activity when a difficulty arose, whereas the playgroup children were much more likely to ask for help.

Jowett and Sylva concluded that

> children who had attended nursery class were more 'ready' for
> school than a matched group of children who had gone to
> playgroup. They concentrated better when alone or parallel to
> others, their play was richer, they were more independent, and they
> approached teachers as resources for learning rather than for aid.
>
> Jowett and Sylva 1986, p.29

It would also be fair to note however that when all the children were tested by Jowett and Sylva using Form B of the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts (Boehm 1970) no significant differences were found between the two groups of children thus suggesting that the children's 'readiness' for school is possibly

> their superiority in social maturity and eagerness to learn rather
> than inconceptual attainment.

> Jowett and Sylva 1986, p.29

This conclusion is similar to the findings in the research of Schweinhart and Weikart (1980) who claimed that school entry is the crucial point as the children's own abilities and their rapid commitment to school are formed by a very rapid 'reading' of the teacher's appraisal of their readiness to learn.

In discussions during this research with the teachers of the children in their Year R at school during their first term at school they gave no indication that any of the children were more prepared than other to start school. When I raised the conclusions of Jowett and Sylva's research the teachers were unable to relate these key findings to Callum. It must be remembered that the Jowett and Sylva research was with a much larger group of children for comparison and analysis and that Callum is one child out of the original 12. Further, when the sample is greater it is much safer to draw conclusions that can be transferred to other contexts and clearly focusing on one child's reactions to starting school would not be a fair way to link or make full comment about the impact of pre-school nursery provision. Suffice it to say that his teachers did not notice any substantial difference in the way that Callum settled into the life of full time education as opposed to his peers. They could not attribute directly any obvious impact of the time Callum had spent at nursery.

Categorisation of contents

The basic purpose of content analysis is "to take a verbal, non-quantitative document and transform it into quantitative data" (Bailey 1978 p.164). Holsti (1968) defined content analysis as

> a multipurpose research method developed specifically for
> investigating a broad spectrum of problems in which the content of
> communication serves as a basis of inference.

> Holsti 1968, p.597

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In categorising content I needed to carefully identify appropriate categories and units of analysis, namely in this research the interview questions, so that they reflected the nature of the text being analysed and the purpose of the research. In this research each interview question for each set of interviews was analysed to look for broad themes and trends within the answers (See Appendix E1 – 4 for Interview categorisations). Each of the four sets of interview contents analysis was then summarised into a composite categorisation of contents (See Appendix F for categorisation summary). From this analysis process it is possible to identify themes. The summary of the categorisation forms the next part of the research text. With such a small sample it is not possible to generalise broader than this study from those figures but the figures are relative in the terms of this study so comparisons and trends can be sort using the data for this study context and can be expanded upon to consider broader theoretical issues.

Summary and analysis of the categorisation of content

Appendix F draws together the outcomes from the four sets of interviews in a table format. It shows the transitions that the children made in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the school context. It collates the responses of the parents and allows for assessment of any differences between the three programmes in terms of outcomes. As might be expected the biggest change in the children's knowledge came by interview two. At this stage the children had started school on a part time basis. This change was consolidated by the time the children were interviewed for the third time. By interview two, for example, many children were recalling other children's names and could recall activities at school, but by interview three all the children recall many other children's names and all the children recalled school based activities. By the fourth interview this knowledge had deepened in the sense that the children showed a broader base of friendships by talking about older children in the school and the children could explain in detail the activities they were involved in, such as, Tilly (4) telling me about "writing and doing letters by myself" and Tanya (4) speaking about "getting ready for the play on the stage." By interview four the children were able to talk about school routines and practices, such as, Tilly (4) said we are going to do something special today and if we are quiet we get stars on the board."

By the fourth interview the children all made positive comments about their feelings of starting school. They were beginning to make conscious links between their pre-school and school based experiences. Rachel (4) spoke about her computer saying "I didn't know how to do the computer much at play school but I do at school – I'm much better at it now." Tilly (4) was able to reflect back upon how she felt at play school when she said "I was just so excited and I wanted to go to school and when I was still four I wanted to go to school and I was still at play school." Jenny (4) commented "the hard work at my pre-school helped me get ready."

For the parents their views on how the children felt about going to school mirrored the children's actual feelings so that by the fourth interviews all the responses were positive. The emotional state of the parents changed over the eight-month period. In April, the parents were mixed in their views with some feeling anxious both for themselves and their child. By September those emotions were more defined as positive or negative and as the term unfolded the parental comments became all positive about the transition process. As the children went full time there was a noticeable drop in the

level of parental active input in preparing their child for school and by interview four parents were relating how they were taking the lead from the school and following the school's established routines for supporting the children at home, such as, hearing the children read each night and helping them to practise their spellings.

By interview three the majority of the parents believed that the school was not preparing their child any more since their child was now at school full time. All the parents decided that the school's preparation for their child's transition to full time education had stopped by interview four, although one parent did note that the school was continuing to provide ongoing support. Overall the parents noted very little preparation for themselves throughout the induction to school process. Over half of the parents in April and September thought there was not much preparation for them. They acknowledged the parents evening and information sent to them. Parents with older siblings who had previously or still attended the school talked about how they had not attended the information and/or curriculum meetings as they felt that they knew the details and information that was to be imparted because of their involvement with the school already. One parent commented about how she would of preferred a formal parents evening in the first term in order to discuss the progress of her child.

By the time the children were interviewed in early December all of the parents thought the transition to school was complete and all the parents were very positive about the transition both for the children and for them selves. The parents noted the positive impact of the induction packages provided by School A as their children were settled and happy to come to school each day. The majority of the parents believed the key element of the induction programme was the home visit as the parent of Jane (4) commented "the home visit was useful as they feel safe because they think that person is coming to my home so obviously mummy trusts them so I must be safe at school with them."

In discussion with the parents about the notion of 'bridging', all the parents could recognise this step in the transition process and the parent of Callum (4) commented " I absolutely agree with the notion − it makes such sense." The parents were able to articulate their views of what they believed were the key 'bridging elements for their child during the transition the full time education. The majority of the parents acknowledged the role that older siblings played in the smooth transition to full time education for the younger child, the family involvement in that child's school and the sharing of the older child's school experiences. The parents also credited the role that pre-school friends and 'surrogate' siblings played in the smooth transiton to full time education. Several parents felt that there were several elements within the 'bridging' step that positively affected their child and they spoke of a "combination of things − how pre-school prepared them, how the infant school prepared them and what they've done during the visits and how we have prepared him as parents. I think that it's not just one thing but a mixture of all these things" (the parent of Ben (4)).

Social background of the children

The 1991 Carnegie Foundation Report, "Ready to learn, A Mandate for the Nation", commented that school readiness was "strongly linked to family income." It noted that school achievement was linked with family income and social class. The Report

referred to American research which showed that mothers from lower income groups engaged less in shared picture book reading and produced fewer teaching behaviours during shared reading than mothers from middle class groups. The Report argued that social class differences exist in children's academic skills before they start school and thus at the very beginning of the children's academic career.

In their research Tymms, Merrell and Henderson (1997) noted that children from more affluent backgrounds had higher scores for maths and reading at the end of the reception year and had made significantly better progress with their reading than children who came from poorer backgrounds. These 1351 children from 38 primary schools had all experienced a full year in the reception class as were assessed using the PIPS (Performance Indicators in Primary Schools) mathematics and reading tests. The relative affluence of the children was determined by the area in which the children lived.

In this research study such an indicator of affluence is not possible as all the children live within the same location but it may be possible to consider the children by means of their social class as determined by their parent's occupation. Social class is set into five main categories (www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/ns_sec/continuity.asp) with traditionally the unit of analysis or class composition being the family/household rather than the individual and so one household member was taken as the reference person to stand for the whole household. In the past the HRP (Household Reference Person) was the eldest householder with males taking precedence. From 2001 this definition was reviewed and the HRP is now the person who is responsible for owning or renting the accommodation. In the case of joint householders the person with the highest income takes precedence. If the incomes are equal the eldest person is taken as the HRP.

Clearly this is a sensitive way to assess the children and the impact of their induction to full time education. It is sensitive because of the nature of the judgements made about households and because the ethical protocol states that the whole of this research document will be made available to each family (See Appendix G). But is there any correlation between children of parents of a higher social class settling better to school than those children of parents with a lower social class? In this research there seems to be no clear correlation between the class that the children have been born into and their ability to settle into the life and routine of school. Following the outcomes from the Carnegie Report (1991) it would suggest that in this context there would be a marked difference between the settling into school of children Gary, Molly and Tanya and Simon. There was no difference that could be observed or inferred in the settling into school of any of the children as related to their social class.

Children whose parents were teachers

In this research two of the children had parents who were teachers. Neither of the parents were teachers of primary aged children. Did the fact that they had formal teaching skills have any impact on the transition of their child to full time education? Were their children more prepared for the world of full time school? Clearly using the data from just two children does not give a significant or wide-ranging sample but in the context of this research it does allow for the notion to be explored.

There was no evidence that the children were more prepared for school or indeed settled in any better than the other children involved in the research project. Callum (1) did make reference to his pre knowledge about school because he commented when asked what is school like? that "it's huge like mummy's school." One of the parents felt that she was prepared in herself for her child going to school and during the second interviews noted that the school hadn't done much preparation for her as a parent but acknowledged that "perhaps that is because I don't think that I need preparing particularly because I am a teacher. Because of that I know what goes on but if I needed it I am sure they would have given me help" (parents of Callum (2)). It may be that the parents were more prepared as they knew more about what to expect 'from the inside' through their professional knowledge but there was no evidence from the children that they (the children) behaved in any particular way or seemed more settled because of their parents occupation.

Themes for the children

In chapter four a variety of themes were explored that related to outcomes of recent research into the transition to school and young children. These themes are explored again below in the context of this research study.

Loss

Weiss noted that, "moving away from people, with whom social bonds had been established, no matter what the reason for the move, is likely to produce distress." (Weiss 1990, p.3) None of the children made any negative responses about school when they were asked about their feelings of going to or being at full time school. No child made any comments about not wanting to be there or wanting to remain with their parent. Callum (1) during the first interview said " I want to cuddle my mummy" in response to one of his questions. This may have been because this is what he wanted to do instead of going to school or in fact reflected his reaction to this first interview situation which was a strange situation for him. The parent of Jane (2) commented that "the initial going in is still a bit tearful but once I leave I think that she's quite fine." Going to school and separating was clearly an anxious time for this parent and her child. Weiss comments on these relationships of attachment saying that they provide "individuals with a sense of security "(Weiss 1990, p.4). The parent of Jane (4) commented on the sense of safety and security when she talked of the value of the home visits. She said "the home visit was useful as they feel safe because they think that person is coming to my home so obviously mummy trusts them so I must be safe at school with them."

Rules

Vartuli and Everett (1998) as reported in Dockett and Perry (1999) referred to children focussing on conventional rules in their responses to the researchers. By interview four in this research one child referred to school conventions and practices. Tilly (4) said "we are going to do something special today and if we are quiet we get stars on the board." There was no other evidence to link with this theme. The research method used by Dockett and Perry involved focus groups of children and it may be that this group

interaction provided more information that would relate to school routines and practices.

Control

There was no evidence within this research study of children speaking overtly about their understanding of the notion of control in their new context. It could be argued that they were clear that the adults were in charge as with the reference that Tilly (4) made to the teacher establishing the rules for behaviour. Fisher made the point that the transition to school process needs to allow sufficient time and / or opportunity for the children to have "pre exposure to the new environment .... to assess its psychosocial features" (Fisher in Fisher and Cooper 1990, p.58). This would allow the children time to assess the situation they are to join and help them to consider the new relationships and control mechanisms used.

Environment

Within the new school environment the children will meet a situation that will probably be new to them. They are part of not only a new social group of 30 but also part of a larger social group of hundreds, depending on the size of the school. The whole size and scale of the building will be huge for them. When I reflect back to visiting my primary school as an adult it seemed so much smaller when of course as a child the place seemed enormous with endless corridors and a huge hall. Cleave et al commented on the physical surroundings and the "scale of the child's setting, the range of his territory, and the limitations on his movements within it" (Cleave et al 1982, p.39). Several children, as noted earlier, referred to the fact that there will be lots of children and that some of those children and other people will be bigger than them. Two children referred to the size of the school building. Simon (1) noted that "it is a bit big for little children" and Callum (1) said "it's huge like mummy's school." Getting to know the size and lay out of key parts of their new school would be important for children starting school and this formed a part of the reason for pre-school visits during the school induction programme. Glazier (2001) also referred to this building familiarisation when she talked about 'orientation programmes'.

Roles

Oatley wrote about role transitions and every day life and noted that a role is a "dynamic conception, a pattern that articulates one person's actions with those of others" (Oatley 1990, p.70). He talked of roles in terms of finding ones place in a structure and this is one aspect to the transition process for young children as they try to establish their role in the new class and school. The children in the research seemed to be clear about their relationship with other children who are already at the school and the adults too. Before the children even started school they identified the fact that other people would be at school. Molly (1) said "well there are lots of people go to big school and all the children might be playing a bit hard....some will be my friends." She went on to comment "I think that there will be very big people as well." Simon (1) it seemed had started to think about those new relationships. He identified that there would be

people that he didn't know and also familiar people that he had already formed a relationship / role with as he noted " I know that there's big children that I don't know but I know my friend M that used to go to my nursery."

Friends

Much reference has already been made to the role of friends in this research and the key role that researchers, for example, Bronfenbrenner (1979), Fabian (2000) and the parents and teachers of the children involved in the research study have identified for friends in the transition to school. School A asks the pre-school providers for key friends for each child so that they can be put together in the same class when they start school. The parents of many children identified how important it was that their child already knew a child or children at the school either a sibling, neighbour or other relative. The researcher will argue later that these friends form a key element in the forming a 'bridge' from pre-school / home to full time school. Indeed the parent of Tilly (1) commented "the fact that she knows quite a few of her older friends are at the school helps."

Culture

Bruner (1996) suggested that the culture of the school and family will influence the child's behaviour as they make the transition to full time education. He discussed participation in the school culture. Several parent referred to this involvement through buying the new school uniform, Molly (2), and trying it on ready to start school, through taking older child to school each day and through attending school events like school fairs.

Themes for the parents

In chapter four a variety of themes were explored that related to outcomes of recent research into the transition to school and parents. These themes are explored again below in the context of this research study.

The big step

Cleave et al's 1982 research showed that many parents saw going to school full time as a big step. The parent of Tilly (1) also felt this when she said about her feelings " Oh my baby! I think that I am happy....but it is still a big step they're going through." Several parents talked about purposely making the whole going to school event a low key event. The parent of Jenny (2) commented that she had "left it very low key. I've not told her much about what happens except that there is a lot of play around." The parent of Ben (1) noted that she "had done very little because he is only three still so I don't want to scare him off."

Many parents talked about their child being 'ready' to start school. The parent of Molly (1) said "I think that she is ready now" and the parent of Simon (1) commented that "I think that he is well ready for school." Families with older siblings either at School A or who had been at the school in the past spent time talking about school as a family. This finding agrees with that of Cleave et al (1982). The parent of Jane (1) talked about

her child and her elder brother doing work together. She said that "when M, the eldest one, brings his reading book home she sits with her little book and does a bit of writing and some spelling. We all talk about going to big school in September." The parent of Rachel (2) commented that as a family they were "just trying to tell her what happens when she gets to school and the routine that she will have once she is full time."

Independence

Not many of the parents in this research study spoke of their concerns regarding their child's own personal independence. Most of the children had practised trying on their school uniform during the summer holiday time and one parent referred to "teaching him how to dress himself. Just leaving his clothes for him to find so that he has to do his buttons up for himself" (parent of Simon (2)).

Parental feelings

The research of Cleave et al (1982) identified that the parents of the children starting school expressed a variety of feelings about their child starting school. Some of the parents referred to "feelings of gladness, sadness and apprehension" (Op.cit, p.98). At the beginning of this research study the parents involved reflected all of these emotions. Several parents felt positive about the situation. The parent of Jane (1) commented that she felt "happy because she needs this" and the parent of Simon (1) noted that "I'm looking forward to him starting because he is ready for it." A few parents had negative feelings. The parent of Ben (1) said that she was "petrified.....I'm worried that he won't know enough." Several parents had mixed emotions about their child going to school full time. "I feel sad...she's my last one. I'm pleased for her of course" commented the parent of Rachel (1). Some parents had personal concerns that is concerns about themselves now that their child would be at school full time. "I'm looking forward to it from a personal point of view as I will have more time for myself" noted the parent of Simon (1) whilst the parent of Jenny (1) said "I'm not sure how I'm going to fill my time yet." The parent of Gary (1) reflected that "it's going to be strange not having him about during the day."

During the time frame of the research, that is, eight months, feelings of anxiety mainly disappeared as the children progressed through their induction programme and joined the school on a full time basis. During the second interview the parent of Rachel (2) commented "I'm getting used to it. She's just the last one and is good company and I miss her." By the last interview all the parental feelings were positive about their child being at school.

Information

In the research of Fabian (2000) it was noted that the information given to parents during the induction period should be accessible in both quality and quantity. Fabian writes about school's achieving the balance between too much information and too little information. The parent of Callum (2) recalled the information evening for new parents lead by the headteacher of School A when she commented "there was an evening for parents and Mrs L gave a talk." The parent of Gary (2) added when talking about preparation activities for her "they mainly helped with the information evening. It was

very interesting as they went through everything that we would need to know. They explained what would happen." The parent of Molly (2) added "I went to the parents evening which was really useful. It let you know about practical things like where to buy the school uniform." What was interesting about these comments was the fact that they were all made by parents for whom their eldest or only child is starting the induction to school process. The parents of children who had older siblings already at school or near relatives at the school were less positive about the information evening and in fact many didn't attend because they thought that they already knew all of he information. It might well be that they were right in their judgement of knowing all that was going to be said at the information evening but schools are evolving places and it may well be that in fact some practices and/or routines had been changed or modified and they might well need to know this information. This outcome has been referred to earlier and is referred to later within the recommendations for School A.

The parent of Jenny (2) noted that "lots of letters have come through" whilst the parent of Simon spoke about the information evening and would have liked a personal meeting with her child's teacher during his first term so that she could find out about his progress during the first term at school (Simon (2) and Simon (4)). She also spoke about the dilemma of parents with a child already at the school when the school had its curriculum meeting. She felt that she could not be in two places at once and chose to learn more about the Year two curriculum that affected her elder daughter instead of her younger son's Year R curriculum. It is maybe something that the school could reflect upon and they may wish to consider organising the year group curriculum meetings on different evenings to help parents with several children at the school.

Social Concerns

In Dockett and Perry's (1999a) research, parents were most concerned about how their child would settle from a social point of view. Parents were concerned about how they should relate to their child's class teacher. In the Cleave et al (1982) research parents were most concerned about their own social adjustment and how they would manage without their child. In this research study there were no comments or concerns from parents about how they should relate to the teachers or how their child would settle socially. Some parents were concerned about their own feelings and emotions during the transition to school time and these have been explored previously.

Emotions

Most of the parents had very positive feelings towards the transition to school process and their child starting school full time, as discussed earlier. One parent noted that she felt that the school was not catering for the emotions of the parents. She said, "they don't cater for mums as such as what it will be like when your child isn't with you any more. I think that you are just there to keep you on board" (Jenny (2)). The parents in Dockett and Perry's research (1999a) believed that their child's positive attitude to starting school was a critical factor in their success at starting school. They felt that their emotions as parents had a strong influence on their child's attitude and emotions towards going to school. In this research study one parent acknowledged that link

between her emotions and her child's emotions. The parent of Stephen (2) commented that she had "mixed feelings" about her child starting school and then went on to add "I hope that's not influencing him."

Physical Concerns

In Dockett and Perry's (1999a) research many parents were concerned about physical issues for their children. The ones that they referred to in general reflected the cultural and educational practices of Australia, for example, travelling a long way to school. In this research study parents concerns centred around fatigue and their child being tired as they coped with going to school full time. The parent of Jane(1) commented about her feelings for her child starting school saying that "physically I'm not sure because she is so small and gets quite tired but obviously she needs it and I think it will bring her out a bit more." The parent of Molly (3) commented that "she has never not wanted to go even though she's a bit tired" and later in her interview she acknowledged that "she is tired by Fridays."

Family Issues

During this research no references were made to any effect on the whole family. Parents did refer to the support and encouragement of older siblings and their role in setting the scene about school for their younger brother or sister and how they helped them with what to expect at school.

Themes for the educators

In chapter four a variety of themes were explored that related to outcomes of recent research into the transition to school and educators. These themes are explored again below in the context of this research study.

In this research study the views of the educationalists, that is, the teachers and the headteachers were canvassed towards the end of phase one of the research period. Their views were not sought during the induction to school programmes but rather towards the end of the process. School A clearly takes the transition to school full time very seriously. It is committed to the induction process and evaluating its outcomes, hence the forum for this research study. It reviews its own practices, as when it changed its induction programme two years ago, as it felt it would be better to enable the children to be full time at school earlier in the autumn term. It has reflected upon that change by being involved in this research. It has also been committed to the induction process by putting more resources into the research programme for Packages B and C. Further, it is also prepared to commit to the outcomes of the research and this clearly may well have implications in time terms, staffing terms and budget terms.

Whilst the research study did not involve the educationalists throughout the research this may be an opportunity for refining any future research. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and may be if this research was ever carried out again their views could be sought at similar time intervals as those of the children and their parents.

Age factors of the children

In this research Natalie, Molly, Tilly and Rachel, Simon and Stephen were children who were older in their year group. All of these children celebrated their fifth birthday during the autumn term in which the bulk of the phase one research was carried out. The rest of the children in the research group had birth dates in May, June, July and August. During the research there was no clear evidence that the older children settled better into the life of the classroom and school. There was also no evidence that the younger children settled better either. The parents and teachers indicated no difference in the way that the children settled into the school full time. One could possibly have expected the younger children to have found the whole day quite tiring as some children were just four and two months when they started full time education. Whilst some parents and some children commented that they were tired these comments were not related to just the youngest children, for example, when the parent of Molly (3) said that she " has never not wanted to go even though she's a bit tired." There was no clear pattern of parents of the younger children referring to the children as tired or having difficulties because of their age. When talking about her own feelings about her child starting school the parent of Ben (1) notes that she was "petrified because of his age." The parent of child Jane (1) referred to her child's size and showed concern about tiredness. Of course her daughter may have been smaller because she was younger but it could be that she was small because this will be her overall stature so her age was not an influence. The parent of Jane (1) commented "physically I'm not sure because she is small and gets quite tired."

It is interesting to reflect upon earlier references within this impact study to concerns expressed about the early age of children starting school in England when compared with other European and worldwide countries. There were clear concerns about a negative or at least not a positive impact upon the young child because of a concern that they were starting school too early. There is no evidence in this research impact study that the youngest children found it hardest to settle into the school routines or were the most tired or anxious. There is no evidence either to show that any of the children broadly found the transition of going to full time education at this age distressing in any way. One could argue that all the children and indeed their families, within this research study, had taken the move to fulltime education in their stride. That is the transition had overall happened without any significant strains or stresses upon them. The evidence does show that there were minor 'settling in' matters that needed resolving, like Jane (2) being a little tearful as she went into school, Gary(3) finding lunchtimes too noisy and Simon (3) having a "clash" with another child. But all these minor adjustments were resolved and the children carried on being settled at the school.

Sibling factors

In this research study Natalie, Molly, Tilly and Callum, Gary and Ben had no older siblings whilst Jane, Jenny, Tanya and Rachel, Simon and Stephen had older siblings either currently at School A or further on through the education system. All of the parents of the children who had older brother or sisters mentioned several times the role that the older child played in the transition of the younger child to full time education. Every parent mentioned this during each interview. During the fourth interviews

parents indicated that they thought that the role of the older sibling was key to their child making a successful transition to full time education. The parents believed that the older sibling was a key element of the 'bridging' process between pre-school/home and school. The parent of Rachel (4) summed this up by saying "her brother ....because she used to come up here every day and bring him to school every day. She has just been surrounded with schools, not necessarily this school but I think that this helped her get the idea of what school was about."

Both the headteacher and Year R teachers felt that one of the key factors in the transition process was the role of the older siblings. The headteacher commented on her view of the importance of the role of older siblings noting that

> I am already making relationships and sending messages to those toddlers that are coming in aged 18 months and those toddlers are receiving messages about the school and what it is like to enjoy it from their older brothers and sisters.

> I think that the induction process does make a difference to them (the children with older siblings) but the messages that they get from their older brothers and sisters have far more of an effect than any induction process we put in place.

> Headteacher School A (Appendix J)

Understanding the self - the researcher

In chapter six the notion of understanding the self was explored within this research context. I made my involvement within the research processes explicit and considered in the broadest sense how I might have an impact upon the research itself. During the timescale of the research I became very friendly with the parents in particular the parents in Phase one. They had allowed me into their homes and we were on first name terms. I had considered my manner, dress and behaviour throughout the research so that I could be sure that I wasn't trying to influence or steer any research outcomes. I do not feel that I did influence any outcomes...there was no overt evidence to show that I did. I would hope upon reflection that what I did was try to ensure that the research process itself was as comfortable and human as possible whilst still being formal and professional. I hope that my influence was on the style of the research rather than on the processes or outcomes.

Impact of the induction programmes

This impact study considers the impact of the three induction programmes upon the children involved within the research study groups. As Shar comments it looks for how the resources of the school, that is the programmes, have been transformed into meaningful outputs, that is resulting in discernable outcomes for the groups of children. Close analysis and assessment of the interview comments shows that there are no

discernable differences in the 'outputs' or outcomes of the three different programmes. (See Appendix M) The headteacher of School A reflected that she could see no difference in "how the different groups of children have settled." (Appendix J) Her discussions with parents had revealed the view that it would be"difficult to improve on the basic programme." The Year R teachers saw no difference in how the three sets of children reacted to school and how they settled to life at school full time.

It seemed that the children all settled differently because they were all individuals but also that they all settled equally as well, as noted by the teachers and headteacher. Each parent noted how positive they were with their child at school and how they were positive about the induction programme offered by the school. So the researcher is left wondering why the Packages B and C did not have a significantly different impact outcome to Package A. It could be that the balance of activities in Package A was a strong balance allowing for familiarisation with both buildings, people and routines and that this package was a complete package and it would need a major difference to it to make any different discernable impact. It could be that the packages offered as B and C were not sufficiently different to make an impact. Perhaps there was not enough more added to the packages in terms of time, quality or new significant activities. Perhaps Package A was a package sufficiently rooted in good educationally practice over the years that it could not be improved in terms of impact.

Phase 2 of the research

All the phase 2 parents were very welcoming as I carried out the interviews over the telephone. I explained carefully the context of the research and the purpose of the second phase of the research. I was aware of the fine balance that I needed to keep between explaining the research context and giving enough but not too much information, as it was important not to lead the parent's responses in any way.

All the parents' of children who had older siblings already at school felt that the influence of the older sibling was the greatest factor that would affect their child making a smooth transition to full time education. They made comments like, "having an older brother and sister obviously helps. She is very familiar with the school as she is always in and out of the building" (Ph2A) (phase two parent A). Ph2B noted that, "it will be very helpful for her as she goes to school every day already with her older brother (named). She goes into the classroom every day and knows the place, routines and knows the teacher." Ph2J commented "her sister being in the school already will be the biggest help as she now knows the school inside out!"

The parents of children who did not have older siblings already at school referred to a range of factors that they believed helped their child make the smooth transition to full time education. Several referred to their child going to school with someone they already knew. "He will be in a class with some of his friends" noted Ph2C and Ph2F agreed with this factor saying "he will be going to school with people he knows from playgroup....there will be familiar faces for him." Where the child did not have a 'friendship' link to the Infant school the parent spoke about their near neighbour who was already at the school and how her child played with this child and had seen her go to school (Ph2G). Several parents referred to the induction programme the school offered. They noted that they did not know what was offered or when it would happen

but they knew that the school did something. One parent commented "I think that the induction programme should be very beneficial" (Ph2C) and "the teacher going to see him at nursery would be good" (Ph2C).

During this first part of phase two of the research the parents overriding bridging link was anticipated as people, indeed child, focused. As with the first phase of the research, the older children (siblings) were seen as the key bridging link through shared and sharing experiences associated with school and going to school, such as, going into the school building daily and attending school based events. Parents whose child was the first child within the family unit to attend school also identified children as the primary bridging link for their child, for example, the neighbour's child who was already at school and other children who attended the same playgroup or nursery who would make the transition to the school at the same time.

In September 2003 the twelve parents were contacted again for their thoughts about the transition to school process now their child was at school on a full time basis. I did not discuss with them the notion that the transition time might or might not be over for their individual child as this was not the purpose of the second phase of the research. The question asked of the parents encouraged them to be reflective about the transition to school process for their child and what, in their opinion, had been important in making that a smooth successful transition .

All the parents who had commented in March about the older sibling or another child being the key bridging element for their child continued to say that this was the most important element for their child's smooth transition to full time education. Ph2B stated that "seeing the links with John has definitely made it easier for her. She easily fitted into the school routine and knew where to go and what to do even on the first day." Ph2I noted that "going there every day with her big sister has definitely paid off. She had got used to the idea of going to school each day and knew straight away what to do and where to go." Other elements mentioned included the value the parents placed on the home visit by the class teacher before their child started school. Ph2E said that "the home visit really helped. He saw his teacher the week before he started school and it helped to make things all quite familiar." Another parent noted that the visits to the school in the summer had been very important. She commented that "the school visits were very necessary so that he knew were things were and what the place really looked like." All of these elements whilst specific to this context could also be applied to other transitional contexts, such as, starting a new job and visiting the work place post interview but prior to taking up post to meet new colleagues and become familiar with the new location. At a time of moving house often several visits are made to the location of the new home to establish important features of the new environment....the nearest schools, shops, petrol station or pub.

One of the parents took the opportunity to mention a way that she had adapted the early morning arrival at school routine to suit her child's needs. She (Ph2E) was very supportive about the transition arrangements for the children and the transition programme but had concerns about the practicalities of the early morning arrival at school. She noted that for her child there were too many children all arriving at once and it was therefore very busy, noisy and unsettling. She decided to arrive with her child a few minutes later each day so that the main groupings of children would already be in their classes as she and her son arrived. This she said was working much better.

He was very calm about arriving at school and his teacher had more time to greet him because the majority of the other children had already been greeted and were getting settled in to the early morning activities. As she commented "just those 2/3 minutes later means that it is not so manic and he can get straight to his teacher." All of the parents were positive in their comments about the induction to school programme offered by School A. The programme was clearly not the main element for them that ensured their child's successful transition to full time education as each parent noted that it was a familiar person, be that older sibling or close friend of the child, that was providing the main bridging link between the old and new context. The programme offered by the school was part of the 'package' of events for their child that helped them make that transition to the world of full time education. Indeed it was one of the elements of the bridging step for their child.

The penultimate chapter draws together the research and considers the detailed analysis of this chapter. It examines the findings in terms of the wider notion of transition theories.

Chapter Eight

Models

The initial context for this research was to use School A to explore notions of transition by attempting to answer the research question What is the impact of transition to full time education? In terms of outcomes there should therefore be two sets of outcomes. Firstly, there should be outcomes in a broader theoretical way that add overall to the sum of knowledge and understanding about the concept of transition. Secondly, there should be analysis of the practices of and for School A so that they have had their practices assessed. This chapter discusses transition and a new theoretical model for transitions focusing in particular on the idea of 'bridging' following the evidence taken from this impact study. The final chapter has reflections and recommendations for School A.

Broader theoretical perspectives

Time frames for transitions

Within this research there has been the opportunity to look for emerging themes and notions and the chance to explore them further. During the research it became clear from the parents' interviews (See sample summary quoted in Appendix N) that they had varying notions of when the transition to full time education for their child might be complete. This gave the researcher the opportunity to explore this issue further.

When does transition finish? Does it ever finish or does life just move onto the next situation or indeed the next transition? Does the transition cycle start from birth and just keep going around? Does the transition model therefore need to be circular rather than linear? Would these notions be true of any context and in this context specifically when does the transition from home to full time education finish and when is it complete? Is it ever complete? Is it after the child starts to attend full time? Is it after the first half term holiday in the Autumn term when the child returns to school to full time education? Is it at the end of the first term or the end of the first year? Is the notion of transition within ones education never complete until the end of that education process when one leaves the education establishment and joins the world of work? Is education never complete in the notion of life long learning so in fact the learning journey in life is a series of transitions in different learning contexts? Whilst it is valid to raise these ideas and thoughts there is no expectation that this research would address all if any of these notions. However it is within the thoughts surrounding these notions that this research sits.

The transition models referred to throughout this research see the notion of transition as a cyclical phenomenon that as a model of behaviour "allows testable hypotheses to be drawn from it" (Hopson and Adams, 1976 p. 4). Hopson and Adams argued that whilst their model is cyclical

> seldom if ever does a person move neatly from one phase to another. It is rather more likely that these representations are of the general experience and that any given individual's progressions and regressions are unique to his or her circumstances.

<div align="center">Hopson and Adams 1976 p.13</div>

Whilst they acknowledged the "progressions and regressions" (Op.cit, p.13) through this model they do not explicitly refer to the notion of time frames. Perhaps it could be argued they are saying that there is no time frame and the processes of transition are on going.

Nicholson (1990) does refer to time frames within his transition model. He noted that

> each one of us is at some point on one or more transition cycle. Movement is continuous. Even the most stabilized conditions contain the possibility of future change, and therefore embody varying states of readiness for the onset of a new cycle.

<div align="center">Nicholson 1990 p.87</div>

Nicholson implied that there is clearly an end to periods or times of transition as he writes "readiness for the onset of a new cycle" and he also refers to the notion that one can be involved in various transitions at the same time, presumably in different phases of those transitions at the same time too. Perhaps an example would be embarking on a new personal relationship having recently changed jobs and following bereavement. This seems like a harsh example but it reflects his idea that several phases of transitions could be occurring all at the same time.

Within this research the parents of the children all believed that their children had completed the transition to full time school by the end of their child's first term at school. Many thought that the transition was completed earlier for their child. One parent noted that transition was"complete as soon as she went full time" parent of Molly (4). The headteacher of School A clearly believed that the transition to full time education for the children was complete in October and she saw no difference in individual children within this time frame in that she said that all the children had "settled in well." Her teachers had differing views thinking that the transition might be complete by Christmas or even by Easter for younger children. Both the headteacher and Year R teachers acknowledged that the end of the transition time depended very much on the individual child and their own individual set of circumstances.

The notion of 'bridging' – a new model for transition.

In the first phase of interviews Molly made comments which could have been signs of her making links between her known experiences and knowledge and her new unknown situation. Whilst I accept that this isolated comment could be interpreted in many other ways, as explored earlier in this thesis, it became the starting point for enabling the research to explore a new emerging notion.

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As comments by children and parents were recorded and assessed a pattern began to emerge. Many of the comments could be themed into eight key elements. A sample summary of these comments is collated in Appendix N. This appendix gives sample quotes from the research interviews to show the comments that interviewees made that reflect elements of the bridging model explained further within this chapter.

As different questions were asked of the children and parents in the fourth interviews in phase one new information emerged about the links being made between one situation and another. Rachel (4) made the link between her pre-school and school context. She spoke about her computer saying "I didn't know how to do the computer much at play school but I do at school – I'm much better at it now." Parents during the fourth interviews commented that they agreed with the notion of bridging and gave examples of bridging activities in their context. The parent of Jane (4) spoke about the same activities taking place in both the pre-school and the school. Several parents spoke of the role that elder siblings had made in helping their child bridge between the two contexts. Several parents acknowledged that they felt a combination of elements had been important for their child to make this 'bridging' link between pre-school and full time school. The parent of Ben (4) commented that it was a "combination of things – how pre-school prepared them, how the infant school prepared them and what they've done during the visits and how we have prepared him as parents. I think that it's not just one thing but a mixture of all these things." The parent of Jenny (4) identified three elements to this 'bridging' time when she noted "older brothers at school – seeing what her brother is doing and talking with him. Knowing that one of her brothers is in the next school so they can compare what each other did at school each day. Her friends from playgroup are here...they are not in her class but they are here and she still sees them. The programme that the children went through as they joined the school was really helpful to get her used to the people and the building."

Within phase two of the research all the parents who had commented in March about the older sibling or another child being the key bridging element for their child continued to say that this was the most important element for their child's smooth transition to full time education. The induction programme offered by the school was clearly not the main element for them that ensured their child's successful transition to full time education but it was part of the 'package' of bridging events for their child. Indeed it was one of the elements of the bridging step for their child.

This notion of 'bridging' from a past experience to a new one is explored by Rogoff and Gardener (1984). People are clearly able to generalise some aspects of existing knowledge and skills to new situations. Indeed knowledge and skills have more general applicability than in the specific situation in which they were originally learned. Rogoff and Gardener argue that very little is known

> about how people transfer skills from one problem to another or
> how they form a schema which includes several related but
> nonidentical problems.

Rogoff and Gardener 1984, p.95

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Rogoff and Gardener suggested that generalisation from one problem to another is a function of the "individual searching for similarities between the new problems and the old ones, guided by previous experience with similar problems" (Rogoff and Gardener 1984, p.96). Ledger, Smith and Rich (1998) commented that

> although they (the children) all go through a similar process at the
> time of transition, each child uses the knowledge they already have
> to develop ways of coping with new experiences.

> Ledger, Smith and Rich 1998, p.10

But Gick and Holyoak (1980) noted that people do not transfer relevant information from one problem to another unless they first notice the underlying similarity between the new situation and past situations. Hence for Molly (1) the similarity would be the fact that there was a teacher in each situation, that is, the pre-school and the school situation. In this context the thinker, Molly, makes use of whatever is familiar in the context of the new situation to apply information and skills available from familiar situations to 'bridge' a solution to the new situation (Petrie (1979) and Burstein (1981)). This new notion of 'bridging'is explored further as a theoretical concept within the transition process later in this chapter.

Children it seems therefore need to learn skills in finding or creating similarities between contexts. This may be an important function of the induction to school process. The process itself may provide the opportunities to 'bridge' between the known and the unknown for the child particularly if they have attended some kind of pre-school provision and especially for those children without pre-school provision. The children without the pre-school provision will not have that pre-school provision experience therefore to draw upon as a familiar context.

The adults involved in the induction process, that is, the parents, staff at the pre-school provision and the staff of the school that the child will attend, have a role in enabling the child to see the links between the familiar situations and the new situations they will find themselves in. Those new situations will include not only the size and scale of the school building but the numbers of pupils in the class; new relationships with peers; new adults to relate to; new expectations of tasks and routines and for many children a longer length of 'working' day as they become full time students.

D'Andrade (1981) noted that

> children may seldom be independently responsible for discovering
> the connections between problems or transforming available
> knowledge to fit new problems.

> D'Antrade 1981, p.96

Vygotsky (1978, p.88) and Wertsch (1979) and Wood (1980) stated that it is the adult that structures and models the appropriate solution to the problem

by engaging the child in this solution, as the adult monitors the child's current level of skill and supports or "scaffolds" the child's extension of current skills and knowledge to a higher level of competence.

<div align="center">Wertsch 1979 and Wood 1980 , p.97</div>

Rogoff and Gardener referred in their chapter in Everyday Cognition (1984) to "guidance in transfer." They noted that the

establishment of an intelligible context of interaction by the participants is essential, since the learner's assimilation of new information depends on its compatibility with the learner's existing knowledge.

<div align="center">Rogoff and Gardener   1984, p.97</div>

The staff of the school drawing up and carrying out the induction to school programme need to know the existing knowledge of the children as they join the programme so that "headfitting", Brown (1979), can take place. The information that is asked of parents about their children as they apply for places at School A asks for details of any pre-school provision that the child has attended. Brown referred to "headfitting" when writing

the distance between the child's existing knowledge and the new information he or she must acquire is a critical determinant of how successful training will be.

<div align="center">Brown 1979, p.251</div>

In the context of this research it was clearly important for School A to know the previous 'educational' experience of the children that would be joining the school in September 2002 so that the induction programme could be flexible to meet the needs of the child and their family. In School A the first few days in September are used flexibly to meet the needs of the individual children and their families. Mornings are used for home visits where the staff visit the children in their home environment whilst afternoons are left deliberately available so that flexible responses can be given. It might be that a particular child has been identified by the pre-school provider and their parents as having a particular phobia or finds it difficult to interact with small groups of children in a play situation. The afternoon sessions are used to enable the school staff to draw up individual programmes to help support the children with their particular problems.

It is important that the school has information about the children before they start school so that they can play their part in the 'bridging' process both for individual children and for themselves as participants in the transition process. Whilst this detailed analysis is important for School A and the children that join it the notion of 'bridging' can be taken out of the school context and put into a broader theoretical framework that would apply to all transition process and time frames.

It could be argued that in all transitional situations there is a time when links are made between what is being moved from to what is being moved to. This could apply in domestic or work place situations. Comparisons are made of the past and future contexts to help make sense of the new situation that the person is going through and/or to. Bridging activities or events enable this linkage to take place. These activities make the link between contexts – the link between old and new. Examples may include visiting a new house several times before moving in to familiarise ones self with the room layout, garden features, furniture requirements and even maybe meeting new neighbours. When moving from one job to another visits are often made post interview to the new context to meet with key personnel or to attend initial meetings.

The idea of bridging as a step with in the transitional process is explored in more detail below with a new model of transitions based around this key element of 'bridging'.

Transition Model

Assimilation and
Learning
Step 3

Introduction
Step 1/4

Bridging
Step 2
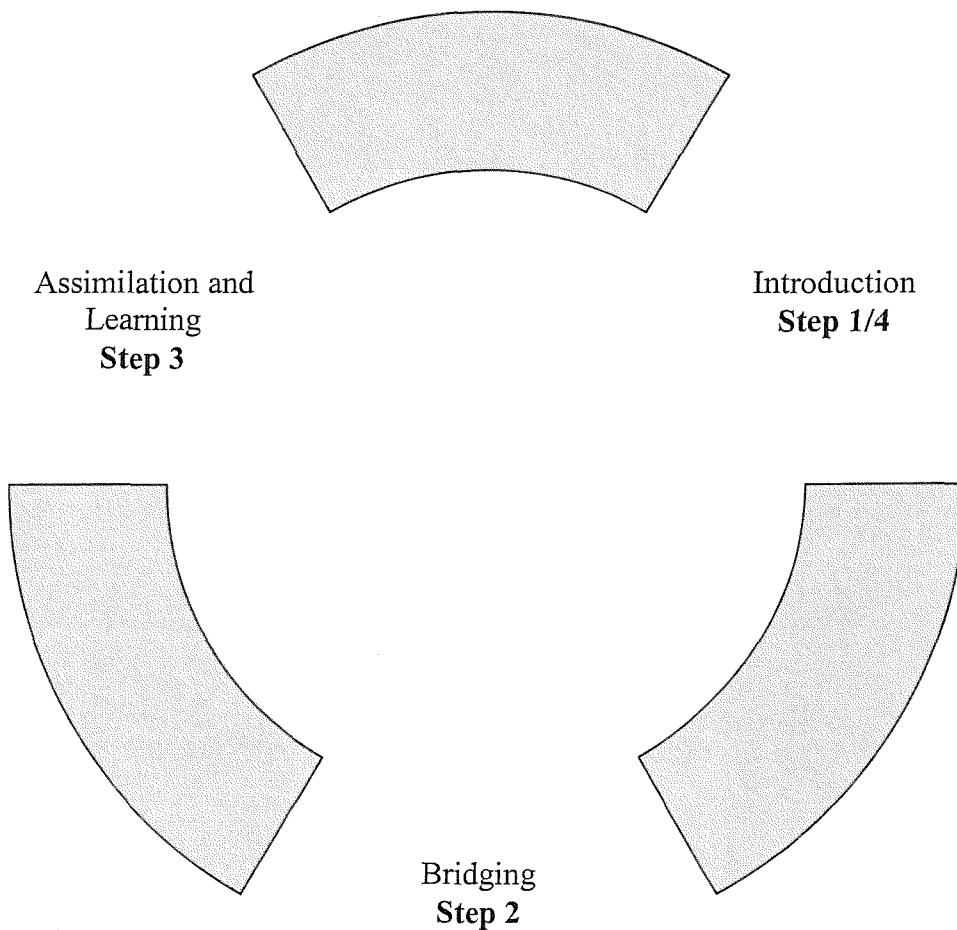
This new transition model has several key features:

- It is a continuous cycle. Step 3 is preparation for Step 1 and so the cycle is continuous and continues around with the end being the beginning of the next cycle.

- It has a simple model structure with just 3 steps. There may well be phases in between the steps for individual people for example, depression, denial as in Hopson and Adams model but this generic model would apply to all people because of the simplicity of the model in steps.

- This generic model would be applicable to all transition contexts and especially within the context of the transition to school research which is the core of this research.

- Step 1 – Introduction – this is the time when the person is introduced or finds them selves in a new context, situation, circumstances, and environment. In the context of this research study when the children are first introduced to the idea that they will be going to full time school. For many this would have been near to the start of the induction programmes but for others it would have been a gradual ongoing process that they became exposed to by living within their family and watching older siblings going to school.

- Step 2 – Bridging – this is the time when activities, experiences from the past are drawn upon by the person going through the transition steps to help make sense of the new context or situation. Appendix N draws together sample references to the evidence within this impact study to elements of bridging events/activities.

- Each element of the Bridging Step is valid in its own right (see appendix N and later details of the elements within the Bridging model) in that a person does not have to have or be part of all the elements to be going through this Bridging Step. They may only be involved in a few of the elements of bridging or even just one element to still be within the bridging part of the overall transitional model.

- Step 3 – Assimilation and Learning – this is the time when the person is assimilated into the new context and feels comfortable enough to begin to learn in the new situation or environment. This is the step when the time of transition is nearly over and the person is secure enough in the new situation or context to start to learn new things. In appendix N and within the previous text when the notion of the timeframe for transition was discussed there is evidence of how parents believed that the transitional time had been completed for their child.

- Step 4 is within the model the same as Step 1. Step 4 follows Step 3 with in the cyclical nature of the model and thus Step 4 becomes Step 1 the Step after Step 3 and the restart of the cycle of the model. Within the text this notion was discussed as the idea of when a transition within the educational context was complete was discussed and when one transition becomes the preparation for another transition to take place. The times referred to were pre-school being a transitional time for Year R and then potentially by the end of Year R a transitional time to move into the introduction to Year One and so on during a child/young persons time at school.

The key feature of this model is the Bridging Step, that is, Step 2. This Bridging Step became clear as a concept to the researcher during the initial stages of the interview process when the children were being interviewed and recalled previous experiences

within the context of the new situation they were in. The notion was explored more fully with the parents and children in interview 4 and again with the parents in phase two of the research project. The diagram and text overleaf explores the key elements within the Bridging Step and it is suggested by the researcher to be a new concept in the context of transition models. This Bridging Step could form a part of the transition model whatever the context. In exploring the elements within the Bridging Step I have given examples from the transition to school process for four year olds (see also Appendix N) and other transition times to explain the generality of the concept and its application to other contexts and transitional situations.

I suggest that this new bridging model with its elements adds to the body of knowledge about transitional times. This is not to suggest that during a time of transition all the elements within the bridging model are evident but that some if not the majority are present in some format or other as they are particular to the bridging context. Similarly, I am not suggesting that some of the elements are more important or prevalent than others or indeed that elements are present in any order or sequence. It may also be that the ideas expressed within the elements of the Bridging Step are not distinct in any bridging phase. It may be that there are natural overlaps and that separating out individual elements is an artificial process. This process may be necessary with an academic model but in the real life situation it may not be possible to separate out different bridging elements, for example, the involvement of a mother or main carer in the transition to school process could be an aspect of the bridging notions of involving others; strains and stresses; roles; physical links; control and affecting others.

Bridging

Key elements within this step
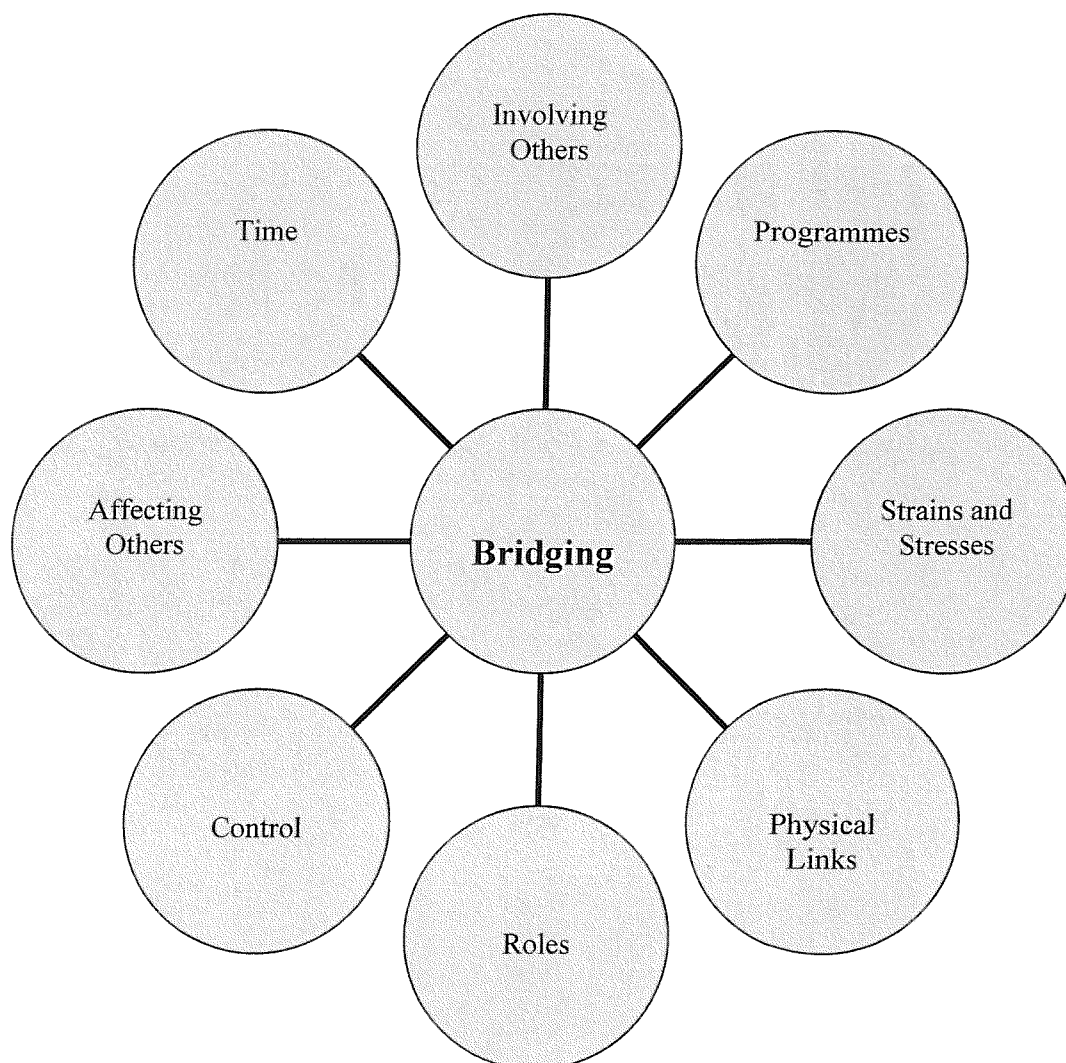
Involving others

In the Bridging Step others are often involved. Within the context of a child making the transition to full time education often the child's mother or main carer takes a key part in the transition programmes (Bronfenbrenner (1979)). Hartup (1999, p.1) noted that in this context, that is the transition to school, often a child who starts school at the same time can be a friend to share in the bridging time. Indeed at School A information is sought about the pre-school friendship group of the child who is to join the school so that the child who joins the school has a known friend in their Reception class.

The teachers of the Year R children at School A believed that they were a key part of the bridging process through the home visit to each child before they started school full time. They believed that visiting the child in their home environment was an important

link for the child. Rather like school going to the child initially rather than the child going to school. Fabian (2000, p.152) also referred to the involvement of others in the bridging time referring to 'scaffolding' in the transition process. Fabian (2002) also made reference to the role that older siblings play in the transition process when she comments

> those with older brothers and sisters already at school sometimes play at 'schools'. They gain an understanding of the nature of school through listening to their older siblings, accompanying them to school each day or seeing school items, such as books that are brought home.

<div align="right">Fabian 2002, p.21</div>

Indeed the headteacher of School A and many of the parents in phase one and phase two believed the role of older siblings to be a key part for many children in making that successful transition to full time education.

Specific programmes to facilitate the bridging

Bridging may not happen of its own accord but it may be helped to happen, be eased, and made quicker, less painful, and less obvious by the intervention of support, guidance, leadership or further training. For children joining full time education for the first time around the age of four years old, most schools have well established induction to school programmes which involve a range of activities that the children and often their parents take part in to enable them to become more familiar with the routines, practices and expectations of full time education. Glazier (2001) suggested that schools might want to think of these specific programmes in two ways. Orientation, that is, a familiarisation with the building, people and routines of the school and Transition, where an individually designed programme is developed for each child and their family tailored to their needs.

Often when starting a new job an induction process is set up to familiarise the new employee with their work place, situation and colleagues. Some work places have Staff Handbooks written to familiarise new staff with the key routines, procedures and practices of the workplace they are joining. In another work place context 'return to work programmes' are established for employees that have been off work for long periods of time, such as, illness or maternity leave, so that they can be re-familiarised with the workplace context again gradually. These programmes can take the form of gradually reintroducing the employee back into the work context. The pace or types of work can be increased gradually as can the pressure on the employee in terms of tiredness. This would be important for an employee who was returning to work after an illness and maybe needed to rebuild their work stamina. The notion of the building of stamina is an important one for young children as they start school full time. My own experience as a teacher of reception-aged children has seen the children wane by the afternoon and often fall asleep by home time.

Strains and Stresses

This Bridging Step can be a stressful time and place to be during the transition process as it is full of tensions. There are tensions between the old context and the new....the familiar and the unfamiliar and the struggle to make sense of the new context. It is a time of using past experiences to make sense of new experiences and the new context (Hopson and Adams 1976, p.15). This time of stresses is a holist time when many facets of a child's life come together can be stressed. Children may be anxious about starting school full time but this may be mixed with some anticipation and excitement about the process too. This may cause some tension with in them as to what they actually feel about going to school. At the same time as the children are anxious or excited so too may be their parents. Parents may be anxious for themselves as well as for their child. This was certainly evident during phase one of the research when mothers were apprehensive for their child and for themselves about their future role once their children were at school on a full time basis. It may also be a time of physical strains and stresses as new patterns of behaviour may need to be established. As a child goes to school full time for the first time it may be that new child care arrangements need to be set up within the household and new patterns of behaviour need to be established like reading and homework each night to reinforce the work of the school day. These may be familiar behaviour patterns if there is already an older child that goes to school full time, but for the only child or the eldest sibling with in the family these will be new experiences for the whole family to deal with. It could be said that for some families the going to full time school of an eldest sibling or only child is a time of transition for the whole family.

Involving a physical link

This physical link relates well with Weiss's (1990) notion of attachment. In this aspect of 'bridging' there can be links made with attachment figures, familiar people and artefacts. It doesn't necessarily involve others except in a second-hand way. So the child may bring a favourite toy to school as they start school and for the first few days or weeks to remind them of home and to make the physical link between the two places - home and school. The child may bring a soother, teddy or even a blanket....or from my own experiences as a teacher a child may bring a very old piece of that blanket! The child's mother or main carer might also be a physical link as they may well be bringing the child literally to the new context. They will probably facilitate the main mode of transport for the child to school each day whether that be by car, bus, bike or on foot. The mother or main carer may stay at the school with the child for some of the induction programme activities initially like story times or may indeed stay with their child for longer periods of time to ease the transition to school.

The employee starting a new job may also take the second-hand links into their new workplace through photos of family and trinkets and lucky mascots. These items may be new for the new job or maybe are familiar items taken from the last work context and brought into the new. They may even be 'good-luck' gifts from the past work place given in preparation for the new workplace to ease the transition between the two.

Role establishment

This Bridging Step notion relates well to Oatley's (1990, p.70) discussions about the movement from one role to a new role. The child going to school on a full time basis is moving from being either an only child or a sibling within a fairly small family community to a role of being one of 30 children in a class context. Their new role involves how they will relate to the other 29 children and the new adults in their lives – teacher, teaching assistant and Headteacher. The children will need to interrelate with all these new people and need to learn the relationships between these people as well as the relationships that the new people will have with them. They will also need to learn new control hierarchies. In this sense it would be control in the sense of power or influence. The hierarchical system of the school is one which the child would need to acknowledge and relate to especially as to how they fitted with in that hierarchy. It may be that this hierarchy is very different to the ones that they are used to at home or at pre-school. It may be that the roles are similar and thus familiar to the child.

Within the workplace context often people changing jobs do so to change their role be that moving into a role of more responsibility or less responsibility. Even a move to the same role but in a different context can have a role change dimension as the people in the work context are different and the immediate work context and environment will also be different thus affecting how that role may be played.

Mastering control

Control is lost as people move into a new situation so the Bridging Step allows for time for that control to be found, established and gained. The establishment of control is the control of oneself within the new context and the understanding of how ones own self-control fits into the control hierarchies of the school. This idea was explored in the previous paragraphs and underlies the idea of these bridging elements not being separate notions but fused notions separated out for ease of explanation or understanding. Fisher (1990, p.57) explored this element for children within the transition to school context and suggested that the use of interpersonal skills would enable children to gain help during this low control period. Indeed the child needs to be very skilful on an interpersonal level to learn to interact with so many people at so many levels so quickly. This use of interpersonal skills to help enable self control would also relate to the wider world of the work place and life transitions outside the school context.

A bridging time for others as well as the person making the transition

This element explores the idea that the Bridging Step time is also a bridging time for others affected by the person making the transition as well as the time for the actual person in the transition process. So for the employee joining a new work team the team has a bridging time as the new person joining them may well change the dynamics and workings of their work place. They may well change the interpersonal relationships as the dynamics are changed by a new person and personality joining the work team. A new boss or leader joining a work place or team may well influence the people they join through their personal and professional interactions with in the work context and there

will need to be a bridging time in those relationships and interactions as the team/work place re-establishes itself.

In a school context there is bridging for "all the key players" (Dockett and Perry 2001, p.15), for the parents of the child going to school full time it is a time of transition because their child is going to school and so a new situation is established for the parents and family because of this. It is a bridging time for the teacher and teaching assistants as they establish a new class with new children and as all teachers will say - every class is different. For the teacher and teaching assistant in particular they have a dual role of being a part of the process yet also being key facilitators of that process to enable it to be successful. For the children themselves making the transitional journey to full time education they are joining a class of 30 young people with all their joint experiences. Each child brings themselves and their experiences to school for all the other children to take part in as they start a part of their lives as joint players in the classroom context. Glazier (2001, p.15) noted "it is crucial that this initial year of school provides a bridge for all the key players."

Time frame

There is no set length of time for this Bridging Step. In this respect the Bridging Step is a fluid time. It may have no obvious start or finish. There may only be an awareness or reflection that it has happened. This step is as long as it needs to be for the individual person in their individual context. The parents involved in this research identified differing time frames for them and their children in the whole transition process. Glazier (2001, p.15) identified the "initial year" as a "bridge for all the key players." For some children this Bridging Step will be longer than for others as they make adjustments to their new context. Within the world of work context some people will make the transition into their new work and roles quicker than others. Some people may identify that they never made the bridge into their new role. It is perhaps this aspect that Estelle Morris referred to when she resigned from her post as Secretary of State for Education in October 2002.

For people who are conscious of the Bridging Step, perhaps because they are part of a process which is set up to enable it to formally take place, there may well be some conscious start and end points. For example, when setting up and organising an induction to school programme dates are set for particular events, letters are sent to enable events to take place, the events start and ultimately the programme of events finishes. In this context there is a start and end to this time frame notion with in the Bridging Step. Likewise a return to work programme for someone who has been absent from work for a while will probably have a beginning and an end.

Application of the model

This 3 step model, I would argue, could be used to examine all transitional experiences. People involved in managing transitions could use the model, in particular the eight elements of the bridging step, to manage successful transitions by using the elements as guides to transitional considerations. It could be a model guide for use in managing staff into new roles. Thereby ensuring that there are bridging elements all ready built into their induction to work package so that the bridging is not left to chance but it is planned by design. The acceptance of this model reinforces reality in the sense that

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these bridging activities take place, often on an ad hoc, unplanned basis, and this model formalises that Bridging Step in transitions by acknowledging its place within the transitional process.

The model could be tested further by applying it to a wide range of circumstances and differing transitions. It could be tested in work place domains or family life situations. Researchers could apply the model in other countries to examine the role that different cultural norms or expectations could have upon the model. I believe that the simplicity of the model is one of its strengths and its application, I would argue is generic to all situations. Within the Bridging Step I would argue that there may be differing cultural practices and norms and these will be reflected in the type and range of the bridging activities. These differing types of activities may relate to the culture of a country or even the culture of a particular work place or family however bridging activities will take place to ensure effective transitions.

This penultimate chapter has suggested that bridging is a new concept in the context of transition models. It is a new model for considering transitions. The final chapter takes the opportunity to draw together this research through reflections and recommendations for School A and reflections on the research process itself.

Chapter Nine

Reflections and recommendations for School A

This final chapter reflects upon the research in terms of School A's practice. It offers discussion on the research outcomes for School A; recommendations for School A to consider and reflections on the research process overall.

There seems to be no obvious differences in the results/outcomes of the three induction to school packages trialled by School A. This outcome is reflected upon by the parents of the children involved in phase one of the research, the Year R teachers and the headteacher. The next question would seem to be why? Clearly the parents' general view is that the core package the school offers is a strong one. "It would be difficult to make it better" noted the parent of Tilly (4). So it may be that the core package achieves the desired impact in terms of the children's ability to settle to full time education quickly and successfully. Perhaps it has all the components necessary to enable that Bridging Step between pre-school / home and full time education. Perhaps however it is not the key element that makes the bridging successful in its own right. If the role of siblings and other already known children in the Bridging Step is so strong then the programme offered by the school may be just an element in the Bridging Step as opposed to being the key element on its own. One could perhaps assume that in different contexts the role of the programme offered by the school would have different significance, for example, for a child joining the school without out any older siblings already at school or any knowledge of any children already at the school.

The success of the induction programmes was measured by the school in terms of the children coming into school in a calm way each day and leaving their parents in a calm relaxed way ready to start the school day. It was measured in the way the teachers speak about the children in terms of their ability to settle to tasks in school and the children's knowledge and practise of the school routines. It was measured by the teacher's comments about the children in terms of their ability to socialise in agreed ways that fit the school's expectations for behaviour, such as, taking turns and working within small groups. It was measured by the parents' comments about their child being settled and enjoying school and wanting to go to school readily each day.

It may be that there was no differing impact between the three induction packages because of the size of the sample. Perhaps the sample size was too small for any themes to emerge within each package. It could be that the variables were too strong within this research context, that is School A and sample size, and so the packages were overshadowed by the variables which could not be controlled. These would include the quality of the pre-school provision; level of parental interest and commitment to their child's positive transition to school and the influence of older siblings, a key factor mentioned by the headteacher, parents and Year R teachers. There was also the influence of the research and researcher in the outcomes. The very fact that the families were taking part in the research may have affected the outcomes. The families may have been more focused on the transition to school process than they would have been if they had not been taking part in the research project. Further the very fact that the

parents agreed to be part of the research could be said to show their interest in the transition to school process and their commitment to it on behalf of their child.

So if there were no obvious differences in the outcomes of the three different packages what did the research show for School A? What could be said as a reflection for School A?

- That the response of the parents to the induction activities provided by the school was positive.

- That the children were successfully inducted into full time education within the accelerated time frame, that is all full time by half term.

- That the majority of parents responded positively to the home visit activity.

- That parents noted the strength of the influence of older siblings and surrogate siblings, for example, cousins, older children as neighbours, in the transition to school process.

- That parents acknowledged a range of influences upon their children as they made the transition to school.

- That parents noted that the transition to school process did have a defined end point around the end of the first term at school. The parents believed it to be either when the children start full time or the end of the first term. The headteacher however believed it to be about October when the children were full time. The Year R teachers believed it to be the end of the first term for most children.

- That parents acknowledged that there were many elements, such as, older siblings; induction programmes; themselves, that helped the children to make that 'bridge' between their past known experiences, such as, pre-school and new unknown experiences, full time school.

Recommendations for School A

1. Continue to deliver Package A induction programme to all children who join the school in Year R. Continue to deliver the package in the current time frame. Ensure that all staff and new staff are aware of the importance placed on he home visits by the parents of the children joining the school. Consider a version of this induction programme, including a home visit, for children who join Year R during the course of the school year.

2. Repackaging the induction to school programme so that the support and reassurance for parents is very overt. Enabling parents to realise that the school is concerned about their emotions and anxieties as well as those of their children during the transition to school process. For example, recognising through the parents information talk the emotional issues for parents as their child starts school - about

how they might feel when their child starts school.......anxious? happy? alone? ready to go out to work?. Reassuring parents about new behaviours that their child might exhibit, such as, their child might be constantly talking about their teacher as though temporarily they have replaced the affection of the parent.

3. Addressing the issue of parents who already have children at the school not attending the meetings for parents because they do not think that they have to because they have done it before. Helping parents to note that each child is different and has different individual needs as they start school. The children may not react to school in the way that an older sibling did. The school may well be different in its practices and routines from the time when an elder sibling was at the school as schools are evolving living communities and have new staff, new initiatives and new practices that the parent might not be familiar with in terms of transition of in terms of Year R. The school may wish to consider different events for parents of children who already have siblings at the school or may consider differing the emphasis at events for these parents.

4. Consider greater flexibility in the time frame of the induction to school process particularly to reflect the individual child's circumstances. For example, if a child has been at full time at a pre-school provider in the year previous to joining the school the school may wish to discuss with parents the child having an accelerated induction programme so that they can start full time education earlier than the first half term.

5. Consider the idea of two aspects to the induction to school process. Namely one called 'orientation to school' and the other called 'transition to school' as written about by Glazier (2001, p.15). Glazier noted that the two programmes have different functions. She comments that orientation programmes are often designed to help children and parents become familiar with the school setting. They may involve a tour of the school, meeting relevant people in the school and spending time in a classroom. Often these programmes are characterized by presentations to the children and parents. Transition programmes, Glazier describes as often including orientation time, but tend to be longer-term and more related to the individual need. These packages might allow the school to cater more for the individual needs of parents and children yet still be feasible for the school to manage and administer. They could be offered to parents in discussion about the individual families needs. For example, a child joining the school who already has a sibling in Year 2 may not need the orientation programme but their own transition programme could be useful.

6. Consider ways of utilizing the children already at the school to enhance the bridging process further. For example:

   • Using older siblings of children to do tours of the school during pre-school visits and meeting their younger sibling on the first day.

- Giving each new Year R child a 'buddy' who is already a member of the school community, for example, a year 1 child matched with each prospective Year R child so that they have a 'known' child to greet them and 'befriend' them as they join the school.

Reflections on the research process or hindsight is a wonderful thing

When one is doing anything there are always opportunities to learn from ones actions. Sometimes it is learning from mistakes often learning from actions that went well but could have been improved further. In this research there are several reflections which I would consider if planning the research again.

Firstly involving the school more at the beginning of the induction process. The school became involved by interview towards the end of the formal induction to school process. This was a deliberate choice by me as the main research emphasis was to work with the children and parents, but on reflection the school could have been involved more and their reflections along the route of the formal induction programme could have been useful. Also there could have been more use made of the class teachers of the Year R classes as in the research of Thompson (1975) and Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis (1979), but there are issues associated with using other researchers in the research process. Thompson highlighted issues about the consistency of judgements when more than one researcher is involved in the evidence gathering process. It was identified that there are more opportunities for the recording of the responses to be less accurate, selective and more subjective.

Secondly, carrying out the third and four interviews with the children and parents at their homes as the first and second interviews were carried out there. The reasons for this approach would be

- Allowing for the same interviewing context as interviews one and two and thus for continuity
- Allowing the children and their parents to remain in their *'domain'* (author's italics) in their territory and perhaps more comfortable.

The reasons against this course of action and for the actions that did take place were

- The children would have been more tired at home at the end of the school day as by then in the research process the children were attending school full time
- It would be hard to timetable interviews with families around their family commitments - it would have been too intrusive. The families would have been engaged in mealtimes and / or after school activities with older siblings and the weekends would have also been family time that the researcher did not want to intrude into.
- It would have been more time consuming for the researcher as the children and their families were all seen in one day at the school venue.

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- It as a good opportunity in the transition to school process for the families to be welcomed into the school on two occasions.
- It showed the school's commitment to the research process and content and their interest by their support for the interviews to take place at school and in school time.

Thirdly, by the end of the research I felt more confident with the research process (but clearly this only comes with the research experience) to suggest that if the research was being carried out again the questions to the children and parents could be less structured. There could be just two or three lead questions from where the conversation would be allowed to flow rather than children and parents answering specific questions albeit that those questions were specifically designed to enable information to be gained for the purposes of the research. It might be that the children would be more relaxed with this suggested style of interplay between the researcher and themselves. There is not however the suggestion or even evidence that the children and their families were not relaxed with the interview processes as they happened in this research. It is merely a consideration. It could be also that the children and their parents would have not reacted well to a looser framework for their responses. Further if carrying out the research again the questions asked could be more considered following the experience of this research, for example, the final question asked to the children during interview 4.

Fourthly, the consideration of the issue of time. This I feel must be one of the biggest issues for researchers today. This must be the case particularly for the part time student who juggles research with full time work and in this case a young family and other professional and community commitments. But I feel sure that it may be the case that even the full time research student must wish for more time for their studies.

Further there is also the issue of time scale in this research. As discussed earlier in this study within the notion of when does transition finish and when is the optimum time to measure impact there is the notion that maybe the research time frame could have been longer. A pragmatic view has to be taken here in the context of the time commitment of the researcher but also in terms of the outcomes of impact that are measurable. A line has to be drawn in time and I wonder if whenever that line is drawn the reflective researcher will always be wondering what if....?

Fifthly, and linked with the issue of time and maybe also idealism there is the issue of the size and scale of the research. It would have been fascinating to have had a bigger sample, maybe of half of the intake of the year group, that is, forty children or even to have involved a second or third school in the research process. The research could have been extended to involve schools in differing parts of the county perhaps with poorer socio-economic circumstances or even involved research with schools in other parts of the country. I wonder also about the merits of similar research being carried out with a primary school as opposed to with another infant school. In many respects they, that is, the primary and infant school are similar with Year R intakes of children but maybe the differing philosophy of the ethos of the primary school and infant school and the fact that the children stay in the primary school for seven years might affect the research outcomes. There is also the opportunity to link the research with not only other parts of the country but other parts of the world. It may be idealistic and the practical logistics mind boggling, never mind the expense, but the research could have involved similar schools in this country and abroad. I do have professional contacts by which this

research can be shared within an international forum through the National College for School Leadership based in Nottingham in the UK so that this research could add to the professional international body of research on this fascinating issue and transition process which the majority of the world's children go through.

Finally why think about transitions? Why spend the time reflecting upon the notion of transitions when life is busy enough with a family and the commitments of full time work to think about new notions. Perhaps this quote sums it up……..

> we come out of nothing, and we are going back to nothing when we die. When something in our life changes, we are confronted with nothing again. We are trying, all the time, to become familiar with that nothing. I have a lifespace filled with ideas, feelings, people. In life changes, that lifespace breaks up, and then it comes back together again in a new form. What we are trying to do is break that completely and be all one, be in that nothingness again, but know it. Whether we focus on something outside or inside, we're moving towards that barrier….to break it.

John Wood 1976, p.24-25

Dear Mr. and Mrs. ....,

Three years ago we changed how we introduce children to life at School A and some evaluation of that system has taken place. However, we wanted to make sure that we were getting this introduction right for the children and so a more in depth analysis of what we offer the children was needed.

We asked Mrs Helen Paterson, Headteacher of School B to carry out some research into our induction programme

Last year she selected, with my help 12 children and their parents to be involved in the review process. This year she would like a further 12 parents of children joining the school this September (2003) to add to the programme.

This would involve you in '2 chats' with Mrs Paterson either at this school or at your home in March and September this year. Whilst this research is independent of this school, it is very low key and informal. Mrs Paterson will merely be asking for your feelings and impressions of the way you have been introduced to school life at School A.

I sincerely hope that you can support us with this. I would be grateful if you could indicate your support on the slip below and return it to school by ?????? March. Mrs Paterson will contact you to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher School A.

INTRODUCTION REVIEW

I do/do not wish to be involved in the review process along with my child.

Signed...

Dear Mr & Mrs ......,

I understand from Mrs A, Headteacher at School A, that you have kindly agreed to yourself and .... being involved in research into the impact of the starting school process for children in the Reception Class.

The research involves talking with you and your child and respects totally your privacy and ensures your anonymity.

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in this research. Clearly I need to arrange the first meeting with you and .....

Please could you indicate on the slip below the most convenient time for me to contact you by telephone. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed for your use.

Yours sincerely.

Helen Paterson

Parent's Name: ....

Child's Name: ....

The most convenient time to contact me is:

* daytime   Tel. no.

* evening after 8.00pm   Tel. no.

(Please delete as appropriate)

Dear Mr. and Mrs. ....,

Three years ago we changed how we introduce children to life at School A and some evaluation of that system has taken place. However, we wanted to make sure that we were getting this introduction right for the children and so a more in depth analysis of what we offer the children was needed.

We asked Mrs Helen Paterson, Headteacher of School B to carry out some research into our induction programme

Last year she selected, with my help 12 children and their parents to be involved in the review process. This year she would like a further 12 parents of children joining the school this September (2003) to add to the programme.

This would involve you in '2 chats' with Mrs Paterson either at this school or at your home in March and September this year. Whilst this research is independent of this school, it is very low key and informal. Mrs Paterson will merely be asking for your feelings and impressions of the way you have been introduced to school life at School A.

I sincerely hope that you can support us with this. I would be grateful if you could indicate your support on the slip below and return it to school by ..... March. Mrs Paterson will contact you to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher School A.

INTRODUCTION REVIEW

I do/do not wish to be involved in the review process along with my child.

Signed...

Helen Paterson
Headteacher
School B

Dear

I understand from Mrs. ....., Headteacher of School A, that you have kindly agreed to be involved in research into the impact of the starting school process for children in the Reception Class.

The research involves talking with you for about ten minutes in both March and September this year. These conversations will take place on the telephone. The research process and final written report respects your privacy and ensures your anonymity.

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in this research. Clearly I need to arrange the first conversation with you.

Please could you indicate on the slip below the most convenient time for me to contact you by telephone. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed for your use.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Paterson

Parent's Name.................................

The most convenient time to contact me is:

- Daytime 9am-4pm   Tel no:
- Evening after 8pm   Tel no:

(Please delete as appropriate)

Child's Profile

Name:-   **Known as:-**

Group:- A B C

Child:- 1 2 3 4

Family Situation:- (both parents; siblings; eldest/middle/youngest)

Parents occupation:-

Previous contact with the school:- (sibling there; parenting course; pre application school visit)

Pre school preparation (prior to Feb 2002):- (nursery/toddler group/other)

Interview Tracking Sheet

Child (code)	1	2	3	4
	Once school place confirmed	End of Induction Programme (i.e. fulltime attendance)	End of first full week	End of first term
A1	April 5th			
A2	April 4th	Sept 23rd	October 14th	December 6th
A3	April 5th	Sept 26th	October 14th	December 6th
A4	April 16th	Sept 24th	October 14th	December 6th
B1	April 5th	Sept 24th	October 14th	December 6th
B2	April 12th	Sept 26th	October 14th	December 6th
B3	March 22nd	Sept 24th	October 11th	December 6th
B4	April 5th	Sept 24th	October 14th	December 6th
C1	April 24th	Sept 26th	October 14th	December 6th
C2	April 5th	Sept 26th	October 14th	December 6th
C3	April 12th	Sept 27th	October 14th	December 6th
C4	April 4th	Sept 23rd	October 14th	December 6th
Interviewing Year R teachers and headteacher Dec 3rd and Dec 6th				

Child's interview

1. What do you know about going to school?
I know that there's big children that I don't know but I know my friend M   that used to go to my nursery.

2. Who else will you know at school?
You get work to do and I know I like that.

3. What is school like?
Well, it's a bit big for little children.

4. What will you do at school?
Playing and doing work.

5. What will you wear at school?
Uniform – School A - blue.

6. Will you have lunch/eat at school?
Yes – but I don't at my little nursery and that's a bit more gooder than big school.
Prompt – Why? Little nursery is much funner because it's got different toys and lots and lots of toys and there's better teachers there.

7. Will you do anything special at school?
Well – I might like going to school – its fun.

8. What is the name of your school?
School A

9. What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?
Oh, I've forgotten her name.

10. What is/will your teacher's name?
Yes I'm going to get into Blue Class.
Prompt – Do you know the name of the teacher of blue class? Mrs. R.

11. How do you feel about starting/going to school?
Well - very nice but I'm already a bit excited because Mrs. C has got a story about going to school.
Prompt – What's it called? Going To School

Parent's interview

1. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?
He's very excited about it already. I think he's well ready for school.

2. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?

I'm looking forward to him starting as I think that he's ready for it. He's beginning to learn to read already. He'll get a lot more stimulation although he enjoys play school at the moment. I'm looking forward to it from a personal point of view as I will have more time for myself but that's not the most important point. Being with his sister as well I think is important to him.

Prompt – his sister? E   age 6 year 1

3. How have you prepared your child for starting school?

Well he goes to school regularly to take E   to school and collect her. We've read books about starting school and he thought it was a bit babyish, as he already knows about what goes on. We've got his school uniform bits and he knows the teachers already as I've been getting the wet play boxes ready with Miss A. So he's getting to know the teachers.

Prompt – pre school? and goes to pre school.

4. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?

Not a great deal as yet. I know that Miss A went to the play school to meet the children recently but we haven't heard about any further meetings – I know that they will be doing reading and introductory sessions but that's not till the summer and I haven't heard anymore yet.

5. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?

Not really no – I wouldn't say they have. I know Mrs. L   does a meeting for new parents but that's not until June – we had that for Emily when she started. It gave us some guidelines on behaviour and what they expected of the children. But as far as J's concerned they haven't really done that for me. I haven't really had any guidance yet.

Child's interview

12. What do you know about going to school?
Playing with the playdough coz I can makes lots of things and...
Prompt...yes...just lots of things

13. Who else will you know at school?
F. C

14. What is school like?
Nice...it's nice there

15. What will you do at school?
The sand

16. What will you wear at school?
My special clothes – school clothes

17. Will you have lunch/eat at school?
Yoghurt, crisps, sandwiches and a drink

18. Will you do anything special at school?
Don't know

19. What is the name of your school?
Big school

20. What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?
No reply

21. What is/will your teacher's name?
No reply

22. How do you feel about starting/going to school?
Happy

Parent's interview

6. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?
He loves it.......he can't wait to get up and go to school.

7. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?
It is really strange not having him around especially for my wife. She doesn't know
what to do with herself. It has taken some adjusting to. He seems to be loving it.

8. How have you prepared your child for starting school?

Just the same sorts of things....helping him with his counting, games like dominoes and snakes and ladders.

9. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?

We have had 3 visits and the teachers came to see him and the helper.

10. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?

They mainly helped with the information evening. It was very interesting as they went through everything that we would need to know. They explained what would happen.

Child's interview

23. What do you know about going to school?
Playing in the sand.

24. Who else will you know at school?
D

25. What is school like?
All right. It's really fine

26. What will you do at school?
No reply

27. What will you wear at school?
Uniform. I wear my school uniform. It's smart.

28. Will you have lunch/eat at school?
Crisps...I have sandwiches as well in my box.

29. Will you do anything special at school?
PE in the hall.

30. What is the name of your school?
No reply

31. What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?
No reply

32. What is/will your teacher's name?
Mrs A

33. How do you feel about starting/going to school?
All right. It's alright really you know

Parent's interview

11. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?
Fine really good.

12. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?
Pleased....I feel quite comfortable about it as he seems to be enjoying it and he is positive about it.

13. How have you prepared your child for starting school?
I spend more time encouraging him now. I feel that I've more of an idea about where he is heading now. I can help and encourage him.

14. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?

Pass….now that he is full time…….all is fine …no more needed really.

15. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?

It has stopped really but if there was a problem I am sure I could contact them.

16. Overall how is the transition to school going?

The week before he started and the first two weeks I was in a real state and worked up about it. Since he started it has been better. The first morning when he went in I was so relieved…he had done it. He has carried on so well since then too. He is so relaxed about it. There hasn't been lots of children crying too so that has been good. I think that overall he has done well now that part is over. My role is now to keep him going and feel so positive.

17. What reflections do you have on the transition process?

The whole process has been really good especially the pre school visits to get them used to school. It was better than starting school cold.

Child's interview

34. What do you know about your school?
Painting, drawing, playing, colouring in the pictures

35. Who else do you know at school?
A, A, E, E

36. What is school like?
All right. I quite like it you know. I saw you in my school today. You were here all the day.

37. What do you at school?
Playing and working. I like working very hard.

38. What do you wear at school?
School uniform….my skirt is grey and this top is blue with a tree.

39. Do you have lunch/eat at school?
I have school dinners – they're nice

40. Do you do anything special at school?
Christmas things – presents for my mummy..oops I shouldn't have told that and the play. I'm in the play.

41. What is the name of your school?
School A

42. What is the name of the Headteacher of your school?
Names headteacher

43. What is/will your teacher's name?
Names teacher

44. How do you feel about being at school all the day now?
It's fine.

45. Before you were at school all the time what things helped you to get ready for going to school all the day each day?
The computer…..I didn't know how to do the computer much at play school but I do at school – I'm much better at it now.

Parent's interview

18. How does your child feel about going to school?
Loves it… just totally adores being here.

19. How do you feel about your child going to school?
Really happy....excellent. She is so settled that I am feeing really good about it all.

20. How are you still preparing your child for school ?
I'm not preparing her really but more doing the things after school at home like reading. To be honest she plays schools each night at home.

21. How is the school preparing your child to be at school?
I think that by going to school every day she is doing what she needs to do and they can't prepare her for what she is already doing now each day.

22. How is the school continuing to prepare you (as a parent) for your child being at school full time?
I don't think that they can prepare you for what is an ongoing thing. For the curriculum there was an evening but I didn't go to that as I've already had a child go through the school and it's just the same things so I didn't need to know them.

23. Overall how is the transition to school going?
I think she's made it really and she's there...so the transition has finished.

24. What has been the impact of the transition activities provided by the school on your child?
I think it made the move to go really smoothly. For her she could of gone to school full time straight away and the way the school has worked it has gone really well especially for those who have younger children but I think that the most important bit was the home visit.

25. What in your opinion was the key thing or key things that helped your child successfully make the 'bridge' from pre school / home to full time school?
Her brother....because she used to come up here every day and bring him to school every day. She has just been surrounded with schools not necessarily this school but I think this helped her get the idea of what school was about and playschool helped too as it got her used to a structured day.

Child(4) Context
- Interview 4
- Last one in Phase 1
- Second one at the school
- Parents, it was agreed previously, would say very little at the first part of each interview so that just the child's responses could be heard and recorded. Also so that they should not prompt their child or their child would think that they (the parent) could speak for them.

HP   Hi B..thanks Mrs J …come on…it's good to see you
You okay?

Child   I'm hot.

HP   Yes it's a really sunny day – beautiful. Have you been playing outside?..

Child   Yeh

HP good idea to take your sweat shirt off…do you want a hand? Here…..

Child at playtime I played on the pirate bit..we've got a new flag

HP   Have you that sounds…oh here's mummy…

HP   Hi Sharon …..good to see you again..thanks for coming.

Parent doesn't seem like 5 mins since last time… hiya   you all hot…I'll have that….I'm all of a rush…it's been a bit manic today….I couldn't find the car keys and then the phone went ….any way you okay?

HP   yea…fine thanks
Shall we all go in this room here.
Bill is waiting for us. Can you see him B?

Mother greets child more …movement of going into room.

HP   Hello Bill…I hope you haven't been eating all the biscuits?
You know what he's like B

Child   Mmmm

HP   Anyway would you like a biscuit before Bill scoffs them all..I don't know which are your favourites… pink ones, creamy?

Child pink

HP   help your self.....Yes take 2 if you like...can you speak with a biscuit in your mouth?
drink?

Sorry I didn't organise any tea or coffee....I'm sure I could though..would you like one? I can get some

Parent   no it's fine really

Laughter

Inaudible

HP   Are you okay there? can you sit right by my silly machine so youre really close.

Child   You're not good with that thing

HP   Yes I'm glad you remembered ...Laughter......I really do need some help with it..can you remember what to do?

Child   It's easy...I can do it

HP   That's good I'll need your help
Anyway are you okay there.. comfy?
If you remember last time Bill and I were at school we came to ask you some questions about school and you coming to school and the things you do and think...yea..

Child   Is his baby still there?

HP   I think so ......do you want to have a look?

Child   He's there

HP   That's good I would have been worried if I'd lost him.
What did you call the baby again?

Child   Can't remember

HP   Oh never mind......perhaps it will pop back into your brain later.
Okay I was just saying that do you remember me and Bill coming to your house and to school to ask you some questions about coming to school and what being at school is like

Child   Yup....can I hear my words?

HP   yes of course when we are all finished I'll fiddle with the machine and we can listen to what everyone has said...play it back......if I can get it to work...you know I'm not very good with it

HP   Well anyway ....here we are again..but this is the last time. This is the last time that Bill and I will need your help
I still need you help though...and mummy too.......Bill and I have some questions for mummy too.

Anyway are you okay to speak into my machine..do you want to sit a bit nearer
Okay lets go..
Now where did I out my piece of paper to help me?......here it is under Bill...what pest...he's not very helpful at all.

Child   he's guarding it

HP   you know I think you're right...very clever Bill...thank you
So ...off we go   .....

Context..each question is worked through formally

Child's interview

    46. What do you know about going to school?
    Playing outside – I like playing with toys
    Prompt...what toys do you like playing with best?
    Like the pirate stuff...we've got a new flag

    47. Who else will you know at school?
    A, D, T
    Prompt...who are they?
    My friends...we play at pirates

    48. What is school like?
    All right
    Prompt....Any thing more you'd like to say about school?
    Its alright

    49. What will you do at school?
    Having lunch and we're doing the play
    Prompt...the play? What play is that? Tell me about the play?
    About the baby Jesus with loads of angels and singing

    50. What will you wear at school?
    School uniform but not in the play

    51. Will you have lunch/eat at school?
    Sandwiches...I have sandwiches all the days now

    52. Will you do anything special at school?
    We are having a play....an angel

    53. What is the name of your school?

Names school

54. What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?
Names headteacher

55. What is/will your teacher's name?
Names teacher

56. How do you feel about starting/going to school?
All right..just all right...its all the day now...all the day now
Prompt...yes...how does that feel? Tell me about that ..all the day
Nothing really..nothing ....all the day

12. Before going to school all the time what things helped you to get ready for going to school all the day each day?
Doesn't reply
prompt...can you think of anything that has helped you be ready for all the day going to school ?
no reply

HP   Fantastic..great...thankyou.......let me put my paper down...or I'll lose it you were great...really helpful and I heard it all despite the biscuits....mummy's turn...shall we give mummy ago now? Are you okay with that? Can you hold the machine then and we can get a good recording...thanks..that's great....

HP   no biscuits for you I'm afraid

Parent   He did well ......he likes coming to see Bill

HP   yea....really well....it almost seems a shame to finish to day as we've all got to really know each other now...it's good.....

Parent ....biscuits were a good bribe

HP   not a bribe surely ....an aid to help us.. yeah okay I agree are you okay for us to start the bit for you is that okay?

Parent   Yep fire away

HP   Sorry to be a pain but I just need to make sure this thing is near to you to pick up the voices

lets see if mummy can be as good as you..
Okay..here we go....B are you ready....really quiet.....is Bill watching you....? Is he behaving?...you know what he's like...just keep an eye on him for me...real pest..naughty kangaroo

26. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?
He's fine...really fine. I think he feels good . He lloks and acts like is good ...full of it.

27. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?
I feel fine too. Quite relaxed about it all really...I think I may have surprised myself..quiet chilled out.

28. How have you prepared your child for starting school?
We haven't really done anything really just the everyday stuff...he;s taking it in his stride.

29. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?
Their routine is still preparing him. It ..it's the every day stuff that is helping him know what to do and what to say and things. Yea...its' the routine things like bye at the door and coats up and bags into class and things like that ..it's good they have got it all worked out...he likes it.

30. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?
No. no preparation for me...its all been For B..after all that 's right isn't it ....he's the one going to school...I've done my bit.

6. Overall how is the transition to school going?
It is has stopped...it is now in the past for us.

7. What has been the impact of the transition activities provided by the school?
Very positive for the settling in period. Oh...It's gone really well. He settled and fine to come all the time and chatty at home and it's gone fine...just really well. Prompt......the key thing may be...is there...has there been a key thing?
– coming in to visit the school – yes...that was good it was good to see things and how they were for B and me....that would be it.

8. What in your opinion was the key thing or key things that helped your child successfully make the 'bridge' from pre-school/home to full time school?
Well...I think it would be a combination of things.... how pre-school prepared them, how the infant school prepared them and what they've done during the visits and how we have prepared him as parents, I think that it's not just one thing but a mixture of all these things.

HP   Great thank you..that was great...hopefully that will all be on the tape and it sounds almost .....well quite sad to say it is the last time for us like this.

Parent   Yea..it will see like a bit strange and no Bill to talk about at home how's it all going anyway? Seen everyone?

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HP   Well I think it's going okay...I've nearly seen all the peoples for this lot of interviews then I need to start looking at what everyone has been saying a bit more and do some thinking and some writing...and more thinking..you know ..bits of paper everywhere

Parent   Will you let us know?

HP   Yes...I promised when I get everything done and its all official I'll let Mrs A have a copy that you can look at if you like and read..if you're having trouble sleeping

Parent   won't be that bad will it?

HP   Hard to say ..it will certainly be long I think any way

Anyway I've got a present for you B...just to say thank you from me and Bill for all your help... do you want to choose one from the bag..

I hope you like it

Child   Mmmm

Parent   What do you say?

Child   Thank you

HP   ...no thank you ...you answered all our questions and helped me with the machine..I couldn't have done it without you and I also got a little pressy for mum too..because she did some talking too...

Parent   No you didn't need to do ...... I didn't mind..it's been okay ....quite enjoyed it really...useful thanks

HP   it's only some of those chocs off the telly...just to say a little thank you

Let me stop the machine and we can hear back the words.

Categorisation of Contents Interview 1

Child's interview

1. **What do you know about going to school?**
7 children make no response. 1 refers to toys; lunch and children playing and having a friend who is already there. 3 refer to "lots of big people."

2. **Who else will you know at school?**
9 children name another child. 2 recall a relative who is at the school. One child refers to doing work at school.

3. **What is school like?**
3 make positive comments, like, "nice, good and great." 2 refer to the size of the school e.g." big for little children", "huge."

4. **What will you do at school?**
2 refer to specific activities, like toys and books whilst 1 child mentions the fact that big people will be at the school. 3 refer to learning and work.

5. **What will you wear at school?**
2 talk about school uniform with 5 mentioning specific uniform items. 1 child talks about "special clothes."

6. **Will you have lunch/eat at school?**
4 say that they will eat at school with 3 mentioning specific food e.g. peas and fish fingers, tuna sandwiches

7. **Will you do anything special at school?**
1 child mentions playing. 1 child mentions eating. 1 child mentions fun and 2 name an activity - sticky things and stuff/make a card

8. **What is the name of your school?**
2 recall the full school name.

9. **What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?**
1 child can name the Headteacher.

10. **What is/will your teacher's name?**
1 names their pre school provider teacher.

11. **How do you feel about starting/going to school?**
6 of the children make positive comments like – proud, good, really up for it, excited and great.

Parent's interview

31. **How does your child feel about starting/going to school?**
6 of the parents said that they thought their child was excited. 2 said that their child was looking forward to it. 1 parent said that their child thought it was going to be an adventure. 9 of parents said their child was "ready" for school.

32. **How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?**
11 felt that their child was ready for school. 1 saw school as a time for child to be with elder sibling. 2 felt happy. 1 felt sad. 2 had mixed feelings. 1 said that they would miss their child. 1 referred to more personal time whilst 2 wondered how they would I fill their my time.

33. **How have you prepared your child for starting school?**

1 refers to pre school books; 2 refer to writing; 3 refer to reading a lot. 1 refers to colouring and counting. 3 refer to talking generally about school. 3 refer to drawing. 2 refer to getting the school uniform.
4 referred to taking an elder child/relative to school. 4 referred to visiting the school e.g. events fetes. 1 referred to nursery and 11 to play group.

34. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?

4 referred to nothing at the moment . 3 referred to none.   3 referred school visiting play school. 3 referred to a letter from pre school about friendship groups.

35. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?

6 referred to no preparation. 5 referred to just the letter whilst 1 anticipated school visits.

Child's interview

1. What do you know about going to school?
The majority of the children could name a specific activity that they had taken part in. One child recalled two activities

2. Who else will you know at school?
All the children could recall at least one other child's name and 7 could recall two or more names.

3. What is school like?
9 of the children made a positive comment about what school was like.

4. What will you do at school?
6 of the children could recall an activity at school.

5. What will you wear at school?
10 of the children recalled that they wore school uniform to school and 4 of the children could talk about the detail of their uniform .e.g. skirt, dress, blue top.

6. Will you have lunch/eat at school?
All the children could recall their lunch...some in great detail. 9 of the children had a sandwich lunch with 2 having a hot school dinner.

7. Will you do anything special at school?
The majority of the children didn't reply to this question. However 3 spoke about specific activities namely "sport, P.E, and work."

8. What is the name of your school?
3 of the children could name their school correctly. Another child referred to his school as "big school."

9. What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?
3 of the children could name the Headteacher, however 6 of the children named their class teacher.

10. What is/will your teacher's name?
10 of the children can recall their teacher's name.

11. How do you feel about starting/going to school?
10 of the children make positive comments about how they feel about going to school. 1 recalls a mixed comment.

Parent's interview

36. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?
3 of parents recall mixed or not so positive comments about how they think their child feels about going to school e.g. "initially tearful", "butterflies". 8 of parents refer to positive phrases, like happy...4; confident...3; enjoying it...3; loves it...2.

37. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?
About their own feelings 5 refer to negative emotions e.g. "bereft, at a loss, strange, sad." 6 refer to positive emotions e.g. "happy, good, fine, positive, very pleased."

38. How have you prepared your child for starting school?

10 have continued to prepare their child. 6 talk a lot about school and what happens there. 3 refer to buying and trying on the school uniform. 1 parent referred to playing counting games and 2 referred to practising dressing skills.

39. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?
8 of parents recalled the home visits and 8 recalled their child's school visits. 5 of parents recalled the story sessions held at the school. 2 recalled visits to pre school providers by the school staff.

40. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?
6 believed that there had been not much preparation for them as parents. 1 recalled information letters whilst 4 recalled the parents information evening.

Child's interview

1. What do you know about going to school?
All the children can name a specific activity and 4 can name two or more.

2. Who else will you know at school?
All the children can recall at least one other child's name and 6 can recall two or more. One child also names his teacher.

3. What is school like?
6 of the children make positive comments about what school is like. 3 of the children say that school is "all right." 1 says that they don't know. 1 comments that school is very busy.

4. What will you do at school?
3 of the children name one activity. 7 make no response. One child comments that the work is "really hard."

5. What will you wear at school?
All the children mention school uniform and 4 of the children recall their uniform in detail.

6. Will you have lunch/eat at school?
All of the children recall details about their lunch. 8 of the children have sandwiches for lunch. 2 of the children have a hot lunch. One of the children recalls that they do not know what they are having for lunch that day because it isn't lunchtime yet!

7. Will you do anything special at school?
7 children didn't reply; 4 did give examples which included PE (x3) and work.

8. What is the name of your school?
7 of the children recall the name of the school.

9. What is the name of the Headteacher of your/the school?
4 of the children can name the Headteacher. 2 recall their teacher's name.

10. What is/will your teacher's name?
All the children can name their teacher. Many also name the other adults who work in their classroom too.

11. How do you feel about starting/going to school?
8 of the children make positive comments about school. One child makes no reply and another talks about mixed feelings.

Parent's interview

1. How does your child feel about starting/going to school?
8 of the parents make positive comments about how their child is feeling about school. 3 have mixed comments.

2. How do you feel about your child starting/going to school?
8 of the parents make positive comments about their own feelings whilst the rest have mixed feelings. This mirrors the perception the parents have about their children's feelings.

3. How have you prepared your child for starting school?
2 of the parents are still preparing their children whilst 7 say they are supporting and encouraging and 2 are not doing either.

4. How will/has the school prepared your child to join them?

8 of the parents say that in their opinion the school is not preparing their child any more for full time education whilst 3 recall times when preparation continues such as – word books and encouraging her; working with the school over a concern.

5. How will/has the school prepared you (as a parent) for your child to start school?

9 of the parents note that there is no more preparation for them whilst 2 recall specific activities like the curriculum evening for Year R and the newsletters.

6. Overall how is the transition to school going?

6 of the parents are positive about the transition process with 3 stating that they believe it is complete and 2 believing that the transition process is not complete.

7. What reflections do you have on the transition process?

9 of the parents state that the process is going well. 1 has concerns about the timescale of introduction to the school being too long and 1 states that they believe a lot is expected of he children at such a young age.

Child's interview

1. What do you know about your to school?
All the children can recall as specific activity, often in detail. e.g. wrapping mummy's present

2. Who else do you know at school?
All the children recall at least three names, often more. 2 children name other pupils in other year groups

3. What is school like?
All the children make positive comments.

4. What do you do at school?
9 of the children give detailed examples, often related to seasonal activities i.e. Christmas. One child doesn't reply. One child says "don't know".

5. What do you wear at school?
All the children talk about their school uniform often describing the key elements and with colours e.g. blue top, grey skirt.

6. Do you have lunch/eat at school?
All of the children speak about their lunchtime arrangements. All of the children stay for lunch. 3 out of 11 children stay for school dinners.

7. Do you do anything special at school?
10 children recall the events leading up to the school play. One child talks about Golden Time.

8. What is the name of your school?
All the children can name the school.

9. What is the name of the Headteacher of your school?
All the children can name the headteacher.

10. What is your teacher's name?
All the children can recall their teacher's name and the names of classroom assistants and often their work pattern. e.g. mornings or afternoons.

11. How do you feel about being at school all the day now?
All the children make positive comments.

12. Before you were at school all the time what things helped you to get ready for going to school all the day each day?
Breakfast and getting dressed – 3; computer at pre school and school – 1; pre school hard work – 1; excited at pre school about school – 1; no reply – 1; don't know – 4.

Parent's interview

1. How does your child feel about going to school?
All the parents say that their child is positive about going to school.

2. How do you feel about your child going to school?
All the parents say that they are positive about their child going to school.

3. How are you still preparing your child for school?
All the parents say that formal preparation by them has stopped but they are doing every day tasks with their child now like reading each evening.

4. How is the school preparing your child to be at school?
All the parents note that formal preparation has stopped but he school is doing on going work now through reading and spellings to be done at home. One parent notes that they are always preparing the child as that is what school is about.

5. How is the school continuing to prepare you (as a parent) for your child being at school full time?
All the parents said that any preparation has now stopped. The curriculum meeting was mentioned. Parents of children with older siblings did not attend. One parent mentioned information coming from the school. One parent would have liked formal parents evening.

6. Overall how is the transition to school going?
All parents say it has stopped....over...complete.

7. What has been the impact of the transition activities provided by the school on your child?
All parents talk about positive impact of the schools programme. Key feature – Home visit - 6; pre school visits – 3; story sessions – 2.

8. What in your opinion was the key thing or key things that helped your child successfully make the 'bridge' from pre school / home to full time school?
Older sibling – 5; pre school friends and older sibling – 2; combination of elements – 4 (including sibling and pre school friends).

Categorisation of Contents Interview - Summary

Question	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4
1	7 no response 1 x toys 3 x big people	10 x name specific activity 1 x recalls two activities	All name specific activity 4 x recall 2 or more	All name specific activity in detail
2	9 x name 1 child 2 x recall relative 1 x refers to doing work at school	11 x recall 1 child's name 7 x recall 2 or more names	All children recall at least one name 6 x recall 2 or more	All children recall at least 3 names. 2 name older children in the school – different year groups
3	3 x positive comments 2 x refer to size of school	9 x positive comment about school	6 x positive comments 3 x school is 'all right' 1 x don't know 1 x very busy	All make positive comments.
4	2 x refer to specific activities 1 x mentions big people 3 x refer to learning and work	6 x recall an activity	3 x name specific activity 7 x no response 1 x child says work is 'really hard'	9 x details examples – seasonal 1 x no reply 1 x don't know
5	2 x talk about uniform 5 x mention specific uniform items 1 x talks about special clothes	10 x talk about uniform 4 x mention specific uniform items	All mention the school uniform 4 x mention specific uniform items	All children describe their uniform with e.g.'s specific details - grey skirt
6	4 x eat at school 3 x mention specific foods	All recall about their lunch 9 x sandwiches 2 x hot school lunch	All recall about their lunch 8 x sandwiches 2 x hot lunch 1 x don't know….as not lunch time yet!	All recall about their lunch 3 x school dinner 8 x packed lunch
7	1 x playing 1 x eating 1 x fun 2 x name activities	3 x specific activities e.g. PE	7 x no response 4 x name specific examples e.g. PE	10 x details about school play 1 x Golden Time
8	2 x recall full school name	3 x recall full school name 1 x says 'big school'	7 x recall full school name	All recall school name in full.
9	1 x names headteacher	3 x name headteacher 6 x name class teacher	4 x name headteacher 2 x recall class teachers name	All recall headteacher's name

10	1 x names pre school teacher	10 x recall teacher's name	All can name their teacher. Many name class helpers.	All recall teacher's name and classroom helpers names and some recall their work patterns.
11	6 x positive comments	10 x positive comments 1 x mixed comment	8 x positive comments 1 x no reply 1 x mixed feelings	All positive comments
12				3 x breakfast and getting dressed 1 x computer and pre school ability on it and school ability on it. 1 x pre school hard work 1 x excited about going to school 1 x no reply 4 x don't know
Parent 1	6 x child is excited 2 x child looking forward to it 1 x child says it will be great adventure 9 x child is ready for school	3 x mixed comments 8 x positive phrases	8 x positive comments 3 x mixed comments	All make positive comments
2	11 x child ready for school 1 x time for child to be with elder sibling 2 x happy 2 x mixed feelings 1 x sad 1 x miss their child 1 x time for more personal time 2 x wondered how would fill their time	5 x negative emotions 6 x positive emotions	8 x positive comments 3 x mixed feelings	All make positive comments
3	1 x use of pre school books 2 x writing 3 x reading 1 x colouring and counting 3 x general talk about school 3 x drawing	10 x continue to prepare child 6 x talking about school activities 3 x buying and trying on uniform 1 x counting games 2 x practising	2 x still preparing their children 7 x supporting and encouraging 2 x not doing either	Not preparing any more just ongoing activities at home from school like hearing them read each night.

	2 x getting the school uniform 4 x taking elder child/relative to school 4 x visiting school events 1 x nursery 11 x playgroup	dressing skills		
4	7 x nothing 3 x school visiting play school 3 x letter from pre school about friendship groups	8 x recall home visits 8 x recall child's school visit 5 x recall story sessions 2 x recall visits to pre school providers by school staff	8 x believe school is not preparing their child anymore 3 x believe preparation is continuing	All say school not preparing their child any more just ongoing school things now. 1 x ongoing preparation as that it what school is about.
5	6 x no preparation 5 x letter of admission to school 1 x anticipated school visits	6 x not much preparation for them 1 x information letters 4 x parents evening	9 x no more preparation for them 2 x recall specific activities	All preparation has now stopped. Curriculum meeting noted – parents with older sibling did not attend 1 x information from school 1 x would like parents evening
6			6 x positive 3 x it is complete 2 x not complete	All say it is complete
7			9 x process is going well 1 x time scale is too long 1 x expectation of children too high	**Impact** All say positive Key elements 6 x home visit 3 x pre school visit 2 x story sessions
8				**Bridging** 5 x older sibling 2 x pre school friends and older sibling 4 x combination of elements (including sibling and pre school friends)

Details of parental employment.   Appendix G

Child's name	Mother's occupation		Father's occupation	Categorisation
A1				
A2	House wife		Property Developer	2
A3	Hairdresser		Travel Agent	3
A4	Teacher		Project Manager	2
B1	Bookkeeper		Ground Worker	4
B2	Newsagent		Newsagent	3
B3			Solicitor	1
B4	Carer		Security Officer	4
C1	Accountant		Computer Engineer	2
C2			Royal Mail - postman	4
C3	Teaches EFL		Nurseryman	2
C4	Check out person		Retail Food Service Consultant	2

Child's name	Pre school Provision
A1	Playgroup
A2	Playgroup
A3	Playgroup
A4	Day care nursery
B1	Playgroup
B2	Playgroup
B3	Playgroup
B4	Playgroup
C1	Playgroup
C2	Playgroup
C3	Playgroup
C4	Playgroup

Ethical Protocol

- **Permission (consent):** from Headteacher (by discussion of Research Proposal); Governors (by discussion of Research Proposal); parents, on behalf of themselves and their children (by letter outlining draft of research then by discussion of Research Proposal and Ethical Protocol.

- **Openness of purpose:** summary document of research findings to be available for the parents and the school (whole document upon request); all queries about procedures to be fully answered.

- **Benefits made clear:** research may influence future Induction Programmes at School A; author to achieve PhD.

- **Withdrawing consent:** any participants can at anytime withdraw from the research without prejudice although this might prejudice the research process and thus outcomes.

- **Equivalence:** comparable research procedures for all participants of each element of the research. That is each child and parent in each group (A, B, C) to be involved in the same processes - 4 interviews between Feb 2002 and Dec 2002 and each set of parents to be involved in 4 reflective opportunities between Feb 2002 and Dec 2002. In phase 2 all parents to be given same set of questions and given two interview opportunities.

- **Anonymity:** parties taking part in the research will not be referred to in such a way as to identify them. Author will keep detailed notes but final document will be coded and fictitiously named so to ensure anonymity e.g. A1, Natalie.

- **Confidentiality:** the confidentiality of all parties will be maintained at all times, including personal and/or private details that may arise/be referred by the children and/or their parents. Only details pertinent to the research process will be declared in the final document.

- **Morality:** the author is aware of the moral issues raised by doing research involving young children and the need to be sensitive to their age and understanding. Further the need for the research process to be at no point prejudicial to a successful induction into primary education.

- **Negotiation;** the author will negotiate with the parents of the children involved in the research process the time/date and place of all meetings so that they suit the needs of the children and the parents.

- **Professionalism:** the author, as a member of the teaching profession, is aware of her role in being the first teaching professional to be allowed detailed interactions with the parents and the child. The author is further aware of the sensitivity of that role and its possible impacts both positive and negative upon the child and their parents with a view to their first school experiences and interactions.

- **Neutrality:** the author recognizes that as a teaching professional she has an intrinsic interest in the starting school programmes and its success, however the author wishes to remain as neutral as possible within the observed research process.

Extracts from interview with Headteacher of School A

Reflection upon the individual programmes......."really interested to know how those children faired having had the extra home visit. It will be interesting to see which is more valuable the home visit or the extra time in play school ...if there really is a way of finding this out. If these are deciding factors then it will be one of the ways that we will change our induction programme. I can't add on both so it will be one or the other. I have spoken to some of the parents involved in the research, not all of them and in passing, I haven't set out to meet them but clearly we are both about the school and they have all told me that it would be difficult to improve on the basic programme. It would be hard to improve on this they say. "

Reflections on the differences between the different groups in terms of outcomes..... "no tangible differences between how the three different groups of children have settled that I am aware of but the teachers may be better at thinking about this issue."

In discussing each child....the Headteacher commented that each child had settled well and she had no concerns about any of them. She also commented that one child was so settled that she "would of settled whether she had no induction at all!" "The ones that have blatantly settled in really well are the ones with older brothers and sisters. I think that it many ways that is the deciding factor. I think that the induction process does make a difference to them but the messages that they get from their older brothers and sisters have far more of any effect than any induction process we put in place."

"They live with the message from their siblings all the time...its like I stand at that door every morning and say good morning to every one and I'm already getting to know toddlers who are 18 months old."

Reflections on the start of the transition process......"I am already making relationships and sending messages to those toddlers that are coming in aged 18 months and those toddlers are receiving messages about the school and what its like to enjoy it from their older brothers and sisters. So if they arrive in a pushchair at school for the first time aged 6 weeks that is when the transition process starts as they have their first contacts with the school. So the induction programme for those children is what we feel we should do and for many of those children I don't think it would make much difference to them if we didn't do it. It is for those children just a familiarisation with the building. Yet for one of the children this programme was important because his older brother had a mixed, unsettled time as he started school which his younger brother will have seen and noticed so this programme was probably really important for this child to reinforce the more positive messages. He has settled in very well."

Reflections of the induction process so far........"lessons learned for the schools far in the research really depend on the outcomes and what it is thought about the induction programme and what we might add in or change. It is interesting because it makes us consider in more detail what we do and I talk about the induction programme with prospective parents as I show them around in groups. This a is a regular Friday event now and they are reassured when I have been talking to them and their eyes light up

when I say that we will see their children in a familiar setting as we visit their child's playschool. They are reassured by this and consequently they are less anxious right away so we can dissipate this straight way even from just when they look around the school."

Discussion with the researcher about the notion of when the transition to school might be complete...."I would say that they are settled at the end of October and that would be for me when transition is complete because they are settled. Because we have made a great change two years ago from having a staggered start into having the children into full time more quickly - we are offering them full time form October and the majority of the children take this up. They are settled in a way that three years ago they wouldn't have been settled until Easter. The whole thing has shifted to an earlier settlement."

Discussion with the researcher about the idea of 'bridging' and how it might look in terms of the children joining the school ...."their transition is made easier by having the older brothers and sisters yes I think that is the case. I hear older children saying to their parents perhaps he (the younger sibling due to start school) will have the same teacher as me and quite often we try to put them with the teacher that their brother or sister had for that reason. Because the family already know the teacher and the older child already knows the teacher. So these are all of the messages that this child will get from its parents and older sibling before they even walk in the door are all about this teacher. So at least the whole is involved because I see this induction process as a whole family exercise. It isn't just about inducting this child into our school because there is an awful lot of parental anxiety there especially if they haven't been through the process before."

Extract from interviews with Year R teachers at School A.

Discussing the three different induction programmes.... "I can't really see any difference between the programmes in the way the children are. None of the parents or the children have said anything about the programmes and how they felt." "I wasn't sure what we achieved by doing the second home visit."

Discussing the individual children and how the three groups of children have settled...."each one has settled well in their own way. I think that one still finds it hard to separate from her mum but her mum does have other children to deal with." "There doesn't seem to be any difference in the way that the three different groups have settled but I have a child in my class who has just joined us and she had no induction programme and she is finding coming to school really hard. It is the policy of the school not to offer a child an induction is they join later into the term."

Discussing the future implications for the school's induction programmes......"not sure really I think it all depends on what your research tells us."

Discussing the notion of transition and when it might be complete....." I think that it is really over by the time they come back to school in January so really by the end of the first term." "I think that for some children it is then but for others it may be by Easter particularly the younger children." "Really it is an individual thing and it will depend on the child and how they react to school." "One of the main things that helps the children is if they have older brothers and sisters as this means that they will already know all about us and our routines, like the reading books routine." " I think that the main thing we do for the children is the home visit as this is when we go to them and they see us as people and start to relate to us."

Discussing the notion of 'bridging' ..."I think that the main thing we do for the children to make the bridge is the home visit. It is seeing us and getting to know us that makes the link between the two set ups for the children." "Some children bring things to help them from home like a girl in my class has been bringing a toy and we've agreed that she can keep it in my jumper drawer during the day."

Discussing the notion of children benefiting form going to nursery rather than playgroup...."we do have one child who went to nursery but I don't think that he is any different at school from the others." "He is very good at playing on his own and sharing his play with me when I can come and talk with him." "Perhaps he is a bit more confident in himself but that could be just him and his personality not the fact that he went to nursery."

PhD research Phase 2

Parent Ph2B

What things (activities/events/people) do you think will help your child make a smooth transition to full time education?

- It will be very helpful for her as she goes to school every day already with her older brother (John). She goes into the classroom every day and knows the place, routines and knows the teacher.
- I'm a parent helper at the school so she's part of this and seen the interplay that I have with the teachers.
- She knows what to do when she gets there....it's as though she's already there really.

What things (activities/events/people) did help your child make a smooth transition to full time education?

- She really confident going into school and has settled fine.
- Seeing the links with John has definitely made it easier for her. She easily fitted into the school routine and knew where to go and what to do even on the first day.
- Her teacher was John's teacher in Year 1 and this has helped. She knows her name and what she is like as a character, as a person.. She knew what she would look like and it was also good when she came to visit us at home. She had a picture in her mind of her teacher for the very first day and this I think was very reassuring – she knew what to expect.

Induction Programme evidence from interviews

Interview	Programme A	Programme B	Programme C
1 children	1 child can tell some detail about school - toys.	2 tell about activities and people	1 talks about people she will know
	All the children tell about one child they will know at the school.	3 children tell about one child they will know, 1 says doing work	all name at least one child
	1 says the school will be big. 1 says it will be like her parent's school 1 gives no reply.	1 says it will be great, another says it will be big	1 talks about lunch with friends and its good
	2 talk about activities, 2 say they don't know.	2 talk about work, 1 talks about big people	1 talks about learning
	3 identify articles of uniform.	3 identify items of clothing	2 identify specific clothing
	3 talk about lunchtime and name foods.	2 say yes, and one of them identifies specific food	3 say yes and one of them identifies specific food stuffs
	2 identify activities at school that would be special e.g. have a play.	2 tell about specific activities like make sticky things and stuff	1 says playing
	3 cannot name school or headteacher all cannot name teacher	1 names pre-school teacher, 1 names school and predicts class teachers name	1 predicts her class teachers name, 1 names school, 1 names headteacher
Parents	2 make positive comments about starting school	2 make positive comments	2 make positive comments, 2 don't reply
	all talk about their child being excited to go start school	3 positive comments and 1 concern	3 make positive comments, 1 shows concern
	2 feel positive for them selves that their child is starting school 2 are less sure	2 positive, 2 mixed feelings	1 is confident, 2 have mixed feelings and 1 is petrified
	all talk about preparation activities within the home and pre-school groups	2 talk about pre-school, 2 talk about getting the uniform	2 talk about talking about school, 1 talks about local friends, 1 talks about pre-school

		all talk about no contact from the school. 3 talk about not hearing anything from the school formally about induction programmes yet , 1 letter of admission	1 talks about letter about pre-school friendships All talk about not hearing anything from the school formally about induction programmes yet, 3 letter of admission	2 talk about letter about pre-school friendships All talk about not hearing anything from the school formally about induction programmes yet, 1 letter of admission
2	**Children** **Parents**	Now 3 children in this group 2 name activities all name one child at the school 2 say school is 'fine' 1 makes no reply 2 name activities 3 talk about the uniform and identify colours all name what they have had for lunch 1 identify school activities 1 names school 1 names headteacher 2 name class teacher all are positive about going to school 2 are positive about their child's feelings, 1 is mixed 1 is positive, 2 are sad		
			4 name activities and of those 1 talks about friends all name at least one child, 2 name 3 all make positive comments 2 name activities all talk about the uniform and identify colours all name what they have had for lunch 1 says work, 1 names a relative 2 names school, 1 says big school 1 names headteacher all name class teacher all are positive all are positive 2 are positive, 2 are mixed	2 say playing and an activity, 2 name activity all name one child at school, 2 name 3 3 make positive comments, 1 says yellow (class name) 2 name activities all talk about uniform , 3 refer to colours all have sandwiches and recall the filling 2 name P.E. none name school none name headteacher all name class teacher 3 are positive, 1 talks about being hungry and another says they are happy but sometimes nervous all are positive, 1 has butterflies in his tummy 3 are positive, 1 feels bereft

		all talk about general encouragement, talking and routines	3 talk about uniform and playing games at home, 1 talks about doing no preparation	all talk about uniform and 2 about doing writing and sums
		all talk about school visits	2 talk about school visits and 1 talks about home visits. 1 talks about many letters	all talk about school visits and home visit, 2 talk about visit to pre – school by school staff
		2 say they didn't need it, 1 says not prepared at all	3 talk about evening for parents, 1 says don't think they do	1 talks about parents evening, 1 talks about letters home
3	Children	2 name activity, 1 says playing	all name activities	All recall activities
		all name at least one child	all name at least one child, one includes teachers name	All name at lest one child, 2 name 3
		all say it is fine	3 are positive, 1 says don't know	All are positive…really fun, busy
		1 talks about playing	1 talks about playing outside, 1 talks about dinners	1 talks about hard work
		all mention school uniform	all mention school uniform	all mention school uniform…my special dress
		2 talk about sandwiches and 1 didn't know because it wasn't lunch time yet!	all talk about lunches , 1 talks about the menu and choices	all mention their lunches -2 in detail
		None recall any special activities	1 talks about P.E, 1 talks about work	2 say P.E.
		2 name the school	All name the school	1 names school, 1 names class
		2 name the head teacher	1 names the headteacher	1 names headteacher, 2 name class teacher as headteacher
		all name their teacher	all name their class teacher	all name their class teacher
	Parents	2 positive about going to school, 1 no reply	all positive yet 1 says they do think about going home	all positive about school

	2 positive, 1 says child is still a bit nervous	all are positive, 2 mention child's tiredness	all positive, 1 says tired on Fridays
	2 positive, 1 mixed feelings	2 are positive, 2 mixed feelings	all positive
	2 talk about a supporting role, 1 not doing any more	2 talk about supporting ,1 talks about independence, 1 doing no more	all talk about supporting role, 2 talk about reading at home
	1 says no more from school, 1 talks about reading and words from school, 1 talks about school routine	no more now, 1 says transition complete but school still there to support if needed	no more now but can keep in touch with teachers
	all say this has stopped	all has stopped but support is there is you need it says 1	all stopped but lots of letters
	2 say going well, 1 says completed	all going well	gone well, all settled, 1 say completed
	1 says still going well, 1 says still needs my support, 1 says every child is different	all gone well , children settled quickly	all very positive about process ,1 notes expectations of children too high
4 Children	All name activities…some seasonal	All recall activities and events e.g. golden time	all name specific activities
	All name at least 3 children, 2 name 4	All name at least 3 children	all name at least 3 children
	All positive…just right says one	3 are positive, 1 says don't know	3 are positive, 1 no reply
	All name specific events/times	2 talk about golden time	all name activities, 3 name seasonal activities
	All name school uniform, 2 talk about specific pieces.	all name school uniform and key items of clothing	all name school uniform and key items of clothing

Parents			
	All talk about lunch, 1 comments positively about the quality of the hot lunches	all talk about their packed lunches in detail	all talk about their lunches
	All talk about Christmas play and their parts in it	all talk about Christmas play, 1 talks about golden time	all talk about the Christmas play
	All name their school	all name their school	all name their school
	All name the headteacher	all name their headteacher	all name their headteacher
	All name their class teacher	all name their teacher and some class helpers	all name their teacher and some class helpers
	All positive about going to school	all positive	all positive
	1 talks about breakfast, 1 talks about computers at pre-school and big school,1 asks for a drink	1 talks about his pre-school helping him get ready for big school	1 talks about pre-school,1 talks about getting dressed in the morning
	all are positive	All are positive	All are positive
	all are positive	All are positive	All are positive
	no more preparation	No more preparation now, 1 says it is up to the children now	No more preparation now, 1 says it now about hearing reading and other routine things
	no more just routine things like reading and words	1 says stopped when they went full time, 1 says some is going on at school, 1 says just reading now	All its about ongoing routines now
	no preparation any more...it has stopped	no more preparation now...lots of letters/information	no preparation any more...it has stopped
	all gone well, all say it has finished	all gone well, all believe transition is complete now children are is fulltime	all gone well....all think that transition is complete
	safety of school reinforced by home visit, all gone smoothly, home visit was good, visits to school were key	good to see the teachers, story sessions at the school, the home visit, story visits	home visits were useful, go to know the teachers well before started, visit to the school to get to know the school building,

			school visits
	2 said brother had been good link, same work at pre-school is good, natural process- planned and unplanned was good,	friends from pre-school important, older sibling at the school, her friends, the induction programme from the school, older sibling at the school, a combination of home and school	the neighbours child as a link, 2 say older sibling, a combination of things- home and school

Teachers

There doesn't seem to be any difference in the way that the three different groups have settled.
I can't really see any difference between the programmes in the way the children are.

Headteacher

Really interested to know how those children faired having had the extra home visit. It will be interesting to see which is more valuable the home visit or the extra time in play school ...if there really is a way of finding this out. If these are deciding factors then it will be one of the ways that we will change our induction programme. I can't add on both so it will be one or the other. I have spoken to some of the parents involved in the research, not all of them and in passing, I haven't set out to meet them but clearly we are both about the school and they have all told me that it would be difficult to improve on the basic programme. It would be hard to improve on this they say.
........no tangible differences between how the three different groups of children have settled that I am aware of but the teachers may be better at thinking about this issue.

Sample quotes from research evidence that relate to each element of the bridging model.

Physical Links

- I tell her she won't need to worry we will all walk there together each day and I will wait for her where we meet R now. Parent of Jane (1)
- She needs my support to be there each day but I don't mind – that's what I should do. Parent of Jane (3)
- The home visit was useful as they feel safe because they think that person is coming to my home so obviously mummy trusts them so I must be safe at school with them. Parent of Jane (4)
- The computer.....I didn't know how to do the computer much at play school but I do at school – I'm much better at it now. Rachel (4)
- As I say we've driven past and talked about starting school and what class he's going to be in and who is his teacher so we're starting to talk about naming names who are going to be there and friends in the same class and friends in different classes. Just to show it will be pretty well like nursery – but more so. Parent of Callum (1)
- She takes her favourite doll each day with her...I think this helps her. Parent of Natalie (1)
- He's in the same classroom that his brother was in so he is familiar with the room and where it is. Parent of Stephen (2)
- I'm a parent helper so it's like I'm a physical link with the school each day so that should help her. She has seen my interplay with the teachers. Ph2B
- I think it helps that I'm there each day...like always it's me taking him and collecting him. I think this adds to his confidence. Ph2E
- Some children bring things to help them from home like a girl in my class has been bringing a toy and we've agreed that she can keep it in my jumper drawer during the day. Year R teacher

Involving Others

- We've done things as a family you know like pre-school maths books together and things and from time to time we do things. Parent of Natalie (1)
- She's looking forward to it – R is there and she's got someone to go with. Parent of Jane (1)
- As soon as I know who she'll be with, as she's got a close knit of friends. I can start to say to her – oh J will be in your class to encourage her to settle. Parent of Jane (1)
- I know A – she's my best friend. Jane (2)
- Her brothers are there so she's been to school with them every day. Parent of Jane (4)
- We take B to school every day – so she's used to the journey and where to go. Parent of Rachel (1)
- Lots of people I know are there, K, J , A, E. Rachel (2)
- Her brother....because she used to come up here every day and bring him to school every day. She has just been surrounded with schools not necessarily this

school but I think it helped her get the idea of what school was about and playschool helped too as it got her used to a structured day. Parent of Rachel (4)

- J, P E and big W. Callum (4)
- Well there are lots of people go to big school and all the children might be playing a bit hard. I know my cousin and M. Molly (1)
- When I go to watch J pick up K I saw her special clothes do I know what they look like. Molly (1)
- Her cousin goes to the school. She knows all about her cousin and school ands she's been following her. She's seen her cousin's uniform and we've been to all the fetes and things like that. Parent of Molly (1)
- Being one of the oldest she lost a lot her friends from pre-school because they started school but then she has caught up with them again and they were at school nearly a year before her. She has so many friends there. Parent of Molly (4)
- Older brother at the school – seeing what her brother is doing and talking with him. They compare what they did with each other. Her friends from play group are here...they are not in the same class but they are still here and she sees them. The programme that the children went through as they joined the school was really helpful to get her used to the people and the building. Parent of Jenny (4)
- I know that there's big children that I don't know but I know my friend M that used to go to my nursery. Simon (1)
- Being with this sister is important to him. Parent of Simon (1)
- Well he goes to school regularly to take G to school each day. Parent of Simon (1)
- I know more now...K, D M and Mrs R. Simon (3)
- Having a sister at the school two years above him meant that for 2 years he was going to school to collect her and getting to know the teachers and that was the principle link for him. Parent of Simon (4)
- I know people that's going to be at big school. I know E and K ...I know they will be there with me. Tilly (1)
- The fact that she knows quite a few of her older friends are at the school helps. Parent of Tilly (1)
- One of our neighbours has an older child and she has a younger sister in her class and the contact with her and her telling the younger girls all about school when they are playing and telling them what was expected at school was probably the biggest link for her. Parent of Tilly (4)
- K, my big sister. Tanya (1)
- E, C, S, P, A, He is in a different class but I don't know which one but I can still play with him. He's special. Tanya (4)
- J is there in yea R. She will be his link into school so they can play together at play times...it will give him confidence. Ph2H.
- The biggest influence was as I thought her sister. Seeing her there each day really helped S. It was like she was as settling influence. Ph2J
- He's got friends in his class and we met his teacher and this helped. He could picture her in his mind. Because of his siblings going there it's as though he has been going there all his life. Ph2K
- Going with someone she knows is the key. Ph2G

- I moved him to a school where he could be with his pre-school friends. This isn't our nearest school but it is where his friends go and that has to be important. Ph2C
- One of the main things that helps the children is if they have older brothers and sisters as this means that they will already know all about us and our routines, like the reading books routine. Year R teacher
- The ones that have blatantly settled in really well are the ones with older brothers and sisters. I think that it many ways that is the deciding factor. I think that the induction process does make a difference to them but the messages that they get from their older brothers and sisters have far more of any effect than any induction process we put in place. Head teacher

Programmes
Some of the comments about the school based induction programme
- The home visit was useful as they feel safe because they think that person is coming to my home so obviously mummy trusts them so I must be safe at school with them. Parent of Jane (4)
- She had a home visit and it was good to see the teacher. Parent of Jane (2)
- She has had story time – 4 mornings and met the teacher. The teacher came out to see her and played with her and told me what times and so on....quite good. Parent of Rachel (3)
- The events are good – they are preparing her – I'm quite happy with this – they've done it well. Parent of Rachel (3)
- I think it made the move go smoothly. For her she could of come to school full time straight way and the way the school worked it it has gone really well especially for those who have younger children but I think that the most important bit was the home visit. Parent of Rachel (4)
- They had 2 afternoons when they went in for an hour and then a morning when he stayed without me. There was a parents evening when the head teacher gave a talk. Parent of Callum (2)
- It did help and prepare him. He was very curious to start with and when he came in September he knew his teacher and where he was coming – the visit s to school really helped. Parent of Callum (4)
- They had a couple of school visits then we went to school for short sessions and then Miss A and Miss B came here. Parent of Molly(2)
- They must have prepared her these visits but I'm not sure quite how. Parent of Molly (4)
- We've had lots and lots of school visits and we've had 3 story times and a home visit which was very successful. Lots of letters have come through. Parent of Jenny (2)
- The programme that the children went through as they joined the school was really helpful to get her used to the people and the building. Parent of Jenny (4)
- He did 2 story time sessions where he was left for half and hour per time. Mrs A came and spoke with him at how. There was an information meeting in June. Parent of Simon (2)
- There have been no formal parents evenings ...I would have appreciated this feedback about how he was doing. Parent of Simon (4)
- The home visit was good – one to one basis before being thrown in with the rest. Parent of Simon (4)

- We have had 3 visits and the teachers came to see him and the helper. The information evening was good as it told us all the things we needed to know. Parent of Gary (2)
- The whole process has been really good especially the pre-school visits to get them used to school. It was better than starting school cold. Parent of Ben (3)
- I think that the main thing we do for the children is the home visit as this is when we go to them and they see us as people and start to relate to us. Year R teacher
- I think that the main thing we do for the children to make the bridge is the home visit. It is seeing us and getting to know us that makes the link between the two set ups for the children. Year R teacher

Time

- Her transition isn't complete yet because she still needs lots of support. She will need it for a few months yet. She is quite young and it's new to her. Parent of Jane (3)
- She's made it now – that time is over. Parent of Rachel (3)
- I think she's made it really and she's there...so the transition has finished. Parent of Rachel (4)
- I think it is over and has gone well. I was slightly unsure of the business of going part time because I thought he would be fine just going full time straight away. We are there now anyway...all over. Parent of Callum (3)
- She's had 2 weeks half time and now into fulltime so it's over now. She has done well. Parent of Molly (3)
- The children have settled down really quickly. I think the transition is complete now. She is still tired but doing well. Parent of Jenny (3)
- I've just accepted that it has taken place. Parent of Simon (3)
- It had happened when he knew he was going all day ...that was the time. Parent of Gary (3)
- Although she's full time I think the transition won't be really through until after half term when she has to go back full time after the week break. That will really be the test of whether she has made it. Parent of Tilly (3)
- Transition has really finished now she has got the routine...that's what is all about. Parent of Tanya (4)
- I think its taken place because he is so settled and is doing well. He has slotted in. Parent of Stephen (3+4)
- I'm just so relieved he's done it. I think he has done well now that part is all over. Parent of Ben (3)
- I think that it is really over by the time they come back to school in January so really by the end of the first term. I think that for some children it is then but for others it may be by Easter particularly the younger children. Year R teacher
- Really it is an individual thing and it will depend on the child and how they react to school. Year R teacher
- I am already making relationships and sending messages to those toddlers that are coming in aged 18 months and those toddlers are receiving messages about the school and what its like to enjoy it from their older brothers and sisters. So if they arrive in a pushchair at school for the first time aged 6 weeks that is

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when the transition process starts as they have their first contacts with the school. So the induction programme for those children is what we feel we should do and for many of those children I don't think it would make much difference to them if we didn't do it. It is for those children just a familiarisation with the building. Head teacher

- I would say that they are settled at the end of October and that would be for me when transition is complete because they are settled. Because we have made a great change two years ago from having a staggered start into having the children into full time more quickly - we are offering them full time form October and the majority of the children take this up. They are settled in a way that three years ago they wouldn't have been settled until Easter. The whole thing has shifted to an earlier settlement. Head teacher

Roles
- She asks lots of questions about the people so I generally answer them day to day. Parent of Natalie (1)
- She's been playing at schools and acting out bits. She sounds a really good teacher – a bit bossy though. All her dolls are on her bed and we all get given writing and sums to do. Parent of Jane (1)
- We've been playing at schools …and I'm the teacher..she likes to read a lot and do drawing and writing . Parent of Rachel (1)
- To be honest she plays schools each night at home – we all take different roles. Parent of Rachel (4)
- The home visit was good – one to one basis before being thrown in with the rest. Parent of Simon (4)
- She knew all the adults as she visited the school and how she would be with them. I think this gave her confidence. Ph2A

Strains and Stresses
- I'm not sure because she is small and she gets quite tired. Parent of Jane (1)
- She enjoys it once she gets there. The initial going in is still a bit tearful but once I leave I think she is fine. She comes home quite happy. Parent of Jane (2)
- I feel sad in a way because it's like that's it now the little ones gone…. Parent to Jane (2)
- She's still nervous but happy. Parent of Jane (3)
- The only thing that I would say although every child is different. She was well ready to go to school when everyone went back and I think that the 2 weeks that she had at home with me made her not want to go whereas she was really keen to go and excited. She quite likes the 2 weeks at home and then she had part time which made it worse. The whole thing was really drawn out and it didn't help her at all. She had been going to play school 3 or 4 days full time so she was well ready for full days. So she was ready when all the children went back. Parent of Rachel (3)
- I'm getting used to it. She's just the last one and is good company and I miss her. Parent of Rachel (2)
- She has never not wanted to go even though she's a bit tired. Parent of Molly (3)
- I think she is quite anxious. Parent of Jenny (1)

- Mixed feelings – desperately going to miss her. I'm not sure how I'm going to fill my time yet. Parent of Jenny (1)
- They don't cater for mums as such as to what it will be like when your child isn't with you any more. Parent of Jenny (2)
- A little bit sort of emotional because he is my youngest child. Parent of Simon (2)
- He's fine about it most times although he does get very tired. He also had a problem with one of the boys…there has been a bit of a clash between them and S wasn't keen that I mention it to the teacher…I think it has settled down now. Parent of Simon (3)
- It's going to be strange not having him about during the day. Parent of Gary (1)
- We did have a problem with lunch times as he didn't like the noise in the hall but hey did sort it out. We have worked with is and he now sits by his friend. Parent of Gary (3)
- Oh my baby I think I am happy. Parent of Tilly (1)
- I think that they expect a lot from this age…to deal with lunch boxes and then she needs to take her coat off and then she needs to change her book. Parent of Tanya (3)
- I don't know…he is quite concerned. He doesn't feel or seem to be that positive about it when I talk to him about it. So not as positive as I would like..it worries me. Mixed feelings – I hope that's not influencing him …what am I going to do next – I am going to have more time – I will have to find things to do – so slight concerns. I like things the way they are. Parent of Stephen (1)
- Happy and a bit nervous sometimes. Ben (2)

Affecting Others
- We've been playing at schools …and I'm the teacher..she likes to read a lot and do drawing and writing . Parent of Rachel (1)
- To be honest she plays schools each night at home – we all take different roles. Parent of Rachel (4)
- I didn't go to view the school even though I was invited to meet the people because I already know them having 2 children there already. We all already know the routines and things to do. Mornings will get more hectic with 3 there now but we will just have to get up earlier. Parent of Jane (1)
- We're all in a supporting role at home now – doing her reading and words. Parent of Jane (1)
- I'm getting used to it. She's just the last one and is good company and I miss her. Parent of Rachel (2)
- Mixed feelings – desperately going to miss her. I'm not sure how I'm going to fill my time yet. Parent of Jenny (1)
- I think I'm at a bit of a loss. Parent of Jenny (2)
- They don't cater for mums as such as to what it will be like when your child isn't with you any more. Parent of Jenny (2)
- It's going to be strange not having him about during the day. Parent of Gary (1)
- It is really strange not having him around especially for us. We don't know what to do with ourselves. It had taken some adjusting to. Parent of Gary (2)
- Oh my baby I think I am happy. Parent of Tilly (1)
- Fridays are hard at the moment…but that seems to be a family thing with K too. Parent of Tanya (3)

- I don't know...he is quite concerned. He doesn't feel or seem to be that positive about it when I talk to him about it. So not as positive as I would like..it worries me. Mixed feelings – I hope that's not influencing him ...what am I going to do next – I am going to have more time – I will have to find things to do – so slight concerns. I like things the way they are. Parent of Stephen (1)
- I felt very emotional about it for the first couple of days and bereft. But I am getting used to it the next hurdle for me will be when he goes full time. Parent of Stephen (2)
- I see this induction process as a whole family exercise. Head teacher

Control
- She's been playing at schools and acting out bits. She sounds a really good teacher – a bit bossy though. All her dolls are on her bed and we all get given writing and sums to do. Parent of Jane (1)
- We are going to do something really special today and if all the children are really quiet we get stars on the board. Tilly (4)
- He seems really confident and has made new friends quickly. He has had some initiations to birthday parties. Parent of Ben (4)

Overview comments
- For him I can't put my finger on one thing. It has been a natural process and all those things that have been planned and not planned have made him so secure with the move to school. Parent of Callum (4)
- Older brother at the school – seeing what her brother is doing and talking with him. They compare what they did with each other. Her friends from play group are here...they are not in the same class but they are still here and she sees them. The programme that the children went through as they joined the school was really helpful to get her used to the people and the building. Parent of Jenny (4)
- It was a combination of what the school did and what we did at home. Parent of Gary (4)
- It has been excellent for him. He was well prepared. They were very welcoming...he does have a brother in the school which helps but eh opportunity to visit a lot has been good too. Parent of Stephen (3)
- For H it has been a combination of factors...early summer school visits; home visits...this was so special for her that her teacher came to see her personally and going with someone she already knew. Ph2G
- It's a combination of things – how pre-school prepared them, how the infant school prepared them and what they've done during the visits and how we have prepared them as parents. I think that it's not just one thing but a mixture of all the things. Parent of Ben (4).

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