

Disapplying National Curriculum Subjects to Facilitate Extended Work-related Learning at Key Stage 4: An Evaluation

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National Foundation for Educational Research

Research Report
No 293

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ISBN 1 84185 561 8
September 2001

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the assistance of a great number of people. The research team would like to express their thanks to the members of the steering group, and in particular to Phillip Lacey, Project Manager at DfEE, who provided valuable advice and guidance throughout the course of the evaluation and during the writing of the final report. A large number of NFER staff also provided support and assistance. Particular thanks go to Debbie Banks and her colleagues for processing the questionnaire data and to John Dobby and Jo Morrison who carried out the statistical analyses. Sheila Stoney also provided project guidance in the early stages of the evaluation. Thanks must also go to John Kimber and Hilary Hosier, Research Associates, who conducted the early telephone interviews and some case studies, Fiona Johnson, a former research colleague who was involved in the project set-up and early analysis, and Robyn Johnson, Assistant Research Officer, who compiled some of the statistical tables. Finally, our thanks to Vivien Cannon, Project Administrator, and Julia Rose, Senior Secretary, for their professional processing of the final report.

Special thanks are due to all of the headteachers and teaching staff who gave generously of their time to be interviewed, and to organise fieldwork visits on more than one occasion. We are also indebted to the time given by the schools' external partners – Further Education college staff, employers and parents – for interview, and particularly to the students themselves for talking to us on two separate occasions.

In order to preserve the confidentiality of the institutions, and individuals, included in this evaluation, all schools referred to by name in the report have been anonymised, and no individual is mentioned by name.

1. INTRODUCTION

In September 1998 the *Education (National Curriculum) (Exceptions at Key Stage 4) Regulations* were introduced under section 363 of the 1996 Education Act.¹ These regulations allowed schools to set aside up to two of three National Curriculum subjects (Modern Foreign Languages, Design and Technology and science), in order that a student might follow an extended work-related learning programme. Since August 2000, this strategy has been extended for two further purposes, that of emphasising a curriculum area in which a student has particular strengths, and in order to consolidate learning across the curriculum.² The regulations were introduced in response to an increasing recognition in government that some young people's needs were not being met through the standard educational interventions adopted in schools,³ and to provide opportunities for schools to respond to individual students' needs by planning a key stage 4 curriculum that would help to secure each young person's highest possible achievement.

This report is an outcome of a mainly qualitative evaluation commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in 1999 to explore issues surrounding the implementation of the regulations and the introduction of extended work-related learning programmes. Broadly speaking, the evaluation sought to assess the clarity and applicability of the national regulations (their strengths and weaknesses) and the impact that implementing them had on schools and students (their success). Following a brief discussion of the background to the project and its conduct, Chapter 2 examines the rationales that schools gave for disapplying National Curriculum subjects, and the methods they adopted to introduce extended work-related learning programmes. Details about the nature of programmes are presented in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 focus specifically on impact, in relation to the young people participating in programmes, and in terms of the whole school. The wider impact that programmes have had on the promotion and development of external partnerships is examined in Chapter 6. The final chapter draws together the emerging messages from the research and makes recommendations for policy and practice.

1.1 Background

It should be noted at the outset that neither concept, disapplication or work-related learning, are entirely new. Headteachers have long had the option of temporarily disapplying National Curriculum subjects, for example in cases

¹ GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS: EDUCATION, ENGLAND AND WALES (1998). *The Education (National Curriculum) (Exceptions at Key Stage 4) Regulations 1998*. No. 2021. London: The Stationery Office.

² Further details are available in Appendix 1.

³ GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE (1998). *Disaffected Children. Volume 1: Report and Proceedings of the Committee*. London: The Stationery Office.

where new students needed a period of time to settle into school, or where schools were reintroducing long-term truants. Such disapplication is restricted to a six-month period, although this can be extended in particular circumstances if headteachers feel it is necessary. The new regulations, by contrast, allow the disapplication of subjects over a two-year period during key stage 4.

Secondly, while the notion of work-related learning has existed in one form or other for some time,⁴ the 1998 regulations were designed for use with *specific* students (largely, though not exclusively, those who were disaffected or underachieving),⁵ rather than being aimed at whole cohorts, and were rigorous in terms of specifying expected support and review mechanisms. In addition to identifying the national curriculum subjects that might be disapplied, the regulations identified:

- ◆ the **procedures** (the provision of a careers education interview,⁶ the preparation of a negotiated curriculum plan and the completion of an induction programme) that schools were required to set in place;
- ◆ the **support mechanisms** (including regular meetings with students, parents, coordinators and mentors) that were required; and
- ◆ the **monitoring arrangements** that needed to be established.

The regulations, which are in line with the government's emphasis on social inclusion for young people,⁷ specified that, in addition to offering young people experience of the working environment and working practices, work-related learning programmes⁸ should:

- ◆ provide students with the opportunity to develop literacy, numeracy and key skills;
- ◆ complement the education they were receiving through the remainder of the National Curriculum; and

⁴ The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), which was in schools in the mid 1980s and 1990s promoted a work-related curriculum, for example.

⁵ The regulations state that extended work-related learning provision '*should be available to all pupils who would benefit from, and want, a distinctive focus on work-related learning*'. In theory, high-attaining pupils who have a clear idea of their preferred career path and want to follow a work-related route would also be eligible for an extended work-related learning programme. In practice (see Chapters 3 and 5), this has rarely been the case.

⁶ Note that the regulations do not *specifically* state that this should be with a careers adviser, intimating that the interview, which is '*for the purposes of careers education*' may be '*with the careers adviser who has responsibility for him or otherwise*'. GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS: EDUCATION, ENGLAND AND WALES (1998). *The Education (National Curriculum) (Exceptions at Key Stage 4) Regulations 1998*. No. 2021. London: The Stationery Office.

⁷ GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE (1998). *Disaffected Children. Volume 1: Report and Proceedings of the Committee*. London: The Stationery Office; SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT (1999). *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 Year Olds not in Education, Employment or Training*. London: The Stationery Office.

⁸ The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines emphasise that these programmes would not be possible alongside the full National Curriculum at key stage 4.

- ♦ contribute, ‘so far as is practicable, towards approved qualifications, whether vocational or not’.

The DfEE objectives for the key stage 4 regulations (against which this evaluation has been conducted) went somewhat further. They are as follows:

- ♦ To provide flexibility in the key stage 4 curriculum in order that schools can make wider use of what they judge to be relevant and valuable work-related opportunities to enhance individual pupils’ learning.
- ♦ To maintain within the more flexible arrangements a broad and balanced curriculum which supports the focus on raising standards and increasing the number of pupils gaining formal qualifications and levels of overall attainment.
- ♦ To produce teaching and learning which engage pupils who are underachieving or disaffected and which results in higher attainment across these pupils’ whole curriculum.
- ♦ To prompt partnerships between schools and local education authorities (LEAs), FE colleges, businesses, community organisations and other bodies and to increase and improve their contribution to the available range and quality of work-related learning.
- ♦ To have wider benefits to the teaching of the rest of the curriculum, both to those pupils on extended work-related learning, and those following the full National Curriculum.
- ♦ To improve participating pupils’ satisfaction with their post-compulsory career and further education and training choices.

1.2 The Research Project

This report presents findings from an evaluation project carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), on behalf of the DfEE, between July 1999 and October 2000. An earlier study, conducted by SWA Consulting for the DfEE,⁹ provided a quantitative analysis of the impact of the key stage 4 demonstration projects. This study indicated that, amongst students who had taken part in the work-related learning project:

- ♦ Attainment at GCSE had been at around the same level as the average year cohorts for their schools.
- ♦ Distance travelled from key stage 3 to key stage 4 ‘is not dissimilar to that of the full year cohorts’.
- ♦ Progression into work-based post-16 routes was higher (+4%) than the average for the full year cohorts, though lower for full-time education (-2%).

⁹ WATSON, A., STUART, N and FERGUSON, J. (2000). *National Evaluation of Key Stage 4 Work-related Learning Demonstration Projects (Research Report RR218)*. Sheffield: DfEE.

- ◆ Unauthorised absence rates improved over time and, although they started at a higher level than both comparator groups and year cohorts, they were lower by Year 11.

The NFER research had a more qualitative focus, exploring the issues surrounding the implementation and impact of extended work-related learning programmes, and progress towards the national objectives. More specifically, the project sought to:

- ◆ establish the extent to which schools had used (and might continue to use) the regulations to introduce extended work-related learning, and their reasons for doing so;
- ◆ ascertain the characteristics of the young people for whom schools had decided to introduce extended work-related learning and the strategies they had adopted for identifying, targeting and supporting those students;
- ◆ explore the type, range and extent (including the level of innovation) of the work-related learning strategies schools (and their partners) had adopted and assess the extent to which the different models of implementation were effective;
- ◆ identify the extent to which schools (and their partners) had established appropriate support and monitoring strategies;
- ◆ identify the key outcomes from the use of the regulations, both for students and for the schools involved.

1.3 The Conduct of the Research

Throughout the research, a detailed analysis of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) monitoring information (covering the first and second year of the regulations – 1998/1999 and 1999/2000) was carried out, exploring the profiles of the schools deciding to disapply National Curriculum subjects, and the profile of students selected.¹⁰ This analysis enabled the research team to gain an understanding of the national context, such as the number and types of schools disapplying National Curriculum subjects, the number of students selected to participate in extended work-related learning, and the types of programmes adopted. In turn, this facilitated the identification of criteria for sampling schools to participate in the research.

The study was conducted in three main phases:¹¹

- ◆ **Phase 1**, which took place during the autumn term of 1999, involved an exploratory telephone survey conducted with **50** schools who were disapplying National Curriculum subjects in 1998-99 (the first year of the regulations). This sought information on schools' rationales for

¹⁰ Under the regulations, schools choosing to use the regulations to introduce extended work-related learning were required to supply monitoring information to QCA by the 30th of October in each year.

¹¹ A more detailed description of these phases can be found in Appendix 4.

implementing the regulations and details about their extended work-related learning programmes. Data from this phase informed the development of research instruments for the next two phases of the study.

- ♦ **Phase 2** included a postal and follow-up survey with a sample of 100 schools disapplying National Curriculum subjects during 1999-2000 (the second year of the regulations). In total, **87** schools returned a first questionnaire (sent out during the spring term, 2000), which focused on the range of personnel (internal and external) involved, the practicalities of implementation (including any barriers) and early outcomes for students and schools. Of these schools, **72** also returned a follow-up questionnaire (administered during the summer term, 2000), which focused more closely on outcomes, explored issues of monitoring, evaluation and review, and schools' plans for the future.
- ♦ **Phase 3**, which ran concurrently with phase 2, involved two detailed case-study visits, one in spring and one in summer 2000, to each of **20 schools**. These visits sought to gain insights into the operation, management and impact of the work-related learning programmes as well as students' attitudes to education, training and employment. During the visits, interviews were conducted with:
 - **96 teachers** (including senior teachers, careers or work-related learning coordinators, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), Year Heads and subject teachers).
 - **304 students**. Of these students, 183 were taking part in extended work-related learning and 158 students were not participating in such programmes (these are referred to hereafter as the 'comparison' group).¹²
 - **34 external partners** (including, variously, training providers, employers, careers advisers, parents and other support services).

The following chapter takes a detailed look at the ways in which extended work-related learning programmes have been introduced into schools since the introduction of the 1998 regulations.

¹² The number of 'comparison' students interviewed in each school mirrored, where possible, the number of interviewed students who were participating in programmes. Where possible, 'comparison' students were chosen who had characteristics similar to the students who were participating in work-related learning programmes, such as similar behaviour and attendance patterns.

2. THE INTRODUCTION OF EXTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMMES

This chapter explores the implementation of extended work-related learning programmes. It provides a discussion of the rationales schools gave for deciding to disapply National Curriculum subjects, the ways in which they had established their programmes and the challenges they faced in doing so. The characteristics of the students selected to participate in programmes are also outlined, as is the pattern of subject disapplication.

2.1 Rationale for Disapplying National Curriculum Subjects

Schools' responses to a question about the DfEE's objectives for disapplication indicated that they felt that the most important reasons for disapplying National Curriculum subjects were related to providing new and more flexible learning opportunities for students who were showing signs of disengagement from, or difficulties with, mainstream education, and helping to raise attainment (see Table 2.1). The possibility that disapplying National Curriculum subjects for extended work-related learning might also assist in developing external partnerships, or have wider benefits for the teaching of the rest of the curriculum, were felt to be less important objectives.¹³

Table 2.1: Perceived Importance of DfEE Objectives for Disapplication (ranked)

Importance of objectives	Very important %	Quite important %	Not at all important %	No response %
'They enhance learning opportunities which can engage the underachieving/disaffected'	92	8	-	-
'They increase curriculum flexibility'	86	12	2	-
'They support a focus on raising attainment'	62	29	7	2
'They enable the development of partnerships with external agencies'	41	55	3	-
'They have wider benefits to the teaching of the rest of the curriculum'	35	53	12	1
N = 87				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER Postal survey of schools

¹³ Special schools were marginally more likely to see the latter objective as very important: seven of the 15 special schools, compared with 23 of the 72 mainstream schools reported this.

This pattern was reflected in the case-study schools, where there was a clear desire to offer **enhanced learning opportunities** that might engage the underachieving and disaffected. There was real concern that some students struggled with a predominantly academic curriculum, focused around GCSE attainment across a full range of National Curriculum subjects. As one work-related coordinator suggested, *‘the full gamut of GCSEs is not realistic for some students’*. Replacing National Curriculum subjects with extended work-related learning was seen as an opportunity to offer different, but equally valuable, experiences, and to lessen academic pressures upon students. Many interviewees also hoped that extended work-related learning might have a **motivational impact**. As one commented: *‘I see it as a hook...that will convince [the students] that there is a purpose and value to learning’*. The aim, for many schools, was to offer students something that, in their own eyes, was more worthwhile than the mainstream curriculum, in the hope that this would encourage them to stay in school. The overall objective in one school was, *‘attracting these girls back into school, and finding a package for them that works’*.

Interviewees also hoped that involvement in extended work-related learning might contribute to **increased achievement**. This was by no means restricted to comments about academic achievement. Indeed, work-related learning programmes were said to offer students *‘experience and certificates that are more attractive than the low grade GCSEs that they would have got otherwise’*. Chapter 4 explores the question of whether an increase in students’ achievement levels was apparent across **all** aspects of their learning.

Most schools were at pains to emphasise that their rationale for adopting the regulations was **student-centred**. As one interviewee commented, *‘it is not a dustbin for the difficult students, but a good programme for those who might really benefit from this opportunity’*. Another interviewee noted, *‘I don’t want to just send difficult pupils off to college to get them out of my hair’*. However, there was also recognition that disapplication could be used as a method of containing disaffected students. In at least two of the case-study schools, for example, National Curriculum subjects had been disapplied for some students, as a means of *‘preventing the disruption of other students’ learning’*. One interviewee commented: *‘It was a very popular move as it meant moving the difficult kids out of school’*.

On occasions, schools had formally registered their intention to make use of the regulations as a means of **legitimising** what they had been doing for some time. This was the case for six of the 50 telephone survey schools, and five of the 20 case-study schools. As one work-related coordinator stated *‘the school “came out” when the process was made more flexible and legal’*. One of these five schools, a special school for students with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), had been adopting this approach for some years and valued the opportunity to do so within the context of nationally approved regulations.

2.1.1 External partners: their rationale for involvement

The involvement of external agencies in extended work-related learning programmes appeared to be underpinned by two philosophies:

- ♦ **Commercial** (gains for their organisations);
- ♦ **Altruistic** (benefits for the students involved, with no anticipated commercial advantage for their organisations).

There seemed to be a pattern in this respect, with training providers and college staff being most likely to identify the commercial imperative, whilst employers often expressed a desire to help young people and the wider community with no anticipated commercial gain. This distinction is not particularly surprising. The work of education and training providers is fundamentally 'student-centred', hence few college or training personnel regarded provision of extended work-related learning for school students as particularly altruistic. Many training providers and college staff saw their involvement as a means of recruitment. Responses included, '*we will get bums on seats*' and '*all students are coming back in one form or another, either on full-time courses or block release*'. The impact on recruitment and retention was a key issue mentioned during interviews with such providers.

These objectives were not, of course, at the expense of desired positive outcomes for the young people involved. Training providers stressed that they hoped students would become more self-confident and develop higher self-esteem and the ability to progress to positive outcomes in the future. Progression for these students was not seen only in terms of returning to the education or training provider in question but, in a more general sense, was concerned with '*helping youngsters with career choices and broadening their horizons*' and '*finding them suitable pathways*'. One college representative said that if involvement in extended work-related learning helped young people to move into further education or jobs it would be '*the icing on the cake*'.

Employers tended to identify solely student-centred reasons for their involvement. Many had devoted considerable amounts of staff time and expertise to support students on extended work-placements, often for little obvious return in the way of increased productivity or profit. Employers were keen to stress that this had been anticipated from the outset, and that they had chosen to be involved because they wished to 'help' young people. Comments such as '*I wanted to give them a chance*' were not uncommon, and one bank manager, whose staff had agreed to support a work placement student with a statement of special educational needs described this as '*a worthy distraction*'. Only a minority talked of potential commercial gains, such as the benefit of extra help supplied by the student, and the usefulness of gaining new ideas from young people. Employers believed that they could help students to develop job-specific skills, key skills, and more general skills, such as experience of the world of work, building new relationships with people, particularly adults, and developing self-confidence.

In spite of this apparent willingness, a number of schools reported that they had found it difficult to form successful partnerships with external agencies (see Section 2.2.1). Moreover, despite being interested in offering students placements in their organisations, employers reported that they had not always known what schools were expecting of them in terms of the *type* of learning experience they should be providing (this is discussed further in Chapter 6). Staff from careers services and Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) expressed the hope that students' involvement in extended work-related learning might lead to an increase in their achievements and qualifications. Parents, however, were often more concerned with their child's happiness (*'I am desperate to see him leave school happy'*), motivation (*'it would give him something of interest and keep him thinking'*) and/or basic achievement, particularly in terms of basic skills, such as *'reading and writing'*.

2.2 Establishing Extended Work-related Learning Programmes

A range of school staff were involved in establishing extended work-related learning programmes, playing different roles in the process according to status, seniority and expertise.

2.2.1 The decision to adopt the regulations

Questionnaire responses showed that the **strategic decision about whether or not schools would use the regulations** to facilitate the introduction of extended work-related learning were commonly taken by senior managers (77% of schools). In a minority of schools this decision was taken by other members of staff – careers/work-related learning coordinators (8%), SENCOs (8%) and tutors/subject teachers (1%). In some cases, external partners had also taken a key role in helping the school to come to the decision about whether or not to adopt the regulations:¹⁴

- ◆ **Local Education Authorities** (eight per cent of schools).
- ◆ **Further Education colleges** (six per cent of schools).
- ◆ **Education Business Partnerships** (five per cent of schools).
- ◆ **Careers services** (five per cent of schools).
- ◆ **Training providers** (two per cent of schools).

2.2.2 Establishing and administering extended work-related learning programmes

The operational aspects of implementing the regulations tended to be carried out by middle managers and members of school staff with apparent expertise in each respective area, in particular careers/work-related learning

¹⁴ There may be an argument that senior managers in schools involved external partners to a greater extent than they involved some of the internal school staff in making the initial decision to disapply elements of the National Curriculum.

coordinators. However, in a significant minority of schools (as indicated below) senior managers also had an active hands-on role, an indication of the importance accorded to extended work-related learning and the desire to make it work for students and schools. Careers coordinators or work-related learning coordinators generally took the key responsibility for the operational aspect of the regulations, sometimes assisted by other members of staff (SENCOs and tutors or subject staff). Other senior staff, including Head of Years, were, on occasion, the key contributors, but the numbers were small in comparison.

- ♦ **Student selection** – Heads of Year (29% of schools), senior managers (24% of schools) and careers/work-related learning coordinators (17% of schools).
- ♦ **Programme set-up and administration** – Careers/work-related learning coordinators (48% of schools) and senior managers (18% of schools).
- ♦ **Student careers interviews** – Careers/work-related learning coordinators (64% of schools) and senior managers (7% of schools).
- ♦ **Student curriculum plans** – Careers/work-related learning coordinators (26% of schools) and senior managers (21% of schools).
- ♦ **Student induction programmes** – Careers/work-related learning coordinators (46% of schools) and tutors/subject teachers (12% of schools).
- ♦ **Student mentoring** – Careers/work-related learning coordinators (36% of schools) and tutors/subject teachers (17% of schools).
- ♦ **Overseeing the quality of off-site programmes** – Careers/work-related coordinators (51% of schools) and senior managers (16% of schools).

In addition, some 30% of surveyed schools had called upon external support (mainly FE college staff and training providers) in setting up and administering extended work-related learning programmes, while external careers advisers had been involved in student careers interviews,¹⁵ and FE college staff in student induction in just over one-fifth of all programmes in each case.

It appears that, in most instances, staff were given roles that were associated with their other responsibilities in school, although this varied – a factor that had implications for the status of programmes in schools (see Chapter 5). Whilst senior managers were involved at an operational level in a minority of surveyed schools, interviewees in case-study schools often identified a lack of high-level staffing, along with a perceived stigma attached to extended work-related learning programmes, or the students who participated in them, as barriers to successful implementation. As one work-related coordinator commented, *‘we don’t want it to be a sink subject’*.

¹⁵ It should be noted that this was not always specifically related to extended work-related learning – see Chapter 5.

2.2.3 Overcoming barriers to implementation

Questionnaire responses showed that, in making the decision to use the regulations, schools had faced several practical considerations. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which certain factors had been significant barriers, minor barriers, or had not been barriers at all in implementing the regulations.¹⁶ The questionnaires were not able to elicit explanations for these responses, but case-study visits sometimes offered illumination. The key issues are raised here, and the implications (based on case-study data) are discussed in subsequent chapters:

- ♦ **Funding.** Over half of the schools (53%) regarded a perceived lack of funding for extended work-related learning as a significant barrier to what they could achieve, and a further 32% thought this to be a minor barrier. In many of the case-study schools, funding shortages were reported to have limited what schools had been able to offer, and in other cases had halted progress (discussed in more detail in section 3.5.3).
- ♦ **Staff workload.** This was perceived as a significant barrier by 38% of respondents, and as a minor barrier by a further 51%. There were a range of issues here related to a perceived lack of sufficient time for administration, programme organisation, placement visits and liaison with programme providers. The fact that one fifth of postal survey respondents reported paperwork to be a significant barrier, and that almost half (47%) regarded this as a minor barrier, suggests a further burden on staff workload.
- ♦ **Organising the school timetable.** This was thought to be a significant barrier, and a minor barrier, by equal proportions of respondents – 39% respectively. The greatest difficulty faced by schools in this respect was how to ensure that time for extended work-related learning could be blocked against disapplied or option subjects on the timetable. Not all schools had been able to achieve this.
- ♦ **Following official guidelines.** One-fifth of respondents felt this to be a significant barrier to the successful implementation of programmes of extended work-related learning, and 47% viewed following official guidelines to be a minor barrier. One interviewee had found what he described as ‘the official forms’ very difficult to understand and complete. Another said: *‘the programmes are so individual and involve so much negotiation, that the bureaucracy becomes onerous as a result’*.
- ♦ **Establishing appropriate work-related learning provision.** Just over one-fifth of the respondents (21%) reported this to be a significant barrier, whilst 41% perceived it as a minor barrier. Forming links with training providers (21%) was felt to be more difficult than with employers (14%), but in both cases, there could be a problem of mis-match between what students wanted to do (demand) and what local providers could offer (supply). As a result, it was not always possible for schools to develop students’ career ambitions through the courses or placements on offer.

¹⁶ There were no real differences between mainstream and special schools in terms of the barriers they perceived.

Provision sometimes had to be explained to students as a '*general vocational experience*'.

External partners also noted that they had been faced with challenges in setting up programmes of work-related learning successfully. For instance:

- ◆ Training providers said that they had limited capacity, with the number of available spaces not always meeting demand for placements.
- ◆ Provision of accommodation had also to be considered. Certain courses, such as hairdressing, required specialist accommodation that needed to be available at specific times of the week to match schools' expectations.
- ◆ Some training providers and employers were concerned that students would have behaviour problems and would be disruptive.
- ◆ Employers were concerned about health and safety considerations that had to be made before recruiting a younger member of staff on work experience.

Following their experiences to date, more than three-quarters of the schools that were intending to apply the regulations in 2000-2001 anticipated making changes (whether minor or major) to the ways in which they would run programmes in the future. These points are explored in Chapter 3.

2.3 Introducing Supporting Systems

The regulations stipulate that students selected for extended work-related learning should receive a **careers interview** and develop a **curriculum plan** before their programmes commence, and that a **mentor** should be present at every work-related learning location with day-to-day responsibility for each student. In most schools the requirements of the regulations were clearly being met, although, as indicated below, this was not always the case.

2.3.1 Careers interviews

According to survey respondents, careers interview appeared to have been conducted with all (70%) or at least some (17%) of the participating students before their programmes commenced. In some 12% of cases (both mainstream and special schools), however, such interviews were not available. Moreover, there were some indications in discussions with school staff that interviews were not always specific to young people's involvement in extended work-related learning, but were often part of the general programme of careers guidance offered to all key stage 4 students.¹⁷ Nonetheless, careers service involvement was generally high; 70% of all responding schools involved careers advisers in targeted interviews, with 11% also involving LEA, EBP or FE staff. Parental involvement, by contrast, was relatively low:

¹⁷ One fifth of the respondents to the telephone survey indicated that this was the case.

only 42% of schools involved the parents or carers of participating students, and less than one sixth of these invited all parents.¹⁸

2.3.2 Curriculum plans

More than three-quarters of the schools reported preparing individual curriculum plans prior to the commencement of young people's programmes. In some schools (13%) this was for a sub-set of their students only, while 18% (all of which were mainstream schools) said that no such plans were in place. There is some indication that schools were taking the notion of co-operation and consultation seriously: more than half of the schools reported the contribution of parents and students to the development of young people's plans. The involvement of other external partners was less evident. While a wide range of teaching staff (senior managers, careers co-ordinators, work-related learning co-ordinators, SENCOs, subject teachers and form tutors) played a part, few schools (less than 6%) drew on the services of the providers of external placements.

2.3.3 Mentoring

Personal mentors were said to have been provided in over three-quarters (76%) of the programme bases. In more than half of the cases, these mentors appeared to be part of what was described as the '*normal pastoral system of the school*'. Other schools reported the establishment of a mentoring role amongst FE (13%), training provider (7%), careers service (5%) and employer (5%) personnel. The frequency of meetings between students and mentors varied greatly (from daily to termly) but would appear to suggest a tendency towards more frequent, rather than less frequent, meetings. In most cases, staff indicated that young people were seen on at least a weekly basis, or according to individual need.

The following section examines the characteristics of the students chosen for involvement in extended work-related learning, and explores how they were selected.

2.4 Selection of Students

As indicated in Section 2.2, the responsibility for student selection was most often taken by Heads of Year (29% of schools). Headteachers and/or deputy headteachers (24%), careers/work-related learning coordinators (17%) and SENCOs (10% of schools) were also involved, the latter usually only when students had statements of special educational needs. Tutors or subject teachers were less likely to be involved in the selection process (3% of schools).

¹⁸ The proportions were only marginally higher in special schools, with 20% inviting all and 27% some.

External partners were involved in the selection of students in only 11% of cases,¹⁹ with careers service staff (6%), FE college staff (3%) and training providers (2%) being the main contributors. Whilst some of these staff interviewed students prior to selection (offering advice on those that might benefit most), in other cases interviews took place after selection. One careers adviser felt that this defeated the purpose of being involved in the process at all, as it was too late by this stage to make recommendations about which students would most benefit from disapplication. The role of employers in the selection process was limited, with none of the survey respondents reporting such involvement.²⁰ This has implications both for relations between schools and employers and for the longer-term success of placements. One employer expressed his concern that he had not been given sufficient information on work experience students – *‘I tend to get the bottom end of the scale...the ones they can’t place anywhere else’*. Another employer, who had not been involved in selection in the past, had stressed a desire to be so involved in the future, in order to give students real experiences of the job application process.

2.4.1 Factors considered when selecting students

Questionnaire responses indicated that schools took the following factors into consideration when selecting students to participate in extended work-related learning:

- ♦ **Students’ interest in work-related learning** (76% of responses). This was illustrated by two case-study schools, where programmes were made available *specifically* to students that expressed an interest in vocational courses, or extended work placements, based on their responses to work experience in Year 10. Although selection was based on student interest rather than perceived need in these cases, the students for whom National Curriculum subjects were disapplied still tended to be the less ‘academic’ students.²¹
- ♦ **Behaviour problems** (66% of responses).²² It should be stressed that only two of the case-study schools focused on what they termed their *‘hard core’* disaffected – those with an *‘acute anti-work ethic’* or who, from a behavioural perspective, had *‘reached saturation point’*. Four other case-study schools targeted students that were perceived as having the *potential* to become disillusioned, disengaged or disaffected, but were, nonetheless, judged to have the necessary maturity to take part in an off-site programme, to benefit from an extended work-related learning programme and to be reliable ambassadors of the school.

¹⁹ This proportion was higher in the case of special schools – some 24% of these schools involved education and training providers and/or external support staff.

²⁰ However, during case-study visits one employer reported that she had been given the chance to conduct interviews before recruiting a work experience student.

²¹ It should be noted that only nine of the 50 telephone survey respondents in 1998/1999 specifically mentioned students’ interest in work-related learning when selecting students to participate in programmes, suggesting that some changes in perception or selection criteria may have occurred.

²² Note that this was only considered in one-third of the special schools.

- ♦ **Underachievement** (65% of responses).²³ As discussed in Section 2.1, raising students' attainment was the rationale given by some schools for deciding to disapply National Curriculum subjects.
- ♦ **Learning Difficulties** (63% of responses). In four case-study schools the key criterion for selection was learning difficulty, as opposed to underachievement. In one of these schools, National Curriculum subjects were disapplied for all students in the two lowest Year 11 bands, both of which were taught in an special educational needs (SEN) unit attached to the school. Here, the SEN teachers coordinated the extended work-related learning programme.
- ♦ **Statements of special educational need** (49% of responses). This figure includes special schools, where the figure for students with statements was of course higher. Of the mainstream schools in the survey, 43% claimed to have taken the fact that students had statements into account in making their selections.²⁴

Of the 20 case studies, two were special schools. One was a school for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), where issues such as 'anti-social' behaviour, poor attendance, and disaffection with education were prominent. Many of the students were articulate but in some cases had severe learning deficits, thought to be the result of missing years of schooling as a result of permanent exclusion at an early age. All Year 10 and 11 students at this school took part in extended work-related learning. The other was an MLD/SLD/PMLD school, where students had varying levels of learning difficulties which affected their ability to access the National Curriculum. All Year 11 students at this school took part in extended work-related learning in place of Design and Technology (D&T) and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL).

It is clear from the above responses, that most schools identified more than one factor when selecting students – an illustration of the diverse needs and attributes of some of these young people. Seven of the case-study schools adopted a 'bespoke approach' to selection, considering a number of perceived student needs, ranging from learning difficulties and poor literacy through underachievement, to behavioural problems and poor attendance.²⁵ As one deputy headteacher stated: *'we look at the students holistically rather than simply from an academic point of view'*.

A greater proportion of boys than girls participated in programmes of extended work-related learning as a result of the disapplication of National Curriculum subjects. Nationally, as evident from the QCA database 1999-

²³ Again, this was an issue in only one-third of the special schools.

²⁴ 36% of Year 10 boys and 55% of Year 11 boys involved in extended work-related learning programmes in the case-study schools were said to have a statement of special needs. The figures for girls participating in the programmes were rather lower, with 32% of the Year 10 girls and 39% of the Year 11 girls having such a statement.

²⁵ Issues such as disaffection, poor attendance and behaviour, and a lack of motivation were also mentioned by the majority of telephone survey respondents as the main criteria for selecting students for programmes of extended work-related learning.

2000, subjects were to be disapplied for just over seven per cent (7.3%) of the students in key stage 4. Of these, two-thirds were boys and one-third were girls, a picture also apparent from case-study visits in the schools using the regulations.

2.4.2 Presentation of programmes to students

The staff questionnaire asked respondents to indicate how work-related learning was presented to students. This sought further to investigate the targeting strategy adopted by schools, and the extent to which students were consulted about their involvement in extended work-related learning. The responses below reflect the categories in the questionnaire to which schools could respond:

- ♦ **Students were targeted by the school, but given the option of whether or not to take part** (49% of schools). Fewer special schools (four of 15) than mainstream schools (39 of 72) adopted this approach.²⁶
- ♦ **Students were targeted by the school, as a result of specific one-to-one discussions** (30% of schools). Such discussions were less frequent in special schools, taking place in only two of 15 such schools.
- ♦ **All key stage 4 students were given the *option* of involvement in work-related learning through disapplication** (15% of schools). There was an issue here about how schools interpreted the term *option*. Clearly some schools saw it as meaning *entitlement* for all key stage 4 students (a high percentage of special schools (33%) identified this approach, for example). Others, however, suggested that the extended work-related learning programme was presented as a *Year 9 option* for any student that wished to choose it.

The latter approach is actually outwith the scope of the regulations, which specify that disapplication should be used as a strategy to address *individual student need*, and not as a form of blanket provision. However, a minority of schools had adopted this approach. These schools had produced Year 9 options booklets, containing details of extended work-related learning programmes alongside other option subjects, from which students could choose. In one instance, researchers sat in on an assembly where all Year 9 students were given details of the work-related learning programme, were told that it would involve replacement of one National Curriculum subject, and were informed how to complete an option form if they decided that they were interested in it. In practice, most schools found that the students who opted for extended work-related learning were those that they would have chosen to disapply National Curriculum subjects for anyway – those that were underachieving, low achievers or with special educational needs, but this was not always so. One interviewee commented: ‘*it was an open invitation to all kids – obviously some of them are less able kids but not all of them*’.

²⁶ The majority of telephone survey interviewees (35) also claimed that they ‘encouraged’ students to consider work-related learning facilitated by disapplication, although the decision was left up to students’ own discretion.

Why were some schools adopting this approach, given that the regulations state that disapplication should be used as a strategy to address individual need? Comments from staff in these schools offered some illumination:

- ♦ **Avoidance of stigma for ‘targeted’ students.** One work-related learning coordinator felt that if students were targeted for selection they would be labelled ‘*thick*’ by other students, and perhaps staff. At his school, the rationale was that if work-related learning was promoted as a viable aspect of the curriculum that any student could opt for, stigmatisation might be avoided.
- ♦ **Avoidance of stigma or lack of status for vocational education.** Two work-related learning coordinators were struggling with what they saw as a tension between attempting to raise the status of vocational education within their schools, whilst offering extended work-related learning as an alternative to the academic curriculum for students with specific needs – a perceived ‘*sink group*’. Offering work-related learning as an option for all students was seen as one way around this concern.

The following section outlines the pattern of subjects that had been disapplied in schools using the regulations.

2.5 The Patterns of Subject Disapplication

The national picture regarding intended patterns of subject disapplication for the academic year 1999-2000, was presented through 507 proformas that had been returned to QCA by January 2000. The findings are illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Patterns of subject disapplication

Subjects	N	%
Modern foreign languages (MFL)	5,434	49
Design and technology (D&T)	1,742	16
Science	188	2
MFL + D&T	2,104	19
MFL + Science	1,104	10
D&T + Science	179	2
No data available	259	2
N =	11,010	100

Source: QCA database 1999/2000

This national picture was reflected in the 30 case-study schools, with MFL being disapplied for the majority of students, either solely or in combination with *either* D&T or science. Schools indicated that MFL was usually disapplied because it was perceived as the subject that students found most

difficult. Staff were concerned that some students could not speak or write English fluently and felt that their achievements in MFL would be minimal.

The school survey indicated that around two-thirds of the time for extended work-related learning programmes (66%) was made available by disapplication of MFL, D&T and/or science, while just over one-third (34%) was obtained from other curriculum subjects. Of the 84 schools offering such information, 29 reported that they had made time available for work-related learning *solely* by disapplication of MFL, D&T and/or science. For the remaining 55 schools, some of the time necessary for the programme had been obtained by using time from other subjects in the curriculum – usually options subjects. The majority of schools (79% of the mainstream and 87% of the special schools) reported that the amount of time that they had been able to make available (from whatever source) was sufficient. However, there were some issues around an occasional use of statutory curriculum time – mathematics, English and religious education for example, to facilitate extended work-related learning. These are discussed fully in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.

2.6 Summary

It appears that schools had clear rationales for deciding to disapply National Curriculum subjects to facilitate extended work-related learning programmes. These mainly related to enhancing learning opportunities for re-engaging the underachieving or disaffected, raising attainment, developing relationships with external agencies, and legitimising strategies they already had in place. The ‘student-centred’ nature of most of these rationales was reflected in schools’ targeting strategies. Most students were selected for extended work-related learning on the basis of having specific needs such as a particular interest in work-related learning, behaviour problems, underachievement, learning difficulties and/or special educational needs.

Although the strategic decision to adopt the regulations was usually taken by schools’ senior management teams, the role of establishing, organising and managing programmes was most often held by work-related learning coordinators, and occasionally Heads of Year. These were felt to have a greater operational awareness of the needs of individual students, and strategies that might best address them. Other school staff, such as subject teachers or tutors, were only involved in so far as they helped deliver aspects of programmes on-site or mentor students off-site.

Schools have had to find ways of overcoming a number of barriers to successful implementation of programmes. The most significant of these were related to funding issues, although time-tabling, staff workloads, establishing appropriate work-related learning programmes and forming partnerships with external agencies were all cited. The implications of some of these perceived constraints are discussed in the following chapters.

3. EXTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMMES

This chapter outlines the nature of the extended work-related learning programmes that schools had put in place during the academic year 1999-2000. It provides a typology of practice – an exploration of the patterns that have emerged in extended work-related learning provision, and an illustration of some different models. It also explores some of the factors, both internal and external to the schools, which appear to have had an impact on the programmes that they developed. As indicated in Chapter 1, work-related learning was not always an entirely new development for schools. While many were making provisions for new *aspects* of work-related learning at key stage 4 (an increased range of learning opportunities for example (94%) and a broader range of qualifications (68%), this did not mean that all features of their programmes were *completely new*. Commonly, schools' programmes were made up of existing components that had been enhanced and/or reconfigured.

3.1 Nature of Extended Work-related Learning Programmes

Questionnaire responses indicated that the majority of schools were providing extended work-related learning opportunities through **work experience placements** (79%), **vocational courses** (63%) and **key skills enhancement work** (60%), with fewer, although still sizeable numbers, reporting provision for personal development work (46%) and vocational tasters (32%).²⁷ Additionally, interviews with school staff, and students for whom National Curriculum subjects were being disapplied, established that work experience and vocational courses were almost always provided **off-site**, whereas key skills work, or personal development activities, were normally undertaken in **schools**. More specifically:

- ♦ Of 104 students that attended **college**, 91% reported an involvement in vocational courses, whereas only three per cent said they were undertaking a key/personal skills course.
- ♦ Of the 88 students that were partially, or wholly, **school-based**, less than one-quarter (24%) were taking part in a vocational course, but 85% said they were undertaking a key/personal skills course.

Only 12 students reported that they were based with a training organisation, and very small numbers said that they were undertaking vocational tasters or other forms of work-related learning. NFER survey responses from schools indicated that the most frequently reported **patterns of provision** were:

²⁷ The pattern of provision in special schools was broadly similar to that in mainstream schools, with the exception that young people in special schools were more likely to be offered vocational tasters (53%) than vocational courses (40%).

- ♦ **Work experience with a vocational course** and at least one of key skills training, personal development training and/or vocational tasters (39 schools).
- ♦ **Work experience** with at least one of a vocational course, key skills training, personal development work and/or vocational tasters (25 schools).
- ♦ **A vocational course** with at least one of key skills training, personal development work and/or vocational tasters (nine schools).
- ♦ **Work experience alone** (five schools).
- ♦ **A vocational course alone** (three schools).
- ♦ **Key skills and personal development alone** (three schools).

There was clearly a wide variety in schools' approaches to extended work-related learning, and it should not be inferred that any one approach was more desirable than another. Indeed, interviews with school staff and students suggested that appropriate learning outcomes could be achieved in a variety of ways. The following case studies provide two contrasting examples of approaches to extended work-related learning, targeted at very different numbers of students, and with markedly different emphases.

Rhodes House School – employment placements leading to NVQ accreditation

Rhodes House School is a medium-sized 11-18 school in a mainly rural part of the south-west of England. The school is said to have a truly comprehensive intake, with a complete range of student ability represented. Extended work-related learning was adopted by this school in order to provide a '*relevant*' curriculum for nine Year 10 and Year 11 students (just under four percent of the key stage 4 cohort) who, for various reasons (including low achievement, special educational needs, underachievement and disadvantaged home backgrounds) were felt to struggle with the demands of the full National Curriculum. This was said to have resulted in a loss of confidence, motivation and the ability to achieve.

In order that these students might follow a substantial extended work placement with the possibility of NVQ accreditation, and to lessen academic pressures upon them, MFL and D&T were disapplied. Additional time was gained by reducing the number of option subjects taken by the students, with extended work-related learning replacing a humanities subject. The result was that each student was able to take part in a work placement with an employer for one and a half days each week, with an additional half-day session in school for portfolio preparation and the development of underpinning knowledge. The majority of students attended one work placement, spanning an entire year, with a local employer – most of which are large retail chains – although some of the less confident or socially adept young people carried out work placements within the more secure environment of the school's office or reprographics section.

All students worked towards an NVQ Level 1 or 2 in administration or customer service.²⁸ Two members of the school's staff are registered as NVQ assessors and verifiers, with D32/34 training. The school is also a recognised NVQ accreditation centre. Hence, whilst employers are selected on the basis that they can provide the necessary opportunities for students to develop the skills, competencies and experiences needed to achieve NVQ Level 1 or 2, school staff themselves take responsibility for monitoring progress, mentoring students and supporting them in the development of their portfolios of evidence.

The focus of extended work-related learning at Rhodes House school was on in-depth experience of the world of work, through one work placement that could lead to a nationally recognised qualification. At All Saints Community College, by contrast, the emphasis was on offering a variety of interesting and varied types of provision to young people, in the hope that this might help them to see a value in school and to take an interest in their community and their own capabilities, ultimately reducing levels of disaffection, exclusion and drop-out.

All Saints Community College – carousel of short tasters in a range of locations

All Saints Community College is a large 11-19 inner-city comprehensive school in the north east of England, serving an area of socio-economic deprivation. Staff described the local area as suffering from high levels of unemployment, crime and poverty. A large proportion of the school's students are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds – 65% are eligible for free school meals, and the student intake is heavily skewed towards the lower end of the ability scale.

Partly in consequence, the school has long faced an uphill struggle in overcoming low levels of student motivation and achievement, anti-social behaviour and poor attendance. The introduction of an extended work-related learning programme was one strategy used by this school in an attempt to *'try to re-motivate them and turn them on'*. The emphasis was on a programme that would provide an alternative to the academic curriculum for students, and to increase their chances of employability post-16.

At All Saints, either two subjects (MFL or D&T and science), or one subject (MFL or D&T) are disapplied so that approximately 120 Year 10 and 11 students (35% of the key stage 4 cohort) can follow a programme of extended work-related learning. The work-related learning programme is quite diverse, encompassing a series of six-week blocks with employers, training providers, community organisations and colleges.

Examples include:

- ◆ **Work experience and college course** tasters.
- ◆ **Community activities** – including active citizenship, media-related activities, and various army-based events.
- ◆ **Outward-bound/lifeskills activities** – including off-road driving, lifesaving and kayaking.

²⁸ It should be stressed here that NVQs in Customer Services are not approved for use with students of compulsory school age. Qualifications used with key stage 4 students, wherever their place of learning, must be approved under Section 400 of the Education Act. Guidance ('the Section 400 list') is available from the DfEE.

- ◆ **School-based skills development sessions** – including first aid, food handling and ICT, as well as personal development and basic skills work.

Students take part in each of the different activities, which operate as a carousel. In this way, they receive tasters of a wide variety of work and community-related activities, and experience of a range of options that might be available to them on leaving school. The opportunity for accreditation is less of an emphasis than at Rhodes House, although students receive locally awarded certificates of attendance, completion and achievement through many of their activities.

Both of these schools were making quite substantial amounts of time available each week for students to engage in extended work-related learning. Other schools however, set aside quite variable amounts of time for this purpose. In addition, the **focus** of different programmes, and the attitudes of schools towards **accreditation** of achievement varied considerably. These aspects are explored in the following sections.

3.2 Time made available for Extended Work-related Learning Programmes

The staff questionnaire asked schools to indicate the amount of time spent on their **entire** work-related learning programme according to the following categories:²⁹

- ◆ up to half a day per week (24%);
- ◆ between half and one day per week (45%);
- ◆ between one and two days per week (45%);
- ◆ more than two days per week (20%).

It could be argued that those schools that were making less than half a day's provision for their students did not really need to use the 1998 regulations. The regulations permit disapplication only where work-related learning **cannot be provided** alongside the statutory National Curriculum. Most schools made provision available for between half a day and two days per week. What structures did these schools put in place to make this amount of time available?

According to school returns to QCA, the pattern of disapplication anticipated for 11,010 students in 1999-2000, was **one** National Curriculum subject for 67% of the young people involved and **two** subjects for 31%.³⁰ One National Curriculum subject would account for around half a day per week, and two subjects, up to one day per week. This explains why 34% of schools (as indicated in Chapter 2) used additional curriculum time to facilitate extended

²⁹ Percentages sum to more than 100 because some schools made more than one response. This occurred where a school *varied* its provision according to the needs of different students. Some students were, for example, involved in extended work-related learning for one day per week, and others for one and a half days. In such instances, two responses are recorded for the school.

³⁰ Two per cent of schools did not provide this data to QCA.

work-related learning. In most case-study schools, additional time was found by replacing one or two *optional* curriculum subjects. However, in a minority of schools, students were reported to have missed *core curriculum time* – mathematics, English and other statutory activities.

It was very rare, however, for schools to have allowed students to miss statutory subjects as a deliberate mechanism. Most tried hard to avoid jeopardising students' statutory learning. In some cases, however, they had simply found the logistics of timetabling impossible to overcome. Some schools stressed that they had faced considerable difficulties in blocking extended work-related learning programmes solely against disappplied and/or optional curriculum time. At one school this had led to a situation where: '*we've robbed quite significantly from other [statutory] areas of the curriculum*'. This problem was most apparent where programmes were provided by external providers who could not be flexible about programme timing. Hence, schools had little leverage when it came to specifying the days and times of the week when students should ideally be involved in their external programmes.

Student interviews across the 20 case-study schools indicated a similar perception of missed work, with 48% saying that they missed some lessons as a result of their involvement in extended work-related learning.³¹ While this could raise concerns about curriculum coverage, particularly given the current government emphasis on improving levels of literacy and numeracy amongst young people, it should be noted that:

- ♦ In most cases, schools had developed strategies to help students make up missed work. Of those schools that reported 'catch-up' to be an issue,³² 28% stated that **all** students were successful in catching up with missed work, and 69% felt that **some** students were successful. Only three per cent of schools said that none of their students had been able to cope with this demand.
- ♦ Interviewees in many schools stressed that it was only by providing substantial blocks of time for programmes of extended work-related learning that students had sufficient time to develop work-related skills and competencies and work towards qualifications.

Interviewees in one or two case-study schools had taken the view, however, that students involved in extended work-related learning were the least likely to catch up with English and/or mathematics, being seriously disengaged from such subject matter already. Special educational needs, and low levels of self-esteem and confidence were some of the reasons given. In these schools, no particular effort had been made to ensure that students made up missed statutory work. Some interviewees took the view that students who struggled with literacy and numeracy, might gain more from a focus on basic skills within their programmes, than through a traditional GCSE English lesson.

³¹ Although it was not clear whether students were always referring to statutory subjects.

³² Forty-one per cent of schools that responded to the first staff questionnaire. (It should be noted that this was less of an issue for special schools in the survey).

One used the example that enforcing the teaching of ‘*Shakespeare*’ to all students could be counter-productive to attempts to raise self-esteem, confidence and ultimately, literacy.

A frequently voiced suggestion was for greater flexibility to allow disapplication of more National Curriculum subjects. This was particularly the case in schools serving areas of high social disadvantage, mainstream schools integrating students with moderate or severe learning difficulties, and special schools.³³ That said, there were interviewees in other schools who felt that core subjects such as English and mathematics should remain compulsory on the grounds that they form the basis of most employers’ requirements of employees. In addition, few interviewees made suggestions, or appeared to have established strategies, for alternative means of developing basic and key skills in young people through work-related learning.

3.3 Focus of Extended Work-related Learning Programmes

There was a clear pattern to the types of skills that students perceived themselves to be developing in various extended work-related learning contexts. By far the largest number of responses were to do with the development of **specific job-related competencies**³⁴ – tasks such as photocopying, filing, welding, changing a tyre or dyeing hair for example. However, students also reported that they were developing a range of broader skills, often in addition to the above, as follows:

- ♦ **general employability skills** (including key skills, job application skills and an understanding of the realities of the world of work) – 93 students reported that they were developing these skills, mainly through **school-based** programmes (52), but also through **employment** placements (27);
- ♦ **underpinning knowledge** (here students generally referred to theory or written work connected to practical work) – 61 students said that they were gaining underpinning knowledge, the majority (50) through **college programmes**;
- ♦ **life skills** (including self-awareness/personal development work, outward-bound activities and recreational pursuits). Whilst the focus of such programmes was often intended to be on team-working and communication, students tended not always to recognise this, reporting that they were simply engaged in enjoyable activities. Fifty-two students reported such involvement, of whom the majority (36) were undertaking these activities through **school**.

³³ One staff member at a special school also felt that what he saw as a ‘mainstream bias’ to the regulations made them difficult to operate in a special school context.

³⁴ These were mentioned on 192 occasions as some students were developing this skill in more than one context.

3.4 Recognising Achievement

In most schools, provision appeared to have been linked to some form of qualification for at least some of the participating students. Questionnaire responses indicated that the students most likely to be working towards qualifications were those who were:

- ◆ undertaking **work experience placements** (true for students in 47 schools);
- ◆ involved in **vocational courses** (true for students in 47 schools);
- ◆ involved in **key skills work** (true for students in 44 schools).

Personal development work and vocational tasters were less likely to lead to qualifications or certification. The majority of students (82%) confirmed that their programmes led to some form of qualification, although 12% were not sure precisely what they were working towards. Qualifications and certificates that students thought they would gain at the end of their programmes were:

- ◆ **NVQs** (37%). Some were hoping for full accreditation at Levels 1 or 2, whereas others were aiming for NVQ units. Seven of the case-study schools provided programmes in which students worked towards NVQ units, compared to five that focused on full achievement of NVQs at Levels 1 or 2 where possible.
- ◆ **Key skills qualifications** such as ASDAN Youth Award (28%).
- ◆ **Non-nationally recognised certificates**, awarded at a local level by colleges and community organisations (23%). The latter variously included certificates for programme attendance and completion, and certificates of competence across a range of activities such as swimming or map-reading for example.
- ◆ **GNVQs** (10%).

In total, 12 case-study schools provided the opportunity for students to work towards nationally recognised vocational qualifications at entry level, level 1 or level 2. Staff in eight schools indicated that students were given the opportunity to work towards an ASDAN Youth Award at bronze, silver or, occasionally, gold levels – sometimes in addition to the above. What affected the nature and variety of qualifications offered across schools? The availability of work experience providers, the scale and scope of qualifications permitted by the DfEE approved qualifications list, and the attributes and capabilities of students being targeted were key factors. In addition, the number of components in the schools' work-related learning programmes and the relative weighting of each component appeared to have a bearing, so that students were:

- ◆ **most likely to be working towards full nationally recognised qualifications** such as NVQs or GNVQs where their school offered them a

single extended work placement or vocational course as the predominant aspect of their provision,³⁵

- ♦ **most likely to be working towards NVQ units** or other credits towards national qualifications where they were involved in two programmes with similar weighting, typically a work placement and a college course, or a college course and school-based key skills work;
- ♦ **least likely to be working towards any form of nationally recognised accreditation** where their programme was focused around a series of short work-related tasters over the course of a year, or where they were involved in three or more concurrent activities such as work placement, college course and key skills work.³⁶

This should not be viewed as a hierarchy of best practice, because much hinged on schools' rationales for adopting particular programmes, and the characteristics of selected students. For many schools, achievement of qualifications was judged to be **secondary** to the broader aim of raising motivation, confidence and self-esteem. In addition, some interviewees indicated a preference for the provision of a **variety of activities** – college work, employment, community work and school-based skills development for example – on the basis that this provided students with a range of experiences, and a greater sense of the options available post-16. For others, a programme provided mainly by external partners following a recognised qualification was simply too costly to contemplate.

So what determined the approaches adopted by schools? Staff interviews made clear that the nature of extended work-related learning was influenced both by conditions **within** schools, and by factors **external** to them.

3.5 Internal Conditions

The following conditions within schools appeared to have played a role in shaping the nature of extended work-related learning programmes:

- ♦ The characteristics, numbers and ages of students for whom work-related learning was considered most suitable.
- ♦ The nature of the existing key stage 4 curriculum.
- ♦ The culture and ethos of individual schools.

3.5.1 Student characteristics, numbers and ages

Schools' perceptions of the **needs and characteristics** of selected students was a strong influence. At the EBD special school, for example, the emphasis was on helping students to become more aware of the outside world, and giving them some of the chances enjoyed by other young people. This school favoured extended work placements, which were felt to contribute to such

³⁵ As indicated in the Rhodes House School case-study above.

³⁶ As indicated in the All Saints Community College case-study above.

outcomes, rather than other curriculum alternatives (such as outward bound activities). As the headteacher stated, outward-bound activities represent ‘*an environment they’ll not be in for the rest of their lives*’. Staff in another school felt that college-based NVQ programmes were more appropriate for students with behavioural difficulties than extended work placements, which were felt to be more suitable for those deemed to be ‘*reliable*’.

The **number** of students for whom work-related learning was felt to be appropriate also influenced the nature of provision, as indicated below:

- ◆ In schools where only a small number of students were felt likely to benefit, programmes tended to be quite limited in their variety and fairly self-contained with respect to the rest of the school.
- ◆ By contrast, schools that had large numbers of key stage 4 students following an extended work-related curriculum were in a better position to offer more extensive programmes with greater variety.

Students’ **ages** also had an impact. Some staff were more comfortable with the idea of setting up long-term work placements for Year 11 students than for those in Year 10. This was a reflection of concerns that at the age of 14 or 15, not all students were mature enough to cope with an extended work placement in an employment context.

3.5.2 The existing key stage 4 curriculum

Schools’ existing curricular arrangements had also had a bearing on the development of extended work-related learning. For example, some schools had little or no tradition of vocational education. As one interviewee explained: ‘*historically this school has provided little in the way of vocational education and, where it has existed, it has usually been an ad hoc strategy to tackle disaffection*’. At the other extreme was a school where work-related learning had long been a feature of the curriculum, and where, as the school’s key coordinator said: ‘*we’ve been doing it for so long now that we know what we’re doing*’. This school was continuing to offer a work-related learning programme that had been running since the 1970s, throughout the 1980s and 1990s (in spite of the introduction of the National Curriculum), replacing MFL for lower attaining students. In this instance, the school had not been fully compliant with the National Curriculum during the 1990s, but now found itself in a position where its practice was legitimate. Most schools fell somewhere in between these two extremes, so that new developments were necessary, but there were some existing practices upon which these could be built. Examples of two schools in this situation are presented below.

The Ridgley School

<i>Existing curricular arrangement</i>	<i>Extended work-related learning programme</i>
Part one GNVQ Manufacturing (Foundation)	Part one GNVQ Manufacturing (Foundation) and Part one GNVQ Business (Foundation) + 1 day per week work placement
Part one GNVQ Business (Foundation)	
ASDAN Youth Award	

The deputy head at this school described these changes as '*a way of enriching what was already there – the icing on the cake*'

George V School

<i>Existing curricular arrangement</i>	<i>Extended work-related learning programme</i>
Alternative curriculum group (comprising core subjects and outward bound activities)	Alternative curriculum group + 1 day per week NVQ at an FE college

The aim at this school was to provide '*a more vocational edge*' for the existing alternative curriculum group.

These examples illustrate the general point that programmes of extended work-related learning did not develop in a curricular vacuum within schools. Rather they were strongly shaped by the nature of the key stage 4 curriculum already in place, and its strengths and weaknesses, particularly with respect to vocational learning opportunities.

3.5.3 School culture and ethos

Just as disapplication did not occur in a curricular vacuum, neither did it occur in an institutional vacuum. The mediating effect of **school culture** was particularly evident in schools that had a strong ethos either for vocational or academic education. Schools with a culture that valued academic learning often experienced challenges in justifying resources and gaining recognition for the development of extended work-related learning. At one school in the '*leafy suburbs*' of a large city, for example, the key coordinator complained that work-related learning was seen as '*an isolated course for the weaker students*' rather than a useful method of learning that might suit a range of students in the school. In consequence, it was reported to exist as '*an invisible part of the school curriculum*' with low status amongst staff, students and parents. This contrasts starkly with other schools in which there was a strong track record of vocational education and work-related learning.

Staff in some schools were reported to perceive extended work-related learning as a **reward for disruptive students**. This could create tensions, with staff resenting what they saw as special treatments for the '*naughty*' students, and using the withdrawal of work placements or college days as a **sanction** against misbehavior in lessons. Other factors that influenced schools' work-related learning developments included:

- ♦ **Timetable arrangements.** Where, for example, schools aimed to avoid students missing statutory lessons, they had to timetable work-related learning activities on certain days and so accept, for example, the kinds of courses that were on offer at their local FE college on that particular day.
- ♦ **Staff availability.** School-based vocational courses usually had to be based around existing staff expertise and experience. Furthermore, the establishment and maintenance of work placements was greatly enhanced by the appointment of a member of staff with dedicated administrative responsibility.
- ♦ **Resource availability.** In addition to human resources, the availability of physical resources such as accommodation, facilities and specialist equipment had a bearing on the nature of provision. Schools were rarely in a position to offer certain vocational programmes, such as NVQs, and in consequence had to approach FE colleges or employers. Other courses (such as GNVQ IT or Youth Award) meanwhile were quite feasible for schools.
- ♦ **Other school development initiatives.** It is clear that extended work-related learning has been helped in several schools by their involvement with other educational initiatives, such as Excellence in Cities (learning mentors have helped with selection, preparation and mentoring of students for whom subjects are being disapplied), and Standards Fund (funding for various aspects of programmes).

The last three of these points emphasise the importance of one further influencing factor: **the availability of funding**. Both survey and case-study responses indicated that funding was the main barrier to the successful implementation of extended work-related learning programmes. Compared to the cost of making GCSE provision available to one more student in key stage 4, the *'unit cost'* of making work-related provision (such as a work placement leading to an NVQ qualification) available to a student was described as being extremely high. Whilst many felt that the high cost of extended work-related learning was a price worth paying (as one interviewee stated: *'It's an investment...it pays us back in the way of fewer exclusions and increased motivation'*), there was genuine concern about sources and reliability of funding. Funds had been accessed by schools from a variety of sources, including national initiatives (Standards Fund and Excellence in Cities for example), as well as regional and local agencies (LEAs, TECs and EBPs). While enabling programmes to run in the immediate term, this funding situation was creating two recurring difficulties for schools:

- ♦ Most funding sources are short term in nature and so put schools in an uncertain and insecure position with respect to future plans and consolidation. As one teacher queried *'What happens when the current SRB [Single Regeneration Budget] funding stops?'*.
- ♦ Many of the current sources of funding are not easily accessible by schools located in non-disadvantaged areas, regardless of the fact that significant proportions of their intake may be from deprived areas.

As a result of the lack of direct funding, some schools said they had not been able to offer extended work-related learning to as large a number of students as they would have liked. Others had not been able to afford the types of provision they would have wished for, such as college or employer based programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications. In addition, few schools had been able to protect the time of work-related learning staff, and hence, could not offer as much as they would have liked in the way of student support, administration and planning.

3.6 External Conditions

Provision was also strongly influenced by a range of external factors including:

- ◆ the nature of existing relations with local work-related learning providers;
- ◆ the prevalence of external initiatives and support in the area of work-related learning;
- ◆ the availability and extent of local work-related learning opportunities.

3.6.1 Existing relations with local work-related learning providers

The issue of supply and demand in shaping the nature of extended work-related learning provision has already been raised in Chapter 2. Whilst school staff and students may have desired a particular type of provision, they were often constrained by limited availability. One school, for example, had decided to focus on extended work placements (as opposed to college course provision), because of the pre-existence of effective links with local employers through sixth form GNVQ courses. In this instance, the relationship with the local FE college was described as being '*poor*'. In contrast, other schools that had enjoyed long standing and productive relations with their local colleges were keen to set up programmes that drew upon these institutions' vocational courses.

3.6.2 External initiatives and support in the area of work-related learning

As described in Chapter 2, a few schools were involved in work-related learning schemes that had been set up by LEAs or other local agencies. It was clear that the opportunity to link into local initiatives of this kind had a huge significance for schools. Staff in one school that participated in an LEA-run scheme, involving nine schools and an FE college, described '*an economy of scale*' that would not have been possible in isolation. However, external collaboration inevitably shaped the kind of work-related learning that such schools were able to make available. In the above case, students received all of their education (both work-related and statutory) at the local FE college. Staff in another school, where students participated in vocational courses at a local FE college, described how the LEA had determined the range of courses on offer.

For other schools it was the absence (as opposed to the presence) of external support that shaped their programmes. Staff trying to set up work placements often complained about a lack of assistance from organisations such as TECs, EBPs and careers services. Interviews with personnel in such organisations, however, suggested that this might have been a product (in the words of one EBP staff member) of *'a conflict between schools' needs for help with finding placements, and EBP's mission to concentrate on advising teachers on work-related learning within the curriculum'*.

3.6.3 Local work-related learning opportunities

Many schools claimed to have been constrained by a dearth of local work-related learning opportunities for students, or a lack of willingness amongst employers to take on pre-16 year olds for extended work placements. Explanations for this included:

- ♦ **Geographical location.** As indicated in Chapter 2, some schools were situated in remote rural areas with small numbers of potential employers, and students encountered problems, and high costs, in travelling long distances in order to undertake external placements. Others in urban areas, especially inner cities, reported that there could be acute competition from other schools looking for similar work placements. Interviewees from external agencies such as EBPs, TECs and careers services talked of *'employer fatigue'* in this respect.
- ♦ **Employer reticence.** Some employers were reported to have pre-conceived ideas about certain groups of young people (in particular those from special schools). In consequence, many schools had experienced real difficulties in establishing, maintaining and supporting high quality extended work placements.

The latter point was not universal, as illustrated by the case of one business which, according to a member of school staff, had *'provided an excellent placement for one student. This is due largely to one of their staff who has a real motivation to support extended work-related learning as a way of initiating GNVQ Level 1 training more broadly within her company.'*³⁷ However, on balance, schools had been stretched to find ways around a lack of local work-related learning opportunities. The following case study provides an example of one inner-city school that had managed to achieve this.

The Ridgley School: Tackling the difficulty of finding suitable work placements

This school, a large inner-city comprehensive, has 40 Year 10 students following an extended work-related learning programme, comprised of school-based vocational courses (Part one GNVQ Manufacturing or Business (Foundation) or ASDAN Youth Award) along with work placements for one day each week. In the first term of the programme, however, the deputy headteacher found it extremely difficult to establish sufficient work placements for a variety of reasons. These

³⁷ It is not clear whether this business was actually initiating GNVQ or, in fact, NVQ level 1. This was a direct quotation from a member of school staff.

included: a lack of time for contacting and liaising with employers; employers' concerns about taking '*socially inept*' Year 10 students; the two-week timetable preventing students from being out of school for a complete day each week; lack of support from organisations such as the LEA, TEC and careers service; and the time taken for Health and Safety checks.

As a way of overcoming these problems, the school:

- ◆ created a new administrative post of Work Placement Coordinator (2 days per week) to set up, and visit students on, work placements;
- ◆ encouraged students to try to find placements through family contacts;
- ◆ set up some placements within the school (such as in the canteen) for those students for whom they felt it would be hardest to find external placements;
- ◆ ran work preparation-type activities in school during the intervening period while students were waiting for placements to be set up.

3.7 Summary

Different schools have adopted a variety of strategies regarding the types and combinations of work-related learning made available, according to a range of internal and external criteria. It is clear that many schools currently view extended work-related provision as an evolving aspect of the school curriculum, and an area that is not yet fully honed or refined. More than three-quarters of the schools³⁸ stressed that they were anticipating significant changes to their programmes next year. This was not because they deemed them to be unsuccessful. Indeed, the largest proportion of respondents (57%) said that they would like to make the programmes available to a **greater number of students** next year. Other changes envisaged were the introduction of different types of work-related learning (55%), working with different education, employment or training providers (43%) and offering different qualifications (40%).

This suggests that schools welcomed the relative flexibility that disapplication for extended work-related learning offered them. To what extent was this borne out with respect to the impact that the programmes appeared to have had on students, schools and external partnerships? The following three chapters explore this in more detail.

³⁸ Seventy-seven per cent of the 65 schools that were planning to continue offering an extended work-related learning programme next year.

4. THE IMPACT OF EXTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMMES ON YOUNG PEOPLE

This chapter explores the impacts on young people of extended work-related learning facilitated by disapplication. It focuses in particular on the ‘distance travelled’ towards achieving three DfEE objectives for the regulations:

- ◆ To maintain within the more flexible arrangements a broad and balanced curriculum which supports the focus on raising standards and increasing the number of pupils gaining **formal qualifications** and levels of **overall attainment**.
 - Young people following extended work related programmes performed as well as the comparison groups in terms of distance travelled from key stage 3 to key stage 4.
 - More than four-fifths of schools (83%) reported that extended work related had a positive impact on attainment for at least some students.
- ◆ To produce teaching and learning which **engage pupils who are underachieving or disaffected** and which results in **higher attainment** across these pupils’ whole curriculum.
 - Extended work-related learning appeared to be more effective with low achieving students, with some motivation and/or interest in the programme area. Programmes appeared less effective with severely disaffected or disengaged students.
- ◆ To improve participating **pupils’ satisfaction** with their post-compulsory career and further education and training choices.³⁹
 - Participation in programmes appeared to have had a positive impact on young people’s feelings of preparedness for post-16 transition.

Section 4.1 deals with the first two of these objectives, exploring the impact of extended work-related learning on young people’s attainments and other achievements. Subsequent discussion examines the relative effectiveness of programmes in engaging underachieving and disaffected students (who are identified as the main target of the regulations). It also considers the distance travelled towards the third objective by exploring the impact on students’ post-compulsory progression. The factors facilitating a positive impact on young people are then summarised.

³⁹ Note that, because of the time-scale of the study, the research has had to focus on young people’s feelings of preparedness for, and confidence in their ability to make satisfactory post-16 transitions rather than on their satisfaction with actual post-16 destinations.

4.1 The Impact on Students' Attainments and other Achievements

As indicated in Chapter 2, almost two-thirds of schools (62%) saw raising attainment as an important objective of implementing the regulations. By the end of the summer term 2000, 83% of schools suggested that involvement in extended work-related learning had made a positive impact on achievement for at least some of their students. Of these, more than one-sixth indicated that it had led to increased achievements for all students. Yet, what, precisely, were the nature of these improvements?

4.1.1 Impact on vocational achievement

Staff in all 30 case-study schools reported positive outcomes for many of their students in terms of the achievement of vocationally-related qualifications (including NVQs or units towards them, GNVQs and key skills qualifications) or certificates of competence or involvement. In Rhodes House School, for example, five of the nine participating students had made progress by the end of the first year of the programme, with one boy in Year 11 having achieved an NVQ at level 2 in IT, while two Year 10 students were strongly expected to achieve a level 2 during 2000/2001 in Customer Services.⁴⁰ Two other students in the same school (who were working towards an NVQ in Administration) were said to have developed '*significant sub-secretarial skills*'.

4.1.2 Impact on academic achievement

The extent to which extended work-related learning had impacted on students' academic achievement was rather more complex. Students' actual, or anticipated academic achievements at the end of Year 11, had to be assessed in the light of schools' predictions for them from the beginning of Year 10. These were based on:

- ♦ what each student **had the potential** to achieve if he or she was to complete key stage 4 and sit public examinations.
- ♦ what each student **would probably** achieve (given their known attributes such as attendance record, attitude and motivation levels). In some cases, this was a predication for underachievement.

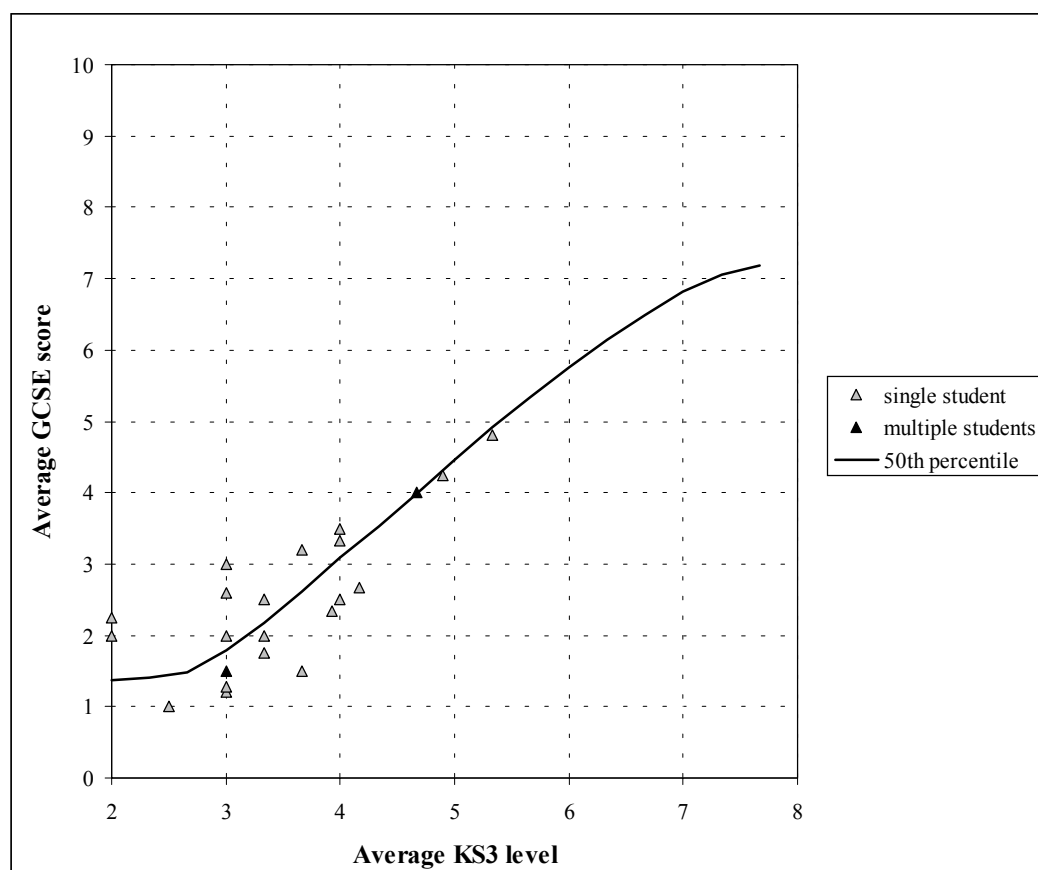
Certainly, a statistical analysis of the Year 11 cohort in the study indicated that the young people who were following extended work-related learning programmes started with significantly lower levels of attainment at key stage 3 (a mean score of 3.23) than students in the comparison group (a mean score 3.72).⁴¹ This lower level of initial attainment was also reflected in their

⁴⁰ It should be stressed here that NVQs in Customer Services are not approved for use with students of compulsory school age. Qualifications used with key stage 4 students, wherever their place of learning, must be approved under Section 400 of the Education Act. Guidance ('the Section 400 list') is available from the DfEE.

⁴¹ These figures are significant at $p = 0.05$.

outcomes at key stage 4, where the former group achieved significantly lower total GCSE scores (a mean of 11 points) than their peers (a mean of 19.38 points).⁴² However, this analysis provides a relatively crude comparison. To begin with, many of the students on extended work-related learning programmes were following fewer National Curriculum subjects than their peers. As a result, it could be anticipated that their overall total GCSE score would be lower. What is more telling is that their **average** GCSE score (2.49) was exactly the same as that achieved by the comparison group.

Figure 4.1 Average GCSE performance against average KS3 level: students following extended work-related learning.



Based on data received from 10 schools with Year 11 students involved in extended work-related learning
 $n = 39$

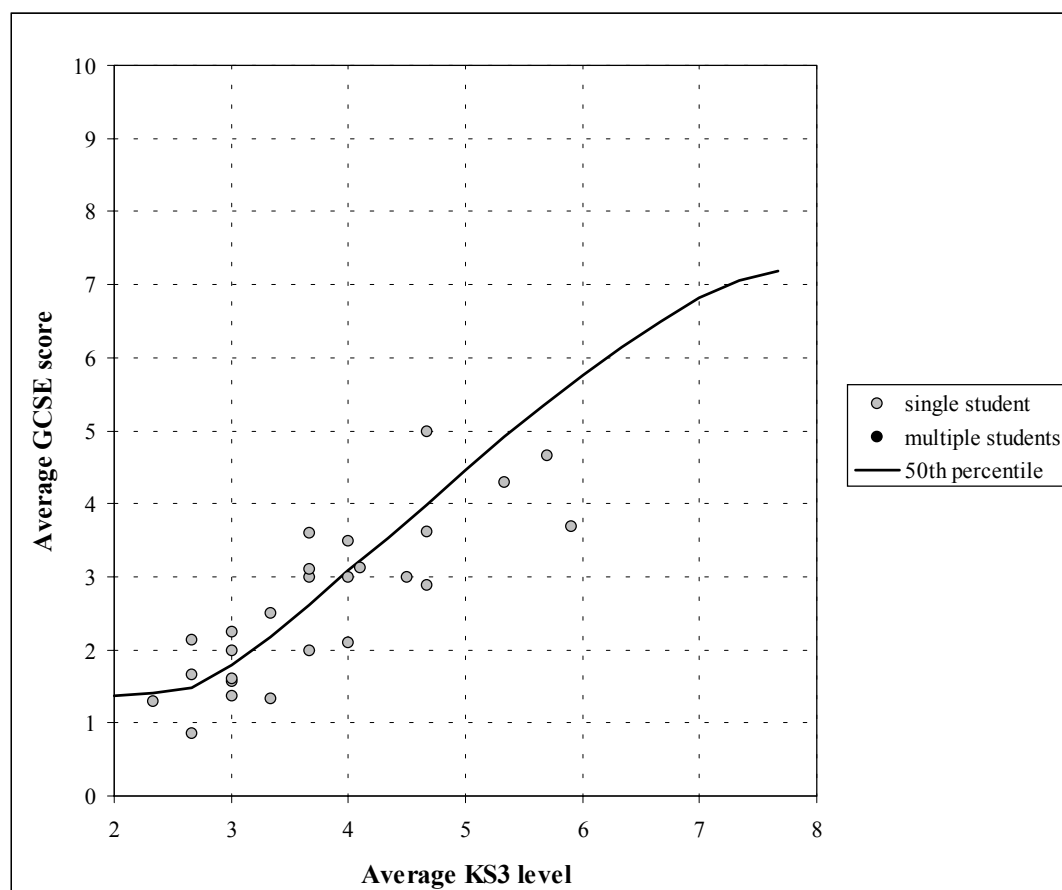
An examination of the performance of the two groups of students (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2) indicates that, by comparison with a national median of performance from key stage 3 to key stage 4, young people following extended work-related learning programmes, performed as well as the comparison group.⁴³ Moreover, a number of these students had also gained nationally recognised vocational qualifications. This suggests that

⁴² These figures are significant at $p = 0.05$.

⁴³ This echoes the finding from the SWA work, which found that the distance travelled from key stage 3 to key stage 4 was 'not dissimilar to that of the full year cohorts'. WATSON, A., STUART, N. and FERGUSON, J. (2000). *National Evaluation of Key Stage 4 Work-related Learning Demonstration Projects (Research Report RR218)*. Sheffield: DfEE.

involvement in extended work-related learning may have at least enabled young people to achieve their potential and, in some cases, have added real value.

Figure 4.2 Average GCSE performance against average KS3 level: comparison students.



Based on data received from 10 schools with Year 11 comparison students
n = 30

Information from staff in the case-study schools suggests that this analysis holds. Staff in six of the schools reported that many students who had been predicted to underachieve, through poor attendance or by dropping out of key stage 4 all together, were now expected to sit (or in some cases had already sat) their public examinations. This suggests that work-related learning programmes had made a positive contribution to these students' ability to achieve their potential, by keeping them 'on track'. This point was summed up by one interviewee who said: *'The programme probably won't increase their attainment levels [at GCSE, but] it helped to keep students on course, and their motivation up, so that most achieved their potential rather than drifting out of the system'*.

Not all schools reported positive outcomes. Five case-study schools suggested that involvement in extended work-related learning had no apparent impact on academic achievement, whilst two schools talked of negative impact. Evidence of **no apparent impact** was as follows:

- ♦ Extended work-related learning students had been predicted to complete key stage 4, and gain the academic grades that they had actually achieved, or were on line to do so (four schools).
- ♦ Extended work-related learning students had been predicted not to complete key stage 4, or to sit public examinations. (In one school this prediction was borne out).

Negative impact was rare, but when it did occur, reasons for it included:

- ♦ Students having missed statutory National Curriculum subjects as a result of time-tabling difficulties. In one school, students struggled to complete their necessary coursework, and hence, failed to meet their potential in these subjects. As one teacher said: *'they are in school less and so it is harder for teachers to have contact with them, especially in relation to GCSE coursework. For example, the two year 11 girls that have done so well on their work experience will now definitely not get 5 GCSEs, but if they had not been doing the programme they might have'*.
- ♦ Students enjoying the experience of extended work-related learning so much that it had *'turned them off'* school altogether. One parent, whose daughter had already achieved an NVQ level 1 in hairdressing, remarked that *'going to college has not had any effect on her school work. If anything, it has made her more bored with school and more eager to move on'*. School staff reported that other students in the same school, who would have been expected to sit academic examinations at the end of Year 11, had not done so.

Even these rare cases did not necessarily equate to a negative impact on achievement *per se*. Although some students achieved fewer GCSEs than predicted, they successfully achieved nationally recognised vocational qualifications – a positive outcome. Young people themselves rarely saw the purpose of extended work-related learning as improving their attainment at GCSE, with only five per cent believing that taking part in the programme would lead to *'doing better at school work'*. However, 21% hoped that their programmes might help them to get more vocational qualifications.

An issue for schools is the fact that some vocational and key skills qualifications, such as NVQs and ASDAN, are not included in the school performance tables. If students underachieve academically as a result of involvement in extended work-related learning, even if they achieve alternative national qualifications, this is reflected as reduced performance for the school as a whole. As one member of staff pointed out, *'I know this programme is the right thing for these kids – they're achieving. But it's no good for us – the NVQs and the other certificates they're doing are not counted in the league tables'*.

4.1.3 Impact on students' engagement in school

Staff questionnaire responses suggested that significant improvements took place in the motivation, behaviour and attendance of students undertaking extended work-related learning. In particular:

- ◆ 92% of schools reported an increase in at least some of these students' **motivation to learn**: 21% indicated that this was the case for **all** students.
- ◆ 85% noted that programmes had led to **improved behaviour** in at least some students and 15% of schools reported improved behaviour for **all** students undertaking extended work-related learning. In over two-thirds of the schools (68%), staff identified a reduction in **exclusions**.
- ◆ 70% indicated that programmes had led to **improved attendance** at school among at least some students, with 10% noting this impact on **all** students. Only three per cent reported that students' levels of attendance had fallen since their involvement in extended work-related learning.

It is important to note that while 75% of the surveyed schools systematically collected monitoring data to provide hard evidence of such improvements, one-quarter did not. Many teachers and external partners relied on their impressions of changes in students' behaviour, motivation and attendance, or on data gleaned from other informal approaches, to make statements such as those reported above, these issues are discussed further in Chapter 5. Furthermore, as indicated in Table 5.1 (Chapter 5), only half the schools carried out any analysis of trends.

In those seven case-study schools where data had been analysed, extended work-related learning was reported to have made an impact on students' **attendance levels**. John Davies School, for example, had developed a system in which students tracked their attendance on a chart, enabling them to see improvements over time. This system, coupled with the content of the programme, was said to have had a dramatic impact. Students turned the system '*into a competition on who was improving more*', and one student with a very poor previous attendance record increased his school attendance from 20% to 67% during 1999/2000. However, in other case-study schools, improvements in students' attendance were limited to their involvement in extended work-related learning programmes, and did not extend to their engagement in other parts of the curriculum. As one teacher pointed out, '*we've got two lads who never come into school, but always go on their work placements*'.

The impact on students' **motivation** to learn and on their **behaviour** in school was similarly mixed. Ten case-study schools identified some positive impact in this respect. Of these, four suggested that students had started to work harder across their whole curriculum and/or to behave better in lessons. In Kornell School, for example, the programme coordinator reported that involvement in an ASDAN Youth Award course had improved students' behaviour in other classes and had helped them settle down and become more enthusiastic about their learning. She suggested that this was due to the

practical and structured nature of the course. *'The ASDAN course structure ... has enabled students to plan and take responsibility for their own work'*. Three schools reported that their programmes had led to a dramatic fall in exclusions among the students involved.

In contrast, the other six schools reported that improvements in behaviour and motivation were restricted to improvements during aspects of students' work-related learning programmes. One employer commented on a boy who had repeatedly been excluded from school due to bad behaviour but who did not exhibit any such problems in the workplace. *'I don't know why he was suspended from school, when he is here he is really nice and polite'*. Explanations for such differences in students' behaviour in and outside school hinged on a number of factors: variations between the two environments; the ways in which students perceived themselves to be treated in each context; and the different content of work-related and academic programmes. In particular, students appeared to respond well to being given responsibility and to taking part in practical work with clearly defined tasks.⁴⁴

4.1.4 Impact on students' attitudes towards school and on their self-esteem

The young people, however, generally felt that involvement in extended work-related learning had improved their attitudes towards school. By summer 2000, participating students were significantly more likely to be positive towards school than they had been at the beginning of the school year (some 48% reported more positive attitudes).⁴⁵ They also appeared more positive than the 'comparison' students, although this finding was not statistically significant.

Staff in ten of the case-study schools noted that student **self-esteem** had increased and almost one-quarter of the students (23%) agreed that their programmes had made them feel more confident. A college lecturer said that, at the beginning of the year, students had been *'so shy and lacking in self-esteem on arrival in the college, that I doubted they would cope with the courses'*. However, by the end of the year students' communication skills were thought to have improved dramatically. *'Students have become chatty, enquiring and will now instigate conversation'*. Parents noted a similar change, commenting on the way their children had *'blossomed'* since the beginning of the year, with one parent saying that her daughter *'now comes home brimming with enthusiasm, talking about what she has done at college'*.

⁴⁴ This is discussed in more detail in Section 4.4

⁴⁵ These figures are significant at $p = 0.05$.

4.2 Raising the Achievements of Underachieving and Disaffected Students

One of the DfEE objectives for the regulations, which was shared by staff in many of the schools,⁴⁶ was **to engage students who are underachieving or disaffected**. However, schools' priorities did not rest only with such students: some 63% indicated that their programmes were aimed also at **low achieving** students with learning difficulties, while a *'poor attendance record'* (symptomatic of some, though not all, disaffected students) was a criterion for selection in 41% of schools.

Interviewees in schools that had selected low achieving students stressed that such young people were often very motivated, but unlikely to succeed in the mainstream curriculum. There was the potential, however, for low achieving students and students with poor self-esteem to become disaffected or to underachieve *'because they felt frustrated about their lack of success in school'*. Extended work-related learning programmes were felt to be **most effective** for the following types of students:

- ♦ **Low achieving** students and/or students with **low self-esteem**. Staff in nine schools indicated that programmes were most effective with students who were low achievers in the rest of the curriculum and who were prone *'to regard themselves as second-rate and worthless'*. Extended work-related learning gave them the opportunity to pursue an alternative route in which they could succeed and which could lead to increased self-esteem and *'a more positive view of education'*.
- ♦ Students who were **motivated to succeed** from the start. Staff in six schools regarded students' *'willingness to take the opportunity and give it a go'* as an important factor in bringing about positive changes in their achievements.
- ♦ Students who had a **genuine interest** in the programme area. As respondents in three schools pointed out, students were most likely to succeed on programmes if they saw what they were doing as relevant to their post-16 aspirations. This was only possible with those students *'who already had a pretty clear career plan at the start of the year and knew where they wanted to go'*.
- ♦ Students with **supportive parents**. Staff in two case-study schools remarked that programmes were most effective with those students whose parents *'were interested in their achievements'* and were *'willing to get involved'*.

This poses some significant challenges for schools, given that many programmes were aimed precisely at raising the motivation and interest of students who may not have been so motivated at the outset. Moreover, while parents were often involved in the initial decision about their child's

⁴⁶ As noted in Chapter 2, 92% of survey schools regarded the regulations as a means towards enhancing *'learning opportunities which engage the underachieving/disaffected'*.

participation, on-going involvement was not said to be as readily achieved. Programmes were felt to have been **least effective** with the following groups of students:

- ◆ Students with a **poor attendance** record. This was seen as the most serious problem by staff in six of the 20 case-study schools.
- ◆ Students with severe **behavioural difficulties** and/or poor social skills. Staff in five case-study schools identified this as a problem especially for students attending college or work placements. *‘Employers are less tolerant towards bad behaviour than we are’*. Several external partners also indicated that they were not willing to take pupils with severe behavioural difficulties.
- ◆ Students who appeared **unmotivated** or **lazy**. Respondents in five case-study schools believed that programmes were least effective with students *‘who refused to make any effort’* and *‘just dossed around in college’*.
- ◆ Students with **considerable learning difficulties**. Staff in two case-study schools indicated that programmes were not effective for students with very low literacy levels and poor organisational skills and who needed high levels of one-to-one support.

These findings suggest that, despite some reported successes in re-engaging disaffected and underachieving students, extended work-related learning, as currently implemented in schools, may not be a suitable solution for all such students. At Rhodes House School, for example, two girls had been removed from their programme because of their behaviour and poor attendance: *‘they basically repeated their behavioural problems in another place’*. In this case, an alternative was found through a mentoring programme provided by the local Youth Service, which involved sessions focusing on basic and social skills. This programme seems to have more closely met their needs, with both girls attending well. Schools may need to consider extended work-related learning as just one of a range of approaches to raising engagement and achievement.

4.3 The Impact on Students’ Post-compulsory Progression

In exploring young people’s satisfaction with their post-16 choices, the research focused on:

- ◆ the students’ **ability to make decisions** about post-16 progression (and their satisfaction with these decisions);
- ◆ the students’ **planned transitions** to post-16 options, including further education, training and jobs;
- ◆ the students’ **general preparedness** for progression post-16.

4.3.1 Impact on students' ability to make decisions about post-16 progression

Eighty-two per cent of survey respondents believed that involvement in extended work-related learning had an impact on at least some students' ability to make better decisions about post-16 progression. Of these, nearly one-third indicated that there had been such an improvement for **all** students. At a more detailed level, interviewees reported that extended work-related learning had led to the following improvements:

- ♦ **Increased job aspirations.** This point was made by a number of interviewees, and summed up by one, who recounted that, following a careers interview in which it was suggested that a Year 10 girl get a part-time job sweeping in a hairdressing salon, the student was most put out and said, *'Well why would I want to do that after all my NVQ experience this year?'* She said that she would, *'want to be getting a job that involved a lot more than sweeping the floor'*.⁴⁷
- ♦ **More realistic job/career aspirations.** Teachers in two schools pointed out that programmes had helped some students who had unrealistic career goals at the start of the year to develop more realistic job aspirations. One teacher in a special school pointed out that, before the start of the programme, there had been a *'reality gap'* between some students' career aspirations and their likely transitions. The programme had helped to *'reduce their aspirations to more realistic goals'*.
- ♦ **Increased understanding of the world of work.** School staff and employers indicated that the work experience component in some of the programmes had helped students gain a better understanding of working life on which to base their career decisions. Furthermore, 20% of the work-related learning students indicated that *'learning about the world of work'* was one of the main benefits of taking part in their programmes.
- ♦ **A clarification of students' career choices.** Finally, some respondents indicated that the first hand experience of different occupational areas, via work experience or college courses, had helped students to make more informed decisions about long-term progression. As one teacher said, *'it helped to challenge, or sometimes even confirm, students' post-16 choices'*. By the end of the summer term 2000, over one-third of the students (38%) had changed their minds about their career plans – 11 as a direct result of their experiences of their programmes. Others were affected indirectly, five through talking to friends about their work-related learning experiences and a further five who had realised their initial choice had been unrealistic. This contrasted with only 13% of the comparison students who had changed their minds between the spring and summer terms.

Most school staff felt that extended work-related learning programmes tended not to challenge existing gender stereotypes. In the schools where students

⁴⁷ This account suggests the need for greater involvement of careers advisors in programmes of extended work-related learning. Issues relating to the involvement of external partners are further explored in Chapter 6.

were given a choice, most opted for courses or work placements which confirmed traditional gender roles, a reflection, according to staff, of peer pressure: *‘Because most of these students are low achievers and consequently often lacking in self-esteem, they want desperately to fit in. They don’t want to stand out from the crowd’*. Interviewees generally stressed that their schools had not consciously reinforced gender stereotypes, although only a few had deliberately challenged traditional expectations. One such example was provided by an interviewee who had attempted to encourage male students to *‘widen their horizons by talking about male barbers and star-chefs’*. In only a few cases had such an approach been successful. On the whole, programmes that most effectively challenged students’ views on appropriate vocational areas for men and women were those that encompassed taster courses in different vocational areas. This advantage has to be weighed up against the potential disadvantage (as reported in Chapter 3) that such programmes tended not to lead to the attainment of additional vocationally-related qualifications.

4.3.2 Impact on students’ planned post-16 transitions

Staff in 12 case-study schools indicated that at least some of the students involved in extended work-related learning were expected to **continue with their education and training** at the end of Year 11, by going to college, by staying on in the school’s sixth-form or by undertaking a Modern Apprenticeship with an employer. Many of these students would *‘normally have drifted off’* or *‘simply disappeared’*. The main factors increasing the likelihood of students continuing in education or training were:

- ♦ **A positive experience of college as part of the programme.** Students responded well to being in an adult environment and *‘being treated more like adults’*.
- ♦ **An increased interest in and motivation to learn more about a particular vocational area** as a result of work placements or college courses.

In seven case-study schools, involvement in extended work-related learning had led to some students being **offered jobs** on leaving school. One parent whose daughter had undertaken an extended work placement was amazed that the programme had given her daughter the confidence to organise herself a job working in a hairdressing salon on leaving school. *‘Before [the programme] she would never have done that in a million years’*. Similarly, a teacher in the EBD school reported that a number of students had obtained jobs as a result of their work placements. However, he was not sure whether they would be able to sustain such employment. *‘They can explode at the slightest thing, so whilst they might seem quite employable for a while, they could easily blow it all in a couple of seconds. Whilst they are in school, and have the ‘EBD label’, sympathetic employers will cut them some slack, but when they are out in the real world, they are up against competition from other young people, and employers will appoint and retain the best’*.

This raised an issue amongst some interviewees about whether involvement in extended work-related learning provided all young people with real life chances, or whether, in fact, it provided a glimpse of something that, ultimately, might be unobtainable for certain young people.

4.3.3 Impact on students' general preparedness for post-16 progression

Over one-third of the survey schools (24) were in their second year of running an extended work-related learning programme. Of these, eight indicated that their programmes had already had a positive effect on students' post-16 transitions. Interviews with staff and external partners in case-study schools provided clarification on the different ways in which such positive effects had come about, and these are outlined below:

- ♦ **Improvement in students' general employability skills.** One teacher commented on how students' work experience had taught them *'to get out of bed in the morning and get somewhere on time'*, while an employer reported that a work placement had helped one student *'to develop a better work ethos – doing a job properly and on time'*.
- ♦ **Providing students with good job references.** Several teachers indicated that even if students had not been offered a job with their work placement providers, they had been given good references which they could use to find work elsewhere.
- ♦ **Teaching students useful job-search skills.** Some staff commented that key skills courses had taught students how to fill in application forms and write their own CVs. One employer also pointed out that he required all students to come for an interview before agreeing to take them on for extended work experience. *'It's a valuable experience that prepares them for the real thing'*.
- ♦ **Giving students the confidence to plan for the future.** A teacher in the EBD school reported that *'one student has already got himself a part-time job with a computer company, and is actively planning his future. He has set up three bank accounts (savings for future, socialising money and clothes money)'*. This level of self-reliance and the ability to plan ahead and take responsibility for the future was judged to be unprecedented in this school.

Evidence from the student interviews supports the conclusion that extended work-related learning had a positive impact on preparing students for post-16 progression. In spring 2000, there was no significant difference in the extent to which those students involved in programmes and the 'comparison' students agreed with the statement that *'school prepares you for getting a job'*. However, by summer 2000, there was a **statistically significant difference** between their views, as shown in Table 4.1 below. Students who had taken part in extended work-related learning were more likely to agree with this statement than the 'comparison' students.

Table 4.1 'School prepares you for getting a job'. Students' views. Summer 2000

Views	Comparison students (%)	Work-related learning students (%)	All students (%)
Positive	46	*65	55
Mixed	38	25	32
Negative	17	10	13
N =	79	79	158

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER survey of students.

**This difference is significant at $p = 0.05$.*

4.4 Factors Facilitating a Positive Impact on Young People

The following factors were identified as having contributed to positive impacts on the young people involved in the programmes:

- ♦ **Provision of a supportive environment.** Work placements were reported to have been particularly effective in providing students with a supportive and challenging environment. Some employers had acted as mentors for the students, providing them with help and advice on personal and school-related problems. Employers also emphasised that students benefited from having contact with adults, other than their parents and teachers, who they would be willing to listen to.
- ♦ **Being treated as adults.** College courses and work placements were seen to have provided students with an environment in which they were treated in an adult way. Students were said to have responded particularly well to being 'given responsibility and expected to behave responsibly'.
- ♦ **Structured and practical programmes.** Key Skills courses were regarded as effective in providing low achieving students and students with poor self-esteem with a clearly structured approach to learning. Such programmes were said to help students develop their 'independent learning skills' and also improved their behaviour by providing them with clearly focused tasks. Staff emphasised the need for programmes not to be too theoretical and not to rely on too much written work. Twenty per cent of students in the second round of interviews confirmed that they liked the practical nature of their courses, whilst 19% were unhappy with courses that relied too much on written work.
- ♦ **Programmes that are responsive to students' needs and aspirations.** Staff in several schools emphasised the need for extended work-related learning to take into consideration students' particular needs, interests and post-16 plans.
- ♦ **Creating conditions for success.** For many students, whose career in school had been marked by failure, the opportunity to succeed – and to be

seen to succeed – was highly motivating. Programmes that provided that opportunity (whether through staged activities or certificates to mark levels of achievement) for low achieving students or students with poor self-esteem to overcome their feelings of failure in the rest of the curriculum were felt to have been particularly effective.

4.5 Summary

The research findings suggest that involvement in extended work-related learning has resulted in substantial impacts on students. It should be stressed that not all the evidence for the findings is based upon quantifiable data, but often on staff opinions, observations and assessments. Impacts were reported as being:

- ♦ increased self-esteem;
- ♦ improved attitudes towards school;
- ♦ increased achievement, demonstrated particularly in the achievement of vocational and key skills qualifications;
- ♦ better behaviour and attendance, especially during the programmes;
- ♦ improvements in students' preparation for, and confidence in, progression post-16.

Whilst extended work-related learning programmes have often proved effective with lower achievers, and those with low self-esteem who still remained motivated to learn, they appeared to be less successful in engaging very disaffected students (those with extreme behavioural difficulties, or those who had little motivation for work-related learning from the outset). This does not imply that an extended work-related learning programme is inappropriate for such students (indeed there have been some real successes), but that a more highly structured approach, with a greater emphasis on the preparation of such young people prior to their placements, and the provision of appropriate support both before and during the programme, may be necessary.

5. THE IMPACT OF EXTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMMES ON SCHOOLS

The findings reported in the preceding chapters have made clear the considerable amount and variety of extended work-related learning that is taking place in schools and the impact of such provision upon students. This chapter investigates the impacts of these programmes on the schools in which they have been developed. It focuses on the progress that schools have made in working towards two DfEE objectives for the regulations:

- ◆ To provide **flexibility** in the key stage 4 curriculum in order that schools can make wider use of what they judge to be **relevant and valuable** work-related opportunities to enhance individual pupils' learning.
 - Schools reported greater diversity of learning opportunities; enhanced curricular status for extended work-related learning and the availability of a wider range of appropriate qualifications for students.
- ◆ To have **wider benefits** to the teaching of the rest of the curriculum, both to those pupils on extended work-related learning, and those following the full National Curriculum.
 - Extended work-related learning was said to have contributed to greater social inclusion within schools, reduced classroom disruption and increased external input to the curriculum.

Before discussing movement towards these objectives, it is important to consider the means by which school staff evaluated the effects of their programmes. Table 5.1, below, shows that the main way in which schools evaluated their programmes was by collecting verbal feedback. Practices such as analysing monitoring data or collecting questionnaires or written feedback were less frequently used.

Table 5.1: Percentage of schools carrying out various evaluation strategies

Evaluation strategy	%
Verbal feedback from school or programme staff	92
One-to-one or group discussions with students	90
Analysis of trends in monitoring data	50
Questionnaires/written feedback from students	35
Questionnaires/written feedback from school or programme staff	31
Other	1
N =	72

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER follow-up postal questionnaire for school staff

The tendency for evaluation to be informal and/or verbal, as opposed to systematic and/or written, was supported by the case-study visits. The majority of these schools based their views of programme outcomes on observation or impression rather than on systematically generated evidence, with few having systems in place for monitoring or evaluating the progress of students towards specific goals, or the impact of disapplication in general. Having said that, evaluation was one aspect that staff in several schools were looking to improve and develop in subsequent years as programmes became more established.

5.1 Increasing Flexibility for Extended Work-related Learning in the Key Stage 4 Curriculum

The issue for consideration in this section is the extent to which disapplication has brought about greater curriculum flexibility that has, in turn, enabled the introduction of valuable and relevant work-related learning for students. Questionnaire responses suggested a number of **positive outcomes** in this respect. These included:

- ◆ a greater diversity of learning opportunities (94%);
- ◆ enhanced curricular status for work-related learning (74%);
- ◆ a wider range of qualifications (68%).

Furthermore, staff in several case-study schools described how the balance and coherence of their key stage 4 curriculum had improved significantly through disapplication for extended work-related learning. One key coordinator said that her school now had '*Year 9 options that are much more clearly stratified with much clearer lines of progression*', while the deputy headteacher of another felt that their key stage 4 curriculum was now '*more meaningful and coherent*' and better reflected the school's belief that '*everybody is equal but not necessarily the same*'.

These developments in curriculum flexibility were achieved in spite of considerable numbers of respondents (both in the survey and the case studies) feeling that the regulations were not flexible enough. The postal survey indicated that greater flexibility in the regulations (20 schools) was the most popular type of assistance proposed by school staff, along with further guidance (both through materials and training) (18 schools), and increased funding (16 schools). School staff made suggestions for increased flexibility of two kinds:

- ◆ flexibility to disapply national curriculum subjects for purposes *other than* extended work-related learning; and
- ◆ flexibility to disapply a *greater number* of National Curriculum subjects.

While some provision has been made for the first of these suggestions through the extension of the regulations (as outlined in Appendix 1), the second is not currently an option for schools.⁴⁸

In spite of such challenges, it is clear from the impacts reported above, and the programme descriptions presented in Chapters 2 and 3, that the regulations have made a positive contribution to the key stage 4 curriculum of many schools. The value of these developments for the students involved has already been established in Chapter 4. The focus now shifts from the work-related learning programmes themselves to their impact upon the rest of the curriculum and the school.

5.2 Wider Benefits for Teaching of the Rest of the Curriculum

The DfEE objective that use of the regulations might have ‘*wider benefits to the teaching of the rest of the curriculum*’ was seen by school staff as considerably less important than several of the regulations’ other objectives. As indicated in Chapter 2, compared with the 35% who saw this objective as very important, there were far greater numbers attributing significance to ‘*engagement of underachieving/disaffected students*’ (92%) and ‘*increasing curriculum flexibility*’ (86%). Furthermore, survey and case-study respondents were much more likely to identify benefits for their selected students, than for the school. This was even more pronounced in the interviews with ‘comparison’ students, who almost always evaluated programmes in terms of impact on the students undertaking them (such as learning new skills, and doing work that was easier than GCSEs), rather than impact upon themselves (as non-participants) or the school more generally.

Notwithstanding this, there are a number of interesting points regarding the benefits and, indeed challenges, that extended work-related learning brought about for the wider school curriculum. There were three main areas of positive impacts:

- ◆ greater social inclusion;
- ◆ improved lessons with less disruption;
- ◆ increased external input to the curriculum.

These **positive impacts** are considered in Sections 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 below. The **challenges** that arose for the wider curriculum as a result of disapplication are discussed in Section 5.2.4.

⁴⁸ The implications of wider disapplication of statutory National Curriculum subjects have already been discussed in Chapter 3.

5.2.1 Greater social inclusion

As described in Chapter 1, the 1998 regulations contribute to the wider government agenda of promoting social inclusion for all young people, especially those who have become disillusioned with the learning process. The survey and case-study data suggested a number of ways in which extended work-related learning developments were contributing to greater inclusion within schools as follows:

- ♦ **Acting as a stimulus for wider debate within the school about the curriculum** and its relevance (or otherwise) for students. Eighty-eight per cent of survey schools indicated that their programmes led to increased discussion amongst staff about tailoring learning to student needs. This was echoed by interviewees in several case-study schools. One key stage 4 coordinator described how, *'the atmosphere of the school had changed'* from one of asking teachers to get through the National Curriculum, to one of asking them to design new curricula to suit their own skills and their students' needs. Such developments represent schools and their staff coming to see work-related learning as a different way of learning, rather than as a reward/treatment for disruptive students, and also recognising the potential of the *whole* curriculum as a vehicle for inclusion.
- ♦ **Improving the attendance** of at-risk students, and **reducing the frequency of permanent exclusions**. Significant proportions of survey schools reported programme impacts of increased attendance at school (70%) and reduced exclusions (68%) amongst some or (less commonly) all of their participating students. Staff in several of the case-study schools recorded similar effects, and underlined their significance with comments such as *'these students would no longer be in school if they had been forced through the National Curriculum'*. Staff interviews also highlighted the way in which programmes had provided school staff (especially those involved with the programmes) with a means of re-connecting with some of the most disengaged and marginalised of their students. As one Head of Year 10 said: *'You can talk to them as people now and not just as students'*.
- ♦ **Improving links with the parents** of students participating on the programme, as well as (in one special school) integrating special support assistants into the life of the school.

5.2.2 Improved lessons with less disruption

A further impact of the development of extended work-related learning in several schools was that the teaching of other curriculum subjects benefited from **less disruption** by students. This came about in two ways, the first of which was the most commonly mentioned:

- ♦ By **removing** disaffected and/or disruptive students from certain lessons. This effect was noted by staff in many of the case-study schools, with comments such as: *'By not having to teach some of the more disruptive students, teachers can have a more meaningful lesson with their other students'*.

- ♦ Through **improvements in the behaviour** of selected students in school lessons. Whilst 85% of survey respondents indicated that there had been improvements in the behaviour of some or all of the selected students, this did not always relate to behaviour in school. As indicated in Chapter 4, many students, whose behaviour was better when undertaking their work-related learning programmes, did not translate this into similar improvements in their behaviour in school. Nevertheless, a few interviewees felt that the behaviour and attitude of students in school had demonstrably improved. One Head of Year described how the programme had '*a knock-on effect in school as the students have matured and settled down – there are fewer behavioural difficulties*'.

5.2.3 Increased external input to the curriculum

Wider benefits were also achieved through external partners making contributions to other parts of the school curriculum. A school collaborating with its **local FE college**, for example, described how lecturers from the college had given advice on the school's GNVQ courses, and school staff had provided input for a college INSET session about special educational needs and differentiation. This reflected, in the school's view, a greater willingness to share resources and expertise since the start of the extended work-related learning programme. Similarly, staff in several other schools commented positively about improved communication with FE colleges over issues such as post-16 transition for their students.

For schools working with **employers**, there were also several examples of wider positive impacts, including:

- ♦ employers participating in school-based events such as careers conventions, career interviews, talks for sixth formers about bank accounts, world-of-work events, and mini-enterprise projects;
- ♦ new work placement possibilities for other curriculum courses such as Advanced GNVQs in Business;
- ♦ support and new members for the parent teachers' association of a special school.

One school also reported that its work-related learning programme had improved its relations and communication with **other local schools** involved in the same LEA-run scheme (the general issue of external partnerships is examined in more detail in Chapter 6).

5.2.4 Challenges and difficulties

Whilst there were many positive impacts of disapplication on the wider curriculum and school, such positive impacts were not always straightforward in nature, nor easily achieved. There were a number of factors constraining the positive impact of **social inclusion**. For example:

- ♦ **Programmes that were based entirely off-site or that involved only a very small number of students** sometimes had poor visibility within the school and so were less likely to influence the wider school and curriculum.⁴⁹ As interviewees in two schools responded when asked about wider benefits, *‘It is very difficult to say about impacts in school because the students are not in school any more [but are at college full-time]’*; and *‘The problem is that staff see it as having low status ... Perhaps if it was bigger it would have more status’*.
- ♦ **Programmes that were viewed by senior staff as separate from the mainstream curriculum** – a *‘self-contained’* solution to the problem of special educational needs or behavioural difficulties – could be marginalised in relation to the rest of the curriculum. This sometimes hampered potential connections and wider benefits.
- ♦ **Poorly developed relationships between school staff and the parents of participating students** could limit the impact of student engagement.

The positive impact of improved lessons with less disruption was difficult to achieve where:

- ♦ **Improved behaviour of participating students in their work-related learning activities was not reflected in other lessons.** The key coordinator in one case-study school, for example, was doubtful whether the *‘increased self-confidence’* of their participating students was impacting upon their other lessons as *‘they might become even more detached from normal school work and only be interested in work-related learning’*.
- ♦ **Participating students were present intermittently in certain subject lessons as a result of timetable difficulties.** In schools where students’ programmes were causing them to miss some of their core curriculum subjects (see Chapter 3) there were negative implications for the teachers of such subjects. In one school, for example, staff in the technology department were resentful about work-related students coming back into their GCSE classes for only one day each week. Besides often being disruptive, this also provided insufficient time to prepare these students for their GCSEs and consequently the department’s GCSE attainment record was seen to be threatened.
- ♦ **The workloads of staff involved in work-related learning programmes conflicted with their other teaching responsibilities.** The NVQ assessor at one case-study school, for example, described how his science classes had been negatively affected when he had to take time off for visits to employers. As noted by several other schools, these situations not only had a negative impact on students who had less contact with their usual teacher, but also incurred supply cover costs.

⁴⁹ There is some evidence that where the whole programme was delivered off-site, the young people were more likely to work towards nationally recognised qualifications. However, this did not have an impact on the school *per se*.

The positive impact of **increased external input to the curriculum** was constrained when:

- ◆ **Staff did not have sufficient protected time for arranging such input.** In certain cases shortages of funding have prevented staff from having sufficient protected time for liaising with employers and college staff about the school curriculum, and for establishing the needs of different school departments through discussions with colleagues. The coordinator in one school described how there had been no wider impacts yet since, in spite of a desire to invite employers in to school, she *'didn't have enough time to even think about it this year'*.

These cases highlight that wider benefits for the curriculum did not emerge automatically, but were affected by a variety of influences within schools, as outlined below.

5.3 Factors Influencing the Impact on Schools

The factors promoting positive impacts are discussed here as a) those increasing the relevance and value of programmes for students, and b) those facilitating wider benefits for the curriculum.

5.3.1 Factors increasing the relevance and value of programmes

Feedback from staff, students and external partners indicated that, if extended work-related learning programmes are to be made relevant and valuable for students, there is a need for:

- ◆ **Effective preparation of students prior to commencing college courses, and work placements.** This issue arose in several case-study schools. Staff at one school, for example, had not fully appreciated their students' need for introductory activities about the world of work before going out to employers. The school now has plans to introduce structured preparatory work for Year 10 students which would include visits to different employers, and sessions with school staff and employers about issues relating to the workplace. Similar kinds of developments were mentioned by staff in several other case-study schools, in relation to college courses, as well as employer placements.
- ◆ **Courses and work placements that are related to students' career aspirations and needs.** In the words of one deputy headteacher, work-related learning is *'not a panacea but an opportunity'* that has to be actively taken by young people. Difficulties were reported when programme components were not well related to students' needs and aspirations. Staff at one school reported that the students who were unsuccessful in their programmes were those that *'didn't see the relevance of what they were doing, as they were not really sure what they wanted to do in the future'*. Similarly, an employer felt that the value of any work placement *'depends on the students – they need to be interested in working in this kind of environment'*. Establishing programmes for students who

may well not have clear ideas of post-16 transition, and/or may have very narrow aspirations, may therefore be difficult.⁵⁰ Furthermore, even if students' ideas are accessed, it is not always possible to find opportunities that relate to their aspirations.

- ♦ **Realistic programme demands for the students concerned.** School and programme staff questioned the relative effectiveness of courses that made excessive demands in terms of written work and conceptual thinking. For example, staff at one school felt that NVQ courses in Building Craft Occupations and Motor Vehicle Maintenance⁵¹ had too much written work for their students (mostly boys), and the key coordinator at another found the spreadsheet aspects of a GNVQ IT course to be too abstract and mathematical. Different NVQ courses such as Hairdressing and other aspects of the IT course such as word processing were felt to be much more appropriate. Students similarly indicated that some programmes were '*more theoretical than expected*' (a negative feature), and the most frequently cited worst aspect of programmes was '*written work*'.⁵² This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that underachievement and disengagement from the mainstream curriculum were common criteria in student selection.
- ♦ **Literacy and basic skills support for students on programmes of work-related learning.** There was a significant minority of participating students for whom the literacy demands of their programmes outweighed their current capacities and the level of support they were receiving. While most students (80%) were content with the amount of help they were given with their programmes, those that were not satisfied (14 students) felt they would have liked more help with coping with programme tasks, basic skills and general day-to-day support. This view was also expressed by one parent who was disappointed that her son's programme had not '*helped him with his spelling and writing which is quite bad*'.
- ♦ **Committed, skilled and well-trained programme staff in schools, colleges and workplaces.** In view of the young people that tend to be selected for work-related learning, many interviewees emphasised the need for dedicated, well-trained individuals. Indeed, programme success was often attributed to factors such as '*getting the trust of the youngsters and their parents through very skilled and dedicated staff*' (FE college-based course), or '*combining the benefits of a busy work environment with the presence of people who are used to dealing with school kids and aware of their needs*' (school-based work placements). Such concerns were also reflected in student comments about the best aspects of their programmes which (amongst other things such as their practical nature – 20%) included

⁵⁰ Although, as the key stage 4 demonstration projects have discovered, work-related learning, through FE college or employer placements, vocational tasters or work towards NVQ units, can be most valuable for those without clear views on post-16 transitions.

⁵¹ It should be stressed here that NVQs in Motor Vehicle Maintenance are not approved for use with students of compulsory school age. Qualifications used with key stage 4 students, wherever their place of learning, must be approved under section 400 of the Education Act. Guidance ('the Section 400 list') is available from the DfEE.

⁵² Based respectively on responses during (n=96), and towards the end of (n=41), programmes.

references to *'being treated like an adult'* (5%), *'being given responsibility'* (4%) and *'the programme staff'* (4%).⁵³

- ◆ **A variety of themes and tasks.** Concerns were expressed about courses or placements being ineffective as a result of having an insufficient variety of themes or tasks. A teacher in one case-study school, for example, felt that initially a school-based ASDAN course was more effective than a college course. However, over the year *'the students had got bored with it because it is not challenging enough, there is no progression of learning, it's all on the same level'*. Similarly, with respect to work placements, another interviewee spoke of the importance of making links *'with reputable employers who could offer a training element for their students [i.e.] not just stacking shelves'*. Findings from the student interviews suggest that these concerns were well founded. In particular, the most frequent improvement suggested by students was for programmes to have a wider variety of tasks (24%).
- ◆ **Strong integration of different programme aspects such as school-based courses with external work placement activities.** Staff in several case-study schools highlighted this as important. One school coordinator, for example, expressed concern about a *'disjointed feeling between school and college'*, and wondered whether the school had done enough to integrate the learning experiences at college with those in school. The difficulty, as he saw it, was that *'the school staff don't know anything about hairdressing and need to be more aware so that they can knit it together with the Youth Award work'*. Similarly, staff in another school emphasised how *'important it was to provide greater links between work experience and the in-school programme [ASDAN and GNVQ courses] so that students become aware of the links between what they learn in school and at work'*.⁵⁴ The issue of integration also arose in relation to different school-based courses, such as an IT GNVQ and a Youth Award course which (in the view of the school's deputy headteacher) *'were effective, but needed linking together more'*.

5.3.2 Factors facilitating wider positive impacts within schools

It is similarly possible to identify a set of factors that facilitate the positive impact of disapplication upon the wider curriculum. The following case studies provide an illustration of variation that exists between two schools.

⁵³ Selected staff in one third of the schools responding to the first questionnaire had received some form of training, variously provided by the LEA, the careers service or other bodies (including the school). Training was more evident in special schools (12 out of 15) than mainstream schools (45 out of 72).

⁵⁴ One means of working towards this for this school was to introduce work diaries, in which students, employers and teachers would enter details of tasks completed each week.

All Saints Community College – several positive outcomes

Staff at this school cited several examples of ways in which disapplication for work-related learning⁵⁵ had created positive spin-offs for the wider curriculum, including:

- ◆ teachers involved with the programme gaining opportunities to be more flexible and innovative, which had an effect on their wider teaching;
- ◆ *‘the students being happier when they are in school’*, which had a positive impact on the atmosphere of the school;
- ◆ greater contact with parents, who checked on what their children were doing and had *‘changing perceptions about education’*;
- ◆ external agencies became more involved in other school curriculum areas.

The factors which promoted these outcomes included:

- ◆ Strong senior manager commitment: *‘Everyone recognises the value and need for this education’*.
- ◆ *‘Good support to make it happen’*, with non-contact time and salary funding for the coordinator through SRB and regional development funding.
- ◆ The scale of operation, with National Curriculum subjects (mainly D&T) disapplied for some 35% of the key stage 4 cohort: *‘When the regulations were introduced, the school was able to formalise what was already being done, just on a bigger level’*.
- ◆ Integration of the programme which, although in its first year, was seen as *‘embedded into the curriculum’*.

As indicated this extended work-related learning programme was fully integrated into the curriculum, an integration assisted by the re-designation of former D&T staff as work-related learning teachers. This re-organisation was said to have led to a wide variety of positive outcomes for the curriculum as a whole. By contrast, at Kornell School, where the programme was said to have been successful in its own right, there appeared to be **no** impact on the rest of the curriculum.

Kornell School – no wider impact on the curriculum

The programme at this school provides Year 10 students who *‘are not able to cope well with the full GCSE curriculum’* with an opportunity to undertake a *‘non exam-based course’* related to the world of work. This course, which replaces MFL, is organised into six-lesson modules that are often linked to workplace visits and ASDAN certification.

The key coordinator at this school said that the programme had had **no** wider impact on the school curriculum. The view was that:

- ◆ The senior management team saw the programme as something *‘to solve a problem’* rather than as a new strand to the school’s curriculum.
- ◆ The strong academic culture of the school meant that *‘vocational education [was seen] as low status’*, and so made the current programme *‘an invisible part of the curriculum’*.

⁵⁵ The programme is described in Section 3.1.

The differences between these two schools raises the question of how, and under what conditions, the benefits of work-related learning programmes can extend beyond the programmes themselves. The following factors appear to have played a role in facilitating positive wider impacts:

- ♦ **Strong senior management leadership and staff support.** Where this has been present (as in the case of All Saints Community College above), programmes have more easily gained a profile within the institution. This has been helpful in securing the cooperation of the whole staff in relation to issues such as catch-up and student selection, as well as raising awareness about the purposes and value of programmes for the students concerned. A lack of such leadership can frustrate wider benefits. As one coordinator reported: *'there have not been enough wider impacts yet as I don't think people are taking enough notice of it – staff need to be made more aware of work-related elements of the normal curriculum and a bit of leadership from the SMT is needed.'*
- ♦ **Committed and interested external partners.** Relationships and trust between key personnel were crucial in facilitating not only programme development, but also wider impacts, such as the contributions that college staff can make to school courses such as GNVQs. One employer had insisted on visiting its partner school in order to *'better understand what the school is doing and where the placement students are coming from'*. While such enthusiasm was not found with all of their employer contacts, the staff at this school felt strongly that *'extended work-related learning is a way in which employers can make a very personal difference through involvement with a particular student'*. For this to take place, though, schools must recognise that *'employers need to feel valued'*, as much as any other party within work-related learning.
- ♦ **Including some school-based components in the work-related learning programme.** This reflects the need for programmes to have visibility within the school, a situation that is far less likely if programmes are based entirely off-site.
- ♦ **Effective funding.** Shortages of funding have prevented staff from having sufficient protected time for liaising with employers and college staff about the school curriculum, and for establishing the needs of different school departments through discussions with colleagues. In other schools, though, non-contact time and salary funding for the coordinator were central in raising the profile of the programme within the school.
- ♦ **Culture of vocational education.** In the same way that school culture was an influence upon the development of programmes, it was also a determining factor in the extent of their impacts across the curriculum. Put simply, programmes in schools where staff and senior managers were in favour of vocational education were much more likely to become a stimulus for improvements in the rest of the school curriculum. In schools where this was not the case, interviewees commonly spoke of *'a need for a cultural change among staff to be more open to work-related learning'*.

5.4 Summary

This chapter shows that schools have developed relevant, and valuable extended work-related learning programmes, and that these have generated wider benefits for the rest of the curriculum. The nature, and extent, of progress made in these two areas, however, varies considerably between individual schools. This reflects the influence of several factors. The relevance and value of extended work-related learning programmes, for example, is increased not only by ensuring that they make realistic demands, are linked to students' career aspirations, and offer sufficient variety, but also that they are supported by committed school/programme staff, and draw out basic skills. Wider benefits, meanwhile, are facilitated by programmes having visibility and status within the school (senior management support, school-based components, large numbers of students, and a vocational school culture), and being able to contribute to other curriculum areas (effective funding, committed and interested external partners). In other words, under certain conditions, disapplication for extended work-related learning can yield benefits not only for those involved in the programme, but also for the wider curriculum and school. The following chapter considers the extent to which extended work-related learning impacted upon relationships between schools and external partners.

6. THE IMPACT OF EXTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMMES ON EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

This chapter focuses on the distance that schools had travelled towards achieving the final DfEE objective for the regulations.

- ◆ To **prompt partnerships** between schools and LEAs, FE colleges, businesses, community organisations and other bodies and to **increase and improve their contribution** to the available range and quality of work-related learning.
 - Nearly four-fifths of schools said that extended work-related learning had increased the number and quality of external partnerships.
 - Levels of interaction in such partnerships varied widely.

As highlighted above, this objective encompasses two complementary aims, which will be considered separately within the chapter.

6.1 Prompting Partnerships

It is clear that external partnership, in some form or another, was a key feature of many schools' extended work-related learning programmes. Ninety-four per cent of survey respondents reported that they were involved with external agencies, and a further 79% said that their involvement in extended work-related learning had a **positive impact** in terms of increasing the **number** and **quality** of external partnerships. However, whilst 41% of respondents believed the objective of '*developing partnerships with external agencies*' to be very important, far higher proportions prioritised the various student-centred objectives of the regulations (as indicated in Chapter 2).

There is clearly a distinction between the **establishment of external links** and the **development of partnerships**. Even though only 14% of schools perceived '*forming partnerships with external agencies*' to be a significant barrier to the implementation of extended work-related learning, maintaining and sustaining those links, and developing quality partnerships, appeared to have been more of an issue. As outlined previously, some programmes were apparently hindered by a dearth of suitable external opportunities, or constrained by a need to adapt provision to what could be offered by existing providers. Although most schools felt that external links were a strong aspect of their provision, the range, extent and nature of those links, and the respective roles and responsibilities of individuals involved, were quite variable.

6.1.1 Pre-existence of links

To begin with, many of the case-study schools were working with external agencies with whom they had pre-existing links, and most external partners reported having some kind of existing relationship with their schools. Some FE colleges, for example, had offered LINK provision for students with SEN for some years, or employers had been involved as providers of work experience or block placement provision in the past. The following case study provides an example of one school in which external provision was a key feature of extended work-related learning, but where the issue of partnership *enhancement* was not deemed particularly relevant.

At **Oldfields Manor School**, a large single-sex school on the outskirts of a northern city with an above average ability student intake, work-related learning has been valued as an important part of the school curriculum for over 25 years. During the 1970s, senior staff at the school came to recognise that not all young people were benefiting from a predominantly academic curriculum, and in response, began to establish a range of external partnerships with education, training and employment providers, in order that low achieving students, and in some cases, young people with SEN, might benefit from alternative methods of learning.

This school maintained and continued to develop these links throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and, in consequence, now has partnerships with around 100 local employers, and a number of colleges, that provide extended work placements or vocational courses to students. Whilst the school is constantly striving to add new partners to its list, it is not faced with the challenge of developing partnerships from a very small base, in order that students might participate in varied and interesting programmes of extended work-related learning.

The pre-existence of external links was not peculiar to Oldfields. In fact, whilst most schools had formed some new links or contacts through extended work-related learning, and perhaps now worked with a slightly more extensive range of partners than previously, very few were starting from scratch. So who were schools working in partnership with, and what were the roles and responsibilities of each?

6.1.2 Range of partners

Schools reported that they were working with a wide range of external partners, including education, training and employment providers, careers services and other intermediary bodies such as LEAs and EBPs. In a few cases, social and welfare service personnel played a role. The **level** of involvement of each respective agency was quite varied:

- ♦ The most commonly mentioned link was between schools and the local **careers service** (76% of schools identified this partnership).
- ♦ Other partners frequently mentioned were **providers** of work-related learning – FE colleges (66%), employers (62%) and training providers (31%).

- ♦ **Intermediary agencies** were less frequently mentioned – EBPs (by 43% of schools) and LEAs (by 26%).
- ♦ **Social and welfare services** were involved in a fairly limited number of cases (only 10% of schools identified such partnerships).

Steering committees, or formal management groups, had been established by 49 surveyed schools (56% of respondents), to oversee extended work-related learning programmes. The involvement of external agencies within these committees was slightly different to the pattern above. Careers service personnel were again the most frequently mentioned (45% of responses), followed by FE college staff (31%). Reflecting the fact that fewer schools worked with training organisations than other agencies, training providers were represented only on 10% of steering committees. However, employers, who were frequently mentioned partners, were represented only on eight per cent of such groups. LEA personnel were present on 20% of steering committees, and EBPs, 14%. This suggests a slightly more **strategic** role for intermediary bodies than was the case for education, employment or training providers.

6.1.3 Roles and responsibilities of partners

Whilst schools tended to take the lead on most matters related to disapplication of National Curriculum subjects, and initial planning, external education, training and employment providers (defined in the questionnaires as FE colleges, employers, training providers and careers services) took the lead in a few key areas. For example, 72% of schools reported that these agencies took the lead on **careers interviewing**, and 55% said that they played the key role in **programme delivery**. Not surprisingly, education, training and employment providers and external support services (defined in the questionnaires as EBPs, LEAs and social/welfare services) had little involvement in initial decisions to adopt the regulations (16% and 14% of schools respectively). In addition, these agencies played a very small role in the selection and targeting of students (11% and 2% of schools respectively), and the determining of individual student curriculum plans (10% and 4% of schools respectively).

Induction programmes and student mentoring were most commonly undertaken by school staff, even though extended work-related learning programmes were often provided off-site. The figures for external providers taking the lead on induction and mentoring were as follows:

- ♦ **Induction programmes:** education, training and employment providers (34% of schools) and external support services (12% of schools).
- ♦ **Student mentoring:** education, training and employment providers (32% of schools) and external support services (7% of schools).

External partners played a significant role in **monitoring** the attendance, achievement and behaviour of students involved in off-site programmes. The

following figures were usually additional to schools' own collection of monitoring data.⁵⁶

- ♦ **FE college staff** collected data on attendance in 58% of cases, on achievement in 67% of cases, and on behaviour in 42% of cases.
- ♦ **Employers** collected data on attendance in 33% of cases, on achievement in 35% of cases, and on behaviour in 28% of cases.

In general, the roles and responsibilities of respective agencies tended to be based around traditional areas of specific expertise. For example:

- ♦ Careers services usually took the lead on **careers interviews** for students,⁵⁷ but had little involvement in student selection, curriculum planning or programme set-up and administration.
- ♦ FE colleges, employers and training providers were involved primarily in **programme delivery**. FE colleges took this responsibility in 26% of cases, employers in 10 per cent and training providers in nine per cent (38% of schools reported no external involvement in programme delivery).

Case-study visits confirmed that most partnerships worked on the basis of a **clear division of responsibility**. Schools tended to deal with issues related to programme planning, set-up and administration, and external agencies were involved primarily in programme delivery or placement provision. However, in a small number of instances, the roles of partners had extended beyond these boundaries. Across a few of the case-study schools, employers and college staff had become involved in school sponsorship activities, talks or group-work sessions with students, or in school-wide mentoring programmes. In one case, an FE college was offering curriculum guidance to a school that was planning the introduction of a Part 1 GNVQ in Leisure and Tourism, and NVQ units to complement D&T in the key stage 4 curriculum. In another, an employer had become involved in a Year 7 literacy skills project.

6.2 Contribution of External Partners to the Available Range and Quality of Work-related Learning

There were examples in which partnership working had contributed to high quality work-related learning opportunities for students. The following case study provides one such illustration.

⁵⁶ As indicated in Chapter 5, strategies for the collection of regular monitoring data were not always in place.

⁵⁷ The careers service was the only agency with any substantial involvement in this respect (accounting for 70% of all responses). Twenty-seven per cent of schools reported no external involvement in this respect, or did not respond to this item of the question.

Alburndon High School is a small 11-16 school in the north of England. It serves an inner-city catchment area, and a below average student ability intake. Alburndon is one of a number of schools, across four LEAs, that is involved in a large-scale project to provide extended work-related learning opportunities, leading to NVQ qualifications, for students at key stage 4.

The project is funded by the local TEC,⁵⁸ and administered by the EBP. Students that are interested in extended work-related learning complete application forms, designed by the TEC, in the hope of securing a place on the project. These applications are studied by the EBP and forwarded to a range of relevant training providers who, in turn, carry out interviews with the students and make decisions about those that might benefit most. Finally, training providers negotiate with local employers or FE colleges to find a suitable placement for each student that has been successful.

Once students are placed, day-to-day liaison about their progress, attendance and behaviour is organised between the placement or programme provider and the school. Over and above this, training providers take responsibility for decisions about appropriate qualifications to which students on each programme should work and, in consultation with programme providers, the design of the programmes. Provision is monitored and evaluated by the EBP. Crucially, the EBP is always looking to ensure that programmes of extended work-related learning have the potential to contribute to predetermined learning outcomes including achievement of a vocational qualification, enhancements in student motivation and confidence and improvements in attainment across students' whole curriculum. Student satisfaction surveys and interviews with staff and students are conducted to contribute to this.

This example of a multi-agency approach, with clear and complementary lines of responsibility, provides a good example of effective partnership working. However, this level of interaction was quite rare across the case-study schools. There was a general lack of awareness, especially amongst employers, that regulations were in force allowing National Curriculum subjects to be disapplied in order that students might follow an extended work-related learning programme. This meant that there was not always a full understanding of why students were undertaking extended work-related learning, and the difference between work experience and extended work placements. One employer commented that she had been wondering why some students came to her for one day per week over a period of time, and others for a two-week block. There was a general lack of appreciation that extended work-related learning programmes, which were generally more extensive and time-consuming than work experience placements, might require different programme structures, support systems and learning outcomes. Only one or two employers made a clear distinction between work experience and extended work placements. As one commented: '*when it's just a week, they're thrown in and they don't get such an in-depth insight into the work [as when they are taking part in an extended placement]*'.

⁵⁸ The introduction of Learning and Skills Councils may affect the source of funding for this project in the future.

6.3 Conditions for Effective Partnership Working

Interviews with school staff, external partners and parents indicated that there were very few occasions in which partnerships were felt to be really poor or not working effectively. In most cases, interviewees were quite happy with their relationships with other agencies. The following factors seemed to have helped in sustaining productive working relations:

- ◆ A clear division of responsibilities, and a shared understanding of respective roles.
- ◆ A strategic approach to setting up the partnership or programme.
- ◆ A good communications strategy, and a useful exchange of information.

6.3.1 A clear division of responsibilities

As indicated earlier, most partnerships appeared to operate along **parallel** lines of responsibility, so that:

- ◆ **Schools** selected students for extended work-related learning according to various criteria, and approached external providers to discuss the possibility of a programme or placement being made available.
- ◆ **External providers** usually took responsibility for devising the programmes to be undertaken by students, and met students for the first time, either on the first day of their programme or for an induction session prior to commencement. They also took the main responsibility for programme delivery (and possibly final accreditation), meeting with school staff occasionally, or maintaining contact by telephone.

The rationale for this allocation of roles was that different partners had specific areas of practical expertise. Schools were thought to know their students best, to be in the strongest position to select them for disapplication and to decide upon programmes that might suit their needs. Meanwhile, external providers were experienced in providing vocational learning opportunities. However, in some cases, a lack of shared appreciation of each others' roles and responsibilities could create friction or uncertainty. One school teacher was frustrated that his programme provider was not responding to the needs of his students effectively, stating: *'schools are picking up on the messages of work-related learning linked with GNVQs at key stage 4, but businesses are not'*. The employer in this instance said, quite independently, *'the students came in and that was it – the school assumed that we knew what to do with them.'* This situation has now improved following the production of a booklet by the school explaining the structure of GNVQ, and what is required from a complementary work placement.

Some of these problems resulted from a lack of clarity over who the key player was within each partnership – the school, the programme provider or an intermediary body. Where this was not clearly established, different parties could spend time waiting for the other to make the first move. This was less

of a problem where providers (such as some FE colleges) were confident about working with young people under the age of 16 – who sometimes had motivational or behavioural problems, low self-esteem or special educational needs. However, this level of familiarity was not always apparent amongst others, particularly employers.

6.3.2 A strategic approach to the partnership

A clear division of responsibilities was undoubtedly a positive feature of many of the partnerships. However, sometimes each individual or agency was so involved in their own area of work, that there could be a failure to appreciate the ‘bigger picture’. In some instances, there did not appear to be a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of provision. In such cases, a gap could emerge between the process of disapplication and the provision of extended work-related learning, sometimes manifested in a mis-match between student needs, and work-related learning provision. This was clearly demonstrated in two instances.

One **FE college**, in the south-east of England, offered a range of courses for students from schools in the local area, designed essentially to help raise the confidence and motivation of low achieving students, with problems of poor self-esteem. However, some schools saw this provision as an opportunity to provide a curriculum alternative for their disruptive and disaffected students. This resulted in a wide mix of students within each class, and was reported not only to have affected group dynamics, but also to have made sessions quite difficult for tutors to manage and to pitch at the right level.

In a similar instance, one **employer** in the north-west of England, was not aware that the students he was taking on work placement were low ability students for whom National Curriculum subjects were being disapplied. His decision to take students on placement was prompted by a desire to give young people from the local area an opportunity to gain practical work experience, with a view to offering them Modern Apprenticeship training once they had left Year 11. The lack of communication between the school and its provider on the rationale for these particular students’ involvement in work-related learning, resulted in frustration on the part of this employer, and the question, why do they keep sending me the ‘drop-outs’, the ones that are *‘not bothered about getting a job’*?

Factors that seemed to increase the likelihood of such frustrations included:

- ◆ a lack of strategic partnership meetings before programmes began;
- ◆ a tendency for external partners not to be involved in student selection, careers interviews, curriculum planning or induction programmes.

There were few examples of partnerships in which schools and external partners made strategic **mutual decisions** about the purpose and nature of extended work-related learning from the outset. In fact, only one or two of the schools that worked directly with their placement providers had been able to develop such a strategic approach. One of these schools had appointed a member of non-teaching staff with dedicated responsibility for working on a one-to-one basis with employers. This individual was responsible for

maintaining dialogue about the content of each placement, in order to ensure that each contained suitable training elements and met health and safety standards. Those partnerships in which an intermediary body such as the LEA, EBP or TEC took overall coordination responsibility, were more likely than other partnerships to adopt a strategic approach, but these were in a minority.

6.3.3 A good communications strategy

The majority of external partners were happy with day-to-day liaison between themselves and schools on matters such as the monitoring of attendance and behaviour. Most commented that school staff were easy to contact, willing to help if problems occurred, and pleasant to work with (although school staff themselves frequently bemoaned the lack of time for maintaining effective day-to-day contact with programme providers). Factors that appeared to have aided good working relations included:

- ♦ **A good flow of information**, with schools informing external agencies of students' needs, attributes and characteristics, and external agencies providing feedback to schools on students attendance, behaviour and achievement.
- ♦ **A straightforward communications system**, ideally through a named individual within the school or external placement location who could be contacted easily by telephone and respond to issues as they arose, '*trouble shooting*' if necessary. As one teacher in the EBD school said: '*personal dialogue is the key*'.

However, meetings between schools and external staff to discuss the objectives of extended work-related learning, programme content, anticipated outcomes, or the needs of specific students, were rare. One social worker, working with students attending an FE college, made a pertinent comment in this respect: '*I'd like it to be more of a structured learning environment rather than just a containment exercise.*' In this instance, there had been no opportunity for a meeting between all members of the partnership.

6.4 Summary

On balance, there was still a need for some clarification in the roles and responsibilities of respective partners, and for more mutuality of understanding about the aims and objectives of extended work-related learning, and the needs of students for whom National Curriculum subjects were being disapplied. This seemed to be the case particularly where students were involved in extended work placements with employers. However, firm foundations had been established across many of the schools, and much had been learnt during the first year or two of involvement in extended work-related learning about effective partnership working. The task for partnerships now is to develop from this base, to create programmes of extended work-related learning that are focused around agreed learning outcomes.

7. CONCLUSION

This report has identified a wide variety of practices in extended work-related learning provision across the schools and their external partners. It has also highlighted that there was considerable variation in terms of the experiences and outcomes of such provision for different organisations and students. The following summary addresses these three key questions:

- ♦ What have been the most significant impacts of extended work-related learning?
- ♦ What are the influencing factors that have contributed to the establishment of successful programmes of work-related learning and student outcomes?
- ♦ In what ways might schools be helped to deploy such programmes more effectively in the future, and to overcome any barriers they have faced?

7.1 The Impact of Extended Work-related Learning

At the outset, it is important to remember that most schools' strategies for monitoring and evaluating the impact of extended work-related learning programmes were informal. Whilst there was some quantification of student progress (as indicated in Table 5.1), most schools relied on verbal feedback from school or programme staff (92%) or on one-to-one or group discussions with students (90%) to get a sense of the suitability, effectiveness and outcomes of extended work-related learning. Case-study interviews also made clear that most assessments of impact were based upon observation, and dialogue with programme providers, school staff and students, rather than on a systematic collection of quantitative data, although there were examples of the latter. Having said this, many interviewees displayed a richness of understanding of the outcomes of extended work-related learning for their organisations and students (the differential impact of various types of provision on different students for example), that provide valuable insights into the impact of extended work-related learning programmes.

7.1.1 Impact on students

Schools identified many ways in which extended work-related learning had an impact on students for whom National Curriculum subjects were being disapplied, and there was much evidence that schools had been able to meet the various student-centred national objectives of the regulations at one level or another. The following messages were clear:

- ♦ **Motivation, behaviour and attendance.** Impact in these respects, in particular on motivation, was judged to have been significant, with staff frequently commenting on improvements in students' levels of confidence, self-esteem and maturity. In addition, 68% of responding schools reported reduced levels of exclusion. However, whilst these benefits were often

apparent within programme settings, they were less frequently seen to extend into students' other activities within school.

- ♦ **Achievement.** A number of students were on target to achieve, or had actually achieved, nationally recognised vocational or key skills-related qualifications. The impact of disapplication on academic achievement was less clear – there was no indication that students' predicted GCSE grades were expected to increase, or had actually increased as a result of involvement in extended work-related learning. However, many students who had been predicted to underachieve from the beginning of Year 10, as a result of poor attendance or dropping out of key stage 4 all together, were now expected to sit (or in some cases had already sat) their public examinations. This suggests a clear positive impact on students' ability to achieve their academic **potential**.
- ♦ **Progression.** Eighty-two per cent of surveyed schools believed that at least some of their students had become able to make better decisions about progression post-16. Many students were becoming more realistic in their ambitions, were raising their aspirations, or had clarified their future plans as a result of their involvement in extended work-related learning. By the end of the summer term 2000, 38% of students undertaking extended work-related learning indicated that they had changed their minds about their career plans, compared with only 13% of the comparison group students. There was no evidence that involvement in work-related learning had challenged gender stereotypes in career decision making. Indeed, in most instances, provision was felt to have reinforced such stereotypes.
- ♦ **Differential impact.** Work-related learning was felt to have been more successful with low achieving students or those suffering from low self-esteem than with students with behavioural problems, poorly motivated students and those with attendance problems. This suggests that the current use of disapplication for extended work-related learning may have more effect as an alternative learning strategy for students who struggle with the academic demands of the full National Curriculum, than for those who have become disengaged from mainstream learning, although the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

7.1.2 Impact on partnerships and the wider curriculum

The remaining objectives of the regulations were related to the impact of extended work-related learning programmes on the wider school curriculum, and on partnerships with external agencies. Generally speaking, school staff perceived these issues to be less important than the potential benefits of extended work-related learning to students for whom National Curriculum subjects were being disapplied. However, they identified some impacts in this respect.

In terms of the development of **partnerships**, there was evidence that schools had formed a number of links with a range of external agencies, some over and above those contacts with whom they had worked in the past. Features of these partnerships included:

- ♦ Most operated along **parallel lines of responsibility**, with schools tending to deal with issues related to programme delivery, set-up and administration, and external providers involved primarily in programme delivery or placement provision. There was a clear rationale for this – different agencies were felt to have specific areas of expertise. However, sometimes this division led to a lack of mutual appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of each agency, or a tendency not to appreciate the ‘bigger picture’ – the aims and objectives of extended work-related learning.
- ♦ The majority reported that their **day-to-day communications strategies were very effective**, usually as a result of key individuals at each location sharing information on student progress and operational programme issues. However, there appeared to have been less provision for strategic partnership meetings before, and during, the course of programmes, to discuss the aims and objectives of disapplication and extended work-related learning provision, and desired student learning outcomes.

Impacts in relation to the **school curriculum** were reflected in two main areas, as described below:

- ♦ **Curriculum flexibility.** The regulations were felt to have enabled schools to introduce a greater diversity of learning opportunities, to strengthen the status of work-related learning within their curricula and to increase the range of qualifications they could offer. There were some calls for even greater flexibility – either for disapplication for purposes other than extended work-related learning (new regulations under section 363 of the 1996 Education Act have given schools greater flexibility in this respect – for details see Appendix 1), or for disapplication of a greater number of National Curriculum subjects where appropriate.
- ♦ **Benefits to the wider school curriculum.** Some staff believed that extended work-related learning had helped to promote equal opportunities, by enabling their curricula to be adapted to student needs: ‘*everybody is equal, but not necessarily the same*’. At a more practical level, the removal of ‘*disruptive*’ students from certain lessons was said to have had benefits for the remaining students and staff, in terms of quieter and more purposeful lessons. Although many students’ behaviour was said to have been good whilst they were engaged in their extended work-related learning programmes, few interviewees reported that this had extended to improved behaviour across the rest of their school curriculum.

7.2 Factors that Contributed to Successful Outcomes

In commenting upon factors that appeared to have facilitated the development of successful outcomes, it is important to acknowledge that extended work-related learning served vastly **different purposes** across schools. Each institution differed in terms of the type and number of students it had selected, the nature of provision that it offered and the school or curriculum context into which extended work-related learning was introduced. In addition, whilst

involvement in work-related learning was a relatively new departure for some schools, for others, the regulations offered the opportunity to expand long-standing provision. Hence, not all schools were starting from the same point, and the *meaning* of success was very different between one institution and another.

Whilst the following factors were felt by school staff and external partners to have aided the effectiveness of extended work-related learning programmes in certain contexts, it is important to stress that they should not be viewed as **ingredients** for success in all environments. As indicated in Chapter 5, extended work-related learning programmes did not develop within curricula or institutional vacuums. Hence, effective provision in one context might be explained as much by the existing institutional ethos of the school as by particular features of its extended work-related learning provision, and some schools may not be in a position to institute all of the following conditions.

7.2.1 Conditions for programme effectiveness

Factors reported by school staff and external personnel as contributing to the successful operation of extended work-related learning programmes were focused around two key areas: factors related to the design of the programmes themselves, and those related to conditions within and between organisations. Features of programme design that were felt to have assisted the successful operation of extended work-related learning included:

- ◆ At least one component of the extended work-related learning programme being provided **outside the school**. Some students were reported to have responded well to being treated in a more *adult* manner and to being given more independence than when they were in school. External providers were also reported to have provided access to resources, and to have offered varied activities that schools are not always in a position to match.
- ◆ **A good integration of school and externally-based work-related learning programmes** to avoid, for example, a '*disjointed feeling between school and college*'. Where school staff and external providers had attempted to ensure continuity between their respective programmes, students found it easier to make links, and were more likely to have viewed their provision as one whole programme, than as a series of separate activities.

Organisation-level factors that were felt to have contributed to successful extended work-related learning programmes were reported as:

- ◆ **Visible senior management leadership** and support for the programme – both within schools and external locations. This was felt to be necessary to ensure that programmes had status and a high profile within organisations, and to secure the interest and cooperation of the wider staff.
- ◆ **Involvement of well trained and committed staff** – both internally and externally – who were well equipped to deal with the needs of young people for whom elements of the National Curriculum were being

disapplied, and to offer suitable work-related learning opportunities or advice.

- ♦ **A good communications strategy** between schools and external partners, enabling information on student needs and progress to flow between organisations effectively, ideally through specified and easily contactable individuals.
- ♦ **A strategic approach to partnership**, with schools and external providers having clearly defined roles and responsibilities, whilst also having a shared appreciation of the aims, objectives and desired outcomes of programmes of extended work-related learning, and the opportunity for initial and on-going discussion in this respect.

7.2.2 Conditions for successful student outcomes

Factors that had helped students adapt to, and succeed in, their programmes of extended work-related learning were reported to have included:

- ♦ Sufficient time for **student induction** and **preparation** before the commencement of external programmes. Students with low self-esteem and self-confidence were felt sometimes to have needed careful nurturing within a school environment before beginning their programmes (a focus on features of the world of work for example, or intensive literacy and numeracy support). This was also indicated in the case of more disruptive or disengaged students.
- ♦ A matching of courses and work placements to students' **career aspirations** (if known) and specific **needs**, in order to ensure a sense of relevance, and to maintain student interest and motivation. A lack of local work-related learning opportunities made this difficult to achieve in some contexts, however.
- ♦ Ensuring that **course demands were realistic** (according to students' abilities and characteristics). On balance, students identified very structured, practical elements of their programmes as the most satisfying and rewarding. In contrast, both staff and students raised a number of concerns about courses with apparently excessive demands in terms of written work or conceptual thinking. An on-going focus on basic skills was felt to be important.
- ♦ Offering a **variety** of activities and tasks, based around suitable learning outcomes, in order that students maintained interest throughout the course of the programme and made effective progression and, ultimately, transitions.

7.3 Constraining Factors

A number of issues have been raised throughout the report about ways in which schools might be helped to develop programmes more effectively in the future, and to overcome any barriers they have faced. School staff and external partners raised a number of concerns about factors that they perceived

to have constrained programme success, and in which respect they would welcome some intervention:

- ◆ **Funding.** Over half of the surveyed schools (53%) regarded a perceived lack of funding for extended work-related learning as a significant barrier to what they could achieve, and a further 32% thought this to be a minor barrier. Implications of funding shortages were that some schools had not been able to make provision available to as many students as they would have liked, others had not been able to afford the cost of external placement opportunities, and many schools could not afford to protect the time of key members of staff in order to provide them with sufficient time for administration, planning and student support. Schools fell broadly into two categories in voicing their concerns about funding:
 - The majority **had been able to access some funds** to support extended work-related learning (through Excellence in Cities, SRB or local agency funding). However, the sums attracted were often felt to be insufficient. There were also real concerns about where programmes might stand if such sources of funding were to become unavailable in the future. The short-term nature of current sources of funding was felt to militate against a strategic approach to work-related learning provision.
 - A minority of schools **had not been able to access funds at all**, due to being located in ‘affluent’ areas (which restricted their access to the sources of funding described above), or due to financial or budgetary problems within their local authorities or schools. Such schools had often decided to go ahead with extended work-related learning on the basis that it was important enough to justify deficit spending, or ‘*borrowing*’ money from another area of the school budget. This situation was felt to be far from ideal, however.
- ◆ **Timetabling.** In some instances, school staff had experienced problems in attempting to block extended work-related learning against disapplied subject time, especially where external programme providers were not in a position to be flexible about timing. The consequence was that some students missed elements of their core curriculum subjects whilst attending their programmes, which not all were successful in making up.
- ◆ **Staff workload.** School key coordinators frequently commented on a perceived lack of time for programme administration, liaison with external partners, and monitoring and evaluation. As stressed above, this was linked to the funding issue, in that few schools were in a position to protect key coordinators’ time for this purpose. Where schools had been able to give key coordinators such time, or had appointed administrative staff to coordinate work-related learning, relationships with external providers appeared to be much more fruitful.
- ◆ **Forming links with external agencies.** Schools had fewer concerns in this respect, although some had faced problems in finding suitable providers because of their remote geographical location, or what was seen as fierce competition for limited places from other schools. In addition, some schools had experienced difficulties encouraging employers to

become involved, as a result of what they felt to be pre-conceived ideas on the part of some employers about the characteristics and attributes of certain students, especially those from special schools.

In addition, staff in schools with no tradition of vocational education or work-related learning, and especially those in which academic learning was highly valued, often found their programmes marginalised. In the worst case scenario, this could mean that such programmes held low status with staff, students and parents and were perceived as a response to a particular ‘problem’ rather than as an integral part of the whole school curriculum. The positive contribution of extended work-related learning to social inclusion and equal opportunities mentioned in Section 7.1.2 above, was reversed in such cases.

So what are the ways forward for schools and their partners? How can schools be helped to overcome some of the above concerns and to develop their programmes more effectively in the future?

7.4 Issues for Consideration

In addressing some of the concerns raised by school staff and external partners, attention should be paid to three key areas: funding, the nature of the key stage 4 curriculum and local partnerships.

7.4.1 Funding

A perceived shortage of funding, and the knock-on effects that this was believed to have had on staff workload, were such that some schools felt that they had progressed as far as they could in terms of the numbers of students for whom they were able to make work-related provision available, and the types of learning opportunities that they were able to pay for, without access to more funds. As outlined in Chapter 4, the ‘*unit costs*’ of work-related learning provision were said to be far higher than the costs of standard curricular provision.

A point made by a teacher in one school, who had managed to access a diverse range of funds to support her programme of extended work-related learning, was that there was no one clear source of guidance on the various funding avenues available. It was only through considerable research on her part that she had been able to identify potential sources, and she felt sure that many schools and other organisations would not know of some of the options available to them. In the absence of direct funding for extended work-related learning, there is perhaps a case for the production of **guidelines** for schools, colleges, training providers and employers on **current sources of funding** that each might be able to access in supporting extended work-related learning.

7.4.2 The nature of the key stage 4 curriculum

Substantial numbers of schools had found it impossible to block whole areas of the (disapplied) curriculum against the points of the week in which extended work-related learning took place. In consequence, students in some schools missed aspects of their statutory curriculum – including mathematics and English – and faced the subsequent challenge of catching up with the work they had missed. According to staff, these students were often some of the least well equipped to cope with this demand. The problem was particularly pronounced where schools had:

- ♦ disapplied National Curriculum subjects **for small numbers** of students, and could not justify re-organising the whole school curriculum around them;
- ♦ adopted a **bespoke approach** to the provision of extended work-related learning, so that different students undertook various types of work-related learning at different times during the week;
- ♦ been unable to negotiate a more appropriate time for extended work-related learning to take place with local **education, employment and training providers**.

Interviewees stressed that some of the young people on the programmes struggled quite considerably with key stage 4 English and mathematics, and could be de-motivated by attempts to keep up in such subjects. However, some of these were felt to have benefited from an intensive focus on basic skills. While some programmes incorporated such a focus, this was far from universal. Even though many contained a key skills element, the communication and application of number components did not always provide a sufficient focus on reading, writing and numeracy for students with basic skills needs. Given the logistical problems some schools have faced in ensuring students can attend all time-tabled English and mathematics lessons, there may be a case for making more of the opportunities extended work-related learning can provide to develop students' basic and key skills, complementing their in-school provision.

7.4.3 Local partnerships

In respect of the other identified barrier to the use of the regulations, forming links with external agencies, the majority of suggestions for ways forward would appear to be most appropriate for consideration at a local level (these are discussed below). However, in relation to the specific concerns of some schools regarding a scarcity, or inappropriateness, of external provision (either due to geographical location, a depressed local economy, competition from other schools, or the pre-conceived ideas of employers about the characteristics of certain students), some interviewees thought that a more **strategic** intervention might prove helpful. In particular, there may be a need for:

- ◆ Guidance for employers on the objectives of extended work-related learning facilitated by disapplication and the differences between this and work experience placements. In particular, advice on appropriate programme structures, support systems and learning outcomes for young people involved in extended work-related learning would be of use.
- ◆ Some encouragement of employers to assist in the training of pre-16 year olds, perhaps by helping them see it as a useful adjunct to their internal staff development strategies.

There were a number of suggestions for consideration at a **local** level. One strategy was the possible preparation of a **directory of businesses** that offered extended work placements or student mentoring in local areas. While many areas had such documents (often produced by careers services, EBPs or organisations such as Project Trident) these were often related to organisations willing to offer short one or two week work placements rather than what might be more demanding long-term placements. Further suggestions related to ways in which schools and external partners might be helped to move towards more active models of partnership working. One factor that appears currently to be militating against a shared approach to decision-making and programme planning is that schools and their external partners are not always fully aware of the contexts in which each other work. For example, employers do not always understand what schools are trying to achieve for their students, whilst schools do not always appreciate how businesses operate, and therefore are not always aware of the scope (or limitations) of the provision that employers are actually in a position to offer. Some of these problems can be addressed by adopting a more proactive approach to partnership, and ensuring that time is allocated to the discussion of expectations, potential outcomes and shared strategies for working at the outset, and that dialogue is maintained in this respect. In addition, there might also be an argument for:

- ◆ structured visits by school staff to work-related learning settings, not only to see how students are getting along (which often take place), but also to discuss with providers how the programmes are operating, whether any revisions are needed, and whether providers are getting what *they* need from the partnership.
- ◆ encouraging external partners to visit schools to meet students before they embark on their programmes and perhaps to give a short talk about their institutions and what they are offering. Where possible, external partners might also be encouraged to play a role within the wider life of the school – becoming involved in industry days or mentoring activities for example.

7.5 Codicil

There are clearly some issues for consideration, both at a local and a national level, in terms of ensuring that disapplication and extended work-related learning are able to continue operating effectively in the future, and that successful programmes can be sustained. However, in spite of some perceived obstacles to the effectiveness of extended work-related learning, many

successful impacts have been identified. On balance, schools and their external partners were very positive about the enhanced flexibility that the regulations had provided, the impact that this had had on the wider school curriculum, the programmes that they had been able to put in place, and the benefits for students of alternative forms of learning. This was summed up by one school teacher who said of her experience of disapplication: *‘Work-related learning has had a major impact in the two years that it has been running...the current Year 10s are developing a solid understanding of what work-related learning is and means [and] work-related learning is well embedded into the culture and ethos of the school’.*

APPENDIX 1

Disapplication of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 for Specific Purposes

From August 2000, regulations under section 363 of the 1996 Education Act, enable schools to disapply elements of the key stage 4 National Curriculum for three distinct purposes. In addition to disapplication in order that a student might follow an extended work-related learning programme (the subject of the NFER evaluation and this report), schools may also disapply elements of the National Curriculum in order that:

- ♦ a student can emphasise a curriculum area in which he or she has strengths;
- ♦ a student making **significantly less progress** than others of his or her age can consolidate his or her learning across the curriculum.

In all three cases, schools may disapply up to two National Curriculum subjects. Whereas the extended work-related learning option allows schools to select these subjects from **three** National Curriculum subjects (Modern Foreign Languages, Design and Technology and science), disapplication for the two new purposes is permitted only from **two** National Curriculum subjects (Modern Foreign Languages and Design and Technology).

APPENDIX 2

Disapplication of National Curriculum subjects at key stage 4 for extended work-related learning – Summary of statutory requirements.

Up to two of Design and Technology, Modern Foreign Languages and science can be disapplied for this purpose.

Criteria

The headteacher, or person nominated by him/her must:

- ♦ satisfy him/herself that the educational benefits to the pupil outweigh any disadvantages;
- ♦ ensure that a careers interview for the pupil takes place before the decision to modify the curriculum;
- ♦ agree with the pupil and his/her parents a structured curriculum plan;
- ♦ ensure that the pupil's entitlement to study a broad curriculum is maintained and his/her opportunities for continuing studies beyond key stage 4 are safeguarded;
- ♦ monitor the modified curriculum;
- ♦ inform QCA of the school's proposals for disapplying the national curriculum and contribute as requested to national monitoring arrangements;
- ♦ nominate a mentor at every place where the work-related learning programme is provided to take day-to-day responsibility for the pupil, to assist the school with the preparation of the pupil's curriculum plan and induction programme and to support and develop the pupil's skills;
- ♦ make arrangements for the pupil to have an induction programme;
- ♦ ensure that, as far as is practicable, the timetable of a pupil attending a work-related learning programme is arranged, preparatory work is carried out, and liaison is maintained, so that the requirements of the curriculum plan are met;
- ♦ make arrangements to monitor the attendance, progress and achievements of the pupil and provide a report to the pupil each term;
- ♦ arrange a meeting at least every six months between the pupil, his parents, the person at the school who has responsibility for the programme and his/her mentor(s).

The **extended work-related learning programme** is one which:

- ♦ offers pupils experience of the working environment and working practices;
- ♦ provides pupils with the opportunity to develop literacy, numeracy and key skills;
- ♦ complements the education being provided to pupils through the remainder of their school curriculum;
- ♦ contributes, so far as is practicable, towards approved qualifications, whether vocational or not;
- ♦ cannot be provided alongside the full National Curriculum at key stage 4.

The **careers interview** is:

- ♦ an interview between the pupil and an impartial and informed adult, which enables the pupil to think about and discuss his/her career ambitions, and to consider the proposed programme and the implications of the proposed disapplication.

The **curriculum plan** must set out:

- ♦ the contents of the curriculum to be provided for a pupil;
- ♦ the National Curriculum subjects to be disapplied; and
- ♦ the educational targets to be achieved, with the aim of ensuring that the pupil receives an appropriate, broad and balanced curriculum.

APPENDIX 3

Conduct of the Research

Initial desk research

An initial desk exercise was conducted to match information from the 1998/99 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) database with other information held at NFER. A detailed analysis of the database was then carried out, exploring the profiles of the schools deciding to disapply elements of the National Curriculum, and the profile of the students for whom subjects had been disappplied. This analysis also included a preliminary typology of schools' provision of extended work-related learning programmes. This analysis was subsequently repeated for the QCA database 1999/2000.

The telephone survey⁵⁹

Early in November 1999, researchers at NFER selected a sample of 100 schools from the 1998-99 QCA database. The sample was randomly selected, but stratified to ensure that the selected schools were representative of all schools in the database in relation to **school type** (whether with or without a sixth form, or a special school, for example) and **management status** (LEA maintained, foundation school or voluntary-aided for example). After preliminary telephone calls to the sample of schools, 50 were both able to participate in the telephone survey, and had disappplied elements of the National Curriculum for certain of their key stage 4 students in 1998-99.

The 50 participating schools were broadly representative of the 470 schools on the 1998-99 QCA database in terms of **type** and **management status** with the following exceptions:

- ♦ **Schools without sixth forms** comprised 24% of the telephone survey schools, and 31% of schools using the regulations nationally, whilst those **with sixth forms** comprised 52% of telephone survey schools and 44% of those using the regulations nationally;
- ♦ **Voluntary schools** accounted for only four per cent of telephone survey schools, but nine per cent of schools using the regulations nationally.

The telephone survey provided qualitative information about the approaches used in the sample schools, including their perceptions of success and any problems encountered in implementing programmes of extended work-related learning. The survey included an initial question to establish whether or not schools had decided to disapply elements of the National Curriculum during 1999-2000 and, for those who had not, the reasons why. All other schools

⁵⁹ Information gathered from the telephone survey relates to schools who disappplied elements of the National Curriculum in 1998-99.

were asked a series of factual questions to update the data already held on the QCA database and to augment it with relative additional data.

The postal survey

A total of 100 schools disapplying elements of the National Curriculum were sampled, drawn from the QCA database of 507 schools. Two schools were subsequently withdrawn by their LEA, so that the total number who were sent a questionnaire was reduced to **98**. In total, **87** schools returned a questionnaire (89% response rate).

The survey schools that were drawn in the sample were stratified according to a range of criteria (locational, structural and operational) and, to a large extent, reflected the national picture of schools intending to disapply elements of the National Curriculum. Details of the profile of the schools in the initial postal survey sample can be found in Table Ai.

The initial questionnaire was carried out in the autumn term to obtain an understanding of the factors considered in deciding to disapply elements of the National Curriculum, and how different schools were implementing programmes of work-related learning. It also aimed to gain impressions of schools' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with disapplication. In the summer term, **96** of the original schools in the postal survey sample were sent a follow-up questionnaire.⁶⁰ A total of **72** schools responded (75% response rate). The follow-up questionnaire aimed to establish teachers' views and reflections on the impact, outcomes and usefulness of the regulations in schools that had been disapplying elements of the National Curriculum for one year or more.

Case-study visits

During February and March 2000, a shortlist of potential schools in which in-depth case-study work could be conducted was compiled. In order to assist commencement of fieldwork immediately after the February half term, a first list was derived from schools that had participated in the telephone survey in November 1999. A second list was drawn-up following the return of completed postal questionnaires during February and March 2000, based on **38** of the responding schools that indicated a willingness to take part in the case-study phase of the research. In total, **27** schools were contacted in order to obtain a final list of 20 schools that were willing to participate in case-study work. Most of the seven schools that felt unable to participate had taken part in the telephone, rather than the postal, survey, and it was some time since they had indicated their willingness to take part in further research. Their reasons for not wishing to participate in case-study work included:

- ♦ forthcoming Ofsted inspections, school closure, or involvement in other research evaluations (three schools);

⁶⁰ Two schools had withdrawn from the study since the first phase, due to staffing issues, and thus were not sent a follow-up questionnaire.

- ◆ internal management pressures, or lack of time (three schools);
- ◆ failure to respond to researcher requests (one school).

By the end of March 2000, 20 schools had agreed to take part in fieldwork as follows:

- ◆ six schools that had participated in the **telephone survey** during November 1999;
- ◆ 14 schools that had responded to the **postal questionnaire** administered in February 2000.

In selecting these schools, a range of criteria was applied in order to provide a spectrum of school types and contexts, as well as a spread of geographical locations. The research team also attempted to ensure that the number of **special schools** in the sample,⁶¹ and the **proportion** of the key stage 4 cohort for whom elements of the National Curriculum were disapplied in each of the schools reflected the national pattern.⁶² Details of the 20 case-study schools compared to the 98 schools in the postal survey sample are given in Table Ai below.

Conduct of the case-study research

The first phase of case-study work was based around in-depth interviews with **53** staff across the 20 schools. Individuals interviewed varied according to different school contexts, and the nature of work related learning programmes offered, but included:

- ◆ **27** senior teachers (17 of whom were Key Coordinators);
- ◆ **13** careers or work-related learning coordinators;
- ◆ **seven** special educational needs (SEN) coordinators, SEN teachers or learning support assistants;
- ◆ **four** heads of Year 10 or 11;
- ◆ **one** schoolteacher with NVQ assessor training;
- ◆ **one** head of a mathematics department (had personal interest in work-related learning).

⁶¹ According to the 1999-2000 QCA database, 14% of schools applying the regulations in this year were special schools.

⁶² The telephone survey indicated that around 60% of schools had disapplied elements of the National Curriculum for five per cent or fewer of their key stage 4 students, 24% for between five and 50 per cent, and eight per cent (all special schools) for 100%.

Table Ai Details of 20 case-study schools, compared to 98 original postal survey schools

Criteria	Descriptor	Case-study schools		Postal survey schools	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Geographical location	North West	5	25	12	12
	North East	3	15	15	15
	Midlands	4	20	21	21
	South West	3	15	15	15
	South East	5	25	35	36
Type	LEA mainstream	18	90	60	61
	LEA special	2	10	14	14
	Non-LEA schools	0	0	24	24
Size	Small (<600 students)	5	25	29	30
	Medium (600-1000 students)	4	20	35	36
	Large (>1000 students)	11	55	34	35
Age range	Up to 18	13	65	50	51
	Up to 16	7	35	48	49
EWRL students as a proportion of KS4 cohort	<5%	10	50	46	47
	5%-50%	9	45	40	41
	51-99%	0	0	4	4
	100%	1 ⁶³	5	8	8
Number		20		98	

Due to rounding errors, percentages may not always sum to 100

A programme of in-depth interviews with school staff, using semi-structured schedules, was undertaken in order to explore in more detail issues raised through the postal and telephone surveys, to ‘triangulate’ the views of different members of school staff on certain key issues, and to allow researchers to focus on issues pertinent to specific school contexts, whilst covering a core of general topics. Interviews with staff in this first phase of fieldwork focused primarily on issues surrounding the **implementation** of the regulations:

- ◆ schools’ rationale for adoption of the regulations;
- ◆ criteria applied by schools in selecting students;
- ◆ establishment of programmes of work-related learning;
- ◆ coordination and management of external partnerships;
- ◆ coordination and management of school staff;

⁶³ This school was a special school.

- ♦ status of disapplication within schools.

In addition, interviewees were asked to comment on, and where possible, provide early evidence of the **impact** of the programmes of extended work-related learning on students and schools, and to highlight any factors that had acted as **barriers** or **constraints** in disapplying elements of the National Curriculum and implementing such programmes.

During the initial case-study visits, **183** students for whom elements of the National Curriculum were disapplied and **158** comparison students were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. The sample was, in part, determined by which students were in school on the days of the school visits. As a result, it is possible that those with poor attendance records may have been under-represented in the sample. All students were asked about their attitudes to education, training and employment and their expectations and aspirations. Participants' understanding of the extended work-related learning programmes was also discussed, as was their experiences of curriculum planning, induction and support.

Follow-up visits to 19 of the case-study schools⁶⁴ took place in the summer term, during which 43 staff were interviewed about their views on the impact of the extended work-related learning programmes. Interviews were conducted with the following staff:

- ♦ **18** senior teachers (seven of whom were Key Coordinators);
- ♦ **ten** careers or work-related learning coordinators;
- ♦ **six** SEN coordinators, SEN teachers or learning support assistants,
- ♦ **four** programme teachers,
- ♦ **three** heads of Year 9, 10 or 11;
- ♦ **one** head of mathematics (with a personal interest in work-related learning);
- ♦ **one** learning mentor.

Overall, during the second visits to schools, a total of 79 students who were participating in programmes of extended work-related learning were interviewed, as were 79 comparison students.⁶⁵ These interviews aimed to explore any changes in expectations and aspirations evident since the first visit. Students participating in programmes of extended work-related learning were asked to review their experiences of the programmes, identify 'high points' and 'low points', and indicate plans for the future.

⁶⁴ One school declined to take part in the second round of case-study visits due to time pressures.

⁶⁵ The same students were interviewed during each of the case-study visits, although there was a degree of attrition, often due to absence on the day of the second visit.

Data on student attainment and destinations at 16 was collected from the case-study schools and will be analysed using logistic regression.⁶⁶

Interviews with external partners

Face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted with 34 key partners linked to the majority of the case-study schools. Interviewees included:

- ♦ **11** Training Providers/college personnel;
- ♦ **11** Employers;
- ♦ **Four** Careers Advisers;
- ♦ **Four** parents;
- ♦ **Four** others, including Education Business Partnership, Local Education Authority and Social Services personnel.

These interviews explored the external partners' role in programmes of extended work-related learning, how partnerships had been developed, apprehensions and expectations of providing work-related learning for young people, any barriers to effective delivery of programmes, and views on the impact of extended work-related learning on the students involved.

⁶⁶ The analysis of the attainment and transition data for students in Year 11 will be included in the final report in November 2000. A separate paper will be submitted in 2001 consisting of the analysis of the data for those who were in Year 10 at the time of visits.