The Alternative Curriculum

The impact and effectiveness of an intervention strategy on the pupils, teachers and the school: An Action Research investigation.

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the BA (Honours) Learning and Teaching in Education at The University of Northampton.

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6/1/2012
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation, except where I have indicated my indebtedness to other sources.

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted or accepted in substance for any other degree or academic award, nor is it being submitted currently for any other degree or award at any institution.

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About the Author

Karen McDonagh is currently a Cover Supervisor at her local high school and is embarking on a Graduate Teacher programme to gain Qualified Teacher Status.
Abstract

The issue of pupils’ behaviour in schools has been a growing concern for many years, however, in recent years government statistics have shown a decrease in permanent exclusions. Therefore, if schools are not excluding pupils for unacceptable behaviour, is their behaviour improving? Or are schools implementing successful intervention strategies to manage the pupils and their behaviour? The purpose of this action research investigation is to identify the impact and effectiveness of an intervention strategy at School X, and to determine successful and unsuccessful strategies used in the intervention. This study identifies the impact of the intervention on the pupils and teachers participating in the strategy, and discusses the impact on the other members of the school community. The data for this study has been obtained through interviews with the pupils, teacher questionnaires, lesson observations, and the pupils progress reports have been obtained, to determine whether the pupils have progressed whilst participating in the intervention.

The findings from the research identify that the majority of pupils have made academic progress during their participation in the intervention strategy, however, it is not determined whether this progress is a direct result of the intervention. This study also identifies the social and emotional cost of the intervention strategy on the pupils, and questions whether the aim of the intervention was to benefit the pupils participating in the strategy, or if the true purpose was to enable the other members of the school community to progress without disruption. Several key issues emerged during this study and one key question of ‘what happens now?’ remains unresolved. This study concludes with an evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the intervention strategy, and recommendations for change have been devised to assist School X with improving their current practice.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

‘There is widespread and growing concern, in educational circles and beyond, at the apparent rise in antisocial behaviour among children, ranging from discipline problems in the classroom and the increased incidence of bullying, to a more general lack of respect for others, in terms of their feelings, person and property, and occasional and notorious cases of violent crimes involving children’. (Warden and Christie, 2001 Pg.1).

It is widely reported that in recent years children’s and young adults’ behaviour is on the decline with a recent report identifying two-thirds of teachers in the United Kingdom have been physically or verbally assaulted by pupils (Lipsett, 2007). In a recent survey the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2009) reported that as a result of dealing with disruptive pupils in the classroom, a quarter of teachers suffer with mental health problems (ATL, 2009). The Department for Education (2011) recently published figures estimating nearly six thousand pupils were given permanent exclusions from schools in England, as a result of their disruptive or violent behaviour (DfE, 2011), and a report from the National Behaviour and Attendance Review suggested that the cost of permanently excluding pupils from school could be up to three hundred thousand pounds for each child (Browne, 2007). However, as research suggests, the emotional and social costs of permanent exclusion go far beyond the financial implications (Smith and Barr, 2008). In light of this Parsons et-al suggest ‘we cannot simply go on just excluding children from school...The problem does not just fade away. It stays with us, gets worse and costs us dearly in the long term’ (Parsons et-al. 1996. Pg.7).

Sir Alan Steer (2009) argues that over recent years behaviour standards in schools have improved and this progress is a reflection of schools implementing behaviour management strategies (Steer,
2009a). Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot (2007) reiterate the positive effects of behaviour management strategies in reducing pupil exclusions and suggest that ‘prevention at an early stage is better than intervention in later stages as it makes the problem more approachable and helps to avoid future involvement with the criminal justice system, social services and healthcare services’ (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007. Pg77). Although the figures for permanent exclusions in England appear to be high, recent figures from the Department for Education (2011) show that there is a decrease in permanent exclusions with the latest data identifying that in English primary, secondary, and special schools, permanent exclusions are more than nineteen per cent lower than the previous year (DfE, 2011).

Therefore, are intervention strategies the answer to reducing pupil exclusions? However, what impact does the intervention strategy have on the pupil, the teachers and the school?

1.1 The Background

School X is a high school with approximately eight hundred pupils in attendance aged between ten and fourteen years. The school consists of two key stages, with pupils in year six in key stage two, and pupils in years seven, eight and nine in key stage three. School X is situated in a relatively affluent area and is regarded as a high attaining and achieving school, with the latest Ofsted inspection rating the school as outstanding. However, in my role as Cover Supervisor at School X, I have observed a significant deterioration in the pupils’ behaviour in one particular year group. During several meetings with Teachers and Senior Managers the issue of the pupils’ behaviour was continually being raised, and it was identified that the issue was mainly focused on a small cohort of high profile boys from that year group, who were disrupting lessons and learning environments for the other pupils. Research suggests that disruptive behaviour can significantly waste teaching time in the classroom, which often leads to teachers feeling
frustrated and an increase in academic failure among pupils (Ruiz-Olivares et-al. 2010. Van Lier. et-al. 2004).

Through discussions with teaching staff it became apparent that the boys were struggling to work in a ‘whole class’ environment and with working at a desk for hour long periods during lessons. As a result of the discussions, the Senior Management at School X decided that in order for the boys to remain at the school and reach their full potential, a different learning environment was needed and a different style of teaching was required. Research suggests that intervention in disruptive behaviours improves the atmosphere in the classroom and facilitates the learning process (Ruiz-Olivares et-al. 2010). Therefore, as School X were in a fortunate position of being over staffed, it was agreed by the Senior Management team that seven high profile pupils would be taught separately from the rest of their year group, and they would be taught using different teaching approaches that fulfils the pupils particular needs. It is well documented that pupils have different styles of learning (Flemming, 1995; Gardner, 1999; Hughes and Vass, 2001) and amongst the teaching staff at School X, it was felt that these pupils would benefit from a predominantly kinaesthetic approach to learning. Therefore, through consultations with all members of the teaching staff, the parents, and the pupils concerned, it was decided that the seven pupils would form a class of their own and they would have a separate timetable from the other members of their year group. However, they would continue to be educated within the National Curriculum subjects of Maths, English, Science, Humanities, Design, ICT, French, and Physical Education. It was also decided that the Head of Department for each subject would deliver the lessons. Although the pupils would attend lessons away from their peer groups, it was agreed that the seven pupils would be included with the other members of the year group during registration, Physical Education, break and lunchtimes. As a result of the discussions, the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ initiative was introduced for the seven boys going into year nine, at the beginning of this academic year.
In a previous data collection assignment, an interview with the Assistant Head Teacher at School X was carried out to identify the aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum initiative. The aims and objectives are; to give the seven pupils an opportunity to achieve and to remain in school, to deliver the curriculum in a style that meets the needs of the seven pupils, and to give the other pupils in the year group an opportunity to learn without disruption. It was also identified that the chosen seven boys all have significant difficulties with social skills therefore, it was decided that the boys participating in the Alternative Curriculum would also participate in ‘life skills’ lessons, work towards Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications, and also attend the local college for various training days in ‘trade skills’ for example; bricklaying, in order to learn social skills, life skills and how to interact with other members of the community.

1.2 The research focus and questions.

The implementation of the Alternative Curriculum initiative has had a significant positive impact on my role as Cover Supervisor at School X, as removing the seven high profile boys from lessons has resulted in a safer and calmer working environment for the other pupils, which has allowed for teaching and learning to take place during my lessons without the continual interruptions of managing extreme behaviour. I have also observed the Alternative Curriculum’s positive impact on the remaining pupils from the year group, as they are more willing to participate during lessons, and other pupils’ behaviour has significantly improved as they are not copying or being encouraged by the seven boys. As the Alternative Curriculum initiative is having such a positive impact on my role, I wanted to establish if the initiative is having a positive impact on the other members of the teaching and support staff therefore, I sent an email to all members of staff that taught or supported this year group to establish what impact removing the seven boys has had on their lessons and, in their opinion, the other members
of the year group. It was apparent from the replies that I received, that the removal of the seven high profile boys from lessons has also had a significantly positive impact on all members of the teaching and support staff and on the remaining pupils in their lessons, as their responses state; “They seem far more confident when working as a class or in their small groups and their behaviour is exemplary” other comments were; “our most vulnerable, quiet and least confident pupils absolutely fly this year because they do not have the fear of being belittled by others in the group” and reiterating the calmer atmosphere that I have experienced, a teacher wrote, “the ambience and working environment is better than I would ever have imagined” (See Appendix 1).

As the Alternative Curriculum initiative is having such a positive impact throughout the school, I am going to investigate if the Alternative Curriculum is having a positive impact on the seven boys who are participating in the initiative, and if the aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum are being met. Therefore, the focus for the research is to investigate what is working within the Alternative Curriculum group and to establish why it is working for these particular boys. I also want to investigate what is not working and why it is not working with a view to creating a proposal of recommendations for change for School X. With this in mind I have devised three research questions, which are:

- What is working and why is it working?
- What is not working and why is it not working?
- What needs to be done to make it work, or improve it?

In order to progress in my own work practice, I also intend to establish what strategies are working with the Alternative Curriculum group with a view to incorporate the successful strategies into my own work practice, to support the teaching and learning of other pupils throughout my future teaching career. This study will be in the form of an action research investigation, as Denscombe (2010) suggests that
the aim of action research is to critically investigate an issue, with a view to developing recommendations for change to subsequently enhance the performance of the educational setting (Denscombe, 2010).
Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter will undertake a critical review of the literature which explores what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour and the consequences this may have on the pupils portraying the behaviour. This chapter will also consider the impact of unacceptable behaviour on members of staff and their morale, and the effect on the self-esteem, and teaching and learning of the other pupils in the year group. The literature regarding inclusion will also be reviewed and will include dealing with behavioural issues using an alternative approach to exclusion.

2.1: What is unacceptable behaviour?

In order to identify what is unacceptable behaviour, a recent report from Ofsted (2010) highlighted the importance of taking into account pupils’ attitudes to learning, and suggests that behaviour should be classed as inadequate if the behaviour disrupts learning or compromises the well-being of pupils (Ofsted, 2010. Pg4). Lawrence et-al (1984) defines disruptive behaviour as ‘Behaviour which seriously interferes with the teaching process and/or seriously upsets the normal running of the school’ (Lawrence et-al.1984. Pg5). Recent evidence suggests that the general behaviour of pupils in schools is improving, although the evidence also identifies that the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is posing greater difficulties for schools and teachers (Apter et-al. 2010). This is representational of School X, as it is a small cohort of pupils causing the most disruptions in lessons and around the school. In a study addressing the intensity of behaviours, Goyette, et-al (2000) suggest that pupils’ misbehaviour was reported in three different levels, within the primary level pupils are reported to be distracted, talking to others at inappropriate times, and arriving late to lessons, the secondary level of misbehaviours includes “clowning around”, quarrelling, and harassing other pupils and sometimes staff, and the tertiary level of misbehaviour includes criticising others,
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destroying material, and displaying aggressive behaviour (Goyette, et-al. 2000). The seven pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum have displayed all three levels of misbehaviours, although the most frequent behaviours displayed are at the tertiary level.

Although there is widespread and growing concern of the apparent rise in behaviour difficulties of small minorities of children, Warden and Christie (2001) identify that such behaviours co-exist with wider social changes, which includes family breakdown, a weakening of parental control, and various forms of physical and sexual abuse (Warden and Christie, 2001). The Department for Education and Employment (1997) however, suggests that pupils displaying disruptive behaviour may be deemed to have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) (DfEE, 1997). This is representational of the pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, as three pupils are identified as having SEBD and the other four pupils are identified as displaying signs of SEBD. The definition of SEBD is however, widely contested with some educationalists highlighting ‘how behavioural problems may be the result of a clash between the values and expectations of school systems and the values that children acquire in their homes and community’ (Evans et-al. 2004. Pg3). Cooper (2011) recognises the stigmatisation and marginalising effect of labelling children with SEBD although, he argues that ‘it is important to understand SEBD as always being the product of an interaction between the individual and the environment’ (Cooper, 2011. Pg88). Cooper et-al. (2001) however, suggests that pupils often attribute their disruptive behaviour to teacher provocation (Cooper et-al. 2001). The British Medical Association (2006) has identified that around twenty per cent of UK children are diagnosed as having mental health problems (The British Medical Association, 2006), and Hackett et-al (2010) suggest that children and young people with SEBD ‘are a particularly vulnerable group whose mental health needs are under-researched’ (Hackett, et-al. 2010. Pg148). Recent studies indicate that SEBD and mental health difficulties can significantly impact upon a person’s participation in education, reduce their self-esteem and result
in a deterioration in their social, general, and academic functioning (Place, et-al. 2000).

Parsons (1999) recognises that some children have major difficulties in their lives in which they have to cope with, however, he argues that these difficulties alone cannot be viewed as the sole cause of the pupil’s disruptive behaviour (Parsons, 1999). In a study from the National Foundation for Educational Research they found that pupils who displayed disruptive behaviour in the classroom were more likely to truant from school (Kinder et al. 1996). Research has identified that a lack of self-esteem, social skills and confidence, poor peer relations, a lack of academic ability including special needs, and a lack of concentration and self-management skills, are all prime causes of a pupil’s disruptive behaviour and truancy (Kinder et al. 1995). Parsons (1999) however, suggests that ‘disaffection, truancy, disruption and exclusion, are disproportionately found in disadvantaged groups’ (Parson, 1999. Pg64) and argues that this group of pupils ‘are a ‘social’ problem rather than simply an educational one’ (Parson, 1999. Pg64). Therefore, the issue of pupils’ difficult and disruptive behaviour is, and always will be, a complex problem and as Lord Elton highlights, there is no simple solution to it. (Department of Education and Science. 1989).

2.2: Children have a right to attend school in safety and to learn without disruption from others.

Although pupils displaying unacceptable behaviour may have underlying difficulties, their behaviour often impacts on the other pupils in the class. In a recent review of behaviour standards and practices in schools, Sir Alan Steer stated that ‘Children have a right to attend school in safety and to learn without disruption from others’ (DCSF, 2009a. Pg18). This view is reiterated by the Every Child Matters green paper which suggests that every child should have the ‘opportunity to reach their full potential…. and to enjoy and achieve’ (DfES, 2003. Pg3). However, the Salamanca World Statement (1994) stated that ‘the fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all
Research shows that pupils’ displaying violent physical and aggressive behaviour in schools is becoming more frequent and such behaviours expose teachers to high levels of stress, and causes severe disruption to other pupils in the class (Parsons, 1999). Aggressive and violent behaviour threatens the well-being of pupils and has a significant impact on their learning, as pupils have difficulty concentrating on the task, learning time is taken over due to the teacher’s attention being focused on the managing of behaviour, and pupils experience feelings of anxiety and intimidation as a result (Romi and Freund, 1999; Hunter, 2003; Head, 2007). It is widely researched that pupils’ challenging behaviour is the most common causes of stress for teachers in modern day schools (Johnstone, 1993; Evers, et al 2004; Head, 2005), and Langdon (1996) argues that teachers’ job satisfaction is significantly being reduced as a result of disruptive behaviour among pupils (Langdon, 1996). This view is reiterated in a recent poll carried out by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2009) which states that seventy-two per cent of secondary school teachers are considering leaving teaching, because they are becoming exhausted from dealing with the persistent disruptive behaviour of pupils (ATL, 2009). This view is representational of School X, as during several meetings, a large number of teachers have expressed the dismay and anxiety that they feel towards teaching disruptive pupils. Bru (2009) therefore, argues that the teaching profession could suffer as a result, as the teachers with the greatest potential may leave the profession due to the high levels of disruptive pupils (Bru, 2009).

2.3: Dealing with behaviour issues using an alternative approach to exclusion.

The DfES (2004) suggests that pupils with challenging behaviour may have underlying difficulties and exclusion in itself does not resolve these difficulties (DfES, 2004). Canter and Canter’s (1988) research reiterates this point and suggests that behaviour issues should be dealt
with using an alternative approach to exclusion. Wider research also highlights the effectiveness and importance of early intervention strategies in managing pupil behaviour (House of Commons Education Committee, 2010), and it is suggested that ‘permanent exclusion should always be a last resort - and in the case of children with special educational needs, who are sometimes the most vulnerable pupils, they should only be excluded in the most exceptional circumstances’ (BBC news, 2008). Sodha and Margo (2010) reported that ‘three-quarters of children who are excluded from schools are identified as having special educational needs (SEN) (Sodha and Margo. 2010), and the DCSF (2008) reported that a majority of excluded pupils are boys aged between eleven and fifteen (DCSF, 2009). These statistics represent the pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, as three of the seven pupils are identified as having SEN, all seven pupils are identified as displaying social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and all seven pupils are boys aged between thirteen and fourteen years.

Browne (2007) suggests that the cost of permanently excluding a pupil from mainstream school could be up to three hundred thousand pounds (Browne, 2007) however, the effects of permanent exclusion on the child are far greater than the financial cost (Smith and Barr, 2008). A recent study however, found that standards of behaviour in schools have risen and compared with the previous twenty years, standards are at their highest (Apter, et-al. 2010). Therefore, it is suggested that behaviour standards in schools are rising due to successful behaviour management strategies and early intervention. Sir Alan Steer highlights the importance of early intervention and suggests that ‘where instances of bad behaviour occur intervention must be swift, intelligent and effective’ (Steer, 2009b. Pg18). With this in mind, this study investigates the effectiveness of the intervention strategy implemented at School X, and identifies the impact of the intervention strategy on the pupils, teachers, and the school.
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In recognition of Bell’s (2010) research, a triangulation approach to the collection of data will be used to ensure reliability and validity of the data collected (Bell, 2010). Laws et-al (2003) suggest that a multi-method approach to the collection of data, will assist in providing a different perspective to be seen, which will subsequently challenge or confirm the findings of each data collection method (Laws et-al. 2003). Middlewood and Abbott (2011) however, highlight the importance of identifying what data is needed and who the data needs to be collected from. Therefore, in order to successfully answer the three research questions, data has been collected from the teaching staff delivering the Alternative Curriculum group’s lessons, through the use of questionnaires, and interviews have been carried out with the seven pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum group. Observations of the Alternative Curriculum lessons have also been carried out, and the pupils’ progress reports have been obtained.

3.1 Chosen paradigm for the research

Middlewood, et-al (1999) recognise the value of research into procedures and practices at schools in order to improve on them (Middlewood, et-al. 1999), and it is suggested that a school becomes a successful learning organisation when it constantly challenges and questions the way it does things (Middlewood et-al. 2011). Drew (1980) defines the purpose of action research as solving a problem and expanding knowledge in a systematic method of enquiry (Drew, 1980), in recognition of this, action research is the chosen paradigm for this study. Carrying out action research has assisted in expanding my knowledge of the impact of the Alternative Curriculum on the pupils participating in the initiative, and has identified whether the Alternative Curriculum is achieving the aims and objectives that the initiative originally set out to achieve. I have then analysed and critically reflected upon the findings and identified appropriate ways in
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which to deal with the issues raised. A report consisting of recommendations for change has been created and will be provided to School X, to assist them in improving their current working practices. Bell (2010) highlights the importance of identifying who will see the final report and who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations for change. With this in mind I have chosen the Assistant Head Teacher to see the final report of the recommendations for change, as the Alternative Curriculum was her original initiative and it is the Assistant Head Teacher’s role to implement the recommendations for change at School X.

3.2 Data collection method: Interviews

The data collection method of conducting a structured interview has been previously trialled and proved to be successful in obtaining the maximum amount of information. Therefore, as one of the methods of data collection, structured interviews were conducted with the seven pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum initiative, with questionnaires forming the basis of the interview. During the interview I read the questions from the questionnaires to the pupils and the pupils answered them verbally during the interview process. This method allowed the interview to have a structure and enabled the pupils to answer the questions verbally without the limitation of literacy skills, enabling the maximum amount of information to be obtained. The intimidating environment of the interview was reduced by addressing the pupils in a friendly and informal way using a language that was appropriate to their age and abilities, as suggested by Bell (2010). Middlewood et-al (2011) suggest leading questions; double questions and questions of a complicated nature should be avoided (Middlewood et-al. 2011), with this in mind, careful consideration was given to the wording of the questions, resulting in the questions being devised to enable the interviewees to have a focus for their answer and also to alleviate the complicated nature of answering double questions. In recognition of Bell (2010) and Middlewood and Abbot’s (2011) research, the structure of the
questions and the order in which they are asked was also taken into consideration therefore, the easier questions were asked at the beginning of the interview, allowing for the more crucial questions to be asked later in the interview when the interviewee feels more at ease in answering the questions (Bell, 2010; Middlewood and Abbott, 2011) (See Appendix 2)

In order to obtain the maximum amount of information from the interviewee, the interviews were recorded, which enabled all possible data to be collected and eliminated the possibility of vital data being neglected or missed through note taking. A problem that I anticipated when conducting the interviews was that the pupils would either answer the questions with answers they think I want, or by giving answers that make them stand out amongst their peers. Therefore, I held the interviews with the pupils individually, this avoided peer pressure from the other pupils and also preserved confidentiality. As the pupils are a particularly vulnerable group of pupils, I ensured that they felt safe during the interview by carrying out the interview in a room that is a safe environment and is familiar to the pupils. I also emphasised to the pupils that my role is of researcher rather than Cover Supervisor, and that the answers they provide will not be discussed with any members of staff at School X. This enabled the pupils to answer the questions with honesty and without concern, as they understood that my focus was on researching the Alternative Curriculum initiative, rather than the pupils themselves.

3.3 Data collection method: Questionnaires

The chosen method for the collection of data from the teachers was questionnaires, as interviews can prove to be time consuming and the logistics of establishing a convenient time when the teachers and I were available at the same time, proved to be impractical. Therefore, questionnaires were issued to the teachers and a time scale of one week was set for completion. The questionnaires were designed to achieve the maximum amount of information from the respondent and
to obtain the most analysable responses, and as suggested by Bell (2010). A degree of precision was used in the questions to ensure the responder understood exactly what was being asked of them, as questionnaires do not offer an opportunity for the explanation of a question, unlike the process of an interview (Bell, 2010). Youngman (1982) suggests the use of different question types in a questionnaire, therefore, to begin the questionnaire a simple tick box to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ was provided to ask if the respondent was involved in setting up the Alternative Curriculum, with the preceding question asking the responder to rank their involvement (See Appendix 3). Bell’s (2002) research suggests this type of questioning eases the responder into the questionnaire allowing for more open questions to be answered later on (Bell, 2002). Bell (2010) also highlights that ‘if respondents are confused, irritated, or even offended, they may leave the item blank or even abandon the questionnaire’ (Bell, 2010. Pg.144), therefore, in recognition of this careful consideration was given to the amount of open questions that were used, as open questions can prove to be too time consuming.

3.4 Data collection method: Observations

In Nisbet and Watt’s (1980) research they recognise that interviews and questionnaires obtain a person’s perceptions of what is happening however, observations identify whether the person is doing what they claim they do (Nisbet and Watt, 1980). Therefore, observations were carried out to enable me to identify if the information that I had received from the interviews with the pupils, and the questionnaires completed by the teachers, is really what is happening in the Alternative Curriculum lessons. This triangulation approach to the collection of data will assist in confirming or challenging the views of the pupils and teachers, and will assist in validating the data collected ensuring its reliability, as suggested by Denscombe (2007).

The observations were recorded in the form of a chart as suggested by Bell (2010), with a tally being used to record the data of when the
pupil was engaged in the activity, not engaged, or if a behaviour issue took place, this strategy was then repeated after the activity and also when beginning the next activity (See Appendix 4). The observation was carried out in one minute intervals for the duration of fifteen minutes, with two pupils being observed in each fifteen minute section. In order for the observation to be successful, engagement with the pupils was avoided throughout the observation. During the observation it was also important to observe the individual pupils in context with what the other pupils were doing, therefore, if a pupil was the only pupil not engaged in the task an asterisk was used to record this rather than a tally mark, in order to enable successful analysis of the data. As Denscombe (2007) and Bell (2010) suggest it is not possible to record every event during an observation and that a single observation is not suffice (Denscombe, 2007; Bell, 2010). Therefore, I carried out three observations during three different curriculum subject lessons. This enabled me to identify the varying teaching strategies being used in the lessons, to confirm what is working and what is not working for the Alternative Curriculum group.
3.5 Ethics

All research has been carried out in accordance with the BERA (2011) ethical guidelines and the University of Northampton’s ethical code of practice (2011). In recognition of this a research ethics approval form has been completed and signed by both the Assistant Head Teacher at School X, and the dissertation tutor from the University of Northampton (See Appendix 5). Permission has been obtained verbally from the Head Teacher of School X in order to carry out the research, and permission from the parents and pupils’ participating in the initiative has been sought through an ‘opt out’ letter. Verbal permission was obtained from the pupils to allow for the recording of the interview and for the interview to be transcribed, this was acquired before the interview was conducted and was also confirmed at the beginning of the recorded interviews. In accordance with the BERA (2011) guidelines a letter was also read out to the interviewees at the beginning of the interviews stating that anonymity will be upheld throughout the interview process, and any transcriptions or data obtained from the interview will be stored securely, confidentially and will have all names or identifying information omitted from them (See Appendix 6). It was also identified to the interviewees, that if at any point the interviewee wished to terminate the interview they are free to do so, and if the interviewee at any point including after the interview, would like to withdraw their permission they are also at liberty to do so, as suggested by Mills’ (2007).

As the pupils participating in the interview are all vulnerable pupils, particular care was taken to ensure that all pupils were made to feel secure and at ease during the interview process. Particular emphasis was also made to my role being of a researcher rather than the role of Cover Supervisor, which assisted in ensuring the pupils felt secure, at ease, and free to answer any questions without the fear of repercussions. In order to carry out the research successfully it was also important that I the researcher, remain objective however, as I have the role as an inside researcher at times this proved difficult,
however, throughout the research process I remained professional and acted with the upmost of integrity at all times. The questionnaires that were provided for completion by the teachers clearly stated at the beginning of the questionnaire that anonymity will be upheld and that all completed questionnaires will be stored securely at all times. It was also identified to the teachers, on the questionnaire, the reasons behind the research and my intentions in using the data collected from the completed questionnaires. In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality a stamped addressed envelope was provided to enable the teachers to post their completed questionnaires to my home address, to avoid any confidentiality concerns that the teachers may have had. Permission was obtained verbally from the pupils and teachers, in order to carry out the observations during lessons and parental consent for the observations was obtained through the ‘opt out’ letter that was issued to the parents before the research commenced (See Appendix 7). All data collected from the pupils and teachers will be destroyed upon completion of this study.
Chapter 4: Results and Data presentation

In this chapter the results from the teacher questionnaires, pupil interviews, observations, and pupil progress reports, have been collated and presented as charts, tables, and in written form. In order to collate the responses from the teacher questionnaires and the pupil interviews, a coding technique has been used to identify key themes in the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) identify that the coding of data enables the ‘clustering’ of key issues in the data, which provides a starting point for conclusions to be drawn (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For the purpose of presenting the data in this chapter the key themes that have emerged are presented as tables with the themes colour coded, and labelled. Where conclusions from the data are beginning to be drawn, these are identified as a key point in the text and further analysis of the key points will be discussed in chapter five. The collected data has been divided into four categories consisting of; Teacher questionnaires, Pupil interviews, Observations, and Pupils’ Progress. The categories of Teacher questionnaires and Pupil interviews have been sub-divided further and the data collected for each question is presented.
4.1 Teacher Questionnaire Results and Data Presentation

Qualitative questionnaires were used to gather background information about the teachers’ initial involvement in the implementation of the Alternative Curriculum, and to gain their perceptions of what is working and what is not working in the Alternative Curriculum. Six questionnaires were sent out to teachers, and five completed questionnaires were returned.

Question 1: Were you involved in the setting up of the Alternative Curriculum initiative?

Out of five responses: Teachers A, B, and C, responded with “Yes” that they were involved in setting up the Alternative curriculum and Teachers D and E responded with “No” they were not involved.

Question 2: On a scale of 1 to 5 how involved were you in the initial setting up of the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ initiative?

Out of three teachers who answered yes to question one; that they were involved in the setting up of the Alternative Curriculum.

Teacher A ranked their involvement as 5 that they were “very involved”

Teacher B ranked their involvement as 1 that they were “not very involved”

And Teacher C did not state their level of involvement.

Question 3: What do you think is the purpose of the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ for the seven boys in the group?

The responses in Table one have been divided into two categories which consist of; To support the pupils in the Alternative Curriculum group, and To support the other pupils in the year group.
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>To support the pupils in the Alternative Curriculum group</th>
<th>To support the other pupils in the year group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>“To foster an ethos of achieving in learning and developing social and inter-personal skills”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>“To enable them to have a more ‘personalised’ education package that caters more closely to their individual needs and enables them to succeed where, in mainstream, they may have failed – also to offer ‘new’ rewards and incentives”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>“To provide more intensive supervision, to try and provide work more suited to their skill sets but most importantly to develop social skills and a better moral compass through interaction”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>“To remove the most disruptive pupils in the year group to give the majority of the others a chance to learn in an environment that allows them to do so”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td>“Keep disruptions to others reduced”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key point:** Three out of the five teachers believe that the Alternative Curriculum’s purpose is to support the pupils participating in the group. Teachers A, B, and C, were involved in the setting up of the Alternative Curriculum group in the first instance. However, Teachers D and E, were not involved and have responded that it was set up in order to support the other pupils in the year group. This suggests that the aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum initiative, were not conveyed to all members of the teaching staff involved.
**Question 4: Do you agree with the choice of pupils in the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ group?**

**Chart 1:**

This chart shows that Teachers A and B agreed with the choice of pupils and Teachers C, D, and E did not agree with the choice. These responses coincide with the responses to the previous questions, which suggest that the level of the teachers’ initial involvement in the setting up of the initiative may be significant to their responses.

**Question 5: Why do you think they were the correct choice of pupils?**

The emerging main point from Teachers A and B’s response, who agreed that it was the correct choice of pupil, is that the pupils previously found working in the mainstream lessons difficult, with class size being a large factor.

**Question 6: Why do you think they were not the correct choice of pupils?**

Teachers C, D, and E, all disagreed with the choice of pupils and the main points behind their reasons for this response is that, one pupil in particular was not disruptive he is just of a weaker ability than others in the year group, and the group of boys chosen do not work well together as a group. Teacher C, elaborated on this point further by
saying; “The group has two types who mix like oil and water. This leads to inattention through poor social interaction”.

**Question 7: What teaching strategies are working in your lessons with the Alternative Curriculum group?**

Table two shows the emerging themes from the responses which consist of; the lesson structure, Activity, Rewards, Pupil Behaviour, and Other suggestions.

**Table 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Lesson Structure</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Rewards</th>
<th>Pupil Behaviour</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>Short, sharp targets clearly focused.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carrot and stick approach.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>Dividing groups into smaller working units. Small breather spaces in lessons. No one strategy works for more than a section of a lesson.</td>
<td>Competition between groups. Very simplified sheets with gap filling creative activities.</td>
<td>Keeping up a dialogue to distract.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>Organised and structured lessons.</td>
<td>Black or White choices no “grey areas”.</td>
<td>Rewards that pupils are looking forward to.</td>
<td>A firm approach.</td>
<td>Calm delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not able to use one strategy for whole group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key point:** The table shows that four out of the five teachers identify that the structure of the lesson is of key importance, with three out of the five teachers suggesting the lessons that work well are structured around shorter activities, with activities being of a practical and creative purpose. Three out of five teachers also suggest that appropriate rewards are a successful strategy in lessons.
Question 8: Why do you think the pupils respond well to this teaching strategy?

The main points of the Teachers’ responses were that the pupils have a short attention span and have difficulty focusing for protracted lengths of time, therefore, short, sharp, activities work as “breaking things up redirects their energies”. Teachers A, and C, also suggested the need for clear guidelines as the pupils “like boundaries”. Teacher E however, suggested that “50% can’t be bothered whatever you try/do”.

Question 9: What do you feel is not working well in your lessons with the Alternative Curriculum group?

The responses in Table three continue with the themes of; Lesson structure, The Activity, Rewards, Pupil Behaviour and Other suggestions. However, the Pupil Behaviour category now includes Pupil Attitudes.

Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Lesson Structure</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Rewards</th>
<th>Pupil Behaviour / Attitudes</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>Long periods of concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing trustworthy attitudes or consistency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extended writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing concentration and listening skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>Concentrated effort for more than 20 minutes.</td>
<td>Anything which involves really academic work. Work involving writing or retention of information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to get them all motivated and working well all the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Jelling’ as a group. Social problems, basic manners, conduct, content of their conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows that the pupils’ behaviour/attitudes are the predominant reason behind the lessons not working. The data from this table also concurs with the data from table two, which identifies the successful strategy of short activities, as Teachers A, B, and C, identify that long periods of concentration, for example; extended writing, does not work well in their lessons. Teacher B elaborates on this by suggesting that the lessons are "Too intense for too regular contact".

**Question 10: Why do you think (your answer to question 9) is not working well?**

The main points from the teachers responses regarding the pupils behaviour/attitudes is that the pupils have poor social skills and they "'bounce’ off of each other – if one is unsettled or being silly it 'infects’ the others". There is also an emerging theme from previous responses that the boys have poor levels of concentration, however, Teacher C commented that "anything seen as 'proper' work is viewed as not worth doing or too much effort", this response questions whether the issue is with the boys concentration skills, or with the work that is being provided.

**Question 11: Do you think the pupils are improving academically, as a result of taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?**

Out of three options consisting of; Yes, all pupils are improving; Yes, some pupils are improving; and No, the pupils are not improving. All respondents answered “Yes, some pupils are improving”, therefore, all respondents were not required to answer questions 12 and 14.

**Question 13: Why do you think some pupils are improving academically, but some are not?**

The responses in table four have been categorised into two themes consisting of; Pupil Behaviour/Attitude and Other reasons.
Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Pupils are improving academically</th>
<th>Pupils are not improving academically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td><strong>Attitude and Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td><em>Once settled, one or two genuinely enjoy achieving.</em></td>
<td><em>Others (the majority) often really don't care and would rather rush work and produce half-hearted results in the hope of being able to do something ‘fun’ for the rest of the lesson (computer games)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td><em>Those are the ones who have some desire to succeed and more realistic support from home</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td><em>Some are more motivated and focused than others</em></td>
<td><em>Can’t retain information / methods</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td><em>Some want to learn</em></td>
<td><em>Poor maturation/attitude</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four shows that all five teachers perceive that the pupils’ behaviour/attitude is pertinent to their academic improvement. Teacher B, however, suggests that some pupils are not improving academically because they are more interested in the reward of being allowed to play on the computer games, rather than participating in the activity itself. This therefore, questions previous suggestions; that rewards are a successful strategy in lessons.

**Question 15:** Do you think pupil behaviour has improved through participating in the Alternative Curriculum group?

Teachers A, B, and D, answered ‘Yes, some pupils are improving. Teachers C, and E, answered ‘No, the pupils are not improving.

**Key point:** In questions one, four, and fifteen, teacher responses are split into; three teachers responding yes to the question and two responding with no. Teachers A and B responded yes to all three questions, however, they were involved with the initial setting up of the Alternative Curriculum group. Therefore, their responses reiterate the suggestion that their initial involvement in setting up the group maybe pertinent to their feelings and responses about the Alternative
Curriculum group, this fundamental point will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

**Questions 16, 17 and 18:**  What do you think is the reason that the pupils / some pupils, behaviour is / is not improving?
The responses for questions sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen, have been collated into the following table, with the themes from the responses being identified as belonging to two categories, which are; Pupil Behaviour/Attitude, and Lesson structure.

**Table 5:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher A</th>
<th>Pupils are improving Behaviourally</th>
<th>Pupils are not improving Behaviourally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One to One, more focused content.</td>
<td>Some need more social/interactive targets, less able to cope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>Again, some give a damn while others don’t.</td>
<td>They have short memories and can be fine one period and awful the next – No consistency. They are developing a bit of a mob or cliché mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td></td>
<td>All students within the group fall to the lowest denominator. Peer pressure from those more bullying/dominant in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>Because there are only 7 pupils, their behaviour is more closely monitored. The others have realised how extreme their behaviour is and perhaps have altered their behaviour to a more positive manner.</td>
<td>There are 2 pupils who have got worse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gang mentality – Only as bad as each other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to Table five, the main point behind the teachers’ reasoning to their responses, is largely down to the pupils attitudes. Teacher D also suggested that because there are fewer pupils in the group their “behaviour is more closely monitored”. Teacher A however, felt that behaviour was improving because of the lesson structure, suggesting that due to the small number of pupils in the group the content of the lesson can be more focused and ‘one to one’ tuition can take place. The predominant theme of why some pupils are not improving is again down to pupil behaviour/attitude, and this view was strongly felt by four out of the five teachers. The main reasoning behind this is that
the pupils are beginning to form a ‘gang mentality’ spurred on by the more dominant members of the group.

Teacher C provided an additional comment that "Behaviour of the lower sets is hugely improved by their absence”.

**Question 19:** What are your feelings about delivering lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group?

**Chart 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your feelings about delivering lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group?</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really enjoy the lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers A, B, and C</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers D and E</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart two shows a three to two divide in the responses again, as teachers A, B, and C, responded that they sometimes enjoy the lessons, and Teachers D and E, do not enjoy the lessons, with teacher E stating that they ‘really’ do not enjoy the lessons. In relation to their answers to previous questions a theme is emerging identifying that; Teachers A, B, and C, have responded with more positive answers, whereas teachers D, and E, have somewhat more negative responses . This concurs with the previous suggestion that the teachers initial involvement in setting up the initiative, maybe pertinent to their feelings towards the Alternative Curriculum group and ultimately the success/failure of the initiative.
**Question 20: How do you feel about the timetable allocation of subjects?**

The responses to question twenty were again split into a three to two divide, with Teachers A, and B, again providing a more positive response saying that the timetable is well split into core and foundation subjects and in proportion with the rest of the year group’s timetable. Teacher C, was unsure of the ratio of subjects however, suggested their contact was high but manageable. Teachers D and E, both responded that too much time was spent on core subjects and Teacher E provided an additional comment that “there should be more staff / less lessons each / more non-curricular subjects.

**Question 21: What do you think the school could do to improve lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group?**

The main points from the responses are that behaviour management strategies should have been agreed and implemented from the start, Teacher E elaborates on this by saying that the pupils have been “left to drift until [becoming] a real problem”. Two out of the five teachers suggested that parents should be invited into lessons, and three out of the five teachers suggested that certain students should be removed from the group to allow for the other pupils to progress. Teacher A, however, said to “ensure that the teachers involved are wanting to teach them”, this comment reiterates my previous suggestion that the initial involvement in setting up the initiative, is pertinent to the teachers views regarding their participation with the Alternative Curriculum group, this fundamental point requires further analysis and will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.
4.2 Pupil Interview Results and Data Presentation

The data collection method of carrying out a structured interview was used to gather background information about the pupils’ views of participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, and to gain their perceptions of what is working and what is not working, in order to answer the three research questions.

Question 1: Why do you think the Alternative Curriculum was set up?

The responses in Table one have been divided into three categories consisting of; To help the alternative Curriculum group learn, To help other pupils in the year group learn, and punishment.

Table 1

| Pupil 1 | “We weren’t doing so well in the classroom last year, so they did it to help us learn.” |
| Pupil 2 | “They thought we didn’t work well in a big class, so they got people who they thought would benefit from it” |
| Pupil 3 | “We were distracting people from their lessons and they couldn’t get on with their work” |
| Pupil 4 | “Because there was too much disruption in all the classes, so teachers decided to get us out of there, so things would run smoothly” |
| Pupil 5 | “So it could help everyone in our group to learn” |
| Pupil 6 | “Because we weren’t very well behaved in our last three years” |
| Pupil 7 | “So we don’t distract everyone in the big group” |

This table shows that six out of the seven pupils believe the Alternative Curriculum was set up to enhance pupils learning, with a fifty per cent
divide between enhancing the pupils in the Alternative Curriculum’s learning and enhancing the rest of the year groups learning. However, pupil seven believed that the Alternative Curriculum was set up as a punishment and a direct result of their behaviour over the previous three years at the high school.

**Question 2: How does it make you feel taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?**

Chart one has been divided into three categories consisting of; Ok, Ashamed, and Hate it, based on the responses from the pupils.

**Chart 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does it make you feel taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pupils one, three, and four said that it makes them feel ashamed being part of the Alternative Curriculum group as other pupils in the school refer to them as the “Spag Class”. Pupil three elaborated on this and said that other pupils point at him and say “look at him he’s so naughty he had to be put in a separate class”, this response questions whether other pupils in the year group view the Alternative Curriculum as a form of punishment rather than to enhance the seven pupils’ learning.

Pupil seven responded that he “hates” being in the group, in reference to pupil seven’s response to question one; that he believes the Alternative Curriculum was set up as a punishment, this questions whether his initial view of being punished is pertinent to his feelings towards the Alternative Curriculum initiative.
**Question 3: Do you feel you are learning more as a result of being in the Alternative Curriculum group?**

Pupils two and three responded ‘Yes’ that they do feel they are learning more as part of the Alternative Curriculum group.

Pupils one and five, responded that ‘sometimes’ they think they are learning more, but sometimes they think they are not.

Pupils four, six, and seven, responded ‘No’ they are not learning more being in the Alternative Curriculum group.

These responses show that the majority of pupils feel that they are not learning more in the Alternative Curriculum lessons.

**Question 4: What do you think has enabled you to learn more?**

The main points from the responses are because it is only a small group they are able to concentrate more and they are able to have more help from the teacher and the learning support assistant. The pupils also commented that they are allowed more freedom in the Alternative Curriculum group therefore, they can choose to work on the computers outside of the classroom which they felt made them more inclined to concentrate on the task.

**Question 4a: Why do you feel you have not learnt more?**

The reasoning behind the responses was because other pupils in the group are continually messing around, the pupils referred in particular to pupil five, and added that this causes them to have to stop and wait for them. Pupil four also commented that for the last half an hour of the lesson they are allowed to play on games on the computer and he says “in that half an hour we could do something else that would help us get a higher grade”. This response questions whether the strategy of using a reward for the second part of the lesson is a successful strategy.
Question 5: Do you feel you have improved behaviourally taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?

Six out of the seven pupils responded with ‘yes’ they think their behaviour has improved, the main reasoning for this response was being part of the Alternative Curriculum group and being with fewer pupils. Pupil four elaborated on this and said “it’s because this school has done this for us, so I have to try and improve”. Pupil three however, stated that “I am working really hard so I can get out of the group”. This response questions whether pupil three views the Alternative Curriculum group as a punishment rather than to assist with his learning, which was his response to question one. This fundamental point requires further analysis therefore will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Pupil one however, responded with ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and his reasoning behind this was because when he is with pupil five, he feels more inclined to mess around.

Question 6: What do you most enjoy in lessons, as part of the Alternative Curriculum group?

Five out of the seven pupils said they enjoyed using the computers, pupils four and six however, said they enjoy lessons in ‘Life Skills’ which consists of lessons in fitness, cooking and building trades at the local college.

Question 7: Why do you enjoy that?

All five pupils who responded that they enjoyed using the computers, said they enjoyed doing research projects on the computers, when asked to elaborate on this all five pupils said they are enjoying doing the ‘American Dream’ project in Geography, which consists of researching their favourite American things and presenting them as a poster to display around the school.
Pupils four and six said they enjoyed the lessons in Life Skills, as they enjoy doing practical activities.

**Question 8: What do you least enjoy in lessons, as part of the Alternative Curriculum group?**

All seven pupils said they least enjoyed; waiting around in lessons, work that required a lot of concentration, and being separated from their friends.

**Question 9: Why do you least enjoy that?**

The main points from the pupils responses are that they “get bored”, when asked to elaborate on this response all seven pupils said that when they are unoccupied or sitting around that is when they begin to ‘mess around’. Pupil three also commented that “I don’t mind writing but when you do it all the time, I get bored and that’s when I can’t cope”.

Five out of the seven pupils also said that they disliked it when the activities had to stop to begin a new activity, pupil four elaborated on this and said “we do something we enjoy then the teacher suddenly changes it when you’re in the middle of something”.

In addition to this all seven pupils commented that they do not enjoy being separated from their friends from the year group, and pupil three further commented that “my old friends no longer want anything to do with me because I’m in the naughty group”. This response suggests the Alternative Curriculum is having a negative impact on the pupils socially and emotionally, this significant finding will be discussed further in chapter five.

**Question 10: What do you think we could do to improve lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group?**

Six out of the seven pupils responded that they would prefer to have more pupils in the class and pupil seven added that he would like “more than two lessons with the mainstream group”. Pupil seven
elaborated on this by saying that in PE lessons, which are with the rest of the year group, he has never been sent out of these lessons for behaviour issues. The additional main points from the pupils’ responses are that they would prefer more practical work and projects in lessons, and they would like more short activities, however, they stipulated that they did not like the activities to be stopped in the middle. Therefore, they suggested that the activities should be related to each other and flow from one to another for example in the American Dream project, the lesson is filled with different activities of researching on the computer, cutting and sticking pictures, and devising posters or computer presentations of their work. The pupils said that this ‘broke up’ the lesson into activities but allowed each pupil to progress onto the next activity at their own pace.
4.3 **Observation results and Data Presentation**

The focus of the observations is to identify if short activities are a successful teaching strategy and engage the pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum. The focus of the observation has been decided based upon the responses from the teacher questionnaires and the pupil interviews, as short activities have been identified as a strategy that is working with this group. Therefore, the use of observation as part of a triangulation approach to the collection of data, will assist in confirming or denying the findings of the questionnaires and interviews, ultimately assuring the reliability and validity of the results in order to successfully answer the research questions. It has also been identified in the responses, that the changeover of activities is when a significant amount of behavioural issues are arising, with this in mind the observation has been carried out to observe the pupils behaviour during the activity, after the activity, and beginning the new activity. The observations were carried out for the duration of fifteen minutes, with observations being recorded in one minute intervals.

**Observation 1:**

Observation one was carried out with all seven pupils present, and consisted of two separate activities where activity one included carrying out written work, and activity two was carried out on the computer. Before the observation period commenced, pupils had already been participating in activity one for twenty minutes.

**During the Activity**

During the activity five out of the seven pupils were fully engaged in the activity and no behavioural incidents were recorded, however, pupils five and seven, although engaged in the activity, two behavioural incidents were recorded which consisted of shouting obscenities to each other across the classroom.
After the Activity

After the activity all seven pupils were asked by the teacher to assist with clearing away the activity, however, only pupils three and four were engaged in this task. Five out of the seven pupils were not engaged in the task and behavioural incidents were recorded for all five pupils, with tertiary levels of behaviour being displayed by pupils five and seven, which consisted of chasing each other around the classroom, using obscene language, and criticising the other pupils. Although pupils three and four were initially engaged in the preparations for the next activity, when they became aware that the other pupils were not participating, they also became disengaged. Behavioural issues were recorded for pupils three and four however, they were in retaliation to the actions of the other pupils and consisted of shouting obscenities to the other pupils.

Beginning the next Activity

When the next activity was ready to begin all seven pupils were not engaged and behavioural incidents were recorded for all seven pupils. Behavioural incidents included; swearing, hitting each other, refusing to follow the teacher’s instructions, and insolence towards the teacher. After several minutes of the teacher instructing pupils to begin the task, pupils three, four and six became engaged in the task and no further behavioural incidents were recorded for these pupils. The remaining four pupils were not engaged in the task however, behaviour incidents were reduced. As the observation period concluded it was noted that all seven pupils had become engaged with the task.

Key point: All pupils were engaged in the activity until the activity ended, and the instruction to move on to the next activity was given. This gap in activities was when the majority of behaviour incidents occurred and the beginning of the next task was delayed as a result.
Observation 2:

Observation two was carried out with six out of the seven pupils, as pupil two was absent for the duration of the observation. Observation two consisted of two activities however, activity two was directly linked to activity one therefore, there was a continuation between the two activities. Activity one consisted of carrying out research on the computer, and activity two consisted of printing out their research and presenting their work on a poster to be displayed around the school. Observation two was carried out at the end of a sequence of lessons, where the pupils have already been working on the activities in previous lessons.

Throughout the fifteen minute observation all six pupils were engaged during the activity, after the activity and beginning the next activity. Although behavioural incidents were recorded for three out of the six pupils, these incidents were primary level displays of behaviour which consisted of distracting one another, and talking at inappropriate times. As activity two was a continuation of activity one, there was not a break between the start of activity two, as a result of this there was not a period between the activities were the pupils were not engaged and this resulted in no behavioural incidents being recorded. The pupils were required to move on to activity two at their own pace therefore, not all pupils were working on the same activity at the same time.

Key Point: All six pupils were engaged in the activities throughout observation two. Activity one and two were directly linked to each other therefore, omitted the opportunity for pupils to become disengaged. All pupils were given the choice of when they moved on to activity two and were therefore, responsible for their own learning. These fundamental observations require further analysis and will be discussed in chapter five; the analysis and discussion section.
Observation 3:

Observation three was carried out with all seven pupils and consisted of two separate activities, however, the pupils were required to move on to activity two when they had completed activity one therefore, there was not a break between the two activities. Activity two was also considered to be a reward upon completion of activity one. Activity one consisted of written work and activity two consisted of working on a chosen activity on the computer. Before the observation period commenced, pupils had already been participating in activity one for twenty five minutes.

During the Activity

During the activity all seven pupils were engaged in the activity and no behavioural incidents were recorded.

After the Activity and Beginning the next Activity

Pupils were required to move on to activity two when they had completed activity one. Pupil seven was the first pupil to complete activity one, when moving onto activity two and waiting for the computer to log on three behavioural incidents were recorded which consisted of; criticising other pupils, shouting obscenities at other pupils, and wandering around the classroom causing a disturbance to others. Pupils two, and six, moved onto activity two with no incidents of behaviour being reported, however, two behavioural incidents were recorded for pupil one, and three behavioural incidents were recorded for pupil five. Behavioural incidents consisted of; causing a disturbance to other pupils, removing the chair from another pupil, and wandering around the classroom. Pupils three and four were the last to finish activity one and no behavioural incidents were recorded during the transition between the activities. Once the computers had logged on all seven pupils were engaged in activity two.
4.4 Pupil Progress results and Data Presentation

In order to identify the impact of the Alternative Curriculum on the pupils’ progress, reports have been gathered for November 2011 and March 2012, to compare the pupils’ progress from the beginning of participating in the Alternative Curriculum and the midway point of the academic year. This data identifies if the pupils have progressed in their learning and will ultimately assist in answering the research questions by identifying if the strategies being used in the Alternative Curriculum are working.

Table one has been divided into three categories consisting of; November 2011, March 2012, and the comparison of the pupils progress between the two dates. The results are taken from the pupils reports, and the score has been calculated by the subject teacher, based on the pupils’ A to E grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>November, 2011</th>
<th>March, 2012</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 1</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Up 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 2</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>Down 8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 3</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>Up 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 4</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>Up 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 5</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>Down 0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 6</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Up 10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 7</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Up 24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart shows that five out of the seven pupils have made progress since participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, whereas two out of the seven pupils have decreased in their progress. Pupil two had the most significant decrease in his progress score however, he also had the lowest attendance figure of 79.7% opposed to an average of 93.2% for the other participants. This therefore, questions whether his level of attendance is a contributory factor to the decrease in his progress.
Pupil five has the lowest score for both November 2011, and March 2012, out of all seven of the pupils. During the pupil interviews, pupil five was identified by several of the pupils as being the main perpetrator of ‘messing around’, therefore, this questions whether pupil five’s behaviour is having a pertinent effect on his level of progress.
Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

The aim of this action research investigation is to identify whether the newly implemented Alternative Curriculum at School X, is having a positive impact on the seven boys who are participating in the initiative and to identify if the aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum which are; to give the seven pupils an opportunity to achieve and to remain in school, to deliver the curriculum in a style that meets the needs of the seven pupils, and to give the other pupils in the year group an opportunity to learn without disruption, are being met.

The results show that the true purpose of the Alternative Curriculum was not clearly identified to all participants before the initiative began, and from responses to the questionnaires, it is clear that the only teachers who were aware of the aim of the Alternative Curriculum, were those who had an initial involvement in the implementation of the initiative in the first instance. Bennet (2012) suggests ‘we only achieve what we aim for’ (Bennet, 2012. Pg8), therefore, if the aims are unclear and not identified to all participants, how can the aim possibly be achieved? The pupils participating in the initiative are also unclear about the true aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum initiative, as six out of the seven pupils are unsure if the initiative is to assist them with their learning or to assist the learning of the other pupils in the year group. A more significant response however, was received from pupil seven who believes the Alternative Curriculum has been implemented as a punishment in direct response to his misbehaving over the previous three years.

The pupils also stated in their responses that they felt ashamed being part of the Alternative Curriculum group, with references to other pupils in the school calling them the ‘Spag’ class. Therefore, it is clear that the aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum were not determined to the other members of the school community either, ultimately leading to them drawing their own conclusions to why the initiative was implemented. This has led to segregation between the
pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, and the other pupils in the school. This view is confirmed in the pupils’ comments from the interviews, which stated that they least enjoyed being separated from their friends and that their previous friends no longer had contact with them, as they are in the ‘naughty’ group. Hackett et-al (2010) suggests that children and young people with SEBD have reduced self-esteem and are a particularly vulnerable group of children (Hackett, et-al. 2010). Therefore, through the lack of communicating the true aims and objectives of the Alternative Curriculum, the pupils have been alienated by their peers, causing an even further reduction in their self-esteem. With this in mind the Alternative Curriculum is clearly having a negative impact on the pupils, on a social and emotional level.

To establish whether the Alternative Curriculum is achieving its aim of providing the seven pupils an opportunity to achieve and to remain in school, the teachers and the pupils were all asked if they feel the pupils are improving academically. As illustrated in chapter four, some pupils are believed to be achieving academically whereas some are not. Using a triangulation approach to the collection of data enables this response to be confirmed, as the pupils’ progress results validate the teachers’ and pupils’ views, by showing that some pupils are improving academically. However, the results do not determine if this progress is a direct result of participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, or if the pupils would have made this level of progress without the intervention. Based on the responses from the interviews, pupils two and five felt that they are improving, yet their results show that out of the seven pupils they are the only pupils whose progress has decreased. This suggests that these two pupils are not being informed of their progress results and also that the Alternative Curriculum is not working for them academically, having said this pupil two also has the lowest attendance figure, this therefore suggests that his attendance may be a contributory factor to his decreased academic progress. With this in mind, it is clear to see that participating in the Alternative Curriculum initiative is not having the desired impact on pupils two and
five, of providing them with the opportunity to achieve. In addition to this the Alternative Curriculum is not having a positive impact on pupil two in assisting him to remain in school, as outlined in the Alternative Curriculums aims and objectives.

Another aim of the Alternative Curriculum is to deliver the curriculum in a style that meets the needs of the seven pupils. Based on the data from the pupils’ progress results, this aim is being achieved for five out of the seven pupils, as the results show an increase in the pupils’ academic progress. Using a triangulation approach to validate the results and ensure the reliability of the data, the teacher and pupils responses confirm these results, as the teachers’ responses state that the well-structured lessons with short activities and work of a practical and creative purpose are pertinent to the success of the lessons. The pupils’ responses add validity to this statement as they state that they enjoy working on projects where they can carry out research on the computer and display their finished work as a poster. Observations were also used to confirm these findings, as in observation 2 it was clear that the pupils were engaged throughout the activity of creating a practical project with the theme of an “American Dream”. The use of observation also confirmed the teachers’ suggestion that the structure of the lesson is of key importance, as in observation one, short activities were used however, there was no consistency between the activities and consequently led to a break between the end of activity one and the beginning of activity two. This gap in the lesson is where the majority of behaviour issues occurred, this significant finding is also confirmed in the pupils responses as they state that they least enjoy waiting around in lessons, and that the cause of their misbehaviours is due to them being “bored” whilst waiting.

An additional aim of the Alternative Curriculum is to give the other pupils in the year group an opportunity to learn without disruption. Based on the comments from the teachers’ emails identified in chapter one, this aim is clearly being achieved. However, I have to question whether this achievement is at the social detriment to the pupils
participating in the Alternative Curriculum group, as through removing the pupils from the mainstream classes this has caused segregation amongst the pupils and their peers, therefore, has School X “sacrificed the few to save the many?” Based on the results of the teacher questionnaires it is clear to see that the pupils’ attitudes are pertinent to the success or failure of the initiative, as the pupils who are making progress are identified as the pupils who want to make progress. In relation to this, pupil three commented that his work and behaviour has improved as he is “trying his hardest to get out of the group”. Pupil three’s response questions the Alternative Curriculums’ impact on his progress, as it identifies that he views the Alternative Curriculum as a punishment and therefore his attitude of ‘keeping his head down’ to get out of the group, is the reason behind his progress.

The attitudes of the teachers’ also has a significant impact on the success or failure of the initiative, as in the teacher questionnaires it is clear to see that Teachers’ A and B were involved in the implementation of the Alternative Curriculum and their responses reflect this, as throughout the questionnaire their responses are all of a positive nature. Although Teacher C had been involved in the initial discussions regarding the Alternative Curriculum, Teacher C did not view his involvement significant enough to be ranked, and Teachers D and E, had no involvement in the setting up of the initiative. Teachers’ C, D and E’s comments throughout the questionnaire were all of a more negative nature, this indicates that their lack of initial involvement in the initiative had a direct effect on their attitudes towards the Alternative Curriculum. Teacher A, reiterated this view by stating that to improve the Alternative Curriculum it needs to be ensured that all teachers are willing to teach the pupils involved. Therefore, if the teachers have not been involved in the initial discussions and are not willing participants, how can they be committed to making the initiative a success? This view is reiterated by Loucks-Horsley (1998) who suggests that to enhance levels of commitment and to support the implementation of new initiatives,
communication must include all staff from the offset (Loucks-Horsley et al 1998).
The Alternative Curriculum was introduced at the beginning of this academic year, for seven pupils in year nine at School X. The pupils were chosen as they were displaying high levels of unacceptable behaviour and were disrupting lessons on a regular basis. At the time of implementing the Alternative Curriculum initiative, School X was in the fortunate position of being overstaffed and in a secure financial position. However, due to the economic downturn, the transition process of School X becoming an academy, and teacher reluctance to participate in the initiative, School X is no longer in such a fortunate position. Therefore, School X has taken the decision to cease the Alternative Curriculum at the end of this academic year, in line with the current participants’ transition to secondary school. In light of this, this concluding chapter will discuss the main findings of the completed research and will answer the three research questions however, as the initiative will cease to exist, the findings will also discuss successful and unsuccessful strategies in relation to all pupils at School X.

**Question 1: What is working and why is it working?**

Based on the findings short activities are a successful teaching strategy, however, the lesson structure has a vital role in the success of this strategy. It was identified that the activities need to be directly related to one another, be of a practical and creative nature, and the pupils should be allowed to progress onto the next activity at their own pace. This results in the pupils being responsible for their own learning and alleviates the waiting for other pupils to complete the activity. Rewards were also identified as a successful strategy although it was highlighted that the reward must not overshadow the activity, resulting in pupils rushing to finish the work to gain the reward. The use of computers has also been identified as a successful teaching strategy, as the pupils particularly enjoyed expanding their knowledge by carrying out research on the computers.
**Question 2: What is not working and why is it not working?**

It was identified in the findings that lessons requiring long periods of concentration were unsuccessful, as the pupils have short attention spans and find it difficult to engage in a task for extended periods of time. Pupils’ attitudes were also a predominant factor to what is not working, as it was identified that some of the pupils perceive the Alternative Curriculum as a form of punishment and therefore, have a negative attitude towards the initiative. The pupils also felt they are being stigmatised as a result of participating in the group. Cooper (2011) recognises the negative effects of stigmatisation and the marginalising effect of labelling children, he also suggests that behavioural issues can be ‘the product of an interaction between the individual and the environment’ (Cooper, 2011. Pg88). This is representational of the effect of the Alternative Curriculum, as it was identified that the pupils feel they are being alienated by their peers therefore, the pupils are responding to this environment by forming a ‘gang’ with the other members of the Alternative Curriculum group.

**What needs to be done to make it work, or improve it?**

As previously stated the Alternative Curriculum will cease to exist after this academic year, however, if an initiative is to be implemented in the future, it is pertinent that all participants are involved in the initial discussions before the initiative is implemented. Powell’s (2002) research reiterates this point and recognises the importance of Senior Management sharing the decision making process, as this will ultimately empower and motivate teaching staff, making them more willing to participate and ensuring their commitment to the success of the initiative (Powell, 2002). Inclusion of all participants in the initial discussions and the implementing of the new initiatives, also enable behaviour management strategies to be agreed and implemented from the beginning. As research widely suggests this results in clear
boundaries being set and a consistent approach to rewards and sanctions (Steer, 2009a).

In conclusion the Alternative Curriculum was destined to be unsuccessful from the offset, as the Senior Management team had not portrayed the aims and objectives to all of the Teaching staff before the initiative began. Therefore, the Teaching staff who were not involved at the beginning felt they had been ‘dragged’ along and this ultimately resulted in negative feelings amongst staff about the initiative, and also towards the pupils participating in the group. The initiative had also not been discussed sufficiently with the pupils participating in the group and the other pupils in the school, resulting in the pupils in the group being stigmatised and alienated from their peers. This created a reaction from the pupils and they formed a ‘gang’ mentality and had a negative attitude towards the initiative and the teachers involved. The Alternative Curriculum has however, been a great success with regards to the other pupils in the year group, as it has removed the disruption from their lessons and allowed for successful teaching and learning to take place. This leads me to question whether the success of the other pupils, was the ‘real’ reason behind the implementation of the Alternative Curriculum.

As a result of this action research investigation a key question has arisen of “what happens now?” The pupils participating in the Alternative Curriculum make the transition to secondary school at the end of this academic year therefore, I question what support is in place to assist the pupils with the transition process? The pupils have been isolated away from their peers for the duration of this academic year therefore, they not only require support with the transition to their next school, but they also need support with being integrated back into a school community. This fundamental point has been raised in the recommendations for change, which will be provided to School X.

As research suggests there is ‘no single solution to the problem of poor behaviour’ (DfES. 2005.Pg.2), however, all schools should be consistent in their approach to behaviour management, teaching and
learning. A high level of communication between all participants is also a necessity, to empower all participants to take responsibility and enhance their commitment to raising academic and behaviour standards (Loucks-Horsley et-al, 1998; Hapner and Imel 2002; Steer, 2009b).
Chapter 7: Recommendations for Change

'Ensuring that all staff share clear expectations and communicate them to pupils, is key to promoting positive behaviour and attitudes to learning’.

(Steer, 2009b)

The aim of the action research project was to investigate what is working with the newly implemented Alternative Curriculum initiative at School X? What is not working? And what needs to be done to improve it? From the findings it is clear to see that short activities consisting of a practical and creative nature are a key strategy. Therefore, I recommend that lessons are structured around a series of short activities which are a continuation from one activity to another. This enables the lesson to flow and has a varied approach to the teaching and learning, which allows pupils to be responsible for their own learning, as they can progress to the next activity at their own pace. This results in pupils remaining on task for longer periods reducing the time for behaviour issues to arise.

As the Alternative Curriculum initiative will cease to exist after this academic year, recommendations for change to the initiative cannot be devised, therefore, the following recommendations are for the implementation of future initiatives. Based on the findings from the action research investigation, I recommend that the aims and objectives of the initiative are fully discussed with all participants involved, with staff and pupils given the opportunity to convey their ideas and concerns before the initiative is implemented. I also recommend that once the aims and objectives of the initiative have been agreed by all participants, the aims and objectives are then communicated to the whole school. This will reduce the possibility of other members of the school community drawing their own conclusions to why the initiative has been implemented, diminishing the
stigmatisation of the pupils involved. I also recommend that in order for an initiative of this magnitude to be a success in the future, it is pertinent that all staff involved are fully committed to the initiative from the offset.

A key question has arisen from the action research investigation regarding the pupils in the Alternative Curriculum group’s transition to the secondary school. Therefore, I recommend that strategies need to be in place in order to support the pupils in the transition process, but also to support their integration back into the school community. As the pupils are all vulnerable pupils and are identified as displaying social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, it is imperative that full support is given to the pupils, in order for their transition to be successful and for the pupils to successfully establish social relations with other pupils in their new school.
References:


Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2004), *Removing Barriers to Achievement*. Nottingham: DfES.


Appendices:

Appendix 1: Teacher Emails regarding the impact of the Alternative Curriculum on the other pupils in the year group.

Appendix 2: Pupil Interview Questions.

Appendix 3: Teacher Questionnaires.

Appendix 4: Observation Chart.

Appendix 5: Research Ethics Approval Form.

Appendix 6: Ethics letter read out to interviewees.

Appendix 7: Letter sent to parents obtaining their consent for the research.
Pupil Interview Questions

Question 1:
Why do you think the Alternative Curriculum group was set up?

Question 2:
How does it make you feel taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?

Question 3:
Do you feel you are learning more as a result of being in the Alternative Curriculum group?

Question 4:
If Yes – What do you think has enabled you to learn more?
If No – Why do you feel you have not learnt more?

Question 5:
Do you feel you have improved behaviourally taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?
Question 6:
What do you most enjoy in lessons, as part of the Alternative Curriculum group?

Question 7:
Why do you enjoy that?

Question 8:
What do you least enjoy in lessons, as part of the Alternative Curriculum group?

Question 9:
Why do you least enjoy that?

Question 10:
What do you think we could do to improve lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group?
I am currently studying for a BA Honours degree in Learning and Teaching and my intentions are to write a dissertation on the Alternative Curriculum initiative at Bushloe High School. I would really appreciate it if you could find the time to complete this questionnaire, as I would like to use it as part of the research on the aforementioned subject.

I would like to assure you that all completed questionnaires will remain confidential and you will not be identifiable in any written reports or transcriptions. To ensure confidentiality I have enclosed an envelope for you to return the completed questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of twenty one questions, with the answers required ranging from a simple yes and no, to spaces for you to write fuller answers.

Thank you for your support.

Karen McDonagh
1. Were you involved in the setting up of the Alternative Curriculum initiative?

Yes [ ] If yes go to question 2

No [ ] If no go to question 3

2. On a scale of 1 to 5 how involved were you in the initial setting up of the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ initiative? (Please circle your answer and go to question 3).

1 2 3 4 5

Not very involved Very involved

3. What do you think is the purpose of the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ for the seven boys in the group?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Appendix 3
4. Do you agree with the choice of pupils in the ‘Alternative Curriculum’ group?

Yes □ If yes go to question 5

No □ If no go to question 6

5. Why do you think they were the correct choice of pupils? (Please do not include the names of pupils)

6. Why do you think they were not the correct choice of pupils? (Please do not include the names of pupils)

Appendix 3
7. What teaching strategies are working in your lessons with the Alternative Curriculum group?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

8. Why do you think the pupils respond well to this teaching strategy?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

9. What do you feel is not working well in your lessons with the Alternative Curriculum group?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Appendix 3
10. Why do you think (your answer to question 9) is not working well?

11. Do you think the pupils are improving academically, as a result of taking part in the Alternative Curriculum group?

- Yes all pupils are improving  [ ]  go to question 12
- Yes some pupils are improving  [ ]  go to question 13
- No the pupils are not improving  [ ]  go to question 14

12. Why do you think the pupils are improving academically?

(Go to question 15)

Appendix 3
13. Why do you think some pupils are improving academically, but some are not?

14. Why do you think the pupils are not improving academically?

15. Do you think pupil behaviour has improved through participating in the Alternative Curriculum group?

   Yes all pupils are improving □ go to question 16

   Yes some pupils are improving □ go to question 17

   No the pupils are not improving □ go to question 18

Appendix 3
16. What do you think is the reason that the pupils’ behaviour is improving?

17. Why do you think some pupils’ behaviour is improving, but some pupils’ behaviour is not?

18. What do you think is the reason that the pupils’ behaviour is not improving?
19. What are your feelings about delivering lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group? (Please tick the appropriate box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really enjoy the lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy the lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes enjoy the lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not enjoy the lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really do not enjoy the lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. How do you feel about the timetable allocation of subjects?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

21. What do you think the school could do to improve lessons for the Alternative Curriculum group?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Appendix 3
Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire
And
Thank you for your continued support.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided.
Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed by me today. I will be asking you questions about the Alternative Curriculum initiative at [Redacted]. The interview should last no longer than twenty minutes and, if you are still in agreement, will be recorded and then transcribed. If at any time you wish to end the interview you are free to do so and you do not have to take part in this interview if you do not wish to. In addition to this you are free to withdraw your permission at any time.

I am currently studying for a BA Honours degree in Learning and Teaching and my intentions are to write a dissertation on the Alternative Curriculum initiative at [Redacted]. I would like to use this interview as part of the research on the aforementioned subject.

I would like to assure you that all comments made during the interview will remain confidential and you will not be identifiable in any written reports or transcriptions.

Thank you for your co-operation and support.
Dear Parent/Guardian

I am currently working as a Cover Supervisor at Bushloe High School, whilst also studying for a BA Honours degree in Learning and Teaching. As part of this degree, I am undertaking research for my dissertation on the Alternative Curriculum initiative that has recently been implemented for the small group of year 9 pupils, of which your son is a member.

An area of this research includes observing various Alternative Curriculum group lessons, and interviewing pupils to gain an understanding of their thoughts and ideas for the Alternative Curriculum. I can assure you that as the research is on the Alternative Curriculum as a whole, I will not be researching individual pupils and only collective thoughts, perceptions and ideas will be used. I would also like to assure you that anonymity and confidentiality is of the highest priority and no pupil will be identifiable in my research findings.

If you have any concerns or do not wish for your son to participate in the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours Sincerely

Appendix 7