

London School of Economics and Political Science

*Contesting the Ideal Learner: An Ethnography of Teachers Work
in a Community School*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the construction of ideal learners through ethnographic examination of teachers' and school managers' work in Heath High, a mixed community school in outer east London. It examines classroom room-based formative assessment, school-wide internal assessment and managerial practices of audit and academic stratification to re-visit critical concerns in critical education literature about the social effects of summative assessment and related managerial practice within marketised governance. This work goes beyond an understanding of the ideal learner as a truth effect of neoliberal discourse in education. Rather, it explores the influence at the micro-level of multiple dominant discourses of students' subjectivity in learning and the teachers' professional and political subjectivities in the construction of ideal learners. It draws upon the trajectory of Assessment for Learning literature; its appropriation and transformation by government and its agencies; its association with Ofsted's notions of independent learning and its role in institutional controversy about Ofsted's preferred learning styles following the election of the Coalition government in May 2010. Based on analysis of eight months' worth of fieldwork conducted over the 2011/12 academic year, this project reflects on a variance of practice across different departments at Heath High and the role of the pastoral Heads and the Head Teacher in matching the inclusive, community ethos of the school to the demands of the local education market. This research is the basis for two substantive findings. First, it reveals how counter-hegemonic ideas about education's role and worth and subject specific passions directly influenced the type of learner most valued in some departments. This agency, though, was partial and contingent, dependent on departments' relative exposure to the school's market position. The concept of educational triage is extended to analysis how departments constitute themselves, and are constituted by, their relative exposure to the market position of the school. A spectrum of practice is revealed: At one end, socially violent subjectivating practices, causing visible anxiety among students. At the other, direct and sustained challenge to Ofsted's understanding of assessment and students' expressions of hegemonic individualism. The second contribution is analysis of the complementarities and conflicts between the social liberal educational ideas and an insurgent traditional paradigm within marketised governance. These were felt at the micro-level and where a challenge to the Heath High's version of educational inclusion. Managerial practice

at Heath High suggested the strong influence of social liberal ideas about educational inclusion. Their manifestation in school policy was threatened by a drip of policy changes in my year at the school, resulting in recalibrations of systems of audit and measurement, effecting the construction of students' educational subjectivity at the micro level. This suggests understandings of students' learning subjectivities needs to be attuned to the influence of multiple discourses within marketised governance, their historical formation and questions of continuity and change at the level of the school.

Contents

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Chapter One – Assessment, Pedagogy, Politics	7
1.1 Overview	
1.2 The Transformation of Assessment for Learning	
1.3 Questioning Formative Assessment	
1.4 Key Arguments	
1.5 Overview of Chapters	
Chapter Two – Researching the Independent Learner	24
Introduction	
2.1.1 More Than Neoliberalism	
2.1.2 Teachers’ Work and the Discursive Production of Ideal Learners	
2.1.3 Theorising Multiple Ideal Learners	
2.2.1 Ethnographic Rationale: Subject Position and Subjectivity	
2.2.2 Research Strategies	
2.2.3 The Year at Health High	
Chapter Three – Forward to Data Chapters	57
Chapter Four – Managing Students’ Progression in English	67
Introduction	
4.1 ‘All about the colour coding’	
4.2 Diary of a Wimpy Kid	
4.3 Operationalising Rowley	
4.4 What Went Well? Even Better If?	
4.5 Performance Management Pedagogy	
4.6 Context and Content	
4.7 Anxious, Narrow and Effective Educational Inclusion	
4.8 Conclusion	
Chapter Five – Negotiating the relationship between levels of learning in maths and Citizenship	105
Introduction	
5.1 Proselytising Maths	
5.2 Maths Is Fun!	
5.3 Build a School	
5.4 What’s an Area?	
5.5 Constructing Algebraic Expressions	
5.6 Defending Citizenship	
5.7 Departmental Triage	

5.8	Conclusion	
	Chapter Six – High Expectations	148
	Introduction	
6.1	More Than Numbers	
6.2	Explaining High Expectations	
6.3	“Help Me to Succeed”	
6.4	Ethics and Numbers: The Role of the Pastoral Head	
6.5	Changing Expectations	
6.6	Conclusion	
	Chapter Seven – New Questions about Ideal	188
	Introduction	
7.1	Departmental Triage	
7.2	Social Liberal Education under Threat	
	Bibliography	197
	Glossary	217

Chapter 1: Assessment, Pedagogy, Politics

1.1 Overview

This thesis is based upon ethnographic research of teachers' and school managers' use of internal assessment in a mixed community school in outer east London. The focus on internal assessment derives from a critical reading of Assessment for Learning research (Black and Wiliam 1998a, 1998b, Assessment Reform Group 2002a, Assessment Reform Group 2002b), specifically, its appropriation within New Labour's Third Way (Giddens 1998) political project for education and its incorporation into Ofsted literature (2004, 2006, 2010, 2011a). The original Assessment for Learning literature defined a set of formative assessment practices which could ameliorate the damage done to students' confidence and motivations by summative testing (Black and Wiliam 1998a). These practices were appropriated and transformed by government and its agencies, who articulated them alongside concerns for audit and schools' data management. The result was a hybrid practice, which reformulated the relationship between students' educational subjectivity, the construction of the academic hierarchy and teachers' practices of labelling and intervention.

This project describes how the classroom micro-practices and processes of data collection associated with it were enacted, in order to revisit longstanding concerns in the sociology of education for educational inclusion and social justice. In particular, it interrogates the extent and social significance of continual, quantified formative assessment practice in light of existing critiques of high stakes summative assessment and related managerial practice within the context of marketised governance (Reay and Wiliam 1999, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004, Ball 2003). Analysis focuses on the type of learner validated through formative assessment and the motivations and calculations of teachers and school managers, which lie behind this valorisation. This introductory chapter proceeds by explaining the motivations behind the research. This is followed by: a summary of the transformation of Assessment for Learning, which defines the practices which are subject to analysis; a description of the research questions and key sociological literature. It finishes with an overview of the research process; and a summary of subsequent chapters.

Aims and Motivations

These lines of enquiry were motivated by my own professional and political questions about the relationship between educational inclusion and the types of educational subjectivity valued in official forms of pedagogy and assessment. These were direct concerns, written into my practice as a teacher of Citizenship education. I grappled with the professional and political ambiguities of grading students in this new, compulsory subject. The open invitation for inclusive, active citizenship following the Crick Report (1999), with explicit instruction for skills based, exploratory pedagogic styles, seemed to contradict the closed grades I had to give students¹. What were the social implications of attaching grades to 'Citizenship' at sixteen? What was the significance of the difference between a level 5a and a level 6c for a thirteen year old? Moreover, what did these grades mean for issues of democracy, equality and human rights on the curriculum? These were not abstract questions. I had to justify these grades to parents and children. Quantifying the performance of the newly officially prescribed citizenship subjectivities seemed to encapsulate key elements of continuity and change in New Labour's educational project. This invoked nominally progressive ideas about students' subjectivity in learning and inclusion but left unquestioned key political questions about the relationship between academic stratification and social inequality. Questions like these led to the decision to pursue sociological enquiry, focussing on the ideal learner in officially prescribed forms of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, the professional subjectivities these practices assume and the reproduction of educational inequality.

As initial research progressed, the focus moved away from questions of curriculum content and formal Citizenship Education, and onto a broader reading of how students' learning subjectivities were recast within the Personalised Learning agenda (DCSF

¹ These concerns are reflected in commentary on the political ambiguities in curriculum content of Citizenship Education and professional fears about assessment of the subject. Crick, the author of the original curriculum declared '*what is not ruled in, is not ruled out*' (2000:118), which was also taken as an invitation by teachers to innovate (Wrigley 2006).

Ofsted's assessments were less ambiguous. In 2005 it found it to be the worst taught subject on the curriculum (Ofsted 2005). Five years later, it had found the situation had improved dramatically following the implementation of 8 Level National Curriculum scales for Key Stage Three and GCSE (2010b). The imposition of these grades provoked pedagogical and political concerns among practitioners (Huddleston and Kerr 2006) and critical commentary (Gillborn 2006) which were similar to my own.

2006, Ofsted 2006). Within this agenda, (DCSF 2008a) emerged as a concrete practice, centred on finite, observable instructions for teachers and managers. These instructions were inscribed into educational governance (Ofsted 2004, 2006, 2010, 2011a), where they were associated with the construction of an active independent learner. This learner was associated with abstract political concepts, such as social mobility and economic security (Ofsted 2006). Evidence of the performance of this educational subjectivity was associated with more tangible, observable attributes, such as excellent teaching (Ofsted 2010a) and responsible management (Ofsted 2004). Like Citizenship Education, (DCSF 2008a) these brought progressive notions of students' educational subjectivity and educational inclusion and married them to assumptions about the role and form of education: That its worth can be measured in quantified outcomes; that academic progression is the linear acquisition of these outcomes and that these measures can be used to judge students, teachers and schools in a marketised system. As I entered the field in 2011, the educational subjectivities Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) invoked, particularly notions of students' independence in learning, were the subject of institutional controversy at Ofsted, where they were held to be evidence of preference for progressive teaching styles in school inspection (Wilshaw in Ofsted 2012, Peal 2014). The progressive nature New Labour's interventions into pedagogy found a form of negative confirmation in sustained attack from the political right (Gove 2009, Saville 2010, Peal 2014). The educational subjectivities discussed in Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) literature mark the emergence of competing narratives of students' subjectivity in dominant educational discourse; a social liberal one, emphasising learning, and a traditionalist formation, emphasising teaching. Yet, for all the heat in official discourse, Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) betrays fundamental convergence around official understandings of education derived from the 1988 Education Act. Whether the ideal student in educational discourse is learning independently or being taught traditionally, they are being measured, or measuring themselves, by the same metrics which are used to judge students, teachers and schools in a marketised system of provision.

Thus, this account of Assessment for Learning practice offers a chance to extend existing critical understandings of assessment practice and also to problematize the shared assumptions about education's role and worth in political debate. The empirical

focus of this thesis is on the classrooms, assemblies, and managerial interventions where Assessment for Learning strategies are enacted. Ethnographic method is deployed in these sites in order to attend to questions of heterogeneity and contestation within professional and political educational discourse about students' subjectivity in learning and to register the critical implications of the professional subjectivities and hermeneutic processes which guide classroom and managerial work. By making these processes visible, it aims to fulfil one of the roles set by ethnography by Willis and Trondman (2000) and makes a modest contribution to knowledge of what exists in order for alternatives to be put to public debate. In particular, it speaks to claims made about the complicity of progressive ideas in a neoliberal project for education and the potential for a more socially just classroom practice system within the current marketised system (Reay 2012, Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen 2012).

1.2 The Transformation of Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning began life as professional based action research (Black and William 1998a, 1998b, Reay and William 1999, Assessment Reform Group 2002a, Assessment Reform Group 2002b)², which aimed to mobilise existing literature and original research in order to persuade government and its agencies that fundamental reform of assessment practice in schools was necessary. This research showed that an overemphasis on high stakes summative testing damaged students' motivations and their understanding of learning. It mobilised evidence that a switch to formative assessment could improve learning outcomes for all students, especially lower and middling achieving students. Formative assessment was defined as any assessment which produced evidence which students and teachers could use to help subsequent learning (Assessment Reform Group 2002a). The phrase "Assessment for Learning" was deliberately used to differentiate it from the assessment **of** learning, which was

² The following referencing conventions will be applied to differentiate between the original research and the transformed version this project interrogates:

The original research will be referenced as (Black and William 1998a). This refers to "*Inside the Black Box*", the document which introduced and defined practice. The classroom practices proposed by this research are referred to techniques.

The government's transformed version is referenced as (DCSF 2008a). This document, titled Assessment for Learning Strategies, summarises the governments interpretation of techniques and outlines the funding arrangements for training of this practice. The classroom practices proposed by (DCSF 2008a) are referred to as strategies. (

useful for exam accreditation and professional accountability, but is not necessarily learning itself (Black and Wiliam 1998a). The switch to formative assessment was to be achieved through the introduction of simple classroom tasks, which could be spread through peer-led training (Assessment Reform Group 2002b). These included sharing assessment criteria, developing students' questioning skills giving targeted feedback and peer and self-assessment (Swaffield 2009: 2). These practices repositioned the student as an active educational subject, able to reflect on their learning and that of their colleagues in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement (Swaffield 2009).

The question of students' agency in learning in this literature was central. It was "*built on an underlying pedagogic principle that foregrounds the promotion of pupil autonomy*" (Marshall and Drummond 2006: 133). The aim of these practices was to re-cast students as active learners, as opposed to a passive recipient of knowledge or the demoralised and confused object of academic ranking (Swaffield 2009). These practices were later contextualised as forming the basis of learning conversations, which were theorised as dialogic acts of meta-cognition, meeting the core tenets of a constructivist educational philosophy (Black and Wiliam 2009). Assessment for Learning (Black and Wiliam 1998a) went beyond traditional pedagogical approaches, which deploy behaviourist traditions of assessment that focus on "*measuring individual students' performance in specific domains against externally norm-referenced distributions of attainment*" (Florez and Sammons 2013). This agenda was also an intervention into teachers' professional subjectivity. It proposed peer-led training as the most effective way for teachers to understand and apply the core tenets of research. Emphasis was placed finding space for professional reflection about students' learning, which, their research showed, was different from, and curtailed by, managerial demands to get results (Black et al 2003).

The policy orientated aims of the research were met with some success. It was referenced frequently in key policy documents of educational governance (Ofsted 2003, DfES 2006), and speeches (Miliband 2003, 2004 a and b, Clarke 2008). £150 million was set aside for training teachers in the core tenets of Assessment for Learning practice (DCSF 2008a). Politicians and civil servants used their positions of political influence to assemble Assessment for Learning research alongside other

initiatives. But in doing so they fundamentally altered it, inscribing their version of formative assessment into educational governance (Ofsted 2004a, DCSF 2008, Ofsted 2010). Significantly, Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) was interwoven with concerns for measurement, standards and managerial audit, and mobilised alongside initiatives designed to meet these end, such as Assessing Pupil Progress (Ofsted 2011a) and Making Good Progress (DfES 2006). At stake in this transformation was a move away from a research agenda focused on students' learning needs and subject-specific learning requirements, towards one focused on National Curriculum assessment levels and schools' data management. Those associated with the original research distanced themselves from these documents³. They complained that the use of levels and standards alongside the practices they outlined was a fundamental misrepresentation of their work (Swaffield 2009, Stewart 2012). They were also unhappy with a switch from peer led training to governmental decree (Stewart 2012, Swaffield 2009).

In this transformed practice, the micro-practices proposed by the original Assessment for Learning research were to be re-orientated onto an understanding of academic progression as quantified and linear. This led to a hybrid practice (Bangs 2011) which fundamentally altered the purpose of Assessment for Learning research, from a desire to give students ownership of their learning in the classroom, to a compulsion to make students responsible for their own academic progression, measured in the currencies of marketised governance. This entailed a shift in the understanding of students' educational subjectivity; the concern of the original research for the confidence of learners was recast as independence, often described as self-management and self-measuring (Ofsted 2010, 2011a,). The practices defined in the original research; communicating assessment criteria, developing students' questioning skills, improving feedback and self and peer assessment, were to be geared towards quantified

³Dr Paul Black, co-author of the original Assessment for Learning research explained to me that Assessment for Learning Strategies ignored the key finding of their research: *"It should not be about grades but be about the pupils own work, it's about an individual conversation with the child, and the child with their peers, about how they can improve it...but to do this you need to avoid giving out marks as much as possible."*

He was even more scathing about the methods used to disseminate Assessment for Learning teaching methods; *"They did not seek formal advice on how to do it. Their method in was to train guys to do the presentations who had not done it. One day seminars with files given out...In one seminar there was a presenter with a script, this was not going to endear them to the teachers".* (2011)

performance outcomes, not qualitative learning goals. This made possible a continual audit of students' performance for Information Communication Technology (ICT) mediated intervention, but entailed the rejection of on the key findings of (Black and William 1998a) research; that grading and marking can have a detrimental effect of students' motivation and confidence (Assessment Reform Group 2002a). At the level of educational philosophy, it entailed the transformation of a constructivist understanding of education as the collective construction of knowledge, with the teacher in the role of mentor, sitting by the child (Swaffield 2009), into the cold logic of knowledge as human capital, with the teacher cast in the role of coach, academic stopwatch in hand, poised to performance manage their team up the school league tables.

At the level of classroom practice, Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008a) valued a calculating learner, able to calibrate each educational performance to externally set key performance indicators, managed by a teacher motivated by similar concerns; Students would know "what level they are working on...and what they need to do to progress" (DCSF 2008: 6). By doing so, they would put "hard data into the hands of school leaders" in order to "compare against local and national benchmarks" (Miliband 2004a: 9).

Assessment for Learning strategies were clearly observable when I entered the field in September 2011 by virtue of their inscription onto key strategy documents (DfES 2006), defined funding Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008), and of no small consideration to teachers and school managers, Ofsted's notions of good management (2004) and excellent teaching (Ofsted 2010). Christine Gilbert, head of Ofsted between 2006 and 2011, played a key role in the creating this hybrid practice by articulating the specific practices forwarded in the original research, matching them to levels (Ofsted 2006), and by briefing her officers to look for its practice, whilst seeking evidence for independent learning during school inspection (2010). These documents value a resourceful, reflective student, focused on their own academic progression, able to intervene in their own educational subjectivity alongside a smart school hierarchy, ready to respond quickly to trends emerging from the continuous production of performance data. Her inspectors were instructed to check:

“Are pupils working independently? Are they self-reliant? Do they cope with choices? How well do pupils collaborate with others? Do they ask questions, of each other, of the teacher or other adults?” Are students assessing their own learning and progress? Do they have targets and do they understand what they mean and what to do to achieve them...Are staff using Assessment for Learning strategies?” (Ofsted 2010: 4/5)

Phil Beadle (2009), a teacher and educational commentator writing in the Guardian, captures something of the consequences of Ofsted’s articulation of practice in his school.

I was struck by how assessment for learning has become a viral philosophy. It infiltrates every corner of every mention of school improvement, and seems to be accepted on tablets written on stone as, perhaps, the single most important key to pupil achievement. But until last term I had no idea what it was.”

For the political right, the inscription of these subjectivities were evidence that Ofsted had a preference for progressive child-centred pedagogy, and had been captured by “*the Blob*”, a coalition of teaching unions, senior civil servants and university education departments (Peal 2014, Sewell 2010). In the middle of my time in the field, Christine Gilbert was replaced by Sir Michael Wilshaw (2012). Her legacy was challenged, particular her notions of students’ subjectivity in learning. In one of his inaugural speeches he stated:

We, and in that word “we” I include Ofsted, should be wary of trying to prescribe a particular style of teaching. Do not expect to see “independent learning”. On occasions pupils are rightly passive rather than active recipients of learning.

However, for all the heat in political discourse around notions of students’ independence in learning, the transformation of Assessment for Learning(1998a) into Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) suggests a level of continuity and convergence across the two regimes. Whether children are learning skills through an independent, exploratory method, or knowledge through didactic means, there is a shared assumption that students’ learning is measurable in comparable outcomes, its purpose is for devolved economic governance and its outputs’ currencies of judgement in ever more marketised provision.

1.3 Questioning Formative Assessment

Tracing the trajectory of Assessment for Learning reveals a defined set of classroom micro-practices; the sharing of assessment criteria, questioning, self and peer assessment, which are directly connected to managerial practices of audit and intervention. An extended analysis of these practices is used to revisit critical concerns raised about the relationship between, and social effect of, marketised school governance and in-school academic differentiation in the sociology of education and critical policy literature. This includes concerns about the relationship between standardised testing and educational inclusion and exclusion (Reay and William 1999, Hall et al 2004), the social violence caused by a return to selection practices (Whitty et al 1998, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004) and changes to the meaning of teaching and teachers' roles brought by the entrenchment of marketised governance (Ball 2003). This literature shares a focus on the social and professional consequences of standardised, summative assessment which are used to represent schools' worth in league tables. The initial concern of this thesis is to analyse the extent and social consequences of the same currencies of judgement in micro-practices of formative assessment. Exploratory analysis of this shift towards formative assessment focused on three interrelated areas, suggesting three broad lines of enquiry:

i. Formative assessment and the construction of academic progression

The quantified version of Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008a) suggests a shift in how academic progression is constructed which differs from existing accounts of summative testing. This shift is along three interrelated lines: First, academic progression, as opposed to end of year or key stage tests, has heightened the importance of students' and teachers' work in the classroom. A key part of Assessment for Learning's (Reay and William 1999) transformation was its articulation alongside the Making Good Progress (DfES 2006) and Assessing Pupil Progress initiative Ofsted (2011a). These projects aimed to orientate teachers work on tracking the progression of all students, especially at Key Stage 3, rather than focussing on high achievers. Second, the shift towards progression suggests the academic hierarchy continuously co-created through class-room micro-practices rather than imposed by externally. This suggests a change in how students are subjectivated as the sharing of assessment

criteria, self and peer assessment, questioning skills are calibrated to help students “*manage their learning*” (Ofsted 2011a) according to these externally set metrics. Third, Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) proposes the extended use of information management software to track and display data about academic progression produced by these classroom practices. This suggests school practices of labelling, intervention and allocation of resources could be continual, rather than cyclical, and based on evidence derived from regular formative assessments, rather than ad hoc judgements. Taken together, they suggest a suite of interconnected practices which recalibrate teachers’ regular micro-assessment tasks towards the needs of marketised governance.

This analysis led to a questioning of how formative assessment is used to construct academic progression and the meaning of academic progression itself. This questioning entailed a focus on: how academic progression was made meaningful by teachers and school managers; in particular, how teachers, managers and students manage the contradiction between universal expectations of progression and individually differentiated educational outcomes; how the defined practices are used in the classroom, including how subject specific constructs are matched to key performance indicators; how students assess each other using these metrics and how they physically record the outcomes of these tasks; what tools are used and their place in the rules and routines of the classroom; how teachers and school managers use ICT to label and intervene in the student body, what their motivations were in doing so and when and where these practices take place in the school routine.

ii. Formative Assessment and the creation of Students Learning Subjectivities

The focus on students’ learning subjectivities arises directly from the transformation and contestation which Assessment for Learning was subjected to. The original research sought to shape an exploratory, social learner through classroom micro-practices. This understanding of students’ role in the classroom was transformed and economised by New Labour, and then officially codified through Ofsted’s valorisation of independence in learning. In turn, this understanding of students’ educational subjectivity was subjected to sustained attack from the political right (Gove 2009, Sewell 2010), reflected in institutional controversy at Ofsted (Wilshaw from Ofsted

2012, Peal 2014). The ideal learner in these narratives is ambiguous and contested. The valorisation of specific learner subjectivities has deep political significance in sociological research. A longstanding research interest has been to chart the creation of specific types of students through teachers' subjective judgements and schools' bureaucratic processes (Hargreaves 1967, Becker 1971). More recent work has focussed on the connection between marketised governance and schools internal practices of labelling, academic stratification, the allocation of educational resources and the reproduction of hegemonic individualism (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004). This work is supported by critical policy literature which has charted the social violence inherent in the high stakes testing used to judge schools worth on the education market (Reay and William 1998, Hall et al 2004). The sum of this literature suggests the way academic progression is constructed in schools and the resultant practices of stratification and labeling have a significant impact on the educational exclusion and inclusion of different social groups. It suggests that assessment practice, and by extension, the marketised governance of schools, is implicated in an ongoing social violence toward students who cannot perform the characteristics of the desired ideal learner, resulting in a classed, racialised and gendered academic hierarchy. This literature has specific relevance to formative assessment, as the original Assessment for Learning research (Black and William 1998 b), in part, represents a professional response to some of these concerns. Diane Reay and Dylan William's (1999) paper "I Will Be A Nothing" charted the anxiety and fear which accompanied National Curriculum assessment practice. An important strand of Dylan William's contribution, beginning with "*Inside the Black Box*" (Black and William, 1998b), was to turn these observations into a technical, normative research paradigm which would appeal to policy-makers, teachers and school leaders.

This analysis provoked questions of how the construction of academic progression using Assessment for Learning strategies creates ideal learners across different sites of the school. This literature provides key analytical points to discuss the critical implications of how formative assessment is used in the classroom and deployed as part of routines of audit and intervention by school managers. It draws out the critical implications of the link between micro-practices of learning and the metrics of marketised governance proposed by Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008).

iii. Formative assessment and teachers' and managers' professional subjectivities

The focus of teachers' professional subjectivities is also raised directly by the transformation Assessment for Learning was subjected to. The original research (Black and Wiliam 1998a) was peer-led and action orientated. It directly hailed teachers' professional subjectivities, specifically locating their professionalism as a driver of change (Black et Al in the Assessment Reform Group 2002). These professional subjectivities were also implicitly political. The original research provided a critique of the influence of marketised governance on students' education (1998a) and teachers' professional freedom, albeit expressed in the normative language of learning. The inclusion of Assessment for Learning in Ofsted literature (2004, 2006, 2010, 2011a) suggests a policy with a strong element of direction and compulsion. These documents position teachers as the producers of performative fragments of knowledge (Ball 2003). They compel teachers to ask students to do the same. It presents them with conflicted scripts about what the attributes of the ideal pupils are and what they should be doing in the classroom to encourage students to perform these attributes. Moreover, the two versions of Assessment for Learning practice suggest contrasting accounts of what their own professional subjectivities are. It both invites them to be concerned, reflexive professionals, and compels them to get results. The original research worked on residual notions of educational inclusion, and was articulated within a wider policy framework that worked with older narratives of child-centred education. New Labour articulated these concerns as the equivalence of measurable standards, but it is an open question as to whether this transformation is accepted or understood by teachers and school managers.

These ambiguities provoked an exploration of the relationship between teachers' subject position in marketised provision and their subjectivity as professional actors. The policy discourse that surrounds Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) provides clues as to how this might be enacted in schools, but this is not sufficient to understand how these practices are understood, or the processes of acquiescence, contestation or deflection that may influence the form they take. Moreover, the narratives of pedagogy that Assessment for Learning mobilised, and those that were mobilised against it by the incoming coalition government, build on educational practices and

ideas that have a longer lineage than government ministers and Ofsted directors. They take place in institutional environments with their own histories and cultures. These tensions, ambiguities and context specificities directly invoke questions of teachers' hermeneutic processes: how these policies are understood by those that enact them, and what forms of agency are on display in the sites in which they are enacted.

These understandings provoked a questioning of what professional subjectivities contributed to the construction of academic progression. This question entailed a focus on influence of teachers' own educational beliefs, including the original Assessment for Learning (Black and Wiliam 1998 a, b), their subject-specific passions and the complementarities and conflicts between these factors and their roles as providers of results for the school.

1.4 Key Arguments and Overview of Chapters 2 to 6

Two claims are made about the wider significance of formative assessment practice at Heath High. The first contribution is to show the existence of discourses wider than those associated with marketised governance influencing the formation of students learning subjectivities. Counter-hegemonic ideas about education's role and worth and subject specific passions directly influenced the type of learner most valued in some departments. This agency, though, was partial and contingent, dependent on departments' relative exposure to the schools A-C economy. The concept of educational triage is extended to analysis of how departments constitute themselves, and are constituted by, their relative exposure to the A-C economy of the school. Departmental triage helps account for the variegated impact of marketisation on the micro-practices of learning and the existence and influence of non-neoliberal discourses of education. This adds nuance to important but sometimes catastrophist and totalising contemporary critical accounts of neoliberalism and schooling. A spectrum of practice is revealed: At one end socially violent subjectivating practices, causing visible anxiety among students. At the other, direct and sustained challenge to Ofsted's understanding of assessment and students' expressions of hegemonic individualism.

The second contribution is analysis of the complementarities and conflicts between the social liberal educational ideas and an insurgent traditional a paradigm within the broad discourse of marketised governance. These were felt at the micro-level and where a challenge to the Heath High's version of educational inclusion. The head teacher and pastoral heads described in their own terms how their number one priority was to stop the development of an educational other (Youdell 2006). Their practices were understood in narrow, economic terms and were fundamental to the school's A-C profile. They were also understood in political and ethical terms, defined against current government policy. Understandings of working class cultural deficiency mixed freely with ethical concerns about students' well-being, moral notions of right and wrong, notions of social justice and the mission of community schools. This work on enfranchisement had impact on teachers' work. The ability to maintain friendly social relations with children and to be able to deploy emotional labour, were positioned as key teacher attributes which could stop students' demoralisation. Heath High's version of inclusion was described as fundamental to the ethos of the school, yet key aspects of it were threatened by changes to the governance of schools and shifts in how the A-C economy were measured.

Chapter 2: Researching Teachers Work

This chapter lays out the analytical points in the sociology of education this thesis engages with, including notions of educational triage, the formation of students' identities through assessment and notions of performativity of knowledge in education. It outlines the ways in which this literature help analyse the social implications of the learning subjectivities valued in assessment practices. It critiques the neo-Foucauldian readings of neoliberalism which underpin some of this literature, and explores the construction of students' educational subjectivities as something more than uniquely neoliberal discourse. It argues for an ethnographic understanding of subjectivity (Willis and Trondman 2000, Ortner 2005) and an understanding as policy and politics as hegemonic practices of rule (Clarke 2005, Newman and Clarke 2009). The second half of this chapter outlines how these conceptualisations influenced the research strategies. It describes the political and ethical considerations which accompany

ethnography and research in schools. It outlines the influence these considerations had on the collection, selection and presentation of data.

Chapter 3: Forward to Data Chapters

Chapter 4: Managing Students Progression in English

This chapter outlines how the English department's exposure to the schools A-C economy drove teachers to use Assessment for Learning Strategies in way that directly paralleled the performance management of the department. Teachers used Assessment for Learning strategies in closed, controlled routines in order to performance manage their learning, suggesting a distinct model of academic stratification. Performance management of learning suggests onerous and boring teaching. This was not the case. It relied on teachers' deployment of affective labour and elicitation of students' personal experiences and emotions in order to achieve investment in texts. This talk of the self, combined with deployment of strategies, worked to produce a powerful set of subjectivating practices, which invite discussion of notions performativity of knowledge, educational confession (Edwards 2008, Fejes 2008) and governmentality (Rose 1992). This chapter reveals the departmental context and subject content specific factors which drove this practice, and outlines the calculations made by teachers to articulate curriculum content and assessment practice in this combination. Their assessment practice gave most value to an atomised, fragmented form of knowledge. Time in these classrooms suggested the existence of an anxious form of educational inclusion which worked to socialise the academic hierarchy, hiding its social origin and disguising its effects, strengthening hegemonic individualism (Youdell 2004).

Chapter 5: Negotiating the Relationship between Levels and Learning in Maths and Citizenship

This chapter outlines how assessment practice was reflective of how teachers negotiated the performance management of their work and students' expectations in their teaching. Much of the description and analysis starts from the subtle differences between these two departments and the stark difference both departments had with

English. The concept of educational triage (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004) is tentatively developed in order to account for these different ways departments were treated according to their exposure to the schools' A-C economy, the types of agency present in these different spaces and the critical implications for the learning subjectivities present. Teachers in these departments outlined strongly held professional and political beliefs about the meanings of their subjects and explained how these ideas influenced the assessment practice I observed. Tellingly, teachers in both departments articulated ideas which ran contrary to Ofsted's understanding of assessment. In maths, teachers emphasised the damage done to students' conceptual understandings by teaching to the levels. Formative assessment practice was used to sculpt and experimental and social learner, focussed on discussing how they had failed. In Citizenship, assessment practice was linked to an explicitly political critique of elitist education policy and the damage it had done to teachers' professional freedoms. Assessment was a negotiated process, whereby students constructed their own criteria, though there was too little time to embed these practices in order that all students participated fully. This variance represented real agency, but this was partial and contingent. In maths it was dependent on the continuation of excellent results, in Citizenship, it reflected the lack of GCSE examination; a situation the head of the department justified in political and pedagogical terms.

Chapter 6: High Expectations

This chapter describes the work of heads of department, heads of years and head teacher in constructing the meaning of academic progression. The subjectivating practices it reveals show how progressive educational ideas have been made consonant with marketised governance. Disenfranchisement of students in the school, understood in economised terms, reflecting the institutional sedimentation of educational social liberal ideas from New Labour's time in governance. Much of this chapter focuses on examples of "*High Expectation talk*" by heads of years and school managers. The repetition of these words played a key role in unifying staff and students behind the school as both a corporate entity and a moral and political project. This talk found its way into the way students were categorised as needing help to succeed in Year 7, revealing opinions about working class cultural deficiency and notions of middle class normality. The ubiquity of "*High Expectation talk*" suggested

an understanding of the anxious form of inclusion present in the English class as something generalised and pervasive in the school for some students. The ethos of high expectations was made possible by a constant focus of positivity, celebration of different forms of success and ongoing concerns for students' welfare, which had direct consequences for the roles of teachers within the school. This ethos, though, faces challenges in the form in a shift in performative demands within the A-C economy and changes to school's governance. Heath High's version of high expectations is contrasted to these divisive and elitist policy shifts and unfair comparative expectations. The shift within marketised governance from a social liberal model to a traditionalist model was felt keenly as threat to the schools ethos and managerial style. Responses to this threat entailed a recalibration of processes of audit and measurement which make up practices of departmental triage, potentially calling into question the contingent spaces of agency described in earlier chapters, with direct implications for the ideal learner valued in these sites.

Chapter 2: Researching Teachers' Work

This thesis engages notions of educational triage (Gilborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004), the construction of students' identity through assessment practice (Reay and William 1999), the performativity of knowledge (Ball 2003) and educational confession (Edwards 2008, Fejes 2008). This literature deploys concepts which make up key analytical points (Willis and Trondman 2000: 399) which are used TO analyse the social consequences of teachers' work. This project shares the premises of this literature, that the valorisation of certain subjectivities through assessment, selection and pedagogic form is implicated in ongoing social violence. It shares a critical focus on the link between the production of students' and teachers' subjectivities in micro-sites of schooling and broader trends in governance, specifically the entrenchment and evolution of marketised governance following the 1988 Education Act (Whitty et al 1998, Ball 2008). The analysis which follows goes beyond neo-Foucauldian understandings of neoliberalism, particularly that provided by Rose (1989, 1992, 1996). Rather, it explores the work teachers do to construct students' educational subjectivities as something *more* than the truth effect of a uniquely neoliberal discourse.

It will argue that an understanding of the "relations of force between discourses" (Hall 1986) is vital to understanding the contested notions of independent learning which Assessment for Learning practice invokes, and that ethnographic understandings of subjectivity are best able to capture its social meaning and social effects. An understanding of the productive nature of policy discourse in the construction of ideal learners, is augmented in two ways: First, by an appreciation of the multiple and contested accounts of educational subjectivity, as outlined in the previous chapter, which constitute Assessment for Learning and are present in contemporary policy discourse. Second, by an appreciation of the context specific subjectivities of teachers present in the translation of policy into classroom experience, including the productive capacities of their hermeneutic processes. Underpinning this shift is an understanding of policy and politics as constituting hegemonic practices of rule (Williams 1977 Clarke 2006, Clarke et al 2007, Newman and Clarke 2009) and ethnographic understandings of subjectivity (Willis and Trondman 2000, Ortner 2006). By being able to attend to

questions of heterogeneity and contestation in the construction of the ideal learner, such a conceptualisation can fulfil the roles afforded to critical education research by Apple (2006): to both bear witness to relations of domination and suffering and be attuned possibilities for counter-hegemonic spaces. This chapter proceeds in two main parts. The first focuses on the conceptual questions about the politics of students' subjectivity outlined above. The second section focuses on the influence of ethnographic conceptualisations of subjectivity, the influence of UK school-based ethnographic research on this project and the application of ethnographic method at Heath High. I return to the research questions throughout this chapter, describing how this literature is used to augment the three central questions and how it is used to structure analysis.

2.1.1 More Than Neoliberalism

This engagement with sociological accounts of educational subjectivity, works with longstanding cleavages in the sociology of education between understandings of policy as discourse and policy as text (Ball 1993). These positions are reflected in two divergent ontological positions within critical education literature from which to understand the relationship between policy and teachers' work in schools (Ball et al 2011). The first (ibid 2011: 611). This Foucauldian frame (1972, 1990, 1991) involves studying teachers' and students' subjectivities as the effects of "*policy technologies*" (Ball 2008). The second focuses on the hermeneutics of policy, "The ways in which policies in schools are subject to complex processes of interpretation and translation." The focus here is on the ways in which "*teachers come to understand new policy ideas through the lens of their values and pre-existing knowledge and practices, often interpreting, adapting, or transforming policy messages as they put them in place*" (Coburn, 2005: 477). Both views are necessary but neither is sufficient (Ball et al 2011). This project holds to a fuzzy compromise; Policy discourse defines the *subject position* of teachers, but does not define their *subjectivity*. This position best fits the ambiguous ways Assessment for Learning positioned teachers. The inclusion of notions of independence into Ofsted literature (2004, 2006, 2010a, 2011) positioned teachers as responsible for enacting a particular form of educational subjectivity, holding them to account for the performance of independent learning in inspection (2010). The valorisation and condemnation (Willshaw 2012, Peal 2014) of the keyword

"independence" hides a deep convergence of the logic of marketised governance, suggesting alternatives are made un-say able or cast useless knowledge (Foucault 1972, 1980). In contrast, the original Assessment for Learning research (Black and Wiliam 1998a) worked directly with critiques of the metrics of marketised governance. It positioned teachers as reflexive practitioners and hailed their professional subjectivity as a source of positive change (Black and Wiliam 1998a). It worked with constructivist pedagogic discourses (Black and Wiliam 2009) that have longer lineages than the 1988 Education Act. Thus, the ethnographic focus proposed aims to provide a *"balancing act"* (Apple, 1999: 61) which works across the dialectic tension between actor and subject embodied in the discourses of learning subjectivity associated with Assessment for Learning practice.

As indicated, the decision to decentre neoliberalism and pursue ethnographic method fulfils a political role. It is in part a response to the current conjuncture in critical education literature, which finds little space to talk about educational phenomena which are not neoliberal. In its various Marxist, Foucauldian and Bourdesian varieties, the concept of neoliberalism is deployed across a range of traditional research sites in the sociology of education, suggesting strong convergence validity around accounts of the consolidation of social inequalities. These social effects are not disputed, but this convergence raises troubling conceptual and political questions. Clarke (2008) defines a broader trend in critical literature in policy and governance to impart omnipotence and omnipresence to neoliberalism by conceptual design. Part of the issue here is one of standpoint; over twenty five years since the 1988 Education, marketised governance has consolidated and evolved and, in the field of educational subjectivity, diverged. In this field, neoliberalism is neither univocal nor uniform and critical enquiry requires an attendant conceptual and methodological re-calibration. The contrasting positions of the independent learner in Ofsted discourse, raise direct questions about how these variations are present in the learning identities that are valued in the classroom. The issue is also one of being able to test rather than confirm a critical account (Newman and Clarke 2009). At a more critical level, there is the danger of the political performativity of declaring a dominant education effectively complete.

The aim of this adjustment is not to impart an intrinsic progressive telos to teachers' professional subjectivities. Consistent research has shown teachers' attitudes towards marginalised groups reproduce educational inequality (Reay et al 2004, Francis and Mills 2004, Dunne and Gazely 2008). Rather, this project is within a broad tradition in the sociology of education, which seeks to address these attitudes and to "to raise the consciousness of teachers to show education as reflecting and contributing to the contradictions of the social, political and economic order" (Barton and Walker 1978: 280). Assessment for Learning provided, in a limited, way, a critique of marketised governance through the normative language of learning and pedagogy. One of its principle authors, Dylan Wiliam, was associated with sociological critique (Reay and William 1998). It demonstrated that concrete classroom practices could lead to less inequitable outcomes. The proposition here is that micro-decisions over pedagogy and assessment, how academic progression is constructed in the classroom, can impact on questions of social justice and inclusion, suggesting a middle way (Lingard and Mills 2007) between the view that schools inevitably produce inequalities and "sociologically naïve" (ibid: 2334) policy discourse.

2.1.2 Teachers' Work and the Discursive Production of Ideal Learners

Analysis of formative assessment practice engages with the concepts developed by writers who have used a Foucauldian frame to describe the creation of particular sorts of educational subjects. Notions of educational triage, hegemonic individualism and the critical consequences of schools' subjectivating practices (Gilborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004, Youdell 2006) provide important ways in which to analyse the critical significance teachers' and school managers' work. In addition, notions of the performativity of knowledge (Ball 2003) and educational confession (Edwards 2008) sensitise critical enquiry to specific aspects of Assessment for Learning strategies. These writers use a conception of the individuals' subjectivity as the product of discourse, understood here as forms of knowledge that order the social and make it meaningful (Foucault 1990, 1991). They offer empirical analysis of the intersections of policy, governance and school-based micro-practice in terms of the subjectivating practices, that is the way in which teachers and pupils are, at the same time, created as subjects and subjected to power through educational discourse. These analytical frames have been selected for their "power in relation to the data for purposes of

illumination” (Willis and Trondman 2000: 399). This literature sensitised analysis of formative assessment practice to subjectivating practices, which value “certain sorts of people”, and carry with them “educational and social exclusions and inequalities” (Youdell 2010: 1).

The focus on teachers work and the meanings they make from it mean complex questions of students’ identifications’ with the roles afforded to them by Heath High are not followed. It is important, though, to note both the productive role of students in the creation of particular sorts of ideal learners, and also their capacity to “*resist normative meanings*” and “*assert and enact subjectivities of their own*” (Youdell 2009: 140). Youdell’s more recent works take up Butler’s (1997) exploration of discursive agency to account for students’ capacity to resist schools’ discursive practice and their individual and collective practices of anti-subjectivation (Youdell 2010, Youdell and Armstrong 2011). These works support Thompson’s (2010) observation that notions of the ideal learner rarely match the lived experience of students. These two different roles afforded to students, as subjects of discourse and as political actors capable of resistance, appear in the following chapters’ inasmuch as they are contributing factors to teachers’ work and the meaning they make from it.

Triage, Hegemonic Individualism and Social Violence

Notions of educational triage provided this project with a vital way of talking about the connection between the macro- and meso-level impacts of marketisation and the use Assessment for Learning strategies at the classroom level. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Youdell (2004) describe the processes by which teachers’ judgments of students’ worthiness are influenced by schools’ exposure to the local education market, measured in the proportion of students who achieve A-C at GCSE. Their work builds on a longstanding research interest in the sociology of education for the construction of ideal students. Becker’s notion of the “*ideal client*” in education (1971) and its relationship to social class, influenced UK based researchers to look at questions of social class, teachers’ labelling and academic stratification (Hargreaves 1967, Rist 1970, Ball 1981). Later analysis addressed questions of gender (Walkerdine 1990) and race (Gillborn 1990) to show how schools’ ideal student was constructed as white, male and middle class. Gillborn and Youdell extended these accounts to showing how

hegemonic individualism and schools' strategic response to marketisation interacted to construct ideal, acceptable and unacceptable learner identities, which worked systematically to privilege white middle class students. They laid out how the pressure to maintain schools' market position drove schools' strategies, which sorted students into categories based on judgments of their instrumental value for position in league tables. Students were defined as *"safe"*, *"treatable"* and *"hopeless"* based on upon judgements of their future performance in exams. As a consequence, resources were targeted at students at the C/D border in GCSE grades, in attempt to compete for market position. Youdell (2004) later offered refinements to this concept, suggesting that the school districts and individual schools constituted themselves as *"safe"*, *"treatable"* and *"hopeless"*. In addition, she pointed at, inside the classroom, ongoing pedagogic practices and teacher-student interactions, which constitute students as suitable subjects for the allocation of educational resources. This literature directly influenced the decision to closely follow the link between Assessment for Learning strategies as a managerial tools of audit, the decisions made at different levels of the school in response data, and how Assessment for Learning strategies were deployed at the micro-level.

Gillborn and Youdell's work also provided crucial ways in which to talk about how the ideal learner is constructed in these sites, allowing emergent questions of class, race and gender to be recognised within a multi-level analysis. The acts of triage they outline, were permeated by the discourse of hegemonic individualism, which worked to systematically privilege white, middle class students. Working class, black and male students were disproportionately labelled as hopeless cases. Their analysis showed how teachers made subjective judgements, based on whom they thought displayed the qualitative attributes of cases suitable for treatment. They point to a subtle shift of understandings of failure within hegemonic individualism, from scientific or cultural models, to the language of individual responsibility, with consequences for teachers' judgements about who might benefit from, or deserve, the scarce resources of the school. Judgements based on individualised notions of success were ad hoc and based on discredited notions of innate ability. The social power of triage as a subjectivating practice, derives from the way in which the categories it creates are deemed natural and pre-existing, rather than the effect of managerial strategy, cultural assumptions and marketised governance. Their work illustrated how subjectivation

works, through what is unquestioningly recognised as the norm, which in educational discourse reflects unspoken assumptions (Savage 2003) about the middle class family and its beneficial cultural dispositions (Reay 2006). In the context of the unspoken normality of the middle class family and the relentless performative demands on schools, those outside this norm are subject to systematic institutional disadvantage, understood here as a form of ongoing social violence. Questions of recognisability, who might merit resources, who is validated as a respected student, remind us that students lying outside this remit face the prospect of being cast aside as impossible learners (Youdell 2006). As Reay and William's (1999) study reminds us, the subjectivating power of market-focussed assessment profoundly influences the students' sense of self-worth.

These understandings sensitised my time at Heath High in four ways: First, it led to a focus how hegemonic individualism was present in how the meaning of academic progression was expressed to students in individual departments and in whole school sites. Stark differences emerged. Some teachers employed counter-hegemonic discourses, albeit within a whole school ethos, which validated individualised notions of success. Second, it led to analysis of the relative social violence of these different practices. The primary focus is on questions of social class, which entered the field in an explicit, moralised and gendered form in sites where students were categorised and separated for intervention. Third, it focussed attention on the relationship between the systems of continual audit and measurement proposed by Assessment for Learning Strategies (DCSF 2008a) and teachers' ad hoc judgement of students. Heath High was a data heavy school, with a plethora of statistics on current and historic performance of students and their predictions available to all teachers through School Information Management Systems (SIMS). This software played a key role in mediating the demands of marketised governance at Heath High, holding teachers and students to account at the same time. Regular internal assessment practice was used to keep a continual record of students' performance. The data presented by this software seemed to both create categories of student and augment teachers existing subjective decisions. Finally, understandings of hegemonic individualism influenced a sustained focus on the use of self and peer assessment, its role in constructing specific forms of educational subjectivity. Analysis focussed on the social significance of asking students to publicly discuss metrics which are shown to be implicated in

ongoing social violence. During my time in the field, Ofsted re-articulated their vision for a particular kind of independent learner, to be enacted through these practices:

These strategies helped pupils to own and understand their targets. Target setting was most powerful in taking learning forward when pupils knew “how” as well as “what” to improve. Pupils’ capacity to learn independently was increased when they were given the opportunities and skills to assess and manage aspects of their learning. (Ofsted 2011a)

Performativity of Knowledge & Education Confession

In addition to triage, Ball’s (2003) account of the performativity of knowledge also influenced analysis of the extent and form of independent learning as outlined in documents like this. Specifically, it helped provide a way to discuss the critical consequences of the sharing of assessment criteria and the relationship of this practice to National Curriculum levels. Ball describes performativity as a mode of regulation that employs metrics for comparison and judgement as a means of social control. The performances as measured by these currencies’ judgement, of individuals, organisations or parts of organisations, serve as a measure of output. They force participants to game the system according to the logic of performative work, not through what is intrinsically good or ethical. Contemporary knowledge is produced according to what is expedient to these standardised metrics; the “*productivity criterion*”, not what is true in the humanist sense, or beautiful. These technologies are a mechanism by which public sector organisations are remade with the “method, culture and system” of the private sector. They replace older policy technologies of “bureaucracy and professionalism” (Ball 2003: 216). It leads to a form of controlled freedom, where practitioners are free to do what they like, as long as they hit the targets. The welding of the original Assessment for Learning research to the Assessing Pupil Progress (Ofsted 2006, 2011a) and Making Good Progress initiatives (DFES 2007b) suggests a practice which passes down the productivity criterion to students. This led to critical questions how “*method, culture and system*” of the private sector is enacted as pedagogic form in the learning of students. These understandings helped analysis of the consequences for the form of knowledge, the type of learning and the type of learner where this practice manifested itself, and of the critical consequences for

parallels between the performance management of staff and the pedagogic form in these sites.

Literature on confessional practice in education and broader culture influenced analysis of the ways in which teachers elicited students' emotional personal accounts of themselves and themselves as school subjects in lessons, assemblies and detentions. This focus developed out of recognition of the affinity between the learning conversations in the original Assessment for Learning literature and the account of confession in Foucault (1990). "*Learning conversations*" (Black and Wiliam 1998a) were naturalised by being based in scientific discourse, reconfigured as dialogic meta-cognition. Papers were published to prove the veracity of the practice. Founding fathers, such as Piaget and Vygotsky (Black and Wiliam 2009) were used to legitimate the lineage. Reports were sponsored to dissect its effectiveness (Assessment Reform Group 2002, 2003). It produced a more valid knowledge about academic progression; "current national testing in England and Wales falls far short of acceptable requirements of reliability and validity" (Black 1998: 57). At the same time, these processes were found to be natural, something which good teachers already do (Black and Wiliam 1998a) just waiting to be uncovered and realised: Assessment for Learning got "*Inside the Black Box of Learning*" (Black and Wiliam 1998a).

This affinity chimes with authors who have used Foucault's account of confession alongside his later lectures on neoliberalism and governmentality (2008a 2008b) to describe new pedagogical modalities, associated with narratives of lifelong learning and educational counselling and student-led audit. Belsey and Peters (2007), Usher and Edwards (2007) and Fejes and Dahlstedt (2013) describe the increased use of study plans, learning diaries as subjectivating practices embodying new modalities of governance. The link between this literature and this thesis is apt, given the members of the Assessment Reform Group saw Assessment for Learning techniques as a natural extension of these practices (Swaffield 2009). Writers in this frame conceptualise confessional educational practice as a technology of the self, along the lines proposed by the Anglo-Foucauldian governmentality method (Rose 1992, 1999 Rose and Miller 2008). In this literature educational confession operates to shape a specific subjectivity; "an individual who is responsible for their education and whose will to learn is being shaped". It is a process that relies on "*expressing* one's inner

desires to the confessor (educational counsellor), which makes one's self an object of knowledge (visible for calculation)" (Edwards 2008: 15). Dialogue also plays a key part in Ofsted's valorisation of the independent learner, and is present alongside in the key documents which outline Assessment for Learning strategies. Christine Gilbert, head of Ofsted in the critical period of this project, called for:

"Dialogue between teachers and pupils, encouraging pupils to explore their ideas through talk, to ask and answer questions Collaborative relationships which encourage and enable all pupils to participate " (Ofsted 2006: 13)

A reading of Brooks' (2000) *Troubling Confessions* also influenced this line of enquiry. This work gives a critical account of the prevalence and power of the urge to tell one's story in literature and culture. It describes how the legal and religious conceptions of confession have bled into wider social practice. It suggests that close attention should be paid to the nature of the social bond between confessor and confessant, and the immediate context in which a confession is extracted. The promise of confession is to uncover what is hidden, but given the strong social pressures to confess, the urge tell all about oneself, and the strong stamp of authenticity confessional talk brings, we need to keep a critical distance from the truth that is produced in confessional talk. Brooks states:

"We need to ask, in all cases, what purpose is served by confession, what response it solicits, and what person or persons who receive the confession are supposed to do with it". (Brooks 2000:10)

These understandings of confession are used to analyse the ways in which teachers used students' personal histories as pedagogic aids, and the work of pastoral heads in intervention groups. Confessional talk in these sites emerged as a key component of some of the more socially violent subjectivating practices in the school, invoking deeply personal stories in lessons and explicit moral categories of class and gender in sites of school discipline, forcing students to talk about their behaviour in these terms.

2.1.3 Theorising Multiple Ideal Learners

This literature provides a vital way in which to talk about the social consequences of teachers' work. It provides key insights into the dynamic relationship between marketised governance and the construction of classed, racialised and gendered

academic hierarchy at the classroom level. This project shares the critical concerns of this literature. However, it seeks to augment neo-Foucauldian framings of the ideal learner, with new questions about both the influence of multiple and contested narratives of learning in dominant educational discourse, and the existence of counter-hegemonic discourse within the professional field. Teachers make meanings with the discursive possibilities available to them (Ball et al 2011). Assessment for Learning presented teachers with a discursively complex, ambiguous and contradictory set of practices. The notions of educational subjectivity it mobilises worked with constructivist notions of pedagogy (Black and Wiliam 2009). The original research (Black and Wiliam 1998a) was connected to sociological critiques of Government policy (Reay and Wiliam 1999). It was articulated within a policy framework, the Personalised Learning Agenda, which worked with notions of educational subjectivity which have a long history of conflict following the Plowden Report of 1967. These subjectivities were economised, and articulated by Government and its agencies as the equivalence of independent self-measurement. The subjectivities it invoked, most prominently notions of independence, were subject of political contestation, manifested directly in institutional controversy at Ofsted (Ofsted 2012). In summary, the ideal learner invoked by Assessment for Learning, is multiple, contested and sits on highly charged ideological divides in the British educational governance. As a result, analysis of the politics of the ideal learner through the politics of discourse, needs to be augmented with an understanding of politics as a hegemonic practice of rule, suggesting an extended ethnographic approach open to questions of heterogeneity and agency.

What is questioned here is the neo-Foucauldian understanding of neoliberalism proposed by Rose (1989, 1992, 1996) and Rose and Miller (2008) and the influence of this governmentality framework in education literature. Governmentality, understood here as the discursive shaping conduct-of-conduct and associated technologies of power, has been used to describe the “soft” and “empowering” ways in which governments seek to control the conduct of individuals and social groups, in order to increase their productivity of the population. These works look at ways in which governance aims at increasing the *“capacity of the individual to play the actor in his or her own life”*, focusing on the role of the professions to spread *“professionally ratified, mental, ethical and practical techniques for self-management”* (Rose & Miller 2008: 106). These works have exposed the paradox inherent in governing through

freedom, and looked at critical questions of who and what is empowered and disempowered, in situations of controlled autonomy (O'Malley 1997, Lemke 2013). Their account of the de-centred state has been used to make sense of, and provide the tools for, analysis of marketised, devolved and privatised social governance, such as the practices of educational confession and technologies of performativity described above. More broadly, governmentality studies have been praised for bringing gender, race and other social cleavages into the critical gaze, showing power/resistance and neoliberalism are not reducible to the market colonising the state (Newman and Clarke 2009). This body of work has been lauded for helping make sense of the changing political context of the 1980s and the 1990s (Lemke 2013), but the conjuncture in which this research took place in 2011, one year into Liberal-Conservative government, suggests a focus on the “*inter-discursivity*” (Hall 1986) of the ideal learner.

Contesting the Conduct of Conduct

This questioning has been influenced by anthropological accounts of governance (Li 2007a, 2007b, Ong, 2007, Sharma 2008). This literature shows that it is possible to for an ethnographic approach to focus on subjectivating practices whilst attending to questions of multiplicity and contestation. These works deploy the concept of governmentality in open ended research alongside Gramscian notions of hegemony, either directly (Li 2007a), or indirectly through notions of articulation (Ong 2007) and notions of assemblage derived from Latour (2005) and Deleuze and Guattari (2004). These concepts are used to augment the “anaemic” take on politics found in conventional governmentality studies (Li 2007a: 26). These ethnographic accounts show how governmental projects of rule are mediated by political practices, which are dependent on the existence of older political rationalities and context specific subjectivities (Clarke 2008, Newman and Clarke 2009). Tania Li writes that:

understanding governmental intervention as assemblage helps break down the image of government as the preserve of a monolithic state operating as a singular force and enables us to recognize the range of parties involved in attempts to regulate the conditions under which our lives are lived (2007b: 276).

In this literature, governmental strategies are not equal to their enactment and techniques are open to subversion and failure. In short, exploring the genealogy of

techniques is a different matter from exploring the witch's brew of actual practice (Li 2007a: 27). Their research reveals a myriad of voices within governmental programmes as well as among those subjected to them. Thus, anthropological accounts of the politics of governmental programmes are able to show how distinct forms of power operate in relationship with each other, the co-existence of other historically formed political rationalities within neoliberalism, the complex patterns of resistance and acquiescence, and a political struggle over the form the "*conduct of conduct*" takes. Ong notes neo-liberalism "*as an ethos of self-governing, it encounters and articulates other ethical regimes in particular contexts*" (Ong 2006: 9). Moreover, Hansen and Stepputat point out that ethnographic study of these particular contexts suggests that a "*strict Foucauldian view of modern governance as the inexorable global spread and proliferation of certain discursive rationalities and certain technologies tends to crumble once subjected to an ethnographic gaze...these forms of governmentality do exist...but always in competition with older practices and other rationalities*" (2001:36)." These ethnographic understandings of accounts of policy, point to the complex ways policy is translated. Lendvai and Stubbs suggest translation is a "*complex, cultural and political practice*" that can be understood as a "*real part of human agency*". There are always issues of "*distortion and negotiation*" which contest the "*grand narratives of neo-liberal hegemony*" (2007:188-9).

These anthropological deployments of governmentality build on constructive critique of Rose and Miller's governmental frame, from Foucauldian scholars (O'Malley et al 1997) and a rereading of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France on neo-liberalism and governmentality, following more recent translations (Foucault 2008a, Foucault 2008b). The notion of self-governance found in Rose's work, as an epoch defining modality of neoliberal power, is challenged. Rather, forms of power are "*interactive*" and "*triangular*" (O'Malley 2009:1). "*Sovereignty*" and "*Discipline*" are embedded in what Foucault terms "*government*", rather than being simply superseded by it. Foucault emphasised "*the multiplicity of power relations and the diversity of their origins, workings and effects*" (2009:2). Further breaking down an epochal defining account of governmental power, is any understanding that the transfer of advanced liberal rationalities of governance into their concomitant technologies of governance is inevitable: "*relations between rationalities and technologies, programs and institutions are much more complex than a simple application or transfer*" (Lemke 2010:56). For

one *“there are no relations of power without resistances and that these resistances are manifest at the point of the exercise of power”* (Foucault 1980: 142) Moreover, resistance is not limited to a dichotomous relationship between ruled and ruler, a sort of “negative energy” obstructing a particular programme: *“Rather than distorting the “original” program, they are actually always already part of the programs themselves, actively contributing to “compromises,” “fissures,” and “incoherencies” inside them.”* (Lemke 2010:56). These are gaps that allow social enquiry to bring political contingency, contestation and critical questions of social variation into focus (Lemke 2010, O’Malley 2009).

The intra-discursivity of students’ subjectivity

These understandings suggest ways in which an ethnographic focus on the discursive production of subjectivity in education, need not assume neoliberalism as a singular regime of truth, which circulates smoothly across social cleavages or goes unchallenged. They provoke a questioning of how to talk about the plural regimes of truth, which make up discourses of students’ subjectivity in learning, their relative strength in the field, their representation in institutional form and their presences at the micro-level in the construction of the ideal learner. This focus was influenced by Hall’s comments on Foucault’s politics of discourse:

If Foucault is to prevent the regime of truth from collapsing into a synonym for the dominant ideology, he has to recognize that there are different regimes of truth in the social formation. And these are not simply “plural”—they define an ideological field of force. There are subordinated regimes of truth which make sense, which have some plausibility, for subordinated subjects, while not being part of the dominant episteme. In other words, as soon as you begin to look at a discursive formation, not just as a single discipline but as a formation, you have to talk about the relations of power which structure the inter-discursivity, or the inter-textuality, of the field of knowledge.

Foucault...saves for himself “the political” with his insistence on power, but he denies himself a politics of “relations of force”. (Hall, interviewed by Grossman 1986: 49)

Hall's call for recognition of different regimes of truth and their mediation through political relations, channels elements of Raymond Williams's (1977) call for "*authentic historical analysis*" rather than epochal abstractions, in order to account for the "*the complex inter-relations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance*" (Williams, 1977:121). Williams suggests that it is possible to distinguish between multiple "*dominant*", "*residual*" and "*emergent*" tendencies, each made up of separate entities, institutionalised ideas and active forces. Clarke et al (2007) have adapted this framework for the study of social policy:

The political-cultural work of the dominant tendency involves trying to maintain its own internal coherence; trying to displace the "residual" elements (undermining their persistence or apparent relevance to the present); and trying to co-opt elements of the emergent and the residual ("transforming" them in ways that apparently support the dominant). In this way the dominant forces can represent themselves as the path to the future that is simultaneously coherent, necessary and inevitable. (2007:152).

Tracing how Assessment for Learning, a critique of economised learning, became enmeshed in a governmental project and then the object of political debate from the right suggests an understanding of "more specific conditions, dynamics, processes and consequences". These "tend to disappear in such "epochal" accounts of dominant trends" (Clarke et al 2007:152).

"Learning for a Lifetime of change" versus "Eternal Truths"

These understandings helped frame the significance of political contestation about notions of independence in learning and its inscription onto Ofsted presented in the introduction. These were not just plural, but representations of political relations of force in education as I entered the field in 2011, between a social liberal vision of education, an emergent traditional paradigm and a residual professional questioning in the form of Assessment for Learning literature. The existence of this political heat reveals divided visions of students' subjectivity in learning, present in competing versions of marketised discourse. Dichotomous presentations of the relative importance of skills and knowledge demarcate these visions, directly invoking opposing "active" and "passive" student subjectivities. As such, the inclusion of these adjectives in Ofsted discourse, particularly school observations, made for highly

charged institutional controversy (Peal 2014), placing Assessment for Learning strategies (and techniques) at the centre of fundamental questions about what teachers and students do in the classroom. New Labour developed a social liberal vision of education which put students' subjectivity in learning at the heart of its Third Way (Giddens 1998) project. In the speeches of government ministers (Blair 2003, Miliband 2004), and the reports of education quangos (QCA 2004a, DFES 2004a, Ofsted 2003, Ofsted 2006, DCSF 2008a), the pupil is positioned as an active participant in the learning process, with the role of the school placed as the facilitator of a learning environment, rather than the deliverer of knowledge to passive bodies (Personalised Learning 2008). Miliband's (2003) assertion that students should "*learn how to learn for a life time of change*" captures the economic assumptions at the heart of this project. In the official literature, the passivity of being *taught* is contrasted with active engagement in *learning*, and knowledge, which may become outdated, is contrasted with the skills of learning, which can be reapplied in an ever-shifting global economy. Children were to be "*active, curious, they create their own hypothesis, ask their own questions, and coach one another*" (DCSF 2006:6). The documents in which Assessment for Learning was mobilised, particularly those associated with the personalised learning agenda, challenged a strictly traditional, positivist view of teaching and learning; that knowledge exists as a set of subjects that can be taught to the learner. Pedagogy, the theory and practice of teaching, was discussed at ministerial level, which was a novel development (Ward and Eden 2009). The active citizen of New Labour's educational project demanded an active educational subject. It found this in constructivist language of pedagogy and, in the form of Assessment for Learning, a professional research paradigm focussed on students' autonomy (Marshall and Drummond 2006) and confidence (Swaffield 2009) which claimed to improve the results of low achieving students (Black and Wiliam 1998a).⁴ Swaffield outlined Assessment for Learning's affinity with radical alternatives to marketised education, such as the Reggio Emilia method (Rinaldi 2006), which classifies assessment as decisions about what to value in students learning. Assessment for

⁴ In preparation for this project I interviewed Baroness Estelle Morris, former New Labour's Secretary of State for Education. As the first ex-teacher to hold this position, I asked her about New Labour's articulation of progressive pedagogy discussed here. In response, she called for a "*rigorous and modern*" pedagogy. Previous iterations of progressive methods "*could not prove they worked*". Rigorous and modern politically was a politically performative couplet. She lambasted ideologues on the left of the teaching profession and the right who had politicised simple technical questions, at the expense of children's learning. "*Politics needed taking out of pedagogy*", she explained.

Learning was one of many ideas about teaching articulated within the Personalised Learning Agenda and elsewhere, including rhetoric derived from anti-school polemics (Pykett 2009), educational psychology and popularised ideas about Learning Power (Buxton 2007), which were mobilised them to generate educational subjectivities consummate with neoliberal economic governance, valuing a narrow understanding of learning compared to the rich, social account in Swaffield's description of the wider ideas from which Assessment for Learning drew. This mobilisation built on longstanding divides in English education about students' agency and role of the child in the classroom. Particularly influential in this is the Plowden report (1969), which set out the necessity for a "*child centred*" pedagogic style. Out of the reaction to this report a "*dichotomy began to emerge between those that were "traditional and didactic" and those that were "progressive and exploratory"*" in official and popular debate (Ward & Eden 2009:91). New Labour mandated the teaching of the "active skills" of citizenship in schools, and promoted a "*learner centred*" pedagogy. In doing so New Labour appropriated elements of the "*progressive*" side of this dichotomy and articulated it within marketised governance, heralding a sort of "*Plowden-but-with-tests*" (Ward and Eden 2009).

Michael Gove, the incoming Conservative Education Secretary disparaged these aims, particular of the emphasis on skills, which was contrasted to knowledge: "Mankind has developed thousands of ways to communicate eternal truths, all of these are lost." Divergent ways of telling the time play an important role in contrasting discourses of students' subjectivity. He looked back favourably at the time when "we used to get students to sit three-hour essay exams to demonstrate their knowledge" (Gove 2009a), showing how opposing conceptions of time demarcate these competing paradigms, confronting presentism against nostalgia. Gove argued that the documents, in which Assessment for Learning strategies were outlined, represented the "fatuous enunciation of high-sounding but empty goals". The focus on skills of learning left students bereft of "a core, knowledge-based, fact-rich entitlement". (2009b). During my time in the field, the Labour MP, then Shadow schools secretary, Lisa Nandy, hailed the existence of "two competing visions for education, an academic, competitive one and a social collaborative one" (2012: 679). These two visions constitute opposed but self-perpetuating models for students' subjectivity in learning, a social liberal one, and a neo-conservative one, each repelled from the other

by strident articulations of what children and teachers should be doing in the classroom: teaching versus learning, passive versus active, exploratory versus didactic, yet converging on certain instrumental views of education. In each model education is measurable in comparable outcomes and its purposes for the economy.

The value of Raymond Williams' (1977) frame is that it allows differentiation between these multiple educational discourses and within them, allowing an appreciation of the range of professional discourses within New Labour's educational project, such as Assessment for Learning, which were articulated as equivalences of a distinctly neoliberal version of subjectivity, but are not reducible to it. This frame sensitised research to the institutional sedimentation of social liberal ideas about learning, the complementarities and conflicts with the emergent traditionalist paradigm and the influence of residual anti-marketisation discourses. Heath High's status as a new community school entailed elements of social liberal ideas, which were expressed in a strong way, influencing the way in which the managers in the school managed balanced concerns for students' inclusion with the valorisation of hegemonic individualism through high expectations. School managers and departmental leaders talked about subtle changes to examination structure and accreditation of vocational courses, as having significant effects on Heath High's version of educational inclusion. The chapters which follow show how these worked at the micro-level, influencing departments' deployment of formative assessment strategies, with direct consequences for the type of learning subjectivities valued through their work. Significantly, these actors talked about these changes in direct terms, defining the school's ethos directly against elitist and divisive policies. The frame presented by Clarke et al (2007) also helped sensitise analysis to the existence of older social democratic discourses, which were active in Heath High, present in how teachers' understood their work and active in the creation of ideal learners, albeit atomised and marginalised within certain departments.

2.2.1 Ethnographic Rationale: Subject Position and Subjectivity

The decision to employ ethnographic method is based on an understanding of teachers' subjectivity as something more than the subject position defined for them in policy discourse. As indicated, this decision comes from the complex and contested

discourses of education that surround Assessment for Learning. The previous chapter has shown that Ofsted discourse (2006, 2010, 2011a) defines their role as both deliverers of results and responsible for students' performances of independent learning upon inspection. The existence of performative inspection system within a marketised system, with heavy penalties for failure, gives these iterations of independent learning, institutional clout, suggesting a strong element of compulsion. Yet, the discourse of the independent learner is the product of an appropriation from the professional field, which challenged economised versions of learning and was also subjected to visceral contestation from the right. This understanding led to the decision to investigate the hermeneutics of policy, focussing on teachers' practices of translation (Lendvai and Stubbs 2007), open to capturing the social effects of their pre-existing values and experiences (Coburn 2005). Ethnography is understood here as;

the close-up, on the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do. (Wacquant 2003:5)

The focus on the relationship between subject position and subjectivity has been influenced by researchers who use a cultural studies frame to attend to questions of structure, agency and cultural forms in social reproduction (Ortner 2005, Willis 1977, 2000, Willis and Trondman 2000). These readings helped frame the constructive role of teachers' subjective states; their passions, emotions, fears, their cultural practices, their relationship to the subject position (of deliverers of results) and the active role of these subjective states in the construction of ideal learners across the school. Sherry Ortner calls for ethnographic appreciation of "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects... as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought and so on." (2005: 31). She calls into question forms of analysis, which emphasise the ways discourse constructs subjects and subject positions. Locating the subordinate positions of subaltern categories and outlining their suffering is useful, but "different from the question of the formation of subjectivities, complex structures of thought, feeling, reflection, and the like, that make social beings always more than the occupants of particular positions and the holders of particular identities" (2005: 36). This understanding of the relationship between subject position and subjectivity stands

analogous to that of Willis and Trondman, who write that “meaning making can never be a mirror of their environing/encompassing conditions of existence because (actors) work through forms of consciousness and self-understanding.” This is not a call for relativism. The subject position of teachers is defined by marketisation: “this “autonomy” must be understood in relation to the conditions of existence within which humans act, work, and create (2000: 97)”. This focus allows for critical enquiry to attend to aspects of teachers’ work which is not reducible to neoliberalism, such as enthusiasm for their subject areas, their students, workmates and the school as a social and political project. The wager here is that this is expressed in the art of the everyday (Willis 2000) and influences the construction of the ideal learner. This ethnographic focus is on the complementarities and conflicts between teachers’ subjective states as a part of their agency in the job, their structural position as providers of results and the affective labour demanded of them in the classroom.

Ortner’s notions of subjectivity worked with Raymond Williams’ (1977) call for an understanding of the structure of feeling which animates social life, against overly structural accounts of art and literature. Hhe wrote “Critiques of the dead can be reduced to fixed terms. But the living will not be reduced...All the known complexities, the experienced tensions, shifts, uncertainties, the intricate unevenness and the confusion are against the terms of reduction” (1977: 129). She developed the concept of structure of feeling in order to go beyond understanding the social through ideology, but “to analyse meanings as they actively lived and felt.” She argues for appreciation of the “Characteristics of impulse, restraint and tone, specifically affective elements of consciousness of a present kind, in a living community”(1977: 132). The affective nature of the structure of feeling is important to Ortner as it brings to the fore the ways in which subjectivities are “complex because they are culturally and emotionally complex, but also because of the ongoing work of reflexivity, monitoring the relationship of the self to the world.” (Ortner 2005: 45). Notions of affect bring to mind Willis and Trondman’s understand of the productive role of cultural practices, which “mutually “speak”- clothes, body, style, demeanour, interaction...but most importantly the actual social and physical locations of the cultural participants.” (Willis and Trondman 2000).

This focus on teachers' subjective states and their emotional labour entailed engagement with the subtle ways in which emotional labour is understood as both a subjectivating practice (Weeks 2007) and a dimension of subjectivity (Bolton and Boyd 2003). Hochschild brought the subject of emotional work to sociological attention by linking "feeling rules and social structure" (1979: 276) to show that emotion was not a biological category but subject to social rules and set to productive work. She defined emotional labour as work which "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (1983: 7). For Hochschild, this results in assumption into rolls which call for "coordination of mind and feeling, and ... sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality." (Hochschild, 1983: 7). Hochschild brings to the fore gendered nature of emotion work, working on notions of personal service and family care. As Weeks argues (2007), gender is produced and productive when personality is put to work. Bolton and Boyd (2003) developed the concept of emotional labour, drawing attention to range of roles afforded to those employing emotional labour. They propose a shift from understandings of emotional labour to understandings of emotional management to in order capture the potential for people to inhabit multiple roles and the existence of a range of motivating factors for emotional work. They propose "*philanthropic*" emotional management to account the agency of an actor within an organisation work to freely extra work or to animate their emotional affects in a way that cannot be reduced to subsumption to organisational roles.

The ambiguous nature of emotion work played an important role in the construction of ideal learners at Heath High. Subject specific passions animated maths, a department with a unique culture. Love of maths, for its own sake, was an infectious narrative which was hard to politically map, but for the fact it frequently chafed with both economised notions of learning and students' expressions of hegemonic individualism. Passion, in this context, was a counter-hegemonic agency, employed as cry for what is beautiful, against ugly performative shortcuts ways of learning subject specific constructs and a deliberately induced affect aimed at ensuring students had the same values. The simplest constructs, aroused strident statements that were at the same time subject specific and technical, but implied a wider critique, and had direct influence on producing a different sort of learner than described policy discourse. Other manifestations of passion were more troubling. Strong identifications

with working class cultural deficiency animated the roles of some actors in the school. Their reforming zeal and its associated cultural affect was a powerful partner to discourses of hegemonic individualism. More broadly, questions of teacher' subjective emotional states assumed a strategic role in the school, as its own ethos of educational progressivism demanded teachers maintain low social distance with students.

Ethnography

This understanding of teachers' work sits in a tradition of school based ethnographic research in the British Sociology of Education. This body of work has played a definitive role in advancing sociological knowledge of the social reproduction of social inequality. Research conducted from within the joint department of sociology and anthropology at the University of Manchester in the 1960s and 1970s played a foundational role in setting enduring research agendas and methodological templates in the Sociology of Education. Part influenced by Becker's (1971) interactionist approach and its deployment in the American school, Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and Lambart (1976) deployed ethnographic method to, showing school process and teachers' judgements worked to reproduce social class. Willis's *Learning to Labour* (1977) advanced knowledge of students' active role in the social process of social differentiation, breaking with mechanistic models of class reproduction. This work laid a methodological and analytic framework for ethnographic work cultural studies, defining both a research agenda within education and broader ethnographies of sub-cultures (Gordon 1984). Ethnographic method has played a key role in understandings of the way race shape students' experiences (Mac an Ghail, 1988, Gillborn 1990 Mirza 1992). The deployment of feminist and post-structuralist frameworks alongside ethnographic fieldwork have attended to nuanced questions of the interplay between race, gender, and social class in the formation of students' identities (Kehily & Nayak 1997, Youdell 2003). The sum of this literature suggests there is much to be gained from thick description and analysis of the micro-politics of the school, its subjects and actors, pedagogy, assessment and its institutional culture.

These studies have been able to make visible aspects of school life which are more difficult to access with other methods. Specifically, these studies show how ethnographic method has the potential to bring together micro and macro perspective.

Comaroff and Comaroff note that the making of history involves “sedimentation of micro practices into macro processes” (1992: 38) Ethnographic analysis has played a vital role in joining up what Ball (1993) has called the ad-hoc of the micro with the ad-hoc of the macro in order to map the social consequences at the school level of successive marketised reform. Studies like Gerwitz et al 1995, Reay 1998) show how teachers’ and students’ subjectivities were re-worked at the micro-level as a response to developments in marketised governance. By being able to attend to the connection between the macro-and the micro, ethnography has been able to make theoretical contributions. *‘to move from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro,’ and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory’* (Burawoy, 1998: 5). As outlined above, this thesis is theoretically informed (Willis and Trondman 2000), as the claim that organisation of the narrative comes from the field alone *‘is nothing but an epistemological fairy-tale’* (Wacquant, 2002: 1481). Second, ethnography allows an appreciation of the processes of school life, not just the products of these processes (Woods 1994). These include:

How a curriculum works out, how a policy is formulated and implement, how a pupil becomes deviant, cultural induction, identity formation, differentiation and polarisation, friendship formation – all require lengthy involvement in the research field otherwise only part of the process will be sampled, leading to misleading analysis (1994: 5)

This project took use of the time afforded to doctoral study in order to fully capture processes of audit, intervention and measurement as they took place across my year of study at Heath High. Third, time in the field allows for subtle questions of agency, subjectivity and contestation to emerge in these sites. Ethnography has played a crucial role in going beyond discourse/ideology to get a view from below (Willis and Trondman 2000) and make visible hidden know ledges. Its sensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of the inhabitants of school life has shown how students reject the roles afforded to them by school life (Fuller 1984, Willis 1977).

2.2.3 Research Strategies

These research interests were addressed by a research design which encompassed one broad empirical line of enquiry which aimed to encompass the Assessment for Learning strategies in the classroom, including observing the labour of teachers and

the learning of students as they turned subject content into levels, and then follow this data up and across the school hierarchy, to see how this learning was categorised and used by teachers and school managers. This entailed negotiating extended access to one year seven class, 7N and their Year Team of teachers and support staff. Most of the data presented was collected whilst observing and participating in 7N's induction into the school, their routine assessment tasks and the Year team, their assemblies and the work of their Head of Year. Roughly half of my timetable was spent with 7N, the other half was spread across classes in Key Stage 3 and data from these classes is also presented.

The key element of this research design was an attempt to embed myself deep in the capillaries of school life in order to achieve sustained contact with teachers and school managers to record ethnographic data of their work. This entailed spending over one hundred and twenty days, four days a week, spread across the 2011/12 academic year, inside Heath High, participating fully in school life. Most of the data presented here derives from time spent in classrooms, participating as a teaching assistant, on a timetable that averaged around 16 lessons per week during my time in the school. As indicated, research also included direct observation of assemblies, departmental meetings, Year Team meetings, staff training days and staff briefings. My time spent in the field between September 5th 2011 and September 9th 2012 included participation in four hundred and twenty five lessons. In addition to these lessons, I was asked to work one to one with a small number of students withdrawn from maths. My year also included observation of thirty-two assemblies, thirty-two staff briefings, four Year 7 team meetings and four humanities department meetings. In addition, I spent time "*being around*" (Willis 1980) the staffroom and with teachers and on their lunch duties and the Christmas party in the assembly hall. As well as this observation as participant, unstructured interviews were used to interrogate motivations of the teachers and school managers who made up the subject of my observations. A total of twenty seven interviews of staff were conducted, mainly in June and July 2012, toward the end of the academic year. A smaller number of took place earlier, in January 2012, straight after Christmas holidays. I returned to the school briefly in September 2012 to interview the Head Teacher and conduct a small number follow up interviews with teachers and Heads of Year.

Ethnography comprises principally of participation observation, which can include a number of research positions. These include:

participation; observation; participant as observer; observation as participant; just “being around”; group discussion; recorded group conversation; unfocused interview; recorded unfocused interview (Willis 1980: 94)

During my time at Heath High, I occupied most of these research positions. Most data which follows comprises of classroom based observation. Extended access to 7N throughout the year allowed me to observe how the school measured students learning across the whole year at Heath High, allowing subsequent analysis to take stock of the range of practices 7N were subjected to, their consequences within the class and teachers' responses to this. This focus made visible distinct departmental cultures and influence of educational beliefs on departmental policy as enacted over a school year, rather than small window of observation. Data gleaned from Pastoral Heads takes the form of direct observation, focussing on how they make academic progression meaningful to students in assemblies and sites of school discipline. This observation data is put into conversation with data from interviews throughout the chapters that follow. The primary aim of these interviews is to ask them what motivations lie behind the phenomena I observed and to unpick the social meanings they make from it. Forsey (2010) writes,

To conduct interviews with an ethnographic imaginary is to ask questions beyond the immediate concerns of the research question. They probe biography, seeking to locate the cultural influences on a person's life, looking later to link this to the pursued question (Forsey 2010: 568)

The interviews here probed immediate institutional motivations to locate the biography of the teacher, linking their personal and professional history to the practices questions of classroom and managerial practice. Using this method, rich personal and professional histories emerged, showing influence of past social formations on the present.

Ethics

Willis states that qualitative data is structured by the relationships, encounters and specific positions of and researchers (1980). Research in schools must attend to

unique ethical and political dimensions to these relationships, relating to the status of children and adults within a hierarchical organisation. The focus of this research is on the adults in this institution but questions of consent and subject position still applied. Planning research in school involves negotiating a set of interrelated practical, ethical and legal contexts related to doing research with children. Christenson and Proust (2002) draw attention to the way much research has often treated children as an 'object' of study, or as a 'subject' to be protected, rather than as active participants in their own world. What has become more common is to see children as social actors that *"act, take part in, change and become changed by the social world they live in"* (2002:481), not simply as appendages to family or school. This view, unlike that of the rules of a school, makes no automatic assumption of difference between adults and children, and as such the same ethical guidelines of informed consent apply. The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2004) is explicit in requiring researchers to comply with article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This requires that all children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the freedom to express their views freely in all matters concerning them. *"Children should therefore be facilitated to give full informed consent"* (BERA 2004 Article 14). The British Sociological Association also makes it clear that consent of the child as well as the parent should be sought, and that specialist knowledge should be used to inform younger children of research aims when soliciting consent (BSA 2002: Section 30).

The central problem to overcome is conducting research to an ethical standard that conceptualises children as active and equal subjects in an institution that does not afford them this role, putting debates about the independent learner in perspective. I began the year by explaining to each class about my role as researcher, outlining how I would also be in the class to help them with their work. I explained I would leave the class if they asked me, and I would not use the school discipline system, though I would ask them to stop if they were hurting others. Presentation of students' responses to teachers work is therefore limited to classroom interactions, rather than the wider responses throughout the school. The decision was taken to represent children with initials and teachers with pseudonyms in order reflect the focus of study. Students of Heath High are active participants of the classrooms described in the next chapters, but the focus of study is on teachers' work and the meaning they make from it. Article

11 of the BERA research guidelines makes it clear that that dual roles, in this case that of learning support and social researcher, may introduce tensions in areas such as confidentiality, and that careful consideration should be undertaken when fulfilling and reporting on these roles. Throughout my year at Heath High, I had access to data, sites and states of emotion that, though rich and relevant to the core concerns of this thesis, were beyond the remit of my role in the school as a researcher of teachers' work. Alderson (2007) notes that whilst ethical statements and codes offer broad guidance, researchers have to work out how to best apply them. To do this, ethical considerations must be taken at every stage of the research process (2007:110). Ethical questions arose during my time with students in my time at Heath High, and those are outlined below.

An awareness of the politics of research also informed my approach to staff in the school. I informed all teachers that I approached to participate that they had the right to ask me to leave at any point. Navigating ethical and political concerns with staff proved more ambiguous than with students in some respects. The Head Teacher introduced me to the school on staff training day on the first day of school. I had his authority behind me. I was welcome in the school. This entailed playing close attention to complex questions of consent and right to dissent during my year in the school. I explained the nature of my research to the three union reps on site. This recognition also entailed recognition of dynamics of race and gender in the professional sphere at Heath High. In the chapters that follow, all the managerial roles are occupied by occupied older white men. All those in teaching roles are female, most are younger, roughly half are people of colour. My full timetable of support represented was more representative of the teaching staff at Heath High, but the ratio represented on the next pages does reflect something the relative social composition of staff and management at the school. Ethical negotiation in these circumstances entailed making clear the role of sociological research, its difference from normative research, and where this research would be kept. The biggest strains on my ethical roles within the school came at times when a supply teacher was taking lessons. My responsibilities in this instance, to outline the work of that had been set to the supply teacher, to show them where books were, meant students perceived the locus of control in the room to emanate from me. All staff and students are made anonymous, and details of Heath High which could identify it are redacted from presented data.

2.2.4 The Year at Heath High

I approached Heath High with the offer of a timetable of regular learning support in return for extended access in the school. My own teaching experience and relevant qualifications were a factor in helping gain this access, but the nature of the school itself also facilitated access compared to other local schools. Heath High was a relatively new school. The Head Teacher explained to me the school had been built under the Private Finance Initiative, and they had all sorts of problems relating to stringent terms of the contract put to the local authority and the weak terms placed on the financiers of the building. This was one of our first conversations and it indicated something of his own ideas. The Head Teacher and many senior members of staff had been with the school from or near the start, and were settled in their roles. They were proud of the school's inclusive community ethos and what they described as their young, forward thinking staff. Though the school faced stiff competition for pupils and prestige in a Borough which contained very successful state schools, religious schools and selective grammar schools, it was considered a success. It had a "Good" Ofsted rating when I entered the school, and in my first term, it was inspected and received an "Outstanding" judgement. The security of the school's market position and the established, confident leadership of the school is undoubtedly a factor in the access I was given. I approached the management of the school telling them it was a critical enquiry about the culture of the school, their use of data and formative assessment.

When I joined the school in September 2011, Heath High had become a larger than average school, with an eight form entry and over 1200 students, in addition to a sixth form of around 200 students. Students came from many ethnic groups, predominantly from Asian background; about a third of the students are White British and other backgrounds. This ratio between White British and Asian students had roughly switched during the small number of years the school had been open. A smaller minority of students were of Black African descent, of mixed origin and Afro-Caribbean. The school had seen a recent influx in students in Year 7 and 8 from Eastern European countries. Most of these students came from feeder primary schools rather than new arrivals. Over half the students spoke English as an additional language. Few were at an early stage of development of English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals was around 17%, slightly higher than the

national average, though much higher than the Borough average. This figure was low in comparison to many schools in neighbouring inner east London boroughs. In my first week in the school, the Head of Year 8, Mr Hoy told me it told me that it was a true comprehensive. *"We get a couple in every year I think will go to prison and a couple who can go to Oxford or Cambridge"*, comparing this favourably to schools in neighbouring Boroughs which did not have a social mix. His description fits well with the catchment area of the school, which covered several small council estates on the London fringes, terraces and large swathes of low rise, private owned Edwardian terraces and pre-war semi-detached housing. The area was recognised a place where the aspirant working class, of all races, moved out of inner east London.

Research Schedule

My research schedule and focus shifted throughout the year, in response to the demands placed on me as learning support and emergent events in the school calendar relevant to my research. In the first weeks I was in the school, I tried to maintain a separation between observation and participation in classes, but it soon became apparent that students, especially students in 7N, were not going to agree to this distinction. Willis said researchers have to be flexible when negotiating the roles between participant and observer, as neither are fixed social roles (1980: 94). This distinction was blown apart by 7N's demands on me. My first week was spent with them around the school, occasionally getting lost, helping them adapt to the rules and routines of high school. This was a struggle for some. I had to tie ties and shoelaces, help students use the site map in their planners, remind them about the bells, remind them when their uniform was incorrect and show them where the toilet was. They saw me more than any other adult in the school over the first term, and as a result they worked me hard. New Year 7 students are needy and inquisitive. The questions they asked me map out my relationship to them in the first week few weeks: "Should I underline the date as well as the title?" "What time is lunchtime?" "Do you know my sister?" "What does the second bell mean?" "What is your real name?" "Do I need to write homework in my planner and my book?" "Are you helping Student P in all lessons?" "Are you deciding which teachers are good?" "Are you Miss Bedia's boyfriend?" "Why are you not in Friday's science class?" "Can you help my table?" These questions followed me throughout September. Attachments built out of this role.

There is a satisfaction that comes with being needed. I knew more of them by first name than any of their classroom teachers in these first weeks.

In October, the focus switched back to research. I negotiated a more targeted approach to my participation in lessons with teachers, focussing on supporting a small number of pupils, so other students would not expect me to circulate during lessons. The teacher planner became an indispensable tool in these sites, notes could be taken down in transition points in lessons, and I became a regular in a small computer room attached to the staffroom, typing these notes up. The other regular inhabitants of this room were the PGCE students on placement. In the middle of October, Ofsted announced they would be inspecting the school and in assembly. In the week after, the Head of Year 7, Mr Peel, explained in assembly that Performance Review Day would be coming up. Both teachers and students would be taking time off lessons on the same day to “*work out how to improve in the next year*”. In these weeks, I made full use of my teachers’ planner to record these processes. Performance Review Day would turn out to be a pivotal event around which subsequent research was conducted. Much of the analysis that follows is a reaction to this event and related phenomena throughout the year. Performance Review Day was not a traditional form of parents evening. Appointments were made throughout a normal school day by students with their form teacher to discuss their targets for coming year in light of their previous year’s grades. Parents were welcome to come; students were required to come in. Over the same days, teachers would meet with their line managers and heads of department would meet senior management of the school.

Significantly, these separate processes converged through the use of the same piece of software (School Information Management Systems- SIMS) and through similar routines set over the same days. SIMS is a web-based information management system, owned and run by CAPITA, a private company which specialises in public sector contracts. It provides school management with constant data on the academic progression of students set against local and national benchmarks, and allows school managers to turn these benchmarks into key performance indicators used to performance manage teachers and departments. SIMS is not limited to performance data; it can be used to create a ‘School Workforce Census’, which records teachers’ professional qualifications, development training and the targets of performance

reviews. It can send automated text messages to parents when a pupil is missing for registers. It allows school managers to look at the performance of certain groups in the school, such as those on free school meals, those down as 'SEN' (Special Educational Needs), those who are 'EAL' (English as an additional language). In short, SIMS provides an off the shelf software system which gives school management the opportunity to extend the geography of control into many aspects of school life.

It puts into the hands of individual teachers and school managers a 'dashboard' of instant data for comparison and audit. For school managers, a few mouse clicks turns the learning of students and the labour of teachers into numerical commodities. These can be compared against the expected grades of the school's students based on their primary school results, against the performance of local competitor schools, and against schools with similar socio-economic intakes based on analysis of pupils' home address postcodes. It allows parents to login to their own account and view their child's attendance, achievement and behaviour records. Crucially, for the teachers described in this chapter, SIMS colour coded the current grades of their students against the externally set targets provided by management, and gave teachers real-time notifications if they had failed to input data in the allotted time. Simple colour-coding highlighted students working at borderline grades, and departments who are working below expectations. This allows real-time information to direct the remedial interventions to where they are needed to keep a departments good standing in the school and the school's good position in the local education market. Moreover, the connection between departments' performance management styles and students' assessment proved to be significant. Patterns of connection and correlation emerged between the way in which formative assessment practice was used to construct academic progression and the type of performance management individual departments was subjected to. Stark differences emerged between these departments, particularly between maths, English and Citizenship betraying different types of subjectivity, unique departmental cultures and context specific pressures. Exploring these differences orientated much of the rest of my time at Heath High, and my timetable of learning support to 7N and other classes was altered accordingly.

In the weeks after November half term, focus shifted towards interrogating teachers about what they thought the impact of Performance Review Day was. Feedback from

the first line of assessments had had a noticeable impact on some students, and I developed a focus on how pastoral Heads kept students motivated. These weeks also posed ethical dilemmas. My proximity to students in 7N had made visible the forms of suffering that were taking place in response to the first acts of academic differentiation that were taking place. I witnessed these inside and outside classrooms. The small number of examples described in future chapters are of students' direct responses to aspects of their assessment cycles, their teachers direct responses to the students concerned and my own questioning of the teachers concerned. Balancing questions of consent, bearing witness to suffering, thankfully rare, and giving a fair account of the teachers implicated in suffering was difficult at times. In late November and December, I followed the Head of Year 7, Mr Peel, in his "Help Me To Succeed Focus Group", which was targeted at students who were not coping with the step up to Secondary School.

After Christmas, I reduced my timetable with 7N and other year 7 classes and focussed on other academic years at Heath High. I shadowed several Year 9 classes, particularly one English class, 9E, in which I was detailed to offer learning support for two students in the class. From January to May, 9E read, watched and discussed *Romeo and Juliet*. Formative assessment in these lessons provided additional data about assessment practice in English, adding to accounts from 7N. Throughout this term, I also participated in Year 10 Personal, Health and Social Education Lessons, observing their preparation for work experience and the discourse of responsibility and "end of job for life" narratives which went with the process. Towards the end of this term, I also observed elements of the process for deciding students' options for GCSE. Parents and students (and with lots of direction from the school) had to choose between academic, applied and vocational pathways, deciding their future roles in the school. Time spent in form classes, assemblies and school meetings for parents revealed fantastic fragments of data, but the lack of time spent through the year in these sites meant I had built neither the connection with the participants nor had been involved long enough to capture the full options in its full process. Coming late to these sites also entailed complex endangered consent. In addition, teachers' awareness of my research and the socially sensitive aspect of this process meant some avenues were closed. Therefore, despite spending a considerable amount of time in Year 9 in this term, analysis focuses on 9E's English lessons. In the last term of Heath High, my

timetable focussed back on Year 7 again, and in the weeks around May half term, in addition to this timetable, I followed up my time spent with teachers across Heath High with interviews about the practice I had observed.

Chapter 3. Forward to data chapters: The social logic of Heath High's A-C Economy

My first full day on site at Heath Hill School was a training day on a blustery Monday, September 5th 2010. Like the other one hundred and thirty days spent at Heath High in 2011/12, it began at 7.15am sharp with a lift from a mutual friend among the tower blocks of E2. Every day we would drive through the tunnels of A12 then on to the open skies and 'A' roads of the London/Essex borders. After getting my login details for the school computer system, I joined the teaching staff as they sat in their departments around circular tables in the school hall. The head teacher introduced sessions on the behaviour management, framed by the London riots of the previous month. This was followed by a detailed session on the school's results. Later that morning the content of these sessions filtered down into discussions of practice, and departmental policy was remade in response to both the riots and the school's exam results. The changes discussed were mundane and technical, but also imbued with sociological significance and broader political allusions.

The form teacher of 7N, the class I was to spend half of my timetable following, was based in the humanities department. My plan was to spend the day attached to that department in preparation for the arrival of the new Year 7 children the next day. At the end of the morning session, the head teacher, Mr Graham, dissected the schools results from the previous year. These result showed it "*was in a good position*", the best ever results for the school. The history teachers I was sat with, however, were prepared for bad news. The general first-day-back bonhomie present on other staff tables absent. The whole school had done well. Their subject had not. This was an awkward moment for them, the result of intense social pressure. In the afternoon, away from the rest of their department, they dissected the causes of their failure and debated how they would ensure it did not happen again. Did they need to think about who could do History GCSE? Was history a right for any student? Whatever their behaviour? Whatever their previous results? What sort of changes did they need to make? These questions were put for debate, and departmental policy was remade in a meeting that extended into lunchtime. These history teachers were not going to be put in the same position next year.

My time in history was brief. Most data was collected outside this department and was focussed on assessment in Key Stage 3, not the GCSE results we discussed. But their discussions over that long lunch, and the speech of the head teacher before that, anticipated themes which were common to different departments and which reoccurred throughout the academic year. My target for that day was to meet the staff I would be working with over the next term, not data collection, but as the day progressed my notebook filled. These notes focussed the explicit political discussions that went into making these decisions and the direct impact these decisions would have on how students experienced assessment. It revealed the key mediating role of departmental hierarchies and how decisions made at this level directly influenced the type of ideal-learner validated in micro-assessment practices. Clear divergence emerged between different departments and critically significant agencies emerged within them, but common to them all was the pressure to get results. This pressure was expressed and felt in a unique way at Heath High. Its status as a community school, committed to its own version of an inclusive ethos and a calm, secure management is crucial here. The pressure to get results was felt as a defence of the working relationships staff had built up since the school was created in New Labour's first term of office. In 2011 and 2012 this pressure was also felt as a defence of particular view of education and a defence of the status of Heath High as a community school. The result was very strong social pressure, which expressed itself in profoundly contradictory ways. The first day, without children in the school, brought this social logic to the fore. This account of that day provides important context to the sites, micro-decisions, professional identities and compromised subjectivities described over the next three chapters.

Results and Riots

The first session of the morning began with a short announcement by the head teacher on the London riots. Management of every school in London had been called by senior police officers over the summer, interrupting many family holidays, the head teacher joked. The senior leadership team of the school had been asked by police to identify ex pupils. School management had worked in conjunction with the council and the police in sending letters to all parents calling for their children to be held in doors “so *the police could get on with their job*”. Instructions were given to staff on how to report

students in a way that would not jeopardise prosecution. More faces would appear in local newspapers. Some of them might be ours. The theme of this announcement flowed directly into the next session on behaviour management, taken by the borough's behaviour management leader. Her lecture dovetailed neatly into discussion of the riots, directly quoting Michael Gove's (BBC 2011) intervention into the debate; *"Schools need adult authority"*. Whilst the riots had *"many causes"*, the lack of *"tough love"* at home was a factor to consider. She generalised from the riots to the problems she thought teachers faced, explaining that the lack of tough love at home was evidenced by the rise of *"oppositional parenting"*. All teachers, she said, had faced this problem. What was needed was *"the re-establishment of adult authority"*. Schools needed to re-establish *"age old principles"*; such as *"adults are in charge of society"* and that *"the principle of adult authority must be maintained"*. All staff, no matter how experienced, were to follow the school discipline plan, not for their own sake, but for newer staff. The school needed to isolate the minority by showing the majority you were consistent, fair and in control. *"Management of the critical mass is essential"*. Each teacher needs to be part of the *"strategic overview of control"* which schools have to do. Every teacher had to think about the *"geography of control in their department"*. What started out as a day to meet teachers I would be working with, turned into a day of furious scribbles in my teacher planner followed by a night of typing notes. The *"geography of control"* was a direct instruction, not a metaphor. The task for our department during this session, was to map out weak spots, blind spots, times and areas when adult authority is weakest. Lesser experienced teachers were encouraged to come forward. *"Is there a student you can't control?"* asked the borough lead on behaviour management. *"This is the ideal time to speak up"*.

The direct reference to adult authority, something which needed to be re-established, invoked a traditionalist view of child discipline, which contrasted with previous policies. One of the many initiatives collated under the banner of Personalised Learning was Behaviour for Learning (DCSF 2009), a set of scripts in which teachers were encouraged to move away from behaviour management and towards learning management. This moved emphasis away from teachers' direct authority, and reformulated all classroom discussion of behaviour in terms of what is best for learning for the student concerned and others in the class, rather than questions of being good or bad (DCSF 2009). Asserting behaviour through direct reference to adult control was

held to be counterproductive in this literature. At the end of this session from the borough lead in behaviour management, a member of the senior management team got up, thanked her for her presentation, and reminded staff to remember and follow the behaviour learning policies of the school and asked staff to remember their previous training in this practice. I never found out if this was a deliberate challenge or represented the consequence of a piling up of policies and announcements, but different conceptions of students' subjectivity jarred in this conflation. Throughout my year at Heath High, practice built up in the school in the years since its creation would frequently be the subject of criticism from a newly dominant traditionalist paradigm, with direct consequences for the learning subjectivities valued by the school.

Heath High's A-C economy

In the second session of the morning, the head teacher introduced the analysis of the school's results. He was full of effusive praise for staff. The school was in a "*good position*" because of last summer's results, and a slew of raw output data was marshalled in evidence: The percentage of A-Cs, A-Cs with Maths and English, number of A-Gs, A Level results. "*The best ever*". This was a different sort of geography of control, so my notes carried on underneath the same heading. Page after page of PowerPoint cracked open the schools scores; in different subjects, dissected and displayed compared to last year's results, compared to the national average, compared to their expected grades based on students' primary school performance data. The moment my table had been waiting for came. History had seen a drop of four percent in the number of students getting a C grade or above, but "*the department was working hard to see why this happened*". The head teacher warned that more changes to GCSEs were likely to come, and all departments will need to think carefully how to adapt to these challenges. These overall results "*should be a cause of personal pride*". What they meant was more than numbers. They showed how Heath Hill High was "*helping the life chances of all its students, no matter what background*". It also made the school more secure in the context the further marketisation of schools in the borough following a number of academy conversions. The school maintains its "*good position*" he explained, despite its competitors not being encumbered by the statutory requirements of a community comprehensive: "*As one of the remaining local authority schools in the borough, the school has to take on*

pupils other schools reject". These are often new arrivals in the borough, often speaking little English, or students expelled from other schools. Both presented the school with unique pressures, but Heath Hill High was committed to being "a community school that aims to do the best for all its pupils whatever results they can achieve". We should be "extra proud" of our achievements because of this situation. But it was going to be a fight to keep it like that. The ability to do this "is reliant on maintaining its good position". "We are clear we are not going down the route of just becoming an exam factory". This may become difficult, he explained "if more schools in the area leave local authority control", or "we lost our good position". This was not a crack of the whip, but call to arms and a political argument that the alternatives were worse. This was a call for a siege mentality; much more effective than managerial diktat. The implication, unsaid but obvious, was that if the results should falter, so would the school as it existed. At stake in the school's good position were an inclusive education, a relatively calm and collaborative leadership team, a community school ethos, and its status as a local authority controlled school.

History's Departmental Exposure

These high social stakes explained why Mr Neil, the Head of history, was showing visible signs of stress. Straight after the head teacher's session I joined the History department. They moved straight into an autopsy of the 4% drop in their GCSE results. Mr Neil outlined how the new syllabus was more content heavy and focussed on content and not skills. They had not made the corresponding switch in teaching styles. Not for the first time, teachers would comment that the switch to more knowledge based curriculum had direct implications for how they taught. He also explained how their marking of their pupils' coursework was too defensive. They could have given them better grades. These and other explanations had been put in a document and sent to senior management. It was better to get their explanation in first, he explained. However, he'd left an important issue out of that document. All the teachers present knew the drop the number receiving C or above at GCSE was also down to whom they had allowed on the course. At Heath Hill High, year ten and eleven students follow academic, applied or vocational pathways chosen at the end of year nine. Students who do the applied or vocational pathways are also allowed to take GCSEs, but departments are allowed some leeway in deciding who can take them. He believed in

encouraging all students to take the history GCSE. It was departmental policy that history should be for everyone. Mr Neil was animated by a particular dislike for Gove, and what he thought was an elitist vision for history he espoused. But the pressure they were under meant they would have to revisit this question of who they allowed on the course. He wanted it to be their decision, not management's, nor just his. In order to plan for the year ahead, Mr Neil asked his colleagues a question: *"Is the study of history a right for every student who wants to do it, or should the department allow only those who it's worthwhile to teach"?*

This rhetorical question was not put forcefully. The hesitant way in which the argument was put suggested this was an ideal, something to aim for. Perhaps not viable. This malleability contrasted with Mr Neil's reputation and role in the school. He was regarded as an experienced teacher and a union activist, a vocal critic of government policy. Later in that year, he was key to organising a strike over pensions, which saw pickets on the school gates, which he told me was a rare occurrence in teaching. He organised dozens of teaching staff attend a demonstration over the same issue during the strike. He was widely respected for following up union casework in his own time. He was not averse to saying no to management. He was *not* known for putting his opinions in the forms of questions, or putting his opinions meekly. Maybe his own position was not one that he felt he could force his staff to accept, should it bring pressure down on them. Or perhaps it was a position he felt difficult to reconcile with the pressure he was under. He explained to me another time, before he left for a job at another school, that active trade unionists have to be as good at their job or better, in order to get away with standing up to management. In this case, being as good at your job or better meant getting results. His position as departmental head compelled him to. Maybe this was why his argument for inclusive history education was put so weakly and ambiguously, when what it took to get results was something he was uncomfortable with. His political beliefs and his school position pulled him in different directions.

For Miss Morris, a young teacher in the department who had just finished her Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year, the answer to the question posed was simple. *"We need to look out for results this year; we have to concentrate on getting the right pupils"*.

Her explanation of who made up “right”, or “wrong” pupils was put in the language of control and authority, directly copying phrases used in the morning’s discussion of behaviour management; “*We need to be in charge*”. But behind this strident assertion was a sense of vulnerability. She spoke about how she had been bullied by a pupil in the previous year. She had walked around school at times to avoid her, and had been abused by her numerous times, but never felt the confidence to report or confront it. Her first year of teaching was marked by confrontation with her from the start. It took guts for her to tell this story in front of her colleagues. Did she have to have her in her class if this student chose history? “*Certainly not*”, her line manager and union representative responded.

Her intervention swung the room. What followed was an extended discussion of who the right pupil was, and how to get them to do History GCSE. Different teachers interjected quickly with a range of problems, with no real conclusions given. The department would have to confront ongoing changes to the GCSE syllabus. It was likely to be a much more content heavy, fact orientated qualification. Coursework might be phased out. “*Gove was serious about this stuff*”, the deputy head of the department agreed. They would have to change the way they taught to compensate for this change. Less time would be spent on source skills, more time on learning arguments by rote. This would hamper students with literacy problems, which was a real problem with EAL (students with English as an Additional Language) and “*some of our white kids*”. Ambitious Asian parents want their children to do triple science. This cuts down the numbers of them who can do history. “*It’s the culture of the parents to prioritise these subjects. We can’t compete for the best students.*” The racial and classed assumptions which underpin these comments were common currencies of judgement. Of course, people agreed, that if someone who had no hope of getting a C grade wanted to choose history, they would be allowed. “*But not a group of them coming in to mess about,*” Nadia said. They would pick and chose. The policy that emerged was ambiguous, and based on teachers’ individual subjective judgement as much as students results.

Mr Neil moved the discussion on. Monitoring and revision classes were going to have to change. They already did enough revision lessons. It was unfair to expect them to do any more extra classes than they did last year, so they would have do more with

them. They would have to target who went on them. And ensure they turned up. He explained he had detailed all of this in the dossier he sent to the senior leadership team. They would have to send out letters which made these classes sound compulsory. They would have to have a much closer look at students' English grades, and pick out who needed to help from the start. They would have to target pupils consistently after mock exams, and keep a list of students across different classes. The rest of the meeting discussed the specifics of how to implement what were slightly altered, intensified routines of audit and intervention for GCSE history. Data about progression would have to be produced, analysed, feedback given. In a direct parallel to the morning's activity on behaviour management, they mapped out their weak points and plotted a course to ameliorate their effects. In that two hour meeting they had extended the logic of the geography of control into their own department. Selection would play a new role in deciding who could do history. Regular assessment would play a new role in the department, constructing academic progression in a different way, potentially validating a different sort of learner.

The social logic of the school's good position

This encounter made anticipated the sorts of structural pressures, institutional culture, policy changes, professional choices, political passions that went into constructing elements of practice across different sites of the school; each influencing the creation of different aspects of the ideal learners produced across the pastoral and teaching sites described in the next chapters. As outlined in the introduction, the policy discourse associated with Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) invited speculation of an intensification of the use of performance metrics outlined by the head teacher that morning, metrics where held to be deeply complicit in ongoing social violence, but between this empirical question and these broader concerns are the questions, negotiations, compromises and emotions on display that classroom, and the broader institutional culture in which they took place. These played a big role in making up what the assessment practices associated Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) meant to teachers that enact them, and they played no small part in making up how they were experienced by students. The pressure, and suffering, faced by Mr Neil and his department underlies Bourdieu's assertion that *"one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of*

an empirical reality" (Bourdieu 1993: 271). The logic of marketisation was felt in a very local, very specific way that afternoon, and immersion into school life made understanding and representing that logic possible. The end result was a decision to intensify systems of audit and measurement in order to improve results, precisely the type of practices encouraged by Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008).

Interrogating the way Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) is enacted entailed unpicking the types of institutional pressure and professional subjectivities on display in the discussion that afternoon. This is not a linear account, the practices that Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) encourage point both down into the classroom, at questions of pedagogy, and up and across, at managerial practices of audit and intervention. These were often fragmented decisions, taking place in disparate parts of the school, bordered by department, year group, class or subject. The next chapters take us into sites of the school where these decisions were played out: a starter activity in a lesson, a teacher explaining the reasoning behind her use levels in a group discussion, a pep talk by a head of year in an intervention group for underperforming pupils, a head of year reflecting on his use of data, the head teacher talking about the other schools in borough. Like that extended morning with the History teachers' department, the narrowness of the remit of many of these decisions and practices, across institutional time and space, played a direct role in curtailing the types of subjectivity possible. Despite this fragmentation, there were two threads running through these different sites. They equate roughly to structure and agency, but cannot be reduced to that. To paraphrase Bourdieu, they are better thought of broadly as logics of the social world of teachers in school.

The first is that achieving the school's good position is subject to marketised pressures, but these pressures are articulated within a school culture which makes this pressure about much more than numbers. Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) manifested itself as a series of practices which school managers use to manage their staff and teachers use to manage their students to keep the school's good position. They were an essential component of keeping staff and students orientated up the path of academic success. They provide the means to micro-manage teachers, students and departments if their results are a threat to the good position of the school. This good position is represented in raw numbers, and practice Assessment for

Learning (DCSF 2008) provides the means to produce the numbers to audit and intervene. This can be understood as structure, but this was a structure understood in very local terms, and articulated alongside ambiguous and contradictory progressiveness and a critique of education policy by school management. The good position was relative to its immediate neighbours, to last year's results, this department's results compared to that department. The good position of the school determined its viability as a community school, committed to a collaborative ethos, "*not just an exam factory*". The commitment to Heath High's ethos as a community school, committed to its own form of inclusion and collaboration, weighed heavy here. The school would have to keep getting good results to keep being a school that is not just about results. The articulation of a version of educational progressivism alongside and within logic of marketised governance was a key part of how the school constituted itself. The resulting contradiction, that to be a school that is not just about results, we must get results, was a source of strong social pressure bearing on the head of History and the rest of the department on that first day.

The second thread running through the next chapters are the professional and political passions animated by histories specific to each academic subject. These departmental and subject specific logics played a direct role in mediating how teachers responded to keeping the schools good position, and how they negotiated particular aspects of Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008) practice. Often these concerns were underpinned by political assumptions, moral assertions and ethical concerns. Sometimes these were openly articulated, sometimes cleverly disguised and sometimes strident but utterly unacknowledged, like the young teacher describing her trouble with one student. Sometimes these were hesitant, conflicted, articulations, like Mr Neil's defence of inclusion and his critique of Gove's plans for history education. These subject-specific considerations were weighed with and against the need for the school to keep its good position, with all the strong social pressure that entailed. In some departments, these agencies were minimised by direct exposure to the A-C economy of the school, in others, negotiated and directly oppositional stances were developed. These factors worked at the micro-level, directly influencing the types of learners teachers valued in their work.

Chapter 4: Managing Students' Progression in English

The vast majority of my time in the English department was spent with Miss Bedia and 7N, the form class I was attached to, and with Miss Lilly and her mixed ability Year 9 class, 9E. There was a department facing unique, localised pressures, and the data presented here shows how Assessment for Learning Strategies (DCSF 2008a), particularly the sharing of assessment criteria and self and peer assessment, were deployed to transfer this pressure onto students. Data presented in this chapter reveals a stark parallel between the performance management of their work and the way in which learning was conducted using Assessment for Learning strategies. This parallel suggests the existence of a deep connection between the macro-pressures of marketisation and the micro-practices of learning in their lessons. This connection was ongoing, direct and went beyond the symbolic confluence of students' and teachers' accountability on performance review days. Miss Bedia's and Miss Lilly's use of Assessment for Learning Strategies were a key link in this connection. This chapter reveals how they were used in a systematic way to attempt to refashion the educational subjectivities of students in a manner consummate with the departments' performance management goals. Miss Bedia and Miss Lilly and their students constructed academic progression in such a way as to cement this goal transference, resulting in sequences of lessons which were enacted according to the aims and methods of organisational performance management. At stake in this version of formative assessment is the requirement of students to repeatedly judge themselves and their peers according to judgements in which, research suggests, students say something intrinsic about themselves (Reay and William 1999). *"Results are results and we don't hide them from them"*, Miss Bedia told 7N, after responding to some students' unhappiness at their grades following their first assessment in October.

This chapter is structured in order to set out in full how Assessment for Learning (DCSF 2008a) strategies are used to cement this goal transference. The first half begins with an account of the pressures on the department, then moves on to extended description of how Assessment for Learning strategies were deployed in these classrooms to operationalise learning outcomes into levels and sub-levels. It describes how this allowed for a controlled delegation of differentiated tasks and

subsequent reflection and target setting. It sets out how routines provided the raw material for the recording and presentation of data on SIMS, providing the basis for future rounds of assessment, feedback and target setting.⁵ The second half of this chapter focuses on the critical implications of the convergence of learning and management. It argues that performance management of learning seen in this department is a distinct modality of academic stratification, which is defined by students' participation in the construction of the academic hierarchy through quantified formative assessment, and made possible by continual articulation of subject specific constructs, as the equivalent of external assessment criteria. The accounts of the performance management of learning provided below both confirms and contrasts to existing accounts of social consequences of academic stratification through summative testing (Reay and William 1999, Hall et al 2004) and related teacher practices of labelling and stratification (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004). Observation presented here suggests the performance management of learning neither ameliorates nor worsens the social disparities and social violence caused by marketised governance, but subtly changes how they are reproduced by recalibrating students' learning subjectivities, resulting in a narrow, anxious but effective form of educational inclusion.

Talk of performance management suggests that these classrooms were boring and learning in them onerous. This was far from the case. In order to achieve students' investment in the performance management of their learning, teachers deliberately set out to elicit their personal and emotional responses to texts in groups and whole class discussion. The result of this was that these classrooms could be febrile, heated environments, reflecting the ages of the students and teachers' skilled deployment of affective labour. Deliberate elicitation of talk about the self, followed by the deployment of Assessment for Learning strategies worked to produce a powerful combination of subjectivating of practices, driving the anxious form of educational inclusion on display. Key elements of these practices had strong affinity with Ball's (2003) account of the logic of performativity criterion and the operation of confessional logic in education (Edwards 2008, Fejes 2008). The elicitation of talk about the self, and then the

⁵ These practices are also given extended space in this chapter as they serve as counterpoints to contrasting phenomena in Maths and Citizenship.

quantified version of that inherent in asking and answering “What Went Well” and “Even Better If?” were strongly suggestive of the neo-Foucauldian governmental frame used by these writers, particular that provided by Rose (1989, 1996, 1999). This chapter foregrounds the deliberate, calculated responses to the department’s exposure to the A-C economy which drives this governmental logic.

4.1 ‘All about the colour coding’

The performance management of learning described in this chapter was driven by the English department’s vulnerability to the A-C economy of the school. The key performance indicator this pressure of schools at that time was based on the percentage of students achieving five A* -Cs at GCSE, including maths and English. My time spent at Heath High uncovered how this pressure was felt in a localised form. It fluctuated according to year-to-year changes in the demographics of a cohort of students, which could be tiny in real terms, but leave a large statistical shadow. The whims of government ministers could mean last minute alterations to years of departmental planning. In the year I entered the Heath High, all of these factors combined to give the English department at Heath High particular reasons to worry about their results, compared to other departments in the school. An ongoing concern was the relative success of the maths department compared to the English department. The head teacher laid the statistics out to me in stark terms at the end of the year. Teachers in the department were acutely aware of these calculations. They explained them in terms of the class and racial composition of the school. Miss Bedia complained of a cultural bias in the parents of South Asian students for maths and science, which put English at a disadvantage. It was a commonly held opinion that parents were just not as supportive as they were for these subject teachers. A more tangible factor was the high number of students who spoke English as an additional language (EAL), and the relatively high numbers of new arrivals who spoke little or no English. In the year I joined Heath High, this pressure was intensified by sudden changes to GCSEs. Students were no longer to be allowed to take them early, or repeat them. This would adversely affect Heath High because the department had taken full use of previous flexibility to help students prepare for their different GCSE exams separately.

Their fears about this changing of the goal-posts were borne out by that year's results. When I returned briefly to staff at the start of the following academic year the head teacher, Mr Graham, explained the numbers:

“Last year we got 66%. This year it was 64% We were expecting 68. We really hoped to get 70, because that would set a marker down for the school. We have 26 kids who got 5 A-C, including maths and science, but got D in English. So a significant number of those failed to pass that marker because of this.

If you got some of those to pass, then our percentage is 68%, where it should be. “ (06.09.12)

My time spent with history teachers on my first day in the school had revealed that these numbers induced significant, focussed, social pressure on departmental leaders and teachers. Compounding this pressure in English was the sense that the school's good position depended on them, and them alone, as they would always come behind maths. This department was uniquely exposed. At stake in the results of ten or so GCSE English results was where all the things the head teacher had talked about on the training day, its community ethos, its culture and the working relationships teachers built up over their years of service. A lot of what gave teachers' work meaning was bound up in the fate of these students, and the whole school was looking for the English department to deliver. These were the high social stakes which drove Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a) through the department, starting at Year 7, all the way up to GCSE.

How the department responded to this pressure was put in clear terms by Miss Lilly, near the end of cycles of observation at Heath High:

Miss Lilly: In terms of the results, it comes down to this; this is what we got last year (pointing to table), this is what we need to do to maintain it or do better this year and for the next years' (pointing to a higher point). With the classes you have been in at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14), it's the red and green system SIMS thing where it calculates what they came to school with, and tracks them through the schools with the different assessments.

After a term you can see whether they have improved. It takes no account of a change of teacher, or whether their behaviour has changed so they are not progressing. Anything could have happened outside of school. There is just that need to get that A-C percentage at the end of it. There is the need in the department. They (management) look at our percentage, and say “What are you doing to do to get this?”, then the head of department says “this is what we will do”; then we decide what booster sessions we will take up, which students to target, which students are at the levels they need, which are not.

It’s all about the colour coding and getting that percentage. (14.06.12)

Her final comments, along with the headteacher’s comments about the school’s A-C economy, capture the type of pressures driving the classroom phenomena described in this chapter. Tellingly, her words also capture something of the form Assessment for Learning strategies took. They capture how SIMS was used to keep track of her students’ progress, from Year 7, and played a key role in narrowing down success criteria, indicating which students to target. She captures this how this driven by a mixture managerial command; “What are you doing to do to get this?” and delegated responsibility, “then we decide”. Crucially, the managerial processes she described; the narrowing of success criteria and the delegation of responsibility to meet this criteria, also captures how she used Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a) throughout the year I had spent in her class. The sharing of assessment of criteria was used to narrow down what academic progression meant, making it consummate with “the colour coding and getting that percentage”. Self and peer assessment and targeted feedback were used carefully focus a delegated management of that learning, making minute steps of academic progression the positive choice of responsible learners. These practices make up the critical focus of this chapter.

The question I asked her, however, was about her teaching, not managerial practice. Miss Lilly’s classroom was not all about “the colour coding”. The vast majority of her lessons did not mention levels, or use Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a). I was in her class for the entire second term and third term of my time at Heath High. Most of these lessons included explorations of Romeo and Juliet, visceral pubescent emotions and the problems of being fourteen. She was able get the

students in her class to talk, and occasionally write, at length about the meaning of love, jealousy and betrayal. Her speaking and listening tasks asked students to insert their own experiences into the lives of the Montagues and Capulets – and for the most part this worked. This was not dry material. The discussions were heated. This was a difficult, mixed set year nine class, in which some students struggled to read, and some struggled to control their anger at the tiniest of slights from other students. The topics covered were often raw, but they were never unfocussed. This was teaching which was engaging but difficult, reliant on the skilled deployment of affective labour, patience and enthusiasm. She had to use her enthusiasm for the text in order that students could apply themselves to the text. She was selling her personality in these lessons, “deliberately inducing feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces a proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild 1983: 7). Such displays of emotion helped bring out students own life experiences in order to extend their understanding of the language and literary devices used by Shakespeare. She used Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 film production in a targeted way to cement understanding of literary devices in the text. The star-crossed lovers dominated these lessons, not colour coding. Most of my time was spent with working on vocabulary and reading with two EAL students, but even lessons in lessons I dedicated to observation, it was difficult not to participate.

That Miss Lilly failed to mention these more open, exploratory lessons which made up the majority of her teaching is instructive, and speaks to the professional subjectivities evident in how teachers talked about their jobs in English. Rinaldi’s (2006) comment that assessment is that which is most valued, is telling here. She *undervalued* what was her own engaging, difficult and highly skilled teaching. This work was just something she did. There are two points to be made about this divergence between her description of the department and most of her lessons. The first is a caveat about the time teachers had in English, which presented practical problems for a deeper analysis of their work in interviews and through general conversations around school. This contrasted with teachers in other departments, whose answers to similar questions in conversations over the year revealed a contrasting set of professional subjectivities. They explored their teaching practice in much broader terms, articulating a wider range of understandings of the role of teachers and education. The time they had to say this, revealed as much as what they had to say. It is also important not to

reproduce this misrepresentation in this chapter by way of empirical focus. The focus is on later sequences of lessons which included formative assessment tasks. The practices of goal transference in these later lessons would not have been successful, unless these teachers had worked hard to achieve students' understandings of the texts they worked, with in these more open exploratory lessons.

The way in which this material was used to construct academic progression in later sequences of lessons, however, was all about getting the "percentage". In both Miss Lilly's, and Miss Bedia's classes, as each half term drew to an end, expansive, open discussion and written tasks were set aside. These later sequences followed the same pattern- an assessment task was prepared, work was done to individualise assessment objectives based on students' targets, the assessment was conducted and then reflected upon over one or two lessons. These sequences often involved changes of seating plan, from groups to rows, or from mixed ability to streamed groups, in order to better manage more focussed tasks. In preparation tasks, students' understandings of the texts discussed in previous lessons, were operationalised into minute, differentiated targets. More closed, didactic tasks were used to cement understandings of these targets. In Miss Lilly's class, academic progression entailed condensing half a term's work on Shakespeare into the minute differences between National Curriculum levels. The sharing of assessment criteria played a crucial role in narrowing down what success meant. For the students I was working with in Miss Lilly's class, what mattered was the difference between a level 5 and 6 understanding of a simile. As we geared up for their first assessment on the year on Shakespeare in June, learning was focussed back down into fragments of texts and these micro-measures of knowledge. The students I was attached to wanted to discuss why Juliet wanted to take the vial of poison, her motivations, and the bloodbath that was coming up. Instead, we had to go over and over what "shrieks like a mandrake torn from the earth" means in these narrow terms. This meant divorcing the simile from Juliet's wider motivations- this narrowing of focus onto specific literary devices of a text is not a new way to teach English, but a *further* narrowing of this focus into pre-defined, levelled categories might be. Such practices make up the key critical points about the form of knowledge and the type of student most valued in these practices.

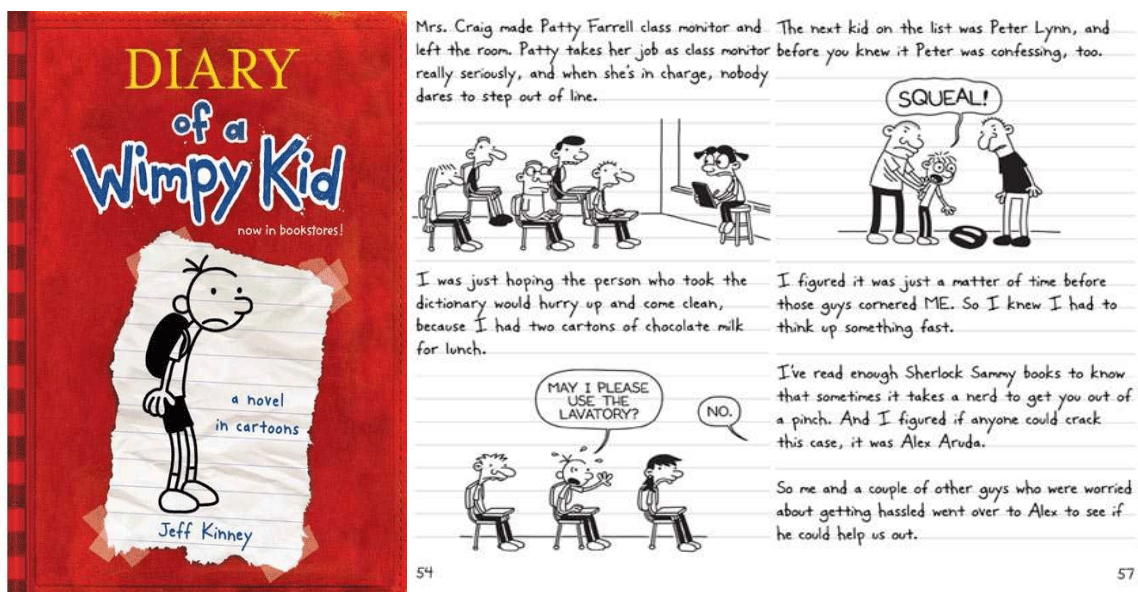
This de-contextualisation was designed to allow the use of self-selected differentiated tasks and self and peer assessment, which followed the same logic as the delegated responsibility (“What are you doing to get...?”, “then we decide”) Miss Lilly described in her management. In the penultimate lesson before the Shakespeare assessment, students worked in groups to label a print out of Juliet’s final speech, circling each adjective, identifying each simile and metaphor, discussing each poetic device. In the second half of the lesson students worked alone for an extended writing task on the use of Shakespeare’s language in Act 4, using their annotated sheet as the basis for their writing. Academic differentiation for this task was driven by students’ self-selecting differentiated performance outcomes, labelled “some”, “most”, “all”, each on representing National Curriculum levels seven, six and five respectively. Examples of “students managing aspects of their learning”, to use Ofsted’s (2011) understanding of Assessment for Learning, were frequent in parts of these assessment sequences. These choices took place in preparation for assessments, where students could choose self-differentiated tasks and texts to match their level. They also took place after assessments had been handed back. Students could decide which part of their feedback was most relevant in progressing to the next level. They could do the same for their peers, writing targets for each other.

The students as decision makers were counselled by me, Miss Lilly or Miss Bedia, but the decisions, within the limited context they were taken, were their own. The levels themselves, whether explicitly communicated, or displayed in the form of “some”, “most”, “all” performance outcomes. The role of Miss Lilly in these tasks was less that of a teacher, and more the manager in a performance appraisal. Her role was to encourage students to verbalise their performance so they could pick apart its strengths and weakness. These interactions had similarity to the learning conversations envisage by the original research (Black and William 1998a), in that students discussed their learning in the abstract with the goal of self-intervention, but they had a very specific aim: Focussed choices, combined with the narrowing of assessment criteria, worked to make academic progression the result of individual and individualising feedback loops. These loops mapped out how the performance management of teachers, mediated by the colour coding of SIMS, was extended into the form assessment practice took, and how academic progression was constructed.

The contrast between open, exploratory lessons and the later, closed, assessment-focussed lessons is significant. The contrast captures the rhythm of learning in English, where the collective construction of meaning from poems and books, built up over a half term, was corralled into narrow, proscriptive performance outcomes. The physical moving of chairs in these lessons, done to enact a much more controlled pedagogic style, matched my mental image of learning being rounded up for quantified auction. They felt like addition to learning, crammed into four or five lessons at the end of each half term. The key point here is that these later lessons were *not* all that English was about, but what was given most official value by the school. Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a) were enacted in order that students attached the same values to their learning. This contrast often involved a shift from the deeply personal to the highly proscriptive at a speed that surprised to me, but seemed to be utterly normal to students. Prior to their final assessment, 9E worked on Shakespeare's use of light and dark imagery in the play. The aim of this was partially to re-cap the plot, as this imagery, particularly the use of the sun, is a motif throughout the play. Going over the times when this motif was used allowed Miss Lilly to question students about key plot developments at each stage. The main activity was to get students to talk and write about "who lights up" their own life. This discussion and writing task veered away from discussion of Shakespeare. It elicited very personal responses, revelations about themselves which students were keen to read aloud. In the final assessment of the year, a week later, students were asked to write about the language and literary devices used by Shakespeare in Act 5. They had to write about how Shakespeare manipulated the audience in the final act of Romeo and Juliet; all students could at least write about the light and dark imagery in this act after their "who lights up my world" activity. They could write about how this imagery made them feel, and all the other collective meanings the class made about Shakespeare's choices built up over the earlier lessons. What made this a successful performance, which *progressed* their learning, was whether their response included a crucial, pre-defined, narrow performance outcome which had been worked on in previous lessons, and resulted in a correct colour code on a departmental spreadsheet.

4.2 Diary of A Wimpy Kid

The path from personal investment to colour coding was revealed to me as I shadowed 7N in their first weeks of school. What follows is a detailed account of their first assessment in English as it contained, in exaggerated form, assessment practice I saw in Miss Lilly's class and elsewhere in English. Miss Bedia introduced the assessment practices in a methodical, telegraphed way in order to make the tasks become routine. She explained and justified each step, taking care to articulate what the purpose of each example of Assessment for Learning strategies were, emphasising how they would help them as learners. My extended access to this form group gave me an extra vantage point from which to judge the impact of assessment in this class.



Diary of Wimpy Kid front cover and sample

Their English lessons continued their socialisation into their new school. Their first book was 'Diary of Wimpy Kid'. This is an illustrated comedy that details the difficulties and concerns of a child entering high school. It was also adapted for a TV series which most of 7N seemed to have seen. The content of the book was used to begin a series of speaking and listening tasks where they talked about themselves, their primary school, their siblings and their own experiences of starting a new school. It was chosen as their first book because its content encouraged them to learn more about each other, cement new friendships, and orientate themselves in their own new school. A large component of these first lessons involved group reading and whole class discussion, followed by minimal writing tasks that related to the book but included more didactic work on spelling and punctuation. Their teacher, Miss Bedia, made a

concerted effort to include all students in these discussions, using variety of pedagogical tricks: hot seating, bean-bag throwing, names out of hats, nominating in order to make speaking and listening exercises a regular activity for all students. The aim of these tasks was to get students talking about themselves to develop their understanding and confidence of their roles as pupils in the school and also to begin to work on English skills.

A lesson on adjectives halfway through the first term encapsulated this mixture of personal development, reading and grammatical understanding. Miss Bedia set group activities which interrogated the author's use of language, particularly "special" words, in order to expand their own vocabulary. Groups of special words could be used "when you wanted to describe someone or something which made you feel more than one emotion". Greg, the protagonist, liked his brother, and his best friend, Rowley, but sometimes he also got annoyed by them. These group tasks got students talking about how people in their lives could also be complicated, and required them to make up oxymoron conjoined adjectives. The culmination of this particular reading was work on complex sentences, which could express how Greg felt about his brother. This was first done as a sentence card sort, with bits of the sentences on each card, with comic additions, then as a group example, and then finally individual examples. The final task for the students I was working with, was to construct a paragraph, which started with a sentence which included an oxymoron adjective (happy-sad), followed by a complex sentence which explained both sides of the couplet. This sort of activity was typical in much of the Key Stage 3 English classes, where teachers elicited personal responses from texts, applied these understandings back to a grammatical concept and then got students to write.

4.3 Operationalising Rowley

In the run up to the end of the first half term, the style of lessons changed. An assessment, first on reading skills, and then on writing skills, Miss Bedia explained, was to be completed before half term. The mark for this assessment would go on their report, and would be discussed with their tutors on performance review day. The next few lessons were going to be very important, "because they would help you get the best possible grade, and they would make the assessment as easy as possible"

(14.10.11). These preparatory lessons entailed a switch in emphasis and teaching style. The open discussion tasks and speaking and listening exercises employed in the previous lessons disappeared, and closed, focussed tasks replaced them. The tables were moved, from groups to rows, to help children concentrate. The target of these tasks was to achieve transparency in assessment criteria, which directly invoked Ofsted's decree that "*all children understand what they need to do to progress through National Curriculum levels' (DCSF 2008)*". These tasks introduced a new concept to the class (new to them at Heath High); the individual target level. Their personal target level, Miss Bedia explained, was based on their Key Stage 2 SAT results, their reading age scores and their Fischer Family Trust score. They had to write this target down in their planners and in the front of their books. To give this target level meaning, Miss Bedia led the children through a series of tasks which aimed to take their enjoyment of the book, their understanding of the literary and grammatical devices it employed, into something which could be given a National Curriculum level. Students were taken through a series of closed tasks, in order for them to understand with precision what was expected of them in the assessment. This was achieved by turning the collective understandings of the text, built up by a series of immersive discussions in previous weeks around key plot twists and character traits, into something they could reflexively measure through a set of performable indicators, which linked specific grammatical and literary devices to progression through sub levels. Miss Bedia and 7N collectively converted socially constructed meanings into individual learning outcomes.

In the penultimate lesson before the formal assessment, the assessment task was outlined. Students were told that they would write an essay titled "*How does Greg feel about his new school?*" My role in the class was to work with students whose results were low level 4 or less, and to work closely with two students on sentence structure. I reminded them of the lesson, two weeks previously, where they had made sentences which could say more than one thing about a person. In the lesson before their first assessment, they were led through a series of tasks that did this. "Greg", the diarist and protagonist of the book, had a love-hate relationship with his best friend Rowley, and the lesson aim was to write about their relationship. The starter activity was to think in groups of all the words that describe friends when they are good, and then all the describing words for when they annoy you. The task was set up as a game, reprising their work from previous lessons on special words. Each pair had to come

up with a word that had not been used yet, and if not, they were out of the game. The next activity, also in pairs, was to find and write down the page numbers of all the scenes in the book that contained Rowley and Greg, and sum up their relationship in one sentence. Students were invited to label an interactive white board with the page numbers they had found. The first activity re-introduced and shared the descriptive vocabulary they would use. The second task reinforced their reading from previous weeks, and gave all members of the class a means to access the task for the main activity.

Sharing and Self-Selecting Assessment Criteria

The next main activity in this penultimate lesson aimed to apply their understanding of the text, and in doing, perform a task that was linked to different levels. Students had to self-select level 4, level 5 and level 6 writing frames for the task of writing a paragraph about Rowley and Greg's relationship. This was real self-selection – no instructions were given. Students were told they'd be able to get more help if they chose the right level for them. For the level 4 students I was helping, the focus was on completing PEE sentences (point, example, explanation) with perfect full stops and capital letters. For level 5 it was on the use similes and creative adjectives. I was directed to emphasise particular components of level four writing skills. My tasks, discussed before the lesson with Miss Bedia, were threefold: To ask these students to correct their sentences for capital letters and full stops, to ask them if they could add a comma to a sentence and add the word "but" or "however" to make it more complex and to push them to think of an extra, adventurous word, usually an adjective that could go into the sentence. To help me direct these students, I was to point out and explain the descriptors for level 4 writing which were glued in their front of their books and displayed on the wall. These are reproduced below:

After they had completed these tasks, we swapped books with students working at the same level, and checked to see their attempts at more complex sentences had had the appropriate capital letters, apostrophes and full stops so they could give each other a level 4 A, B or C.

Level 4 Speaking and Listening

Pupils talk and listen with confidence in an increasing range of contexts. Their talk is adapted to the purpose: developing ideas thoughtfully, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly. In discussion, they listen carefully, making contributions and asking questions that are responsive to others' ideas and views. They use appropriately some of the features of standard English vocabulary and grammar.

Level 4 Reading

In responding to a range of texts, pupils show understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters, beginning to use inference and deduction. They refer to the text when explaining their views. They locate and use ideas and information.

Level 4 Writing

Pupils' writing in a range of forms is lively and thoughtful. Ideas are often sustained and developed in interesting ways and organised appropriately for the purpose of the reader. Vocabulary choices are often adventurous and words are used for effect. Pupils are beginning to use grammatically complex sentences, extending meaning. Spelling, including that of polysyllabic words that conform to regular patterns, is generally accurate. Full stops, capital letters and question marks are used correctly, and pupils are beginning to use punctuation within the sentence. Handwriting style is fluent, joined and legible.

Level 4 KS3 National Curriculum Level Descriptors

What Went Well? Even Better If?

This penultimate lesson built up tension. The talk of levels in English spilled over into other lessons. They questioned me about what the assessment was for. On the lesson of the assessment, they were quiet lining up. Again, students asked what the assessment was for. Miss Bedia had to spend several minutes re-explaining what Performance Review Day was, how the assessment “was not a test”, that it was to help their learning, that the results would not mean they would have to change classes. She questioned the class to remind them of the notes they had made in the previous lesson about page numbers and then set them off on the task. My job was to help students who had arrived at Heath High in with Key Stage 2 results of level 3. These

students were provided with a writing frame. My task was to help them use it, answering any questions they had about their work without correcting it.

In the next lesson in the sequence, their work was handed back, with formative comments and a grade written on a feedback sheet, which was to be completed by the students. The tables stayed in rows, so that students could concentrate on working in pairs. The first half of this lesson was taken up with how to fill in the rest of the feedback sheet. Miss Bedia began this task with a short speech about levels, and why they are important. They were *“something we all have to be open about. We don’t hide them”*. They should be *“used to help you get better”*. *“You may not like them, but we have to talk about them to help you get better”* (19.10.11). They had to make targets out of her comments on their work. Their job, in pairs, was to narrow these targets down to what would help them progress up the next sub-level. The tasks in the class consisted of them talking to their neighbour about their targets, and then recording this in their planners, and gluing a separate sheet in which they recorded the same information into a folder kept separately from their books.

These tasks were framed by a phrase that became common in English across the Key Stage 3 lessons in which I was present. Miss Bedia moved her power point on to a big slide that contained the acronyms WWW and EBI in a font size that took up the whole screen. The class knew precisely these letters signalled. They knew they stood for *“What Went Well?”* and *“Even Better If”* before Miss Bedia introduced those terms. These words tumbled out of their mouths as they saw them on the screen, suggesting they had been coached in this method of self-reflection in their primary schools. It seemed like familiar chant, which the children were happy to repeat. After looking through comments about their work on the feedback sheet Miss Bedia had given out, two of the students I was assigned to, made the following conclusions:

WWW: I used new words to describe Rowley.

EBI: To get a 4c I need to use PEE sentences that make a paragraph.

WWW: I used paragraphs to explain my ideas

EBI: To be 4b in English I need to use capital letters and full stops in every sentence.

When their “WWW?” and “EBI?” had been approved by me or Miss Bedia, they had to write them down on the feedback sheet that was handed, and put this in a separate

individual folder, which was kept away from their regular books. This assessment folder, Miss Bedia explained, was to be kept in school, and be their permanent record. It would only leave the class during Performance Review Days. This folder would also be displayed during Ofsted inspections, as it provided evidence of Miss Bedia's formative assessment and children's own comments. This accountability was explained in clear terms to the children. The documents could be seen by your parents, the headmaster and Ofsted so *"everyone can see what progress you are making"*. After completing their feedback sheet, they had to copy much of the same information into the correct page of their student planner. The second half of the lesson returned to whole class readings of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

In the next lesson self and peer assessment continued. A photocopy of their original assessment was handed back to them so it could be used for a peer assessment tasks. Miss Bedia had marked areas for improvement on their work with a question mark written in green pen, without saying what area it needed to be. For the students I was helping, a question mark was put next to a sentence without a capital letter. If a student had made many mistakes, the more consistent ones were picked out. More able students, working at level 5 or above, were asked direct substantive questions about the language in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Those working at lower levels tended to be questioned on more basic spelling and grammar. At the start of the lesson students were split into general ability groups, spread across separate tables. *"You can help those who got a mark nearest your own"*. Students first had to check their own work, and correct or comment on where a question had been, and then hand it to a partner to double check their work.

Progression Anxiety in 7N

These multiple acts of recording and reflection did not go smoothly. In part, because first lesson after the assessment was filled with quite tedious administration tasks; put your target on page x in your planner, write your results here, here and here, stick this in your book and write your result there, put your assessment in your special assessment blue folder. There was also some unhappiness regarding the grades. These were often below what they had achieved at primary school. Miss Bedia's advice that *'Heath High levels work in a different way'* was not a good enough

explanation. A small minority displayed forms of distress during the administration for these reasons. In this class, one boy was struggling to hold back tears. Silent tears welled at the side of his eyes, he refused to engage with the teacher or his peers, and they looked straight ahead, neck and face rigid, and concentrated on controlling their outward signs, trying to make sure no one could see them crying. He was not the only boy I saw struggling with his emotions in this way, during assessment feedback in other lessons. A small number of other boys also reacted to their first assessments by withdrawing.

This suffering was by its nature hidden from the teachers. It was difficult to detect, because of the inward, quiet direction of the child concerned and because the teacher had other more pressing concerns in the classroom. Getting thirty pupils to complete a series of reflexive discussion tasks, followed by new administrative tasks, left little time to focus on their emotional responses. This behaviour was present in a very small minority of cases, but it was on an end of a scale that ranged from this to a defensiveness to discuss their work with others and a reluctance to record their results if they did not like them. This suffering was described to me as a necessary part of *"toughening up"* by Miss McKay, the pastoral head of Year 7, when I described it to her in the staffroom. One boy in 7N had cried in the same, secret, defensive way during two separate post-assessment exercises. He would refuse to say what the matter was to any adult. She said this was him *"growing up"*. *"He can't be told he is wonderful all the time...learning how to fail is a good lesson for everyone"*. For his classroom teacher it was something he would *"get over quickly"*, something normal for some Year 7s. In the lesson after this conversation, Miss Bedia repeated that *"results were results"*, but we are *"proud of all our achievements and we show them to each other so we learn from them"*. *"Even if you don't do well you learn from it"*. Heath High will only ask that you *"do your best"*. (21.10.10)

For most, these routines became normal, and the visible signs of anxiety and discomfort diminished. For others, signs of suffering were ongoing. For one student in 7N, Michelle, this anxiety developed into a nervous tic which spilled into lessons. Rather than face the task in hand, there was a repetitive focus on the planner and the target sheet, ticking off homework that needs to be done, and asking me when the next homework was due. This was followed by going to the relevant page and ticking

off the task. Over the first term the ticking motion of her right hand developed into an involuntary reaction, when the pupil was anxious about her work. After the first cycle of assessment tasks, the focus of her anxiety moved from her homework pages to her target pages in her planner and her exercise books. She ticked off these targets until she had to ask for another planner. Our lessons immediately after this sequence were taken up with extended periods, where she re-wrote her levels and targets in her planner, turning the relevant pages into a mess. Ahead of Performance Review Day, several subjects had similar routines to English. She kept asking me if she was making progress, what did making progress mean, and if she was getting better. I told her she was making good enough progress, and that levels did not matter that much. I am reasonably certain she could see through this. She was adept in creative guesses and evasiveness, including the use of teachers' body language to help her guess the right answer to questions, so she had the skills to see my platitudes for what they were. I spent a considerable amount of time in lessons supporting her and also providing one and one support with maths throughout my time at Heath High. Her questioning of what progression meant reflected this relationship. Staff worked hard to respond to her needs and treated her with respect. The question here is not one of inclusion, but what the schools inclusion meant. For this pupil, the educational content of the lesson was secondary to anxiety which was written over the record of her academic progression. The acts of self-monitoring associated with the recording of results in her planner, became both an avoidance tactic and a manifestation of her anxiousness.

These examples of suffering and anxiety stood out, as they contrasted with both the stated ethos of the school and the vast majority of staff and student interactions. Heath High prided itself on strong pastoral care and good staff, student relations. 7N's induction into the school had been designed with their emotional and social well being in mind. Their first day, apart from the nervous line-up in the tennis courts in the first hour, was designed to help them make new friendships and to get to know the school. The day comprised of group problem solving tasks in the gym, the hall and the playground, and all staff, not just Year 7 tutors, were encouraged to join in. Lots did, so there was a very high student staff ratio. This day was used as an example of the school's child focussed policies, when I later interviewed the head of department and the head teacher. Both of them contrasted the ethos of Heath High with other schools

which could be “*exam factories*” (06.09.12 Mr Graham), an implicit criticism of schools in the borough whose leaderships had chosen to convert to academies that same year.

Neither was it the case that the English department, Miss Bedia, their form teacher, or the general year team leadership were lacking in compassion. Both the deputy pastoral assistant and Miss Bedia showed nothing but compassion and patience to students who were upset at all other times. Significantly, I never heard an adult raise their voice to a child in all my time there, which contrasted to every other school I have worked in or trained in. Students would talk to teachers outside of the classroom. I would be approached in the playground by students in 7N, when doing duty with other teachers. The head teacher described staff-student relationships as a great strength of Heath High. He was confident that every child in the school, if asked, would “*know a teacher that knew something about them, or shared an interest with them.*” “*Teachers from other schools and inspectors always say we have a really good atmosphere*” (06.09.12). These were generally fair observations. Even students who were notorious among staff for being in and out of the behaviour management cycle, regular attendees of the isolation room, were social with teachers, albeit outside of their classrooms. The general calm, secure atmosphere of Heath High made the signs of anxiety after 7Ns first assessments all the more noticeable. The preparation for it; “*we share our results, we don’t hide them*” (Miss Bedia) and the reaction to it; “*it’s part of toughening up*” (Miss McKay), contrasted to the care and concern shown elsewhere. Directed inward, deliberately hidden, these anxious moments stood apart from regular interactions between adults and children in the school routine.

4.5 Performance Management Pedagogy

The cause of this anxiety was embedded in the way academic progression was constructed in English. It marked the end-point of a sequence of lessons which followed the logic of organisational performance management. Organisational performance management is understood here as the shaping of individual behaviour to align the interests of the individual with that of the organisation (Mohrman and Mohrman 1995). It involves a “systematic and continuous process for improving organisational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams, including planning, defining, goal setting, monitoring, assessing and reviewing

individual and team performance” (Armstrong 2009:1). The self-assessment activities completed by 7N and 9E resemble managerial logic of performance management systems, which aim to create “a continuous, future-orientated and participative system; an ongoing cycle of criteria setting, monitoring and informal feedback and peers, formal assessment, diagnosis and review” (Shields 2007: 2). From this perspective, the manifestations of anxiety are less the result of an uncaring school, and more the intended consequences of a form of pedagogy, which sought to reproduce the performance anxiety of the department in the learning of students. Miss Bedia, Miss Lilly and their students used Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a) to enact the goal of performance management, which is to align the interests of the individual with those of the organisation, and replicated the tools of performance management, which is participation in target setting and reviews. Her department’s organisational goal was to make keep the danger of failure in the A-C economy from the department and the school, and students’ consummate goal was to progress at least two National Curriculum sub-levels per year. The confluence of teachers performance management and students assessment practice revealed on Performance Review Day was extended directly into the classroom. The sharing of narrow, levelled assessment criteria, defining a set of delegated tasks and asking students to assess those tasks in the language of performance outcomes, were the tools by which the performance anxiety of the department, was reproduced in the learning tasks of students.

These routines marked the direct footprint of the local education market in the minutiae of routine learning activities. They present a novel form of academic stratification, defined by teachers, making learning the equivalence of levels both through the sharing of assessment criteria, and students’ direct involvement in the construction of the academic hierarchy, through the routines of self and peer assessment. The claim here is that performance management pedagogy can be defined as the routine use of the key performance indicators, used to manage teachers and schools as pedagogic tools in the classroom, in such a way as to copy the aim and purpose of organisational performance management. It entails operationalising subject specific constructs into key performance indicators, prior to assessment tasks, and the tight convergence of formative and summative assessment in routines of self and peer assessment. Calling the use of Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a) performance

management of learning allows for a clear distinction to be made between this practice and the original Assessment for Learning (Black and William 1998a) research. 7N's operationalising of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* show what Assessment for Learning's misrepresentation (Swaffield 2009, Black 2011) means in practice. In simple terms, it confirms the comment made about New Labour's transformation of Assessment for Learning (Black and William 1998a) by Bangs (2012) of a "strange hybrid of formative and summative assessment" where everything is "recorded to the nth degree".

Fabricating Progression, Performing Independence

The final recordings of learning which go on SIMS and are recorded in 9E and 7N's planners and class folder, have a resemblance to key aspects of Ball's (2003) account of the performative construction of knowledge operating in education. Students' role in the performance management of learning described here, resonates with this account of the professional consequences of marketisation. This comparison brings in to focus; the significance of the time spent preparing these recordings, their direct relationship to the local education market and Ofsted's notions of good teaching, the cause and nature of the anxiety on display and, crucially, the type of learning subjectivities the performance management of learning values. Performativity is "a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions" (Ball 2003: 216). These targets are the currencies of judgement in a system of marketised provision. They are pushed by a managerial form of governance, which sidelines professional and bureaucratic forms of organisation. Crucially, performativity works to shape specific types of teachers: flexible, enterprising and focussed on the organisations goals. Ball describes this logic operating to refashion teachers' work, making it, and the meaning they make from it, a "response to targets, indicators and evaluations" (ibid, 215). Miss Lilly's description of a department, that is all about "*the colour coding and getting that percentage*", records the operation of this organisational logic. In order to frame the social significance of these metrics, Ball applies a neo-Foucauldian understanding of the discursive construction of subjectivity, particularly the governmentality frame provided by Rose (1989, 1996, 1999). This is used to connect macro shifts in governance characteristic of a neoliberal epoch with questions of professional identity and subjectivity at the institutional and individual

level. Crucially, external representations work to re-shape teachers' identities. Performative measures are not just an external, managerial imposition; they have the effect of bringing about a subjective change in the existence of those that operate under its logic. They are "represented as individuals who calculate about themselves, 'add value' to themselves, improve their productivity" (2003: 215). As a result, Ball argues, teachers may have to internalise these prerogatives in order to avoid antagonism between their pre-existing professional beliefs and the demands of the job. By doing so, the performative measures take aim at their soul, changing the relationship between themselves, their colleagues and their students.

The practice of recording the answers to "*What Went Well?*" and "*Even Better If?*" in narrow, economised terms, is significant as the performative logic of teachers' work outlined by Ball is passed down to students. From this perspective, the multiple acts of recording in English represent the endpoint of productions of fabrications of learning, which are valuable to students and teachers, inasmuch as they are effective in rendering themselves open for successful appraisal. During the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* assessment, Miss Bedia made this logic clear: Their self-completed feedback forms were kept in the special folder at the front of the class, ready for the head teacher or Ofsted to view at any time. They had to duplicate the same comments and targets on the English page of their planner, leaving them open to the audit of their form tutor and parents.

This chapter has thus far outlined the internal articulation of external pressures that push this practice, describing the mediation of SIMS and the A-C economy in an English department "all about the colour coding". These documents were a reminder that the subjectivities they supposed to represent were also externally required. Ofsted's (2004, 2006, 2010, 2011a) articulation of Assessment for Learning strategies suggest that it is not just that teachers must transform themselves into an auditable commodity through the production of fabrications of teaching, but that they have to provide evidence that they require their students to do the same. Ofsted's judgement of what makes up a good lesson, and by extension, what made up a good or outstanding school, was evidence of a particular sort of self-reflective learner, cast in the image of their own procedures. Such practices are an example of what is at stake in Ofsted's desire to see independent learning. The recoding of the answers to "What

Went Well?” and “Even Better If?” provide vital evidence of this externally desired educational subjectivity, and an indication of how it should be performed. Miss Bedia’s explanation to 7N of how their recordings are used suggests that the planner and the assessment folder were key artefacts in the construction of this independent learner. This is what Christine Gilbert (Ofsted 2006) envisaged when she matched data management to Assessment for Learning techniques, it is what Ofsted meant by indicating that “Pupils’ capacity to learn independently was increased when they were given the opportunities and skills to assess and manage aspects of their learning.” (Ofsted 2011a). Notably, these practices were recognised by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate in their report after they visited Heath High in early October; “In lessons observed, students sensibly evaluated their own and others’ work, and contributed thoughtful and constructive comments.” (Ofsted 2011b).

The central place of these recordings, and the time spent working on them, suggests the operation of the law of contradiction in the performative construction of knowledge. This refers to the conflict between the need to increase first order tasks in order to deliver success, in this case, teaching and learning, and the investment of time and resources of second order procedures which monitor and measure performance. These latter tasks are crucial in the production of documentation for external audit, but investment of time, resources and personal in monitoring procedures takes away from first order tasks. The time spent by students in their planners, and by teachers on SIMS, suggests these “monitoring systems” (Ball 2003: 221) come to impinge on the first order core tasks of learning and teaching. Moreover, these acts of recording were the final stage of sequences of lessons which in some cases lasted weeks. Around one eighth of the lessons in Miss Lilly and Miss Bedia’s class comprised of assessments, sandwiched by preparation and reflection lessons. The key point to be made here is that that for all the fuss, time and effort made over these second order activities, they actually carried relatively little of the meaning that students made out of the texts they were studying. The snippets of their learning that go into these displays were a tiny component of the meaning students took from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* or *Romeo and Juliet*. These performances worked to transform complex social processes of learning into simple figures. For 7N, the diary of the Wimpy kid allowed them to talk at length about their socialisation into the new school. For the students I was working with, this was narrowed down to the minute differences between a level

4a and 4b, dependent on the correct replication of PEE paragraphs. This was seen in a stark way in Miss Lilly's class, where discussion of Shakespeare often took the form of deeply personal discussion of emotions. These simple figures could never be a true reflection of their understandings of the text, but that was not the point. I got the impression the students in Year 9 got that as well, whilst going over "shrieks like a mandrake".

The narrowing of success criteria and channelled autonomy directed students to make their own calculation between "wealth and efficiency" (Lyotard 1984:46) in order to give a *true* reflection of what would progress their learning. These calculations encourage students to exteriorise their own learning, and by extension, their personal identifications with the text and their social relationships with their fellow student these identifications depend on. The calculations inherent in "WWW?" and "EBI?" encouraged students to de-socialise their learning relationships, in order that meanings they make out of texts can be translated into academic progression. In Miss Lilly's class, this took the form of extended discussion and writing tasks on what love and jealousy meant. In Miss Bedia's class, students discussed what it meant to start a new school, and to have mixed emotions about family members and classmates. Students had to make these close and personal meanings and, at the same time, turn them into auditable fabrications of improvement, recorded forever in their planner and blue-folder. The anxiety on display should be understood in this context.

The production of these fabrications, and the process of exteriorisation inherent in their construction, influence what it means to be a successful learner at all points in the academic hierarchy; The learner identity most valued is one that is flexible, able to adjudicate on their own and their peers' performance. This student is an emotionally literate learner; neither demoralised by a low position in the academic hierarchy, nor content to be top of the class. Rather, they are rational, goal-orientated, focussed on the minute steps need to achieve the next level, never satisfied. In this way, the asking and answering of "*What Went Well*" and "*Even Better If?*" is suggestive of a Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism as a practice. "*a "way of doing" directed towards objectives and regulating itself through continuous reflection*" (Foucault 2008: 318). What is key here is not position, but process; the commodity valued by Miss Bedia was *not* the highest grade, but the ability to reflect and improve. This governmental frame has real

traction in the English classrooms at Heath High, not least because of the affinity of confessional ways of talking and writing in discussion of personal, emotional topics in the pre-assessment classes, and the practice of asking and answering “WWW?” and “EBI?” in later assessment-reflection lessons. The combination of the two types of way of talking about the self, made for powerful set of subjectivating practices.

The use of Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008) encouraged teachers to articulate English curriculum content in a specific way, bringing forth students personal emotions and histories, as a way to achieve investment in later assessment tasks and achieve effective goal transference. The effect of this pedagogical decision was for these two types of lesson in English to encapsulate key elements of the operation of confessional discourse in education, as described by Fejes (2008, 2013) Edwards (2008). For these writers, confessional discourse between teacher and student is the glue that holds a governmental project in education together. Crucially, this is reliant on an active child, whose productive capacities are enticed and developed through confessional dialogue in order make them “an object of knowledge and visible for calculation” (Edwards 2008: 15). The key point here is that the way Assessment for Learning strategies were deployed in the English department were at the exact pinch point between the child’s own desire to talk about themselves as individuals and be seen as a progressing learner, and the operation of bio-political mechanisms of audit, measurement and comparison aimed at the governance of the population, the precise location of what Foucault termed “government” in his lectures on the “genealogy of the subject” (2008b):

Let’s say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques – techniques of domination and techniques of the self. He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government. (2008b)

This description captures the relationship between the two types of lesson described in this chapter, where talk about the self was deliberately elicited in order to for students to invest in later, calculations in relation to levels. In order for a successful

transference of goals, students' voices were valued, honed and worked in order for it to direct towards certain (levelled) ends. The strong affinity with a governmental frame suggest this questioning is not simply pedagogic tool, but a discursive frame in which questions of who students "*are or would like to be emerge*" (Dean 1995: 581). They represent a refinement of technological techniques and evaluations for managing the self (Rose 1989), making students' learning visible in order for it to be worked on and developed. They suggest that practices, which make up a regulative ensemble, make it possible to govern in an advanced liberal way (Rose 1996: 58). Asking and answering '*What Went Well*' and "*Even Better If*" represent, exemplify the controlled de-control which makes up the regulative state (DuGuy 1996). They are enacting what it means to be "learning how to learn for a lifetime of change' (Milliband 2003), practising for a life which will require a "*ceaseless work of training, skilling and re-skilling...for a life of ceaseless job seeking; life is to be the continuous capitalisation of the self*" (Rose 1999:161).

4.6 Context and Content

Care has to be taken, though, not to abstract teachers' intentions to an epoch defining understanding of neoliberalism, as the reproduction of certain subjectivities, or overstate the efficacy of governmental designs on children's educational subjectivity outside of the English department. This is not to deny the affinity with wider trends in governance, their links to wider networks of power, or the potential for these practices to profoundly shape the educational identity of students. These observations are a premise of this thesis. What my time spent in the English department reveals, is how the specificity of departmental *context*, in this case the intense pressure to get results, and subject specific *content*, in this case the emotional content of English lessons, were articulated together by teachers through pedagogic means. The result of this was a very powerful subjectivating assessment technology, which combined the logic of organisational performance management and personal and emotional subject content, to achieve effective goal transference. Miss Lilly laid out the reasoning behind their elicitation of personal responses.

RB: Things get heated in that Year 9 class – how do you cope with that?

Miss Lilly: A lot of the tasks are fitted to the class to give them an outlet for their emotions. It enables them to place their feelings and emotions into a story. They find in Shakespeare a story that gives their emotions context. Through learning about the vocabulary, they find a way to express their own feelings, so they can become less frustrated.

The Year 8s have an opportunity to talk about family life, you can set a topic, and ask them to write a story, and they will open up about their own lives and themselves as learners. Sometimes you realise what they have gone through, and they are the way they are because of that. To read all these stories about themselves and their families was quite challenging, but these things are not far from the surface when you do a standard task to write story around the one emotion or a starting sentence.

There are tensions in that class due to a lot of strong personalities, but within those strong personalities, many of them have not been able to place themselves and feel part of or accepted by others, there are sort of deeper things going in that class, and part of the thing we do in that class is to unpick that through content of the literature and the writing and speaking tasks. It needs real patience to get these students to commit to focussing in on that.

What interested me in your class was the balance between the social and personal education, done through Shakespeare, and the need to turn that into grades.

How do you manage that?

I think for me the important thing is they have enough skills for when they leave school. So although we do books and poetry and all these things are important so they get a sense of literature and themselves, this new generation though, if it is not personal to them, and if it does not relate to them, then they are just not interested. I find that difficult.

So a lot of what you saw me do, was about me getting them to engage with it through turning the text into something that was relevant to them.

Yes, the task on the use of Sun imagery and Juliet. “Who makes your world light up?” (Students were asked to write an extended piece of writing starting with the question “who lights up your world?”)

That is one example. You use the text, make it about them, refer back to Shakespeare's language, then slyly put the learning back into it, and then the SPG (Spelling and grammar). You can then ask them how they are going to express themselves in the clearest way, so; spelling, grammar, punctuation. That is how I try and do it, that balance of engaging and learning. We could do it by rote, but we would not get the results in the middle of the spectrum like that.

I don't know if there is a set answer of how I do it. I just sort of think about them as a class. I have a Year 8 class that love writing about themselves, but this Year 9 class. You have seen them. There are days when they want to do it, and days when they won't.

Miss Lilly makes clear the context and content specific factors, which meant this valuing of an active subject followed the logic of educational confession described by Fejes (2008) and Edwards (2008). The affinity with the use of Assessment for Learning strategies in these classes is the result of intense departmental pressure, the emotive, qualitative and immersive nature of English curriculum content, and teachers' calculated decision to employ speaking and writing about the self, so they can "*slyly put the learning back into it*". Miss Bedia and Miss Lilly made a tactical decision to articulate a series of equivalences through pedagogic means: students' lives were inserted into texts through expansive discussion; these texts were inserted into levels through the narrowing of success criteria and controlled delegations and differentiation of tasks; these levels were made into targets for self-improvement, charting the success or failure of individual learning goals. These equivalences asked students to insert of themselves into the academic hierarchy, making their own subjectivity the object of their learning. At each stage of these stages, their role (and my own) was to elicit the personal, individual responses in order to that students could help themselves up their natural paths of academic progression.

Embedded Progressivism

The deliberate, strategic work of valuing an active educational subject described by Miss Lilly, chimed with discussions I had with other school managers about at Heath

High. Her point about the link between pedagogic style, “not learning by rote”, and results spoke to a wider form of educational progressivism in the school, which took its cue from managerial concerns. Mr Hoy, the head of Year 8, talked about how he had to rule through motivation, not fear. The head teacher called on the importance of good reciprocal relationships in the classroom- “*being a sausage factory would not work for us with our kids or our school*”. The targeted repetition of high expectations by Mr Peel, the head of Year 7 was explained to me in similar ways. The conceptual issue here is, to paraphrase Rose (1999), students themselves had to be mobilised in order to achieve the school’s goals. Encouraging and inculcating certain educational subjectivities could not be achieved through didactic means, or “learning by rote”. The schools’ good position depended on active educational subject. The point to be made here is that this suggests a certain understanding of progressivism was embedded in this non-selective state school, and this was cemented *because of*, not *in spite of*, the demands of marketisation. Teachers discussed concerns about student voice, the effects of teachers’ labels and setting practices, child-focussed learning in terms of keeping up results at Heath High. These concerns were focussed on those at the C/D boundary, but also for those working beneath this level whose de-motivation may drag this cohort down. From this view the overtures of child-centredness in later aspects of New Labour’s education policy, particularly within the personalised learning agenda, are not simply nostalgia or repackaged consumerism or part of the post-Fordist imaginations in key policy speeches from of the likes of Miliband (2003, 2004) and Blair (2002), but a direct concern of school management and their staff seeking manage more effectively its cohort of students in the A-C economy. It directly brings to mind Estelle Morris’s call for a “rigorous and modern” form of pedagogy. It is also the progressivism the cultural warriors of the political right in educational governance (Gove 2009, 2011a, 2011b, Peal 2014) have in their targets when they laud facts over skills and teaching over learning. Heath High suggests this is less to do with a conspiratorial “Blob” in the educational establishment and more to do with how the logic of marketised governance expresses itself in the setting of a community school with settled, secure management.

4.7 Anxious, Narrow and Effective Educational Inclusion

This embedded progressivism, in the context of strong social pressure to get results, had a very specific consequence in context of the English department. The mobilisation of a particular kind of agential learner through Assessment for Learning strategies, worked to produce a narrow, anxious but effective form of educational inclusion. The confessional logic discussed above, is key to understanding both the effectiveness of its scope across the spectrum of achievement and the anxiety it caused. These routines obliged them to talk about their personal (and personalised) failings, but it also offered them consolation, realistic targets for improvement. The power to co-opt the academic range in the classroom lay in the circular nature of these confessional routines. No one was exempt, no one could rest on their laurels and sit back and bask in the glory of a good grade. No one can give up “because it’s not worth the effort.” Rather, the better the work, the more they would have to talk about it. If students wrote at a higher level than they expected to, they would have to reflect on their work at that level. The greater the length of the work, the higher up the scale National Curriculum level the student’s target, the more material existed from which “WWW” and “EBI” could be made. The level and sophistication of their ability to reflexively analyse their work was expected to progress in tandem. In speaking, writing and administering “What Went Well and Even Better If”, with its conjoined aim to both console and discipline, students in 7N were reading from a very powerful script.

Both the anxiety and inclusivity talked about here have at their root the appearance of openness and transparency in assessment criteria and the demand that students display the same characteristics, when discussing⁵⁻¹ their work. This transparency has its roots in the original Assessment for Learning research literature, but when their recommended practices are combined with levels, students are not just commentating on their learning. They being forced to be open about currencies of judgement which, research suggest, students believe say something intrinsic about themselves (Reay and Wiliam 1999, Hall et all 2004). For the writers of the Assessment for Learning research, extended acts of meta-cognitions were crucial in making assessment an open, democratic practice. This would ameliorate the demoralisation at the bottom of the academic hierarchy, where students *“find strategies that place their blame on others or factors beyond their control”*(Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot 2002: 53), and stop the confused motivations at those top of the academic hierarchy, where *“pupils look for the ways to obtain the best marks rather than at the needs of their learning”*

(Black and Wiliam 1998b: 8). In these English lessons, explanation and self-selection of assessment criteria worked to make the assessment process appear transparent, democratic. These assessments were not tests as such. They differed from high stakes summative testing. The question was known in advance, and the penultimate lessons were spent helping to ensure a grade, which they would know in advance. Miss Bedia and Miss Lilly's assessments took surprise out of the process. The grammar of the pedagogic encounter was opened up, and students were drilled to focus on minute differences outlined in level descriptor, in order to meet what were effectively *pre-decided* grades. Self and peer assessment socialised this learning process, making their personal learning the object of public discussion and, finally, a permanent record for public audit. No one was exempt. The satisfaction of being top of the class is denied. For those at the bottom, the consolation of alternative forms of validation is also denied – everyone was stuck on individual feedback loops, judged in front of their peers against goals that are set, in part, by students' own decisions. In these loops, "*learning how to fail is a good lesson for everyone*" (Miss McKay).

The type of pressure built into these cycles, and present in 7N, speaks to a time when one in ten children aged 5-16 has a clinically diagnosed mental health problem, where stress at school is the biggest single contributor to self-harm and depression, and a time when a 2013 YouGov survey suggested nearly a third of children had considered suicide by age 16 and nearly as many self-harmed (Maddern 2013). These mental health issues are becoming increasingly associated with education problems in school, with the NSPCC (2014) finding a 200% rise in counselling sessions related to exam stress in the same period. The claim here is not that Assessment for Learning strategies were directly responsible for these problems at Heath High, or that they were observable, though real suffering was witnessed at the time 7N had to leave a permanent record of their reflections. It is rather to raise the prospect that educational inclusion, which in the narrowest sense, is expressed in these English classrooms through the performance management of learning, may be fundamentally implicated in the internalisation of the performance anxiety endemic to marketisation governance of schools. It is worth contrasting the questions of Student M, in 7N, who repeatedly asked "*am I making progress?*" after her first English assessment, filling in her target page in her planner with scrawl at the same time, and the declaration that "*I'll be a nothing*", by Hannah, a student in Reay and Williams' (1999) study, in response to

discussion of her SAT grades. Both are showing the power of school assessment practice to shape students' learning identities, but there is a certainty in Hannah's statement, lacking in Student M's. The difference between them captures both the anxiety and form of educational inclusion mentioned here. It shows what is at stake, in English, for some students, in the shift towards self-managed formative assessment. "*Am I making progress?*" captures the ontological logic of inherent in teachers' deployment of these practices. This deliberately aims to destabilise the certainties and identities that come with being a good or bad student. The focus on progression aims to marginalize both, leading to a permanent self-questioning of individual students' educational worth, questions, like "What Went Well?" and "Even Better If", which mark the end point of a successful operation of goal transference from department onto student. This way of being was constantly reinforced by a forceful, calculated exhortation for high expectations by departmental and year team leaders. The head of Year 7, Mr Peel, repeated this phrase throughout the year, and justified it to me in terms of educational inclusion. He would not allow students to believe they would be nothing. Any student who showed signs of succumbing to this fatalism were singled out to have more high expectations delivered to them. He described how students from parents who had low expectations of their children's success were singled out for similar treatment. The labelling process here was not picking out failures, but those deserving extra help to succeed: I followed members of 7N into his "Help Me to Succeed Focus Group" selected after the first Performance Review Day. These practices, outlined in detail in the final data chapter, worked to reinforce the impression that the only type of student it was possible to be in English was one focussed on their own academic progression.

"*Am I making progress?*" also captures the dubious progressivism at the heart of these practices. This may be progressive, in the narrow sense that all students across the academic range have their learning broken down into small chunks which they can access, but it is debateable whether the transference of the anxiety of marketised governance can be considered socially progressive. Further, the very openness and transparency performed by teachers and students works to naturalise the academic hierarchy by socialising it within the classroom, making it the product of students own interactions, at the same time requiring them to seek external validation. This works to disguise its social power, its operation in the school and its wider social origins. The

result is a consolidation of a form of hegemonic individualism which makes students responsible for their own achievements (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004). “*Am I making progress?*” captures how responsibility for individual success or failure to the student is a question of the students own orientation. The question posed by the department and the teacher is not about wider causes of educational inequality or the real barriers faced by some students, but the minute steps all students can take, no matter what their grades. The logic of “WWW?” and “EBI?” works to continually delegate the success or failure of micro-parcels of learning to the individual student. The focus on progression over position in the class and grading was a key element of what made the original Assessment for Learning research (Black and Wiliam 1998a) progressive. When combined with levels in these English classes they worked to leave the differentiated educational outcomes and the wider social inequalities they represent in the background. The academic hierarchy takes on the appearance of the natural process whereby children self-select the rate and level at which they progress. This progression was the result of interaction between other students and the teacher, freely discussed across, the product of social interaction between their peers in the classroom.

An inclusive, open academic hierarchy?

This inclusion and openness seemingly contrasts with accounts of the exclusionary and hidden aspects of high stakes summative testing (Reay and Wiliam 1999, Boaler et al 2000, Hall et al 2004) and the explicitly divisive intentions of educational triage as outlined by Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Youdell (2004). The focus on progression meant there was less of a clear distinction between “*safe, treatable and hopeless*” students (2004: 412) in English; rather each was on their own personally differentiated path towards academic success. The resulting practices of setting and allocation of educational resources were given the appearance of openness and accountability. They were based on universally recognised performance indicators, built over successive assessment cycles. These decisions had the legitimacy of notions of reliability and validity, rather than “*common sense discourse of ability and appropriate conduct*” (Youdell 2004: 413), even when teachers slipped back into this language when talking about their students. Miss Lilly described this process in the Year 9 class I attended, and how similar practices are used when students transfer to GCSEs.

Me: Could you say more about the booster class? You mentioned it in class.

If we are doing a booster class, we are looking at who is on borderline for GCSEs, which means getting in those that are level 5s at the moment, particularly those on 5a, and making sure they are fully prepared for the step up to GCSE next year. So it's for the grades they need, but also the personality types.

We can't just let anyone in. If they are going to mess about, then we won't give them that extra help. The colour does not tell them if they are mature enough.

So is it the case that the ones who get level 6 will get A-C GCSEs?

It's to do with picking the top set for Year 10. All those who get level 7s at the end of Key Stage 3 go into the top set. I don't deal with that, but the idea is we have a class where we can concentrate on getting the best marks.

I want to say yes, but the step up from Key Stage 3 to 4 is a big thing, and the first marks they get back in Year 10 usually cause disappointment. When I first taught my current Year 10 class, they did a mock test and I gave them a letter as a mark. They asked what it meant. Was it a 7a, an 8c? They were stuck in thinking about levels, not the mark in the test.

She went on to detail how pervasive and generalised the performance management of learning was in the department:

What is the biggest difference between the systems in Key Stage 3 and GCSE? Do you track in the same way? The green/red thing? (SIMS colour coding)

Literally it goes from Key Stage levels to the exam board mark scheme, and we communicate the mark scheme of the exam board to the students very clearly from the start. Every piece of work they do in GCSE has a set mark scheme, even if we have made it up to be similar to the exam boards. We give them it in class.

The skills remain the same, but the focus changes.

Do any students ‘not get’ the change in mark schemes?

The ones we are helping at the moment in Year 9 with the booster classes. They have trouble interpreting the new schemes. We use levels, but the levels are only part of it. We also use; the FFT (Fisher Family Trust) data, the levels they have been getting, their reading age calculation. All this says what they should be getting at GCSE, so if we think their progression in Year 9 is not good enough for them, we help them now.

So the GCSE targets come from this data?

Yes, but alongside what they have done in Year 9 specifically. So in Year 9 now, we are doing one final reading level, and one final writing task, and this will determine their overall level for the year, which will help us set for next year, but their individual targets come from all the other data, including their past marks.

How do these demands affect the way you teach? Does it shackle you, or is it useful to have these structures?

I think it depends on the class. I have a top set Year 9, which are all students working at level six and seven. I can look at the National Strategies and incorporate what they are doing into my work.

With a mixed ability set, I have anything from 3c to 6a.

There is something there for anyone to access because of the way we set things up- the levels are there so they can progress.

(14.06.2011)

Miss Lilly describes a department where Assessment for Learning strategies are deeply embedded across all age groups and are used to performance manage students. GCSE students are immediately given the new assessment criteria, or a fabricated version of them, in order that they can judge themselves against a new set of metrics. That they cling to the old Key Stage 3 levels speaks to the structuring impact of National Curriculum assessment criteria on students learning Key Stage 3. She describes how Assessment for Learning strategies are integral a form of educational triage which is permanent, finessed and rationalised through a myriad of performance metrics and targets, yet still dependent on judgements of personality and linked to notions of individual responsibility, which existing literature suggests are

deeply classed and racialised (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). The circular nature of these routines means formative assessment begets more formative assessment in a manner redolent of the role of testing in the original accounts of triage:

“Hence the effectiveness of selection, as a means of raising achievement, is enshrined in a set of circular beliefs that are impervious to evidence: if the desired results do not emerge, it simply proves the need for more selection.”

(Gillborn and Youdell 2000: 59)

But rather than the division of students into those deemed hopeless cases and those worthy of educational intervention, the demands to “get that percentage” is connected to the repetitive use of formative assessment is implicated and the creation an inclusive academic hierarchy where “there is something there for everyone so they can progress”. The social cost being a pedagogic form which builds performance anxiety into students’ lives.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the A-C economy of the school impacted on English in a concentrated form, resulting in very strong social pressure on teachers in the department. Miss Lilly’s account of a department that is “all about the colour coding” revealed a managerial practice that had stark parallels with use of formative assessment. Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a), particular the sharing of assessment criteria and self and peer assessment, were used to construct academic progression in a way that directly paralleled the performance management of the department. Narrowing success criteria into National Curriculum sub-levels and delegating responsibility for academic stratification and assessment worked to pass the performance anxiety of the department onto individual students. This was learning through organisational performance management, showing, at departmental level, how the pressures of marketisation infiltrated the micro-practices of teaching and learning. At stake in these micro-practices were the form of knowledge that was most valued, the teaching that were considered the most effective, the way curriculum content was introduced and the learning identities that were most desired. Unique departmental pressures and subject-specific curriculum content meant Miss Bedia and Miss Lilly articulated personal meanings, readings of texts and National Curriculum

levels in through a series of equivalences, built up through pedagogic means, ending with a desired outcome; students' self-subjectification into the academic hierarchy.

The dominant picture which emerges from these classrooms was of form of learning directed towards discussion of the self, aimed at eliciting personal responses to texts and individualised responses to teachers' feedback. Teachers enacted Assessment for Learning strategies in order to encourage students to think about learning in a certain way and to think about themselves as learners in a certain way: always progressing, never demoralised, never satisfied. This practices valued students who were rational and goal orientated, but also restive, anxious, forever focussed on the next step. "*Even Better If?*" built in *dissatisfaction* to students learning. Moreover, this dissatisfaction was encouraged by the conflicting ways in which they were invited to understand their learning. Students were expected to simultaneously relate to texts in a way that was personal and passionate, then apply these ideas in a dispassionate, calculative way, coolly adjudicate on a narrow fragment of their learning. They had to present these fragments "*to the headmaster and Ofsted*" (Miss Bedia), and apply the same lens to the learning of their peers. In Year 7, some students were incapable of making this switch. Students at the top of the academic hierarchy could not be satisfied, those at the bottom were required to have, or quickly develop, the emotional literacy to deal with the contradiction between universal progression and differentiated outcomes. "*Results are results and we don't hide from them*" (Miss Bedia). The impression given is of the operation of a very powerful subjectivating set of practices which rely on continual talk about the self. Students were asked to talk about deeply personal subjects; "*who lights up their world*", and "*who makes them feel two different emotions*", and then later talk about their learning from these discussions in terms, which have been shown to have fundamental impact on their self-esteem and confidence.

Care, though, needs to given not equate goal transference with the meanings students took from curriculum content. Whilst the performative construction of knowledge in these most valued talk about the self in a highly selective, specific way, this was not the only form of knowledge that was possible, nor should it be seen to automatically eclipse the other ways students talked about themselves vis-à-vis *Diary of a Wimpy kid* and *Romeo and Juliet*. They were encouraged to insert their lives into these texts with

a view to inserting themselves into National Curriculum levels, but talk of self overflowed into friends, family and a wider social existence. The performative logic in operating in these classrooms assumes the existence of socially formed knowledge about texts and student's understandings about themselves. It narrowed these down, economised them and asked students to exteriorise them, but these acts presupposed the existence of other forms of knowledge, discourses and power relations that were the subject of classroom discussion. The social was transformed into KPIs, but these KPIs relied on the existence of this wider social world. The way these fabrications were dissected by students had affinity with neoliberal governmental logic, but do they make the meaning students took from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* neoliberal? Was it a neoliberal Romeo that stabbed himself? Class materials and students' lives offered more material than just the discursive striations of dominant educational project. It's the broad sociality inherent in English curriculum content which is in part responsible for both the inclusion and the suffering of those unable to switch between these different ways of talking about their work.

For teachers, "*the colour coding and getting that percentage*" entailed enacting a form of pedagogy that had to be about much more than numbers. Their work was geared towards valuing a student who could talk about themselves and their learning in order so they successfully transfer the goals of the department into their learning subjectivities. This could not be a jug and cup model of learning. It could not be teacher led as it assumed an active "*independent*" educational subject. Performance management of students in English could not be "teaching by rote" (Miss Lilly). In order to work *on* students' learning subjectivities they had to work *with* these subjectivities. This entailed more than teaching content: they had to fulfil the role of councillor, in order to encourage children to insert their lives into texts; they had to fulfil the role of coach, in order to encourage to children to talk about their performances. Their eliciting of talk about the self, in its combination of forms, encapsulates some of the ways critical writers have talked applied a governmentality frame to education, particularly that proposed by Rose (89, 99, 92). What this chapter has revealed is the creative, affective, calculated and skilled labour of teachers in making this logic work.

Chapter 5: Negotiating the relationship between levels learning in maths and Citizenship

As my time at Heath High progressed, clear differences emerged between assessment practice in these departments and English. These differences reflected very different types of professional subjectivities and influenced how teachers introduced subject content and how students experienced assessment. The key difference was that assessment for learning strategies were not used to extend the performance management of the department into the micro-practices of students' learning. Rather, assessment practice, formative and summative, was constitutive of how teachers negotiated the influence of performance management of their work and students' expectations of their teaching. Their assessment practice, and by extension the teaching that preceded it, diverged from SIMS, in contrast to the tight convergence described in English. Tellingly, teachers in maths and Citizenship had more time in their working lives to discuss their work than teachers in English. They outlined strongly held professional and political ideas about education's role and worth, linked to subject specific concerns and unique departmental histories and career histories. They were able to talk about how these ideas were enacted in the lessons I observed and how they influenced the use of levels in students' learning and the recording of data for SIMS. Notably, teachers described how these ideas influenced the type of learner they were trying to form through assessment practice. Teachers used these ideas to negotiate and challenge the understanding and purpose of assessment outlined by Ofsted (2004, 2010, 2011) and Assessment for Learning Strategies (DCSF 2008a). This agency, though, was partial and contingent. In maths it was dependant on the continued production of excellent results. In Citizenship, it reflected the security and professional respect the head of the department had built up over years of working with her colleagues in east London schools.

In this chapter, I argue that the variance of assessment practice reflects the differentiating effect of marketised school governance on teachers' jobs and students learning. I show how departments were constituted by their relationship to the schools market position and argue this had a direct relationship to the range of professional subjectivities on display and the type of learner summoned through assessment

practice. Comparison between these different departments shows how these different performative demands, distinct departmental cultures and subject specificities combined to produce stark divergence in the experience and meaning of teaching, with consequences for the types of learner that could be validated through assessment practice. The observation and interview data presented below shows how teachers' choices about assessment practice both drives and delineates this departmental differentiation. In short, how a department was held to account, correlated with the options teachers had to hold students to account in their learning through their deployment of assessment in the classroom.

This link is conceptualised by tentatively extending the notion of educational triage (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Youdell 2004). Teachers' accounts of their assessment practice and the managerial pressures that influenced it point to the operation of a form of departmental triage. Departments under pressure, such as English, were treated to added accountability, which is passed down to students in a way not apparent in maths or Citizenship. These latter departments were respectively deemed safe or marginal to the schools A-C economy. Exploring the notion of educational triage at departmental level captures the relative nature of the agency on display. It helps theorise the variegated impact of marketisation on teachers' work and students' learning at Heath High. Crucially, it can account for the spaces of heterogeneity and contestation in the school and divergent nature of the professional subjectivities on display. Different relative pressures to get results allowed for a space in which teachers could debate and enact a range of educational ideas within the broader ethos of marketised governance. The teachers in maths and English describe limited but real spaces of contestation and negotiation. They described how these agencies influenced the deployment of assessment practice and explicitly linked this practice to the production of specific sorts of learning subjectivities. The ideal learner constructed in their classrooms was the outcome of political battles and political ideas enacted by actors at the departmental level. As a result, the ideal learner they summoned chafed with wider form of hegemonic individualism the school, the performance management of their departments and notably with many student' own expectations.

This argument proceeds by description of the maths department and an introduction to the teachers I worked with. This is followed by ethnographic description of their

lessons, presented side by side with commentary from them about their choices of assessment practice. These accounts describe how maths teachers used formative assessment to shape a learner that was exploratory and social, focussed on learning, not levels – a crucial difference which teachers repeatedly emphasised to their students and to me. This directly contrasted to the tight association between the two encouraged by Assessment for Learning Strategies (DCSF 2008) in English. Their comments on their work show how their practice is the result of a series of negotiations between, on the one hand, what they believed maths was, and on the other, the demands for accountability, expressed through SIMS by management, but also by students (and parents) who wanted to know what ‘levels’ they were on, rather than discussion of their learning. These negotiations were often couched in subject specific ways which were implicitly political. They involved discussion about what “math” is, its inherent beauty and the enjoyment it could give as much as its utility. These ideas influenced how they believed these subjects should be taught (and assessed), and were intrinsic to their professional identity. Similar concerns were expressed by the head of Citizenship, but in a more directly political way, influenced by a suspicion of the elitism and managerialism which she described as dominating government policy. Though I spent much less time in her classrooms, the similarities and differences between her narrative and that of Maths teachers are presented together as it draws out the atomising effect of departmental triage on teachers subjectivities. Despite articulating similar concerns about assessment, these ideas were sealed within their respective departments, applied internally only, with little chance for generalisation across the curriculum. Departmental triage worked both to create spaces for this contestation and to atomise them vertically within the structures of the school.

Finally I outline the wider significance of this variance of practice. For students, the processes aimed at the subjectivation into the academic hierarchy through assessment in these departments, were less direct, less emotionally violent and less educationally limiting than in English. In maths, teachers worked to pedagogically sculpt a learner who was articulate and confident in explaining how they were wrong, an attribute they described as integral to “real” learning. National Curriculum levels were described as an anathema to this skill. Formative assessment practice as understood by Wiliam and Black (1998a), particularly the sharing and discussion of

working-out, was a fundamental tool in the construction of that learner. Discussion of assessment and levels, when it occurred, did not induce visible signs of stress. In Citizenship, students created their own success criteria, making assessment a negotiated process. This divergence also raises questions about the possibilities of alternatives and the resources of critique within English schooling posed by Reay (2012) and others (Lupton and Hempel-Jorgenson 2012). The argument here is not that assessment practice in these departments represents ready-made coherent alternative to teaching demanded by marketised governance. Nor is it that these decisions had a discernible impact outside their subjects. The academic hierarchy was still present; this was not learning for its own sake. The exhalation for high expectations by the wider school, expressed in results, dominated some students' expectations of learning (which maths teachers spent considerable time working against). Rather, this variation, and the intra- institutional triage it reflects, helps map out both the opportunities and barriers to teachers' engagement with what less socially damaging forms of assessment practice could be.

5.1 Proselytising Maths

My time in maths was spent between Miss Parvispor with 7N and with Miss Ketros and Mr Hughes who shared 7E. Their teaching reflected the broader ethos of the department; concept focussed, with lots of discursive work on qualitative understandings, reinforced by constructivist⁶ pedagogic tools, either through concrete applications or puzzle play. The motto of the department "where the children count" was made manifest in a concerted effort by teachers to engage students' interest. Students learnt key concepts through discussion and experimentation, with all students expected to have a go. The use of textbooks and worksheets as learning aids was actively discouraged. These were used sparingly, to practice existing learning, rather than to introduce new concepts. The teaching values of the department had been heavily influenced by its founding head. He was renowned for proselytizing maths' intrinsic worth to students and staff. Two years previously he left to take up a role in a Christian mission, but his convictions and something of his method remained

⁶ Understood broadly as outlined Piaget (1977) as learning is the active construction of meaning rather than the passive recipient of knowledge.

through his choice of staff. Each of the teachers described below articulated their own version of his mission to me and their students. Miss Ketros thought the way in which maths was taught was vital to stopping students, especially young girls, from thinking “maths was not for them”. Mr Hughes had given up his job in the city for “something more satisfying”, and wanted to see a form of maths taught which was relevant to the modern world, “not just about exams”, but based on problem solving skills. Miss Parvispor, 7N’s teacher, with whom I spent most time, linked the teaching ethos of the department to the pleasure she got from solving abstract mathematical problems, a pleasure she wanted students to share.

These ideas had a demonstrable impact on their teaching, and were reflected in a deeply ambivalent attitude towards the use of levels and grades in their department. On the one hand, they were proud of the results they got and also the respect this gained for them in the school. On the other, they took great care to disassociate students’ learning from levels in the classroom and were disparaging about the validity and reliability of performance metrics as measures of, and tools for, teaching. Teachers consistently pointed out ways in which teaching to levels or grades damaged students’ knowledge and also the ability to learn. This ambivalent attitude reflected the secure position of the maths department in the school; it got continually good results, and was renowned for being forward thinking, progressive, and crucially, successful. The result, and arguably cause, of this success, was that teachers had the earned autonomy to deploy professional judgments in how to construct academic progression, how to use students’ performance data in the classroom and how children reflected on their performance. In the lessons described below, maths teachers used levels and progression data in a careful and selective way. Crucially, the method in which formal performance data was produced, diverged from regular learning. Internal tests were conducted every half term in order to fulfil the demands of SIMS and also for the department’s own, separate, records. This took the form of short summative pieces of work, rather than the extended, integrated, formative sequences described in English. These tests were not the basis of levelled intervention and extended processes of levelled self- reflection. In contrast to English, the introduction of curriculum content was not calibrated in preparation for these assessments. Rather, it purposefully diverged from it. As a result, formative assessment practice was prevalent, but was qualitative in nature. Learning conversations took the form directly envisaged by the

original Assessment for Learning (Black and Wiliam 1998a) research. The only knowledge of Assessment for Learning in the department was via this original research, rather than through Ofsted's (2004, 2006) or the DCSF's (2008a) appropriation of it. Teachers explicitly reject the view of learning expressed in these documents. Formative assessment practice took the form of whole class and small group dialogic tasks, involving discussion on the best way to solve practical problems, with a surprising amount of time spent discussing concepts abstractly. Subsequent exercises were rarely linked to levelled understandings. The class was exhorted through these tasks with a justification of learning for maths for its own sake. Notably, the summative assessments used for tracking academic progression, were not used for setting at Key Stage 3. The department had recently moved away from selection by making all Key Stage 3 classes mixed ability. This new set up was part-inspired by research conducted as part of the head of Key Stage 3's education master's dissertation, itself indicative of the professional subjectivities in the department.

5.2 Maths Is Fun!

Miss Parvispor's first lessons with 7N contained preparation for a test and reflection on results. The way she fitted this test in with subsequent lessons and how she articulated the meaning of this test to students exemplified the ambivalent attitude and negotiated approach to levels in their department. This negotiation was not just with the demands of SIMS, but also with the expectations of students. It also brought to the fore their struggle to articulate the meaning of maths to students as something different to the acquisition of grades. Her explanation of her actions brought out her own passionately held views on the value of maths learning. The first lessons of the year involved simple teaching on basic number work. These lessons were followed by a short test, the purpose of which was to ascertain the students' National Curriculum level in numeracy. This was to be recorded in SIMS, in students' planners for Performance Review Day and also in the departments separate database. Neither Miss Parvispor nor Miss Ketros made a big deal out of these tests- they were explained as something which would help them set their target level for the term, but did not set homework to revise or signal that they were important. This test itself was were short, and composed of groups of questions set around level three, four and five, though this distinction was left unmarked on the question paper. In the lesson after, students were

invited to come to the front to answer the questions in front the class on the interactive whiteboard, correcting the ones that were wrong on their own sheets. Both Miss Ketros and Miss Parvispor picked out students working at a lower level for the easier questions. Students had to correct their work as appropriate, and write two targets, based on maths, in the back of their books. In both classes, students were incredibly eager to know what the results meant, competing to see who got the highest score was common on most tables. Some asked Miss Parvispor what level they had got. "Maths is not about levels, maths is about fun", she shot back, smiling, before telling them what marks were what levels and getting them to record these in their planners.

At the time I thought she was being sarcastic, or at least being theatrically effusive to keep the motivation of her new Year 7 class. She was, though, very serious about maths being fun. The next few lessons were spent deliberately moving away from an understanding of maths, and assessment, as involving levels, marks, grades or competition. At the end of my time in her classes I asked why lessons in the department moved away from levels very quickly:

If you have way of teaching maths that focuses on what levels pupils are getting then students assess themselves against...are spending the whole time assessing themselves against that criteria, rather than on enjoying the lesson, working together, developing a deeper understanding, and particularly in Year 7, when the students have just come from working towards SATS and tests and how well they will do, you want them to start secondary school maths with a new start.

They need a fresh way of doing things. You do that by having some projects at the start of the year that get them enthusiastic and working together again, rather than saying in order to get a level four, you need to answer this question, to get a level five, this needs to be answered.

It does not mean that you don't do that at different parts of the year, but it's particularly important after year six that you have a shift away from that.
(01.06.12)

Her argument about the distorting effect on learning caused by grade acquisition is identical to concerns in original Assessment for Learning literature (Black and Wiliam 1998a, 1998b). This take on levels was shared across the department, particularly

when it came to criticism of the damage done by teaching to the level at primary school. A “shift away from Year 6” captures the general opinion in the department that part of their job in Year 7 is to undo the damage caused by Key Stage 2 tests. Miss Ketros told me that part of what she had to do was to “build them back up again”. Miss Parvispor’s opinion of why maths is fun, though, was unique, and she put it forcefully:

It isn't always fun. It can be quite boring. Especially if you have got stuck on things, or never understood things to start with. You need to remind students that is not all maths is. Maths is much broader than that. You need to do it in a certain way. I do it by having lots of puzzles, particularly in Year 7 and 8 as starters, so in Year 7 I do loads of matchstick puzzles. Can they move them to make a shape? It makes them enthusiastic about something that they do not consider maths.

This is where it is important. Maths is not just about something that has an application. It's about working things out. So sometimes that is about logic puzzles and Sudoku. You don't do it for a purpose. It's not going to earn you more money, it is entertainment. So it is really important that you show that kind of maths.

There is an argument that says “do all students need to learn algebra?”. “Why not give some students functional skills?” We can argue about that both ways. One of the arguments is that people never use algebra again. I think we need to get away from the idea that it's good because it's useful. You don't argue about you should be learning how to paint with water colours in art, because you may never paint with water colours again. The reasoning behind that argument is ridiculous.

This is a strongly held belief of yours then. Is it shared by others in the department?

To a greater or lesser extent. It is something people think. I think I hold that idea more strongly than other people, but then my interest in maths is more in that direction as well. Maybe a teacher coming from a specialism in an applied area would think differently. (01.06.11)

What I thought was sarcasm at the start of the year turned out to be a definitive statement on her identity as a teacher and as a mathematician. Her choice of comparison to art shows how she valued this learning. Maths was not just fun, it was

beautiful, and her task was to share this beauty. Nothing in maths is too good for her students, whether teachers, the school (or the students) liked it or not. Her job was to share this passion. For Miss Parvispor, breaking down the performative equation (Lyotard 1984) that truth equals quantifiable value over effort, was a key part of what made her tick as teacher, and a key part of what she did as a teacher. Such passions are a reminder that the social world of teaching and the knowledge it imparts has longer and broader lineages than the neoliberal. This encounter also encapsulates a more general relationship between learning and levels, that were present in other teachers' Year 7 classes – tests were something that students did for records, for an overview, for Performance Review Days, “for Ofsted” (Miss Parvispor) but, unlike English, the levels they contained were not the object of learning, nor did they infiltrate the subject of curriculum content. It is difficult to imagine teachers in English telling students to “forget about levels”. Maths teachers still had to “do” levels. This was not contested by any teacher in the department, but this performance management of their work was understood as something fundamentally separate to the considerations which went into *how* they taught curriculum content and skills. “Maths is fun” captures the influence of Miss Parvispor’s personally held beliefs, but also the broader relative freedom teachers had to position summative assessments in their work and their freedom to articulate the meaning of levels in a way they deemed pedagogically necessary. I was to find out that the disarticulation between learning and levels was common, embedded and calculated. Students were told frequently and forcefully that academic progression was not about the acquisition of numbers. It is tempting to see these ideas as acts of resistance- she clearly articulated a critique of marketised governance and challenged its manifestation in learning. Her positions, however, were more the logical conclusion of the wider ethos of the department.

5.3 Build a School

In the lessons after the tests, all teachers of Year 7 in the department introduced the “Build a school” project. This asked students to design, plan, cost and present their plan for their ideal secondary school. This project is significant as teachers described it as a deliberate move away from levels after the tests in the first weeks, and also because student’s participation in this project anticipated the way learning was conducted in more defined areas of curriculum content later in the year. “*Build a*

school” modelled the type of learner teachers wanted in their classrooms; confident, focussed on learning, not levels, and able explain to discuss. Crucially, summoning these attributes entailed a deliberate move against the idea of learning for levels, and were described to me in these terms by Miss Ketros and Miss Parvispor.

The first tasks in this sequence did not involve maths; they had to brainstorm all the things that would go into their ideal school. Miss Ketros modelled this to 7E as “*somewhere which helps you learn in a fun way*”. Outlandish ideas were encouraged; swimming pools on roofs, helicopter pads, go-kart tracks, games rooms, ball pools. Students also came up with thoughtful ideas which showed their sense of vulnerability in his new institution; a separate place for Year 7s that was quiet, away from older years, a field just for Year 7 to play sports at lunchtime, a place where mums or dads could come and see them when they were sad. Their homework was to make a poster to advertise their ideal school to students in Year 6 “just like you last year” (Miss Ketros). Like the *Diary of a Wimpey Kid*, this activity had been devised in part so they could place themselves securely in the new school by discussing a fictional one. Miss Ketros explained this reasoning:

Build a school plan is part of wider emphasis on projects that were introduced throughout the Key Stage 3 curriculum in order to develop critical thinking skills across the curriculum. Not just knowledge of particular areas, but developing links between different topics and areas, and they decided the best way to do that was to introduce projects. So the idea is you would have maybe one project every half term, and you might spend a week or two weeks on that, and those projects vary. Some of them are projects where you are working on a precise project, so the “build a school” project was an opportunity to discuss what it means to be in school, and you can ask them what do they think? What do they want? You would have seen from the lessons they have all sorts of ideas how a school should be, some more practical than others. Some of the topics might be around a theme, one of them was around the environment, it was more the idea then that there were lessons that were mini-projects themselves around the general theme, but with the design your school, it was over two weeks.

Is this something you are enthusiastic about?

It is. It takes a lot of planning, but kids seem to enjoy it. It works well when it is scheduled with tests, because obviously we also do half-termly tests. If this is

scheduled just after that, it is a good way to shift things back to something different, so they don't put the test in front of their learning. If you are going to do it effectively it takes a lot of planning, so it's definitely worked better this year, as it's the second year we have done projects. (01.06.11)

The next lessons focussed back on maths. Miss Parvispor's lesson laid out the task and success criteria in 7N: Each group was to present an overview of their school. This was to include a scale drawing of a classroom presented on a large sheet of paper, and a costing of tiles, bricks and classroom materials and a description of the maths they used to work out the cost of these materials. The department had prepared materials from builders' merchants' promotional magazines, with photocopies made of pages of tiles and bricks, including their cost per square metre. Other than that, they were free to put anything they wanted in the scale drawing of the classroom and the wider description of the school. The second lesson started with some brief whole class work on scale drawings, followed by instruction to get on with it. Most groups found it difficult to calculate area using both centimetres and metres. Miss Parvispor dealt with problems like this as they arose; "This group has got this problem – who can come up and show them how it is done". Mr Hughes preferred to pre-empt these problems by doing whole class work at the start of his lesson on multiplying and dividing by decimals and work on place holders. The homework set by Mr Hughes and Miss Parvispor was to get the prices of more tiles from B&Q. In addition, Miss Parvispor asked her class if "Anyone's mum or dad is a builder?", and if so, could they ask them how they measure up an area for tiling and explain it to the class in the next lesson.

The third and fourth lesson was dedicated entirely to students' group work. Teachers and I circulated, helping students solve particular problems, and ensuring they were going to have something to present to their groups. Teachers' circulation was not random; it was focussed on getting to know specific students in the class, particularly ensuring students who had low levels found a way to contribute to the group. Miss Parvispor directed me to help one student who had a particular low level from primary school (*'working towards Level 2'*) to help her use a ruler to count the distance of a perimeter, and fill in the relevant colours for different bricks the group was using. Later, Miss Parvispor told me her "primary school has done nothing useful with her for years" as her old teachers did not have the training and "She'd never get a Level 4". Miss

Ketros told me her circulation in her lesson was deliberate; targeted at the students whose recent tests and Key Stage 2 grades had shown a discrepancy. In the next lesson with 7E, taken by Mr Hughes, I worked with a couple students who were nearing completion, so I took an initiative and asked them to see if they could represent their working out with algebraic functions- a development that Mr Hughes quickly latched onto in order to ensure I did it correctly. It was crucial they knew that B for bricks or T for tile was a variable; they had to do it for more than one set of tiles, or none at all, to make sure they knew this. The point to be made here is that, though Miss Parvispor described these lessons as a deliberate injection of fun, these teachers took this fun seriously, watching students carefully, learning about them, probing them and pointing them towards solutions in specific ways.

The final lesson in this sequence was their presentations. Miss Parvispor explained why she assessed these classes:

The thing to say about this is that it was not a formal assessment. It was not to give levels we would record, or go home on their reports. Therefore, we had a degree of flexibility to use different criteria for marking. Now there are obviously general guidelines which we don't really do for these projects for the reasons I was talking about earlier, and also the idea with these projects is that you're assessing them as a group as well. Students are not getting levels, and they are definitely not getting individual levels for it, but how well do you assess what the groups do?

In the class you were in, I decided it would be about how many different ideas they had, what type of maths they used in it, how many people contributed, how well their work is presented. Also, we looked at how well your group listened to other presentations as well, so some in the class say what they did well, and a couple to say what they did not do well, and I might give a little summary at the end. Most of this talking is not me, and that is important. The only time I give feedback is if a group has done very well, and other students might struggle to question them, or suggest improvements, or if it's gone a bit wrong, and students find nothing positive. (11.06.11)

Mr Hughes had given his groups more of a formal structure and a checklist of mathematical issues they should discuss, but the essence of the way 7E self-assessed

their class was the same: Focussed on qualitative feedback and deliberately free of levels.

Mixed Ability?

I asked Miss Parvispor whether the reasoning behind this sequence of lessons (participative, collaborative, peer-assessed, un-graded), was connected to the to the decision to move away from selection at Key Stage 3, as both initiatives where implemented around the same time:

So, initially, it was separate. Well, no. It's not completely separate as they are both part of analysing how you teach Key Stage 3, and looking at how you change the curriculum, but the discussion was quite different. With sets, the Key Stage 3 coordinator was doing a master's, and as part of their master's they had done dissertation on mixed ability versus setting and learning outcomes.

He was quite keen to implement it. I would say the department was split. Some people were very enthusiastic, over people were very worried about whether they would be stretching their top students, and a lesser extent to how they were catering for the bottom of the ability range.

In my opinion, you do have to think about those at the top of the ability range more when you set, as its always the case that you have to differentiate-in for the bottom, as there is a greater variance of needs, whereas students at the top of the range can just do more of the same, without being stretched, so there is the tendency if there are no behaviour issues is to let them do another ten questions rather than extend their understanding. I strongly support mixed ability at this level, but you can't make it boring for some students, so planning is important.

What kind of ideas influenced teachers' opinions on this?

I think there was a difference between how long people had been teaching.

Can you explain?

I think those who had been there longer where more in favour of having sets.

Because?

They had taught with them for longer. They were more comfortable teaching that way. I know the head of department we had before liked to have one top

set and then mixed ability classes. People were used to that. He was very good in lots of ways, but breaking that up was never something that would have been discussed with him around

So it was something that came when he left. It also varies according to how confident teachers are.

Let's keep it on generalities, about your training in other schools, not Heath High

In my first training school, I taught a mixed ability Year 7 class, doing whole class teaching on themes, being enthusiastic, a lot of discussion. Whereas some in the department had never had experience of teaching mixed ability before, or had never been taught like that themselves.

Miss Parvispor was slightly uncomfortable discussing her colleagues in this exchange, but that there was a debate serves to illustrate a broader truth about the professional subjectivities in the department. It is significant that the planning of “build a school” was influenced by a critique of the use of levels for learning, and a response which involved the deliberate elicitation of play, exploration and participation in order to counteract the negative effect of learning for levels.

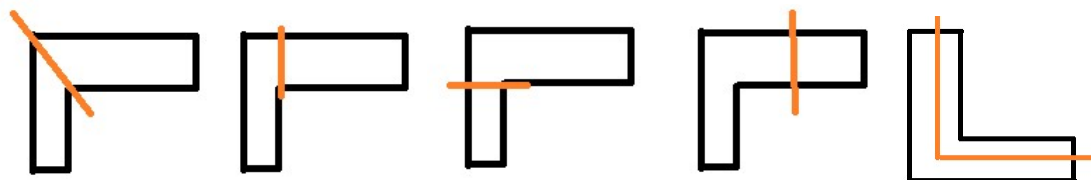
5.4 What's an Area?

These ideas about how maths should be taught were enacted in a more focussed way in lessons on compound shapes a week after “build a school”. This lesson encapsulated how academic progression, short half-termly tests aside, was constructed through qualitative discussion about the meaning of mathematical concepts. It shows how teachers routinely used strategies outlined in the original Assessment for Learning literature to cement this conceptual knowledge. The use of formative assessment signalled that maths was an open form of knowledge that was publicly testable, and summoned a student that was eager to show what they had got *wrong* in order that others could learn. Differentiation took the form of the self-selected of tasks which loosely matched National Curriculum level descriptors, but this relationship was not communicated. This lesson brings out the relationship between these discussions and concept work and practice work, the latter only undertaken after students' conceptual knowledge was secure. Discussion about this lesson revealed

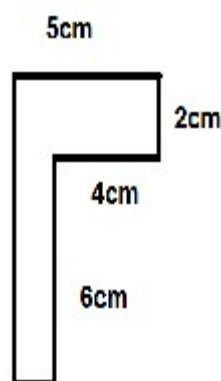
these assessment strategies had been planned deliberately *against* a levelled understanding of area taught at primary school, which had led to mathematically poor understandings. At stake “what area is”, was the direct contestation of the performative construction of knowledge in maths teaching. The pedagogically contrived corrections to performative logic were not just aimed at students’ emotions and motivations, as in the “build a school” activity, but were also technical, fundamental to what “area” is.

The lesson started with a display of six shapes on the board, including simple rectangles, which had been practiced at length in previous weeks, but also right angle triangles and compound shapes, and some shapes with mathematical notation indicating the length of parallel sides. The starter, whilst the register was being taken, was to work out the area of three of the shapes on the board, and students were told to pick two they could do, and to try one they were unsure about. After the register was taken, Miss Parvispor then went through each shape in random order, asking students to come up to show their working using the interactive whiteboard. She asked students who were unsure about a specific shape to come up and show their working. Students were not expected to get these questions right, instead, the skill being modelled from the start was showing your attempt to someone else and explaining it in order to learn from it. There was no “right way”, but “lots of different ways which we discuss to find out which is better” (variations of this statement were used by all maths teachers). She then reminded them of the “build a school” project, and talked about the problems builders faced. They had it easy: “All of their classrooms were rectangles. What if the rooms were strange shapes? How would we work the area out?”

The next slide a simple compound shape with no measurements given which had been divided in various ways as shown below:



Students were directed to discuss, in pairs, which one represented the best way to divide the shape to work out its area. Again, there was no right or wrong answer; the aim was discussion of why some were better than others, which ones were the same, which ones made it easier, which ones made it more difficult.



Next, the whole class worked on finding the area of one example on the board (pictured above), with students invited to come up and describe the first step, second step etc. After the steps were on the board, simplified by Miss Parvispor, they were given a worksheet with rectangles, C-shapes, T-shapes, compound shapes with triangles and more complicated shapes. These were arranged in groups of ten, with each group getting progressively harder. This was the style of maths I was familiar with from my own education - steps shown on the board, followed by long sets of practice questions – but there was a level of self-direction which was different. Students were not to do all of them, instead, they had to do three from each, and if they were confident, move on to the next row of shapes. They were only to complete a group of ten if they were unsure about the ones above. This activity finished with students again coming up to the board and going through questions they were stuck on, this time with the worksheet projected onto the whiteboard. Again, Miss Parvispor alternated between students who were convinced they had got something right, and those unsure or stuck on a particular shape. The plenary of the lesson switched back to discussion work; they had to write out what their “top tips” (Miss Parvispor) for working out the area of compound shapes, followed by a brief whole class discussion of what the best “top tip” was.

Differentiation and Self- Assessment

This delegated differentiation was different to that in English, as it was not immediately and directly articulated alongside the academic hierarchy. There were not level four, five and six compound shapes, and the construct discussed “area” was not introduced within this framework. Rather, at different stages in this lesson, academic differentiation was driven by students own choices. These choices were fundamentally

different to the choices asked of students in English. Differentiation was not placing themselves into a level, but about being able to place their own learning at a point they were unsure about and discussing with their peers and teacher what to do about it. In the terms set by Vygotsky (1978) in the early 1930s, students were placing themselves in the zone of proximal development, just beyond the point at which knowledge is secure, the area in which learning takes place according to constructivist understandings of knowledge. In the terms set by the original Assessment for Learning literature (Black and Wiliam 1998a) students were deciding where they were in their learning and discussing what they needed to do go next. This was formative assessment as directly understood in this original literature. These assessment tasks were not just for students' learning, but also for teachers:

So if you have a lesson like compound shapes, where the pre-requisite for that lesson is you using stuff you have done over the last couple of lessons, one way of starting the lesson is finding out if they have remembered for two reasons. One, for your assessment; if they are still stuck on single shapes, you need to spend more time on that, and also, for their benefit. They might have forgotten some of it. In a mixed ability class you need to have a range of shapes so that everyone can do some of them, and they can chose. (Miss Parvispor 01.06.11)

I had seen other teachers in the department use traffic light system to indicate the relative difficulty of tasks. Miss Parvispor explained:

It's not traffic lights really, because the green ones are ones which everyone can do, the easiest. The amber questions are the ones in the middle, and the red ones are the hardest. But these are not levels. They are relative, not absolute measures. They are there for me and them, not the department. That is the difference. I use them at A Level and GCSE. The students appreciate it at even at that stage. It's important they are not levels but are about maths. Levels may be numbers, but they don't help someone understand how to work the area of a tricky compound shape. (ibid)

Her last comment is telling. Constructing academic progression through these micro-focussed formative assessments relied on summoning a discursive, questioning student, able to lead their own differentiation, and talk about what they did *not* know; the aim of constructivist conceptions of learning. The creation of this preferred

educational subject meant introducing maths as a form of knowledge that was qualitative, relative and testable. The stated objectives of the lesson “To discuss the meaning of area”, carried with it this form of knowledge, and with it the activities they were expected to do and the type of student they were expected to be. Miss Parvispor justified it in these terms;

A vague objective is better, if you tell them at the beginning. Sometimes it's very useful to discuss that objective- so with area we need a detailed discussion. If you are teaching something new, or if you don't want them to prejudice what they will do, or if you want them to experiment themselves, then a specified learning objective is not always appropriate .(ibid)

Levels, Learning and Rules

Rules were an anathema to this form of knowledge, and a barrier to students' academic progression. The problem Miss Parvispor faced was that this is what the students had experienced at primary school, and it not only damaged their confidence, but led to learning *wrong* maths. The assessment strategies developed in this lesson, and the type of student subjectivities they required, turned out to be targeted at these wrong understandings, and entailed a deliberate summoning of a different type of student in order to correct them:

Miss Parvispor: So, when you start off an area topic in Year 7, you need to make sure they can work out the area of simple shapes. So you work on squares, then rectangles, then triangles. You might not get onto triangles. Some of the students might still be learning how to count the squares in the middle. When you are working out the area of compound shapes, there is more than one way of doing it. You can't just tell a student this is the rule. So for example, one of the biggest problems, its happened to me so many times, when you start a topic on area, you ask a student “what is area?” and they say “length times width”. Area is not length times width. Area is how much space there is inside a shape.

Length times width will get them through primary school?

Well, no, it will get them a level 4, which is what the school needs.

So it has been gamed by primary schools?

Absolutely. It's for the test, and it does so much damage. If you want to get an answer to what area is, you have to continue to ask much more probing questions. So you have to ask different questions to bring it out.

The trouble with primary school maths is that for a lot of teachers that is where the learning stops. And with the pressure to teach to that Key Stage Two tests, means that the teachers take shortcuts which create problems later. I said earlier maths learning was a spiral, which goes up and down. Drumming in "area is length times width" blocks a path off for later, but it helps them get some students a level four. I don't know what they do, I can only comment on what so many of students do, even in GCSE. They might be tired one day. I have had top set GCSE students write down length times width in mock GCSE papers. They know it's wrong, but it seems to have stuck in their head at a formative stage in their learning.

It's wrong, to teach to what the schools need at a particular point in order to maximise results, as it's not always what is in the students' interests or best for maths. There are many examples of bad rules like this in maths. It needs a lot of discussing to get these mistakes undone, and sometimes a student never un-learns it. It's a mistake some make all the way through. (01.06.11)

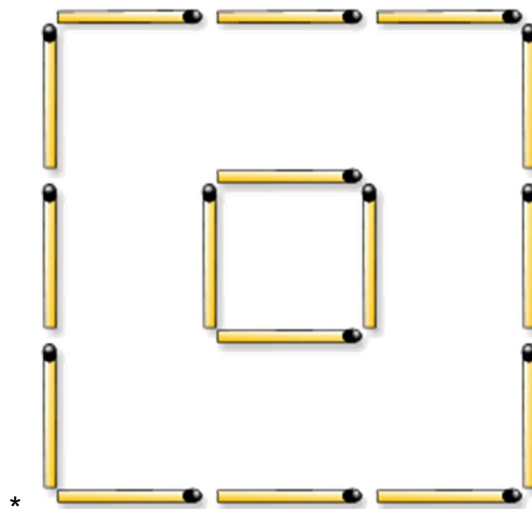
This was something she was passionate about. Her words showed her additional motivations behind the exclamation at the start of the year that "Maths is not about levels, it's about fun". Her discussion of the different ways students can construct knowledge of what area is show the tight bond in her lessons between the her understanding of what maths is, its purpose and the type of student that is pedagogically summoned through the deployment of routine non-levelled formative assessment techniques.

5.5 Constructing Algebraic Expressions

Another example of bad learning Miss Parvispor wanted to eradicate through discussion was students' understandings of algebraic expressions. This lesson, towards the end of the Easter term, is included here as it relied on the educational subjectivities she had built up in 7N over the year. Students had to understand that the letter in an algebraic expression was a variable number, not a fixed representative

of a physical object, a danger inherent in some ways algebra is taught at primary school. To make this concept understood, students had to experiment, discuss and debate the concept. Discussion of this lesson brought up Miss Parvispor's own version of the ethos of the department and how she worked to reproduce this ethos in trainee teachers that she had responsibility for.

The starter for this lesson was a matchstick puzzle. Students had to move four matches to make three squares:



This was done on an interactive whiteboard, and many students volunteered to come up and get it wrong, reinforcing the idea that getting it wrong is what learning is. She explained this:

I used it in that lesson as there was going to be a group task, so it was a lesson where you want people to be able to give their ideas and have a go. Setting that up in a lesson is important. You don't want a starter, or any question really, that has a right or wrong answer. You should avoid questions that have answers that are either right or wrong.

Miss Parvispor then introduced the main content of the lesson, which was to work with algebraic expressions of dice rolls. She used a computer generated dice to ask students how they could write "add one to the dice score", and students came up: Some wrote "dice add 1". She then introduced the first main activity, in which students had to match cards containing different algebraic expressions to written representations of this operation e.g. score on the die plus two had to be matched to $D+2$ (see picture below). These used varying levels of number skills, and students

made errors: They got $D-5$ and $5-D$ the wrong way round. $2D+ 3$ and $3D +2$ was another error. Around half the students understood the operation of brackets and some students could not remember the squared symbol. A small minority of students got plus and times mixed up, forgetting that the times signal is default in algebraic expressions. Some students whose first term test reports on numeracy indicated they should have found these tasks easy, made mistakes, reinforcing Miss Parvispor's comment that learning in maths was a spiral which goes down as well as up. These errors were discussed, and students asked why they were easy to make.



The next activity involved giving out dice to pairs of students in the room and letting them write result of each algebraic expression after each throw, learning in a practical way that D was a variable for each expression.

Miss Parvispor explained the significance of what she was doing:

The trouble is students will have met algebra in primary school, at least some of them will have done, but their experience of it will have been very different. They would have been in different schools and different sets in primary school and they will have learnt it with different pre-conceptions. The idea behind this is to go back and try and level it up, get them all understand the reason why we use algebraic symbols, and try to get them to understand what a letter represents in algebra. i.e. a variable number that can change rather than a thing which is fixed. So the letters are not objects in themselves.

Often they use fruit, so you get $3b$ plus $2b$ is $5b$, and maybe the b stands for banana, but the problem with that is the pupils start to think with fruit salad

algebra. If you are not very careful about how you teach it, they think that the letter b is a banana, rather than the b representing some kind of number.

Is that why you had them all throwing dice?

Yes – the d is not representing the dice, it's representing the number that comes out, not fixed.

When I did algebra, all I remember is a textbook.

You do need to practice, so they are used sometimes, with the student teachers sometimes, who maybe have worked with textbooks, who want to go straight to using a textbook. Whereas I say, use the textbooks to see what kind of thing students need to answer, work out a way to teach it.

So you ban the beginning teachers from using textbooks?

I never allow BTs to use a textbook.

Are you allowed to stop them?

At the time Yep.

What do you say?

I say don't use a textbook (laughter).

How does that go down?

Generally well, I tell them this is going to be the only time they have to make interesting resources and plan properly, so make the most of it.

You do have textbooks in the department – which are all about levels, each page has level three, four and five questions, but you did not use the levels:

In the introductory lesson, you are not really using levels, as you need them to get the head round the concept, and also you are doing a group task where you are trying to get them all focused on discussion and getting the ideas right so you are not getting them to write down something fixed in their book.

But it would be easier for you to use the textbook.

It breaks it down into sub-levels as well, but it's not a very good way of teaching. Especially for algebra as it goes very quickly through the different levels. First of all they are doing it individually, so you are not getting them to discuss it. It's "what level can I get?" rather than "how can we learn?"

And also it takes too much individual teacher intervention rather than providing directed interventions that benefit everyone. You need to help each of the

individual pupils as they get stuck, and you go round to help each one, so you don't have time to address general issues which could help everyone.

Whereas if you have a group task, you can provide most of the help they need via whole class and then some targeted interventions.

(01.06.11)

The difference between “What level can I get” and “how can we learn?” was a fundamental distinction behind the operation of much of the practice described in this chapter. It captures the essence of the difference between formative assessment practice in maths, and the use of Assessment for Learning Strategies (DCSF 2008a) in English. It delineates the contrasting ways teachers in these departments encouraged students to invest in learning, enticing students to construct what academic progression meant. Crucially, it accurately captures what regular assessment practice was asking children to do, and points to the critical implications of this divergence of practice. For now, what needs to be emphasised is that in maths this was a constant negotiation, between the department and the school, but also from parents and students, who wanted the validation of levelled progression. This became apparent when we talked about the role of tutors in the same exchange:

Let me play devil's advocate. It's obvious in 7N that some of those kids have had private tuition for maths, why can't they get on with questions at level 5 or even 6 (in the textbook), instead of doing group work with students working towards a level 4.

Firstly that's not appropriate, as in the lesson you are talking about, they need to be involved in discussion to learn, but also because in general, parents employ tutors because they want their children to do well in a test, so most tutors focus on what you need to do well in a test, which means a short term focus. You learn how to pass the immediate goals, but they won't set up a foundational understanding of it, so pupils will struggle when they get further on. There are so many examples of this in algebra.

The same problem with “area” we were talking about before?

Yes, similar, pupils vary. You find some that have been tutored very well, but are not good at giving answers to questions that require explanations, or require independent thought, or then do really well all the way to through to GCSE

because of home tuition, but then really struggle at A Level, even with more tuition. At what point do they learn to do it without a tutor's help?

So we are de-tutoring some of our pupils.

Miss Parvispor's link to 'A' Level reiterates her position on the educationally damaging effect of constructing academic progression as the steady acquisition of levels. "De-tutoring" was a key part of what teachers in the department were trying to do with formative assessment practice; it captures the pressure from students and parents which they had to negotiate and ameliorate. For Miss Parvispor, this also spoke to her deeply felt, personal opinions on maths. Learning for the acquisition of grades resulted in what she had described to me as inelegant, ugly understandings, which blocked off further development of and enjoyment in the discipline.

5.6 Defending Citizenship

Miss Lee, the head of Citizenship, also spoke to concerns about making learning equivalent to grade acquisition and detailed how this influenced the assessment practice I witnessed in her lessons. The ideas she expressed shared much with the critique of levels put forward by maths teachers; assessment criteria worked to narrow students' understandings, confuse their motivations and de-motivate others by branding them failures. She also expressed a passion for her own subject which was resulted in strongly held ideas about how it should be taught and assessed. Like maths, this found expression in students' experiences of assessment and the type of educational subjectivities this practice involved. In her classroom, assessment was a negotiated process, with the presentation of final projects subject to the sanction of peer pressure for poor effort, and whole class celebration of those that do well. There was no evidence of the use of 8 level National Curriculum scales. In the lessons in which I was present, students created their own success criteria for their projects, and provided feedback to their peers in group presentation based on this. Commenting on this, Miss Lee articulated a very powerful argument about why National Curriculum levels, GCSE and A Levels were a pedagogical and political anathema to Citizenship education. She castigated colleagues in other schools she had worked in for "doing it wrong". For her, it was a space to enact a different form of learning which had been marginalised following the 1988 Education Act. She described her department as an

attempt to construct a redoubt of child-centred learning, standing against a cult of standards *“which did not always have the interests of children at heart”*. (11.07.2012)

There were also subtle but telling differences between her narrative and ideas expressed in the maths departments. Whilst the critique of teaching to levels given by Miss Parvispor was specific to how students learn within this subject. Miss Lee’s critique was broader in scope and time. Subject specific concerns about what Citizenship, particularly what she thought was its message of inclusion, was allied to an explicitly political history of the marginalisation of teachers’ professional voices and, with it, a form of child centred learning, which did not label students and schools as failures. The result of was an outright rejection of constructing academic progression through quantified performance outcomes, rather than the ambivalent attitude and negotiated practice prevalent in maths. Consequently, students did not do GCSEs or A Levels in the subject, and she did her best to keep National Curriculum levels out of the classroom at Key Stage 3. This oppositional position, though, was vulnerable. It depended on the marginal position of her department relative to the production of league table data, and the security that came from her respected position in the school. This policy might change when she, or senior leaders of the school who respected her position, retired.

The similarities and differences between maths and Citizenship are significant as they show how assessment practice delineates the variegated impact of marketisation on different departments at Heath High. Citizenship was free from the gaze of league tables, so was not performance managed as such, allowing Miss Lee to enact a residual (Williams 1977) social democratic understanding of teaching, influenced by her experience teaching in community schools in east London before the 1988 education act. This delineation shows the existence of a range of professional subjectivities which contribute towards assessment practice, but the words of Miss Parvispor and Miss Lee, and their practice, also serve to show the atomisation of these different ideas within these departments. They articulated similar concerns, but never to each other, and never beyond their own departments. These were atomised professional subjectivities.

The story she told about her own journey into teaching, from English, through to her taking up a Citizenship post is worth repeating as it shows the forces driving this atomisation. We began by talking about how she became a teacher:

I did not really know what else to do. I thought it was something I could be good. I was always a people person. When I finished my degree, I applied for a PGCE, it felt like the next step even though I was not desperately ambitious to be a teacher. It was a time when it was very difficult to get jobs. I came to London for a job that had a one term contract.

That was at a school down in Custom House, East London, a very tough school, but once I started, something clicked and I really liked it. This is something I really enjoy. I kind of fell into teaching, but what made me want to stay was the feeling that I could make a difference. It's a bit corny, but I went into it because I realised we could change things, and also that the children could change things. The ethos was that the children could change things.

That she started by stating she was a people person, with teaching being the next step, reflects the way “gender is both produced and productive when personality is put to work” (Weeks 2007: 241). This opening comment jarred with her academic knowledge. She was doing a part-time Education Masters at a stage in her career when it would not have benefited her instrumentally. Of all the teachers I worked with, she had the most knowledge of education literature, and applied it in her role as mentor to trainee teachers. We talked throughout the year about her dissertation. In this interview, this form of professionalism emerged as something distinctly political:

What year was that placement?

1983.

That would have been Custom House at the very end of the docks... what changes have you seen in teaching since then?

Loads. There was much more freedom for teachers to design – not only the content by also the approach – there was quite a progressive and liberal, you know “we’re here for the kids, we’re in it together, we’re part of the same community” attitude. I would not say the senior management team at that school were particularly inspiring, but I think they were very caring and their hearts were into what they saw as their kids.

What subject were you teaching at the time?

For that term I was cover supervisor, then English, and then Expression; a combination of English, geography and history. In a sense it was very progressive because it was a transition approach, taking kids from primary school and not putting them straight into discrete lessons, but working with them first. We had to abandon it after the 1988 Education Act, it was a terrible.

What was the shock of 1988 then? How did it impact on you? How did it impact the school?

Lots of consternation and anger. About all sorts of things. The way it was imposed, the lack of consultation with teachers, lack of trust with teachers as professionals, but also how it would alter that curriculum and who that curriculum was for...I don't know what the word is...but there was anger. I think people saw that the National Curriculum was not actually a curriculum for all, it was actually quite an elitist curriculum that would maximise the opportunities of the brightest, the children who "had" already what they needed. (11.07.12)

She was speaking outside the dominant discourses of education, against managerialism, elitism. This critical understanding was also applied to New Labour's record in office. Their successive interventions were a "genuine attempt to improve education, but for who? That is what I would be suspicious about". She was suspicious after her experience working in a school that was placed under special measures in a neighbouring borough:

Do special children go to schools in special measures? I did not like it that a school should be held responsible and isolated like that. It's stigmatizing and disrespectful. Yes, by all means send in a new leadership, or change things, but you have to ask how schools get in bad situations in the first place. The blame is not on the teachers. Building trust between schools and building up school leadership takes years to get right. It can't be done overnight, and it's a very wasteful way of improving something, ultimately. Yes, they did want to improve standards, of course they did. But it showed little understanding of what motivates people in the long term, or what makes up good, stable, long term school management. (ibid)

She was particular sad about the money spent on inspections and regulations:

Things that I saw – in 2001 in the school I was in, money was thrown around...but it was tightly controlled and went alongside these rigid, regular top

heavy inspections. It felt weekly that someone was coming in HMI, a lot of money put into inspections and checking people were doing. Money was spent on literacy but I have doubts its usefulness.

The fact is standards have not really improved despite results- there are other places in the world that have raised the standard of literacy without the targets and the quite narrow view of literacy that the national strategies implemented.

(ibid)

We moved on to the 2002 Education act and the implementation of Citizenship education:

I was very very supportive. I did have responsibility for PSHE, which, as you know, is not Citizenship, but includes talking about important things. This was similar to what we were doing with Expression in Custom House in the eighties. What did we call it...breaking down the atomised curriculum? Yes. It was really empowering. Even though it was not called Citizenship back then, it was what it we were trying to do. I have always thought education was about creating a climate where young people could develop the skills to change themselves and change things that are wrong, locally, globally.

So you are saying school is more than about the skills for work?

Absolutely, yes. I was very supporting of Citizenship.

In this exchange, Miss Lee encapsulated the residual influence of her experience of a different type of teaching from her formative years in education, before the 1988 Education Act and the neoliberal transformation of education. The residual here is understood as a way of understanding teaching that;

“has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residual cultural as well as social of some previous social and cultural institution or formation.”

(Williams 1977: 122)

The introduction of Citizenship education allowed for a verification of her teaching at Custom House, albeit in a narrow, marginalised form. Whereas Expression at Custom House was about “*breaking down the atomised curriculum*” (Miss Lee), her Citizenship

lessons where a once a week chance to cram in a different sort of learning. These ideas had a direct influence on the assessment practice in her lessons. I spent the second part of Easter term working with one of her year nine classes on an extended scheme of work about human rights. The educational content of the lesson was a standard liberal history of the triumph of human rights and democracy, with some additional content on the role of imperialism in holding back this inevitable march. The main materials were provided by a mixture of Amnesty international and videos produced by the United Nations, involving various celebrities. The focus of most activities were on students' developing their own opinions of what human right were through card sorts and organised debates.

The ethos Miss Lee described at Custom House in the eighties "*that children could change things*" was integrated into the assessment task. This was an extended group presentation, comprised of self-directed videos, in which students described what they thought the most important human rights were, which ones were relevant to their lives and which ones still needed to be won. This included interviews with teachers, and research conducted on human rights abuses around the world and in the UK. It's fair to say that the resulting presentations showed a mixed level of student engagement, reflecting the atomised way in which Citizenship curriculum content and skills were addressed in the school. Some presentations were fantastic, and reflected extended research, whilst others were made in the last two lessons. This was one of the few times on the timetable where students were not being pressured about levels, so some took it as an opportunity to attempt to do as little work as possible. Miss Lee was open about this to me; students had to have an opportunity to engage with these issues, she could inspire them "but not make all of them love doing it". This, again, reflected students' understanding of learning as for grade acquisition. The key thing, she explained, was to ensure that "all students engaged enough" so they did not hold others back. It was necessary that all students had an "opportunity to access the curriculum". In particular, she wanted to ensure Citizenship was something students "do", not just taught. She explained what was wrong with the latter position, and how she ended up doing it differently:

I remember seeing the head of citizenship when I was at (school in the neighbouring borough). There was a contradiction in terms of how she wanted to be done. The way it was presented by her was that there would be tick box,

and each person around the school would do it, have each child have a folder (sic), and so that when the inspector came, she could hand them a load of folders, and it would just be that. It was not my thing then, but I remember thinking “God I wish I was in charge of that” because I would do it very differently.

There was a tension between the content and the expectation that some heads wanted from it.

What do you think that expectation was?

Well, you have asked me this in the staffroom before. That head thought if we had three hundred paper folders, four whole school events, three projects, one person in charge, a couple of lessons loaned each year from different subjects

What do you mean by that?

Oh, sorry, maths teaching taxes, geography teaching democracy. That set up. With one person coordinating it all, and collecting all the work to put in one place. This would be great if the teachers were doing it in a holistic way, where it was embedded in the whole curriculum, and not imposing it from above and bolting it on to stressed teachers so it could be recorded for Ofsted. It was about leaving a paper trail for inspectors, which means a command and lines of command. I thought this would be a travesty for the curriculum. (ibid)

Our conversation then moved on to a broader critique of the difference between learning and levels. Again, this had similarities to the critique outlined by Maths teachers, but allied it to a much broader, generalised critical narrative of education, selection, which relates to both her department, her teaching decisions and broader schooling:

When something is tested against a standard, given a level, then there has to be success criteria, and you have to do it in this way or this way, and it takes something away from what it can be teach it, as it narrows it right down, and more importantly it takes away from what is should be for students. It's the fact that right from when kids get in Year 7, parents are already rattling on about fast tracks and levels. In different subjects, often it is done mistakenly, written at that early tim, based on past ability not future potential. There not valid judgements of potential.

What do you think about the short course GCSE?

I have looked at it. I have never taught it. It is not something I would be inclined to embrace I have to say. Say someone got an A in citizenship, and then vandalised the (local town) centre. I am not saying that to judge, but what is that half GCSE about? Is it saying you know how to pass exams? Is it saying you are a good citizen?

Why is that?

I think kids are tested to death. I understand why some schools go down that route in terms of raising status or securing staffing and giving citizenship a level of status in the school to parents and students that says look; you get an exam out of it.

But I don't do it, and I will argue against doing it, because 'A' kids are tested to death, and because 'B' once it is a GCSE it can then be taught in a way really does not get to the heart of what citizenship is. It's just another box to tick. My children did it at their school. I explained to them that it was nothing to do with what citizenship was about.

Her 'B' has similarities with Miss Parvispor's and Miss Ketros's critique of levels on the basis of subject specific concerns, but her "A", "kids are tested to death" suggests a much more sustained critique. They mark the difference between a sustained political opposition to the use of levelled assessment and the negotiation with performance management and students' expectations revealed in maths. This opposition, though, has been pushed to the margins of the A-C economy at Heath High (Gillborn and Youdell (2000) Miss Lee explained her position further:

I notice in the lessons I was in, you don't use the National Curriculum levels?

Yes.

Have you been asked to?

Yes.

How did that go?

Well, I use them as little as possible in Citizenship. What next? Levels in PHSE? I won't go much further on this because I respect my colleagues and what they have to do but I have been around the school along time, and, you know, I am settled here. I can argue that it is educationally wrong for this subject.

So no spreadsheets with green and red citizens after their human rights presentation then?

(Laughs) No. Maybe I should. Can you imagine teaching human rights, or the suffragettes? Turning that into a colour on a computer? (01.06.12)

Her words a marked contrast to English, a department which was all “about the colour coding and getting that percentage” (Miss Lilly). The comparison is instructive, as it draws attention also to Miss Lee’s career trajectory. She began teaching English and was involved with “breaking down the atomised curriculum” with Expression at Custom House in the mid-80s. Twenty years later she found in Citizenship Education an outlet for this vision of learning, albeit one away from the direct glare of league tables and atomised within her department. She later told me that she worried what would happen to Citizenship when she retired, or if a new management team came in who did not respect her judgement about what was right for citizenship. Her oppositional was vulnerable, as it relied on the professional respect she had among her cohort of East London teachers who had gone into management. In contrast in maths, teachers were central to the School’s A-C economy, what the head teacher had called the school’s “good position”, but they found themselves in an ambivalent position, working with and against students’ motivations and their own performance management. Miss Parvispor explained why:

RB: You said ‘forget levels’ after the first test, but your department does not forget levels.

No. You can’t forget levels. You would not be allowed to be a teacher if you forgot levels. It’s a ridiculous idea!

Everything about levels is about Ofsted. We have a section in the beginning of the planners for maths, it will tell them what their level is at the beginning of the year.

You will have a target grade to get at the end of the year, and half-termly tests, there is a little section where you can put your levels in from each half term, and the idea is you should be making progress, and there is space in the planner to make targets.

I get them to write the targets in their books as well.

Her comments show the constrained subjectivity on display. She was not “allowed” to forget them, but how they were communicated to students differed from English-

targets sets were not linked to levels. The routines themselves were set apart from regular learning activities. Subject specific constructs were taught in such a way as to move away from understanding maths through external criteria, in contrast to the convergence constructed by teachers in English. Again, she described academic progression as something qualitative, and derided official understandings of progression in Ofsted;

I would not have a target to give someone which tells them they should get a level 5a or 5b because although topics in general in maths are levelled, topics are not 5a or 5b. If the national curriculum says they are on a website somewhere, then someone has made that up out of thin air. How you divide it up is a random thing, based on how quickly or how many you can do in a certain time. We could time how quickly it does to get a set of ten basic algebra questions to see if it's a 5a, b or c, but thinking like that starts to show how silly it is.

What you can do is ask the student to write their own targets, based on their own understanding. I often ask students to make up their own targets when coming out of a test. So if they have done a test, I will ask them to take the test home and complete where they got wrong, and make themselves two or three targets, and at least one of those has to be about maths specific, not about levels or behaviour. (06.09.11)

This decision reflected strongly held beliefs about maths learning, displayed in the lessons and sequences of lessons, that runs contrary to the understanding of learning and assessment expressed by Ofsted. I asked her about the department's use of tracking data and the assessments of pupil progress outlined by Ofsted (2004, 2006, 2011). She explained how her department deliberately ignored them:

So you should record or monitor can this student work the area of a rectangle? Can this student work out the area of a rectangle by counting squares, can they work it out by multiplying lengths, can they work out the area of a triangle, with a right angle, compound shapes. These are all things that are in the National Curriculum somewhere, and assessing pupil progress means you tick them off. We have never done that. And our last head of department was very anti-it. The reason is, and I agree, is that 'can they do this' is a slightly nonsense question. When do you mean they can do it? In that lesson, when you go through those

questions? Do you mean the next day, the next week, at a half term test, at the end of the year, the year after?

Maths learning is not linear, so the question is irrelevant. Maths learning is like a spiral, you go up and down and around, but over time you go more up than down, but you forget stuff before you move on. All for something that is so time consuming, can you imagine how long it would take for all of those students to do compound shapes, and then for them to forget bits two weeks later as we move on.

Would you not spend your time in class doing things which would improve their understanding in general? The school allowed us to do that because of our results. I think if our results were not good, there would have been pressure on us to focus on getting more data on students' progression, as it is, the SIMS gives an overview of what are good results, and they don't want more than that. At least this is how the head of department explained it. (06.09.11)

What is significant in Miss Parvispor's and Miss Lee's comments is that official departmental policy emerges as a key site of decisions which can seem technical and mundane, but are deeply sociological significant and make a significant difference to how students experience assessment in these departments. The professional subjectivities Miss Parvispor maps out make it clear that they are intrinsically connected to her department and her relationship with this department is one of mutual intellectual affirmation. She had made casual comments in our conversations about education throughout the year that, by themselves, could suggest a radical educator. When her words are put in the context of her department, they seem normal, technical and utterly mainstream.

5.7 Departmental Triage

These two departments suggest the existence of real spaces of agency, albeit ones which are enabled and constrained, ultimately, by the market position of the school. The broad critique of the neoliberal project outlined and enacted by Miss Lee existed in a space marginal to the schools' market position. The career history she outlined is in part a history of the marginalisation of social democratic understandings of education's role and worth derided in much official discourse since the 1988 Education

act. In Maths, the head of the department could reject the view that learning was linear and Miss Parvispor derided the validity of National Curriculum scales, but at the same time they “would not be allowed” to forget targets which were “all about Ofsted”. They make clear their departments are spaces in which dominant understandings of education’s role and worth are contested, albeit in a way constrained by performance management of their work, students’ understanding of assessment and ultimately the market position of the school. Crucially, the differences between the way academic progression was constructed between these two departments and English also reflected a different relationship to the A-C economy of the school.

It is worth exploring extending the notion of educational triage in order to conceptualise the types of professional subjectivity these teachers reveal and to think through its critical significance for teaching and the possibilities for alternatives. Departmental triage augments Gilborn and Youdell’s (2000) and Youdell’s (2004) account in three ways: descriptively, conceptually and critically. Descriptively, the focus of practices of triage in this instance is on the construction of different types of department through managerial intervention based on their relative exposure to the A-C economy of the school. We see safe, treatable and marginal departments, which are treated to varying levels of accountability. Conceptually, it allows for spaces of variation and contestation in which discourses other than hegemonic individualism work to produce an ideal learner. Extending the notion of educational triage in this way helps explain the variegated impact of marketisation on the micro-practices of learning at Heath High. Critically, it helps map out both the barriers and opportunities to engaging teachers in what a more socially just education system looks like.

Gilborn and Youdell’s (2000) exposition of the concept educational triage laid out the social implications of schools’ strategic responses to the A-C economy. They showed how schools’ organisational responses to the demands of marketisation could entail routine and divisive selection in order to sort students into categories suitable for the allocation of educational resources. Through these processes, students were categorised as safe, treatable or hopeless cases depending on their instrumental value to the schools’ market position. Critically, these decisions legitimated the re-articulation of discredited notions of innate ability through a subtle shift in understandings of meritocratic individualism. Youdell (2004) tentatively extended the

notion of educational triage to include the bureaucratic, institutional and classroom dimensions. Bureaucratic triage refers to the zoning of school districts deemed acceptable for treatment, and is used to understand the development of different categories of school governance within and across geographical areas. Institutional triage outlines the processes by which a schools' management defines itself as safe, treatable or hopeless. Finally, classroom triage refers to the minutia of teachers' and students' subjectivating practices, which represent permanent and ongoing construction of different sorts of learners, which draw on explicit and implicit understandings of safe, treatable and hopeless learners.

Youdell's discussion of these additional dimensions was explicitly exploratory and tentative, but it gives valuable insight into the link between the macro of marketised governance and the micro-decisions about formative assessment revealed by teachers across this chapter and the last. What is being taken from the notions of educational triage here, is the observation that different units of educational organisations are treated differently, to make the organisation fit for marketised governance. In the context of Heath High, departments deemed safe or marginal to the A-C economy of the school were given relative professional freedom, whilst vulnerable departments, such as English, were treated to extra levels of accountability which manifested in the classroom through the performance management of their learning. It is not the case that this was automatic- but that different relative pressures to get results allowed for factors other than the schools' market position to influence the way academic progression was constructed. To briefly re-cap, in maths, we have seen an ambivalent and contradictory treatment of learning for performance metrics. Teachers negotiated their opposition to them based on professional and personal ideas about the nature of maths against the expectations of some students and the performance management of their work as demanded by Ofsted. In Citizenship, this opposition took on a more overtly political guise, was rooted in a critique of the education reform similar to much sociological critique (e.g. Whitty et al 1998, Ball 2003, 2008) and explicitly opposed the use of levels, albeit in a department marginal to the school's position in the league tables. Both departments contrasted sharply to the performance management of learning in English- subject specific constructs where explicitly disarticulated from the levels and teachers talked about their work in much more expansive way, reflected very different professional subjectivities.

Miss Parvispor explained the nature of her department's autonomy in clear terms:

So keeping the results keeps your autonomy?

Yes. That's it.

Fair enough. What would happen if your results dropped?

I have not been part of meeting with senior management. I am not responsible for that. We do have the departmental improvement plan, which we all contribute to. If the head teacher felt the department needed more improvement, that plan would be monitored more closely, and they would make sure that the plan was being implemented, but given we are achieving what we have planned, there is not a reason for them to come in. (01.06)

The key point to take from this is that for the department to be monitored more closely, a discussion would have to take place about how to monitor the students' learning more closely in order to judge the efficacy of the departmental plan. In this situation, the demands to demonstrate progression, to be accountable, would come into the types of pedagogic decisions outlined in this chapter. Decisions to end the selection and setting across Key Stage 3, the deliberate rejection of Ofsted's notions of academic progression and the questioning of the validity of National Curriculum measurements would be taken in the light of new demands. Mention of management coming in to a department reminded me of the intense pressure that history teachers were under, back on the first training day of school, when their poor results left them exposed. The department's response to their public exposure was systems of audit, selection and ad hoc teacher judgements about students' worth in the A-C economy of the school, which bear striking resemblance to the original descriptions of educational triage (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). That these teachers explicitly debated the social implications of their assessment policies serves to reinforce the views put here. The head of the department was explicitly opposed to some of these measures, but felt compelled to enact them. We can see what the end point of this process might be English, where departmental accountability begets student accountability in a cascade of audit which, via Assessment for Learning strategies (DCSF 2008a), infiltrated the way curriculum content was introduced. Management asked the question "What are you doing to get this?" (Miss Ketros) and this was followed by a cascade of delegated accountability which ultimately manifested itself in the performance management of students' learning. This clear contrast suggests the tight nexus

between marketisation, hegemonic individualism and a specifically neoliberal form of subjectivation outlined by Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Youdell (2004) is shown to be variegated rather than smooth and uniform. Significantly, this chapter has outlined how teachers struggle against certain understandings of education, which are crucial to the construction of hegemonic individualism in the performance management of their work and also in with students' expectations. Miss Lee had to encourage some students to take their work seriously, as it was not quantitatively assessed. Teachers in maths made a concerted effort to disarticulate learning from levels. The broader analytical point to be made here is that accounts of neoliberalism in education, specifically those that deploy a Foucauldian understanding of the discursive production of subjectivity, could be augmented with context specific variation when looking at how ideal learners are constructed. The discursive production of learning subjectivities in these departments is the outcome of political battles, political ideas and political actors who work with discourses broader and that which can be understood as neoliberal. An understanding of departmental triage helps makes these micro-battles visible.

A crucial part of this context at Heath High was a relatively hands-off management which emphasised professional freedom and a collaborative ethos, as long as departments contributed to the "good position" (Mr Graham) of the school. Miss Lee described this relative professional freedom when we discussed how she dealt with parents who wanted their children graded in her lessons. I wanted to know whether this was a reflection of what the school wanted or their own demands:

That is an interesting question I don't really know. (Mr Graham) has always been of the opinion to leave it to departments. There is no drive from the top really. It's based on heads of departments own ideas about education. How they deal with the parents who want to know about grades their decision, and how departments communicate grades to parents is also their decision.⁷

In the limited space allowed by departmental triage, within the context of Heath High, a professional subject emerged which directly contributed to a deliberate summoning

⁷This managerial freedom, though, was dependent on the continual good results of the school. Mr Graham made this clear to staff on the first day of term and in interview to me at the end of the year. Changes to how the A-C economy was to be measured meant the "goodwill built up" could be in danger.

of a different sorts of learner across vertical departmental divisions in the school. 7N's maths teacher, Miss Parvispor, outlined how this agency was rooted in the unique culture in the department bequeathed to her by the founding head, but also by her own ideas about maths and teaching:

So your department is pretty well respected. In the school. In the borough, and Ofsted as well, judging by the lesson they came in.

I think there has always been an emphasis in the department from when Mr G set it up of emphasising enjoyment in maths and emphasising lessons that were involving, discussion, activities, and not about doing exercises from a textbook. And so that, coupled with the fact the maths department the results have been good, means there is a strong ethos of how much students enjoy it as well as how well they do, and related to that, how you teach. I don't think, over time, anyone in the department could get away with teaching from a textbook.

Chicken or egg, is it the results that give you the freedom to teach like this, or teaching like this that gives you the results?

Well with this school it is neither, because it was set up that way in the beginning. Mr F set up the school from Year 7 so he set out how the department would teach, and recruited students on that basis.

How that would work if you came into a school with poorer results, or did not teach like that, would be different.

Change of subject. You're now the union rep. Is there any relationship between your ideas about maths and why you're a union activist?

(Long pause)

You have strongly held beliefs about both.

I guess there is a correlation in terms of the way you think that pupils learn best and how they should be supported, and what it takes to do that, which is well supported teaching.

Which way do pupils learn best?

Through a combination of dialogue, discussion and practice, and getting the balance right between them.

But teaching like this does mean allowing trust in teachers to have freedom. So a lot of the things to do with being a union activist are to do with supporting that.

For Miss Lee, similar arguments were laid out, but contextualised within a longer narrative of professional defeat against the onslaught of marketised governance. This was mixed with excitement at specific opportunities afforded by New Labour's educational project, such as Citizenship Education. This narrative was repeated in our discussion of Assessment for Learning:

It brought with it quite a lot of excitement and hope. Maybe people who had been thinking that this way of pigeonholing kids was not right, it gave them a bit of hope.

Hope for who?

Well, me for a start. And others who had been around for a while. It was like the things we had been saying when the National Curriculum was introduced. It felt like some of our critique was vindicated.

Which bit?

The idea you should listen to teachers for a start. That they know how to teach. That they should say how teaching should happen. But also that listening to children is something that teaching is about. They said that "teaching is not just a command from the Education Secretary."

They could not articulate why it was not right, why what had happened was wrong, why testing to death was bad, as it was now about results. I think that work gave us some credible, academic, you know, reasons, for saying we know the assessment system we use in this school, in this county, is not maximising the learning potential of the students. They managed to put it in a well-researched, clear way, which got traction. It was about the children. That was it, the research was centred round how to make assessment help them. I remember it now.

It helped also because, you know, it was based on lots of research, and was propounded by high status people so it carried a lot of weight.

Sorry, who do mean by 'they'?

I think when the National Curriculum was introduced, and then SATs, we could not prove that it was going to be bad for a lot of children.

Do you think the criticisms and suggestions of Inside the Black Box have been used by schools?

I think with anything like that I think the schools who really have used it, it has made a difference for them. Things take a while to measure whether there is a difference. I am sure it has made a difference where it is embedded and sustained. (11.07.12)

Miss Lee's are words a reminder that Assessment for Learning research had a professional reach and life of its own before it was transformed into Assessment for Learning Strategies. *Inside the Black Box* (Black and Wiliam 1998a) sold 20,000 copies. Her account also suggests a certain amount of ambiguity as which version of Assessment for Learning was validated in the minds of teachers, and also whether the transformation was recognised. Miss Lee's words are a good segue to discuss the critical implications for departmental triage for broader questions of educational inclusion and social justice. At stake here is not just analytical nuance - but questions of the resources of critique within the existing education system. The value of departmental triage as a tentative extension to the concept is that it defines the processes by which professional freedoms are opened up or closed down in direct correspondence to the departments specific importance to the school's market position with corresponding impacts on the range of ideal learners teachers can help construct. What both accounts reveal is a tight nexus between the valorisation of teachers' professional freedom and the enactment of a form of learning that is not conducted according to the logic of marketised governance. The enactment of their ideas in resulted in practices which were less stressful, socially violent and divisive than practice in English. The argument here is not that these professional freedoms are a synonym with social justice, though the interviews and practice shown in this chapter arguably show a correlation, but that departmental triage accounts for the existence of spaces where teachers can discuss the professional and social impact of their assessment practice. In these spaces, they contextualised their teaching with discourses that had broader and longer lineages than the colour coding and the need to get that percentage, though these pressures were ever present. At the same time, the variegated impact of the A-C economy at Heath High worked to produce a discursive striation which corralled these narratives within in their respective departments. Treating different departments differently had the effect of accentuating the vertical divisions within school life, atomising critiques of marketised governance within departments able to successfully traverse or sidestep its demands.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed how teachers in maths and Citizenship used assessment practice to construct learning subjectivities that chafed against the pressures and discourses associated with marketised governance at Heath High. It has made visible the micro-political practices that take place at departmental level which allow for the enactment of ideas that conflict with official understandings of assessment found in Ofsted (2004, 2006, 2010) and the DCSF (2008). These teachers outlined how strongly held political and professional ideas, unique departmental cultures and personal career histories influenced the assessment practices described in this chapter. Learning was not understood to be linear. Academic progression was not just the acquisition of grades. In Maths, teachers worked to sculpt and exploratory and social learner explicitly against an understanding of academic progression as the acquisition of grades. This was clearly articulated to students (“Maths is not about levels”- Miss Parvispor). Assessment was about “what can I learn?” not “what level can I get?”. Students were “de-tutored”. These teachers articulated an extended critique of the performative construction of mathematic learning based on the damage done to students’ confidence, motivations and understandings of key concepts. In Citizenship, residual notions of learning for social justice were enacted through Miss Lee’s choice of assessment. Explicitly critical discourse about the elitist nature of government policy influenced the decision to reject managerial requests to use National Curriculum levels. The construction of the ideal learner in these departments was the outcome multiple discourses and political contestation over their enactment at departmental level.

Their practice contrasts sharply from the performance management of learning seen in English. Subject-specific constructs, such as area, were purposefully disarticulated from levels, in contrast to the calculated conflation articulated by English teachers. The production of data for SIMS was an addition to learning, set apart from regular activities, distinct from the tight integration seen in English. The ways teachers talked about their relationship the senior leadership of the school differed markedly. Underpinning these differences was each department’s relative exposure to the market position of the school. The professional agency inherent in the construction of learner subjectivities was fundamentally linked to departments’ exposure to the

schools' market position. Their relative exposure to the A-C economy played a fundamental role in influencing the type teacher it was possible to be and the options open to them to summon different sorts of learners. How these departments were held to account directly influenced the space in which teachers could choose how to hold students' learning to account. These links suggest a form of institutional triage. This tentative extension of the concept of educational triage helps understand spaces of contestation and negotiation, their limited and partial nature and their direct link to the marketisation of school. It can account for the heterogeneity of discourses influencing the construction of the ideal learner and their conflicts and complementarities with hegemonic logic of marketised governance and individualism in the school. Crucially, it helps make visible the sites in which teachers mediate the demands of marketised governance and the processes by which these sites are opened up, closed down and vertically delineated. Teachers in these departments did not display an understanding of educational progressivism that was completely neoliberalised. They worked with professional and oppositional discourses to enact a form of assessment that was less socially divisive than in English. The processes of subjectivating students into the academic hierarchy were less socially violent. The argument here is not that these departments represent a ready-made alternative to marketised governance, but they were a breathing space for students from the relentless valorisation of numbers from other departments and a pastoral team that gave constant positive reinforcement in economised terms. The discourses which sustained these practices were bound up within the walls of these departments, limiting their reach.

Chapter 6: High Expectations

“Welcome Year 7. We will start with good news. You have just started at a school that has got its best ever GCSE results. This group of (Heath High) Students are now joining our 6th form to do A Levels and will go on to succeed. You should be aiming to beat them! When you sit in these seats in 5 years time, I want this Year group to beat them, and get the best ever GCSE results. I have seen your reports from primary school. We know we can do this. You have come here because your parents want the best for your future. They have very high expectations of you all. We have very high expectations, and we want you to have the highest expectations in yourself.”

Mr Peel, Head of Year 7, speaking at the first assembly of the year

6.1 More Than Numbers

This chapter leaves the classrooms of Heath High and describes the work of Heads of Year and the Head Teacher. Its aim is threefold. First, it describes how these members of staff made academic progression meaningful to students in assemblies and intervention groups. Second, it outlines how they used data about academic progression to categorise students and intervene into their learning. Third, it unpicks the motivations and meanings school managers and pastoral heads attach to this work. Much of this chapter focuses on the use of high expectation talk in these sites, exemplified above by Mr Peel’s first words in his first assembly. I first assumed articulations such as these were a simple repetition of Ofsted discourse by Mr Peel, but as the year progressed it became apparent these words reflected something more pro-active, embedded and ambiguous than simple repetition. Speeches like this played a key role in unifying staff and students behind the school as both a corporate entity and a moral and political project. Predictably, much of this work was done with an eye on the A-C economy in which the school was situated. High expectation talk was justified in utilitarian terms and spoken about in the language of percentages, cohorts and Years. But the success of these interventions depended on high expectations representing something much more than the numbers Mr Peel rattled through in these first assembly. This chapter demonstrates how the mobilising power

of these articulations relied on their inherent discursive malleability. Pastoral Heads gave these numbers meaning through range of political ideas and moral statements about the purpose of teaching. They showed a level of sociological awareness, but their accounts were suffused with cultural explanations of working class underachievement, which were explicitly communicated to students deemed to have low expectations. Managerial efforts to make students share in the values of the school had a fundamental impact on the social role of teachers in the school and how they were expected to conduct themselves with students. In order that students believed in the high expectations of them, they had to encourage and nurture and push, putting a priority on teachers' social connections with students. Heath High's version of high expectations represents a set of subjectivating practices that rely on calculated, sustained work on students' wellbeing in order to manage the contradiction between high expectations and divergent results. They were a clear example of hegemonic individualism, constructing a goal orientated ideal learner, but were deployed with and were inseparable from an extended focus on students' self-esteem and emotional wellbeing aimed at those who would succeed in a different way. Care was essential to Heath High's A-C economy.

Enfranchisement

Unpicking the motivations of pastoral Heads reveals this to be something unique about how they say Heath High was set up. As this was one of the last community schools built in the country, the Head Teacher was able to recruit staff on the basis of a particular vision for the school. His work, and that of his appointments also suggests the institutional sedimentation of progressive educational ideas, which have been made compatible with marketised governance, reflecting the sustained political and financial investment in education during New Labour's years in office. In their own words, they describe how the school cannot afford the existence of what Youdell (2006) terms an educational other. The interviews and ethnographic sketches present a picture of a school which does everything in its power to stop the emergence of a critical mass of students who are disenfranchised in the school for any reason. Ideas about the negative effects of teachers' labelling, students' motivations, students' voice and staff-student collaboration were articulated by managers and Heads of Year as vital tools to enfranchise this critical mass of students into the schools' ethos of high

expectations. This mass included those at the C-D border and all those below this crucial border “whose demoralisation could drag others down” (Mr Peel 11.07.11). At stake in high expectation talk is the anxious form of educational inclusion described as operating in the English department as something generalised and pervasive, with consequences for how students were labelled. A driver of this anxious inclusion was the relentless and forceful positivity directed at students deemed to lack high expectations, seemingly contradicting long-standing accounts of teachers’ constructions of low expectations (Becker 1971, Hargreaves (1967) and the production of “hopeless case” (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). SIMS software played a central role in forming this critical mass by helping heads of Year categorise this cohort, suggesting the names that were the subject of extensive meetings with the senior leadership team and departmental heads and the object of intervention. Like in English, this software seemed to augment or justify pre-existing qualitative judgements about which students required intervention. Notably, these heads of Year and senior leaders described their work on what the Head Teacher called disenfranchisement in political terms, defining it against what they described as the authoritarian and divisive policies proposed by Gove and the new Ofsted regime. Their school would not become an “exam factory” (Mr Graham 09.06.12) which was “ruled by fear” (Mr Hoy 14.06.12). The concern of these managerial actors, though, was that a drop in their results would necessitate strategies which could undermine this ethos by endangering the goodwill of staff and students. The ethos of the school was threatened by the “divisive” and “elitist” (Mr Graham 06.09.12) policies of those in charge of education on the political right.

Something of the nature of this educational enfranchisement can be seen in Mr Peel’s first assembly. Here he hails an educational subject of a corporate entity, and works to transfer the goals of this corporate entity onto and into his new students. Their academic progression, the school’s good position (“its best ever results”) and parental hopes are articulated as equivalences of high expectations, which are afforded an ontological priority in students’ lives. This was typical of his and others’ frequent and forceful invitations to take pride in, and internalise, a corporate version of the school; it was “oversubscribed”, “rated excellent” and had other students that were “looking to take your place”, Mr Peel explained to his cohort in assemblies throughout the year. The repetition of the phrase high expectations was a recurring motif in his work, central

to how he articulated the meaning of academic progression and also how he categorised and intervened in students' learning. Rather than the reproduction of hopeless cases (Gillborn and Youdell 2000), he deliberately targeted high expectations to those he felt needed them. In Year 7, a small cohort of students, overwhelmingly on Free School Meals, were categorised and separated in order to have high expectations delivered to them. The targeting of high expectations in this way compensated for the "low expectations of society", "some teachers' inexperience" and some students' negative experiences of primary school. Their poor adaptation to the new school could "bring others down", so they were categorised as needing "Help to Succeed". He subjected them to rituals aimed at their educational salvation; inclusion into the ethos of high expectations of Heath High. More broadly, students in his Year were valued as agential, active learners; they had 'student voice', they co-delivered assemblies, they gave feedback to Ofsted inspectors, who hailed students' subjectivities back in their report. Through these roles they were positioned as citizens of a learning community that *shared* the goal of the schools good position.

6.2 Explaining High Expectations

Mr Peel made similar speeches in most of his first assemblies, but he was not the only teacher repeating this talk around the school. High expectation talk was notable for its sheer ubiquity in the first weeks, and its repetition in key parts of school life afterwards. As I shadowed 7N in their first few weeks of the year, the high expectation talk was repeated to them when they were being encouraged and when they were being told off. Teachers mentioned this theme at the beginning of every first lesson they had, and some reminded them throughout the year of the high expectations they had agreed to have on the first day. The phrase was invoked when talking about results, behaviour, uniform and planners. It was related to their parents, the school and themselves. It was linked to future success, good wages, providing for their future families and, most often, exam results. It was a discursive prop used to contextualise all that was negative or positive about students. During my first weeks at Heath High, my initial, and wrong, interpretation of this bombardment of was of a management team repeating the language expected of it by Ofsted and teachers following their queue of influential school leaders.

The initial assumption was based on an understanding of the ubiquity of the phrase high expectations in educational governance. “High expectations” yields within the .sch.uk top level domain yields 77,000 unique results from the 19,000 state maintained schools in the England and Wales when searched on Google when I checked this in late 2011. Most of these entries were on the front pages of school websites, and take the form of forwards from Head Teachers speaking to parents and prospective parents. This is reflective of a consistent discourse on standards which has held the low expectations of teachers and students responsible for poor standards and continuing educational inequality. These ideas were reiterated in a stark way during my second term at Heath High, when Michael Gove (2012) labelled oppositional teachers the “enemies of promise” for variously going on strike, being against changes to GCSE systems and deepening privatisation of educational provision. His appointed head of Ofsted reiterated this argument in his first speech, titled “*High expectations for all*”:

“We have made progress. But the quality of educational provision isn’t improving fast enough and the gap in outcomes between the richest and the poorest isn’t closing. Without a radical change now, we will see more social and economic division in this country.” (Ofsted 2012)

Wilshaw’s talk of radical change and inequality brings to mind Reay’s (2012) account of how the political right have stolen the language of social justice in education policy, which has worked to sanction and exacerbate existing inequalities and strengthen marketised governance. What time spent at Heath High made apparent was how the logic of marketised governance worked from the bottom up, forcing this management to think through how to best mobilise the students behind the goal of league tables. A particularly forceful example of this logic came in Mr Peel’s address to Year 7 in the assembly after Ofsted had visited the school.

“Year 7, you all know Ofsted have been in the school. We are delighted to be able to tell you we have been judged outstanding. This is because of all the hard work you put in, and the high expectations we have for you. You should remember that you are in an oversubscribed school. This means that lots more children want to come here than there are places for them. Look at the seat you are sitting. This means another boy or girl would like to be sitting on that seat, in an outstanding school. Don’t forget that when you are doing work, because

we want the best for you, this is what we mean when we say we have high expectations for everyone". (18.10.11)

During the assembly he returned to this topic. He thanked them for the hard work they had *put in, which* "reflected the hard work of your teachers, who worked hard for you when Ofsted came". All this work, by "*everyone*" had "*been noticed*". He finished by saying he would spend the next few weeks going round and to thank some students "*who had sometimes found it hard in the first weeks, but they have come through*" and other students who had produced some "*amazing work since the start of term*". What was typical of this example was the link made between personal success, their self-expectations and the schools corporate position. What made this example stand out was the level of openness about what Ofsted meant to the school and the teachers and the emphasis on their shared experience. They had shared in the stress, they would share in the celebration and they would share in the thanks. The impression he gave was of being in it together, the learning of students and the labour of teachers behind one shared project; Heath High as a corporate educational entity united by high expectations. The invitation to look at the seat next to you was contrived as the school was oversubscribed due to a burgeoning school age population in the borough, but this made it no less powerful as a piece of individualising rhetoric on eleven year olds. The personal visits round the school were targeted at many of the students who would go on to be sorted for intervention, anticipating the 'Help Me to Succeed' focus group after the first Performance Review Day. His visits encapsulated what was a concerted effort at inclusion in Year 7 by bombarding students who were struggling with relentless positive messages at the same time as relentlessly pursuing visible manifestations of ill-discipline in uniform, planner and class conduct.

The impression was of a man who cared about the results these children got, but also someone who was paying close attention to those "who had found it hard" and cared for them, so my line of questioning to him at the end of the first term attempted to see if he felt there was a contradiction between his care for students' welfare and his concern for results.

Me: Why did you use the phrase 'high expectations' a lot in your assemblies?

You can't set the bar too high- if we raise it, hopefully most of them will rise to it.

Raising the bar works, because most of us meet in the middle; what would be the alternative? To set low expectations? We need to reinforce it. I would worry about it if a school said just come as you are. Some would sink and some would swim, that is not what it should be about.

I don't apologise for repeating myself. I know it looks weird and a bit culty, but hopefully it sinks in with about half of them.

In the first assembly and other times, you seemed pretty focused on results; GCSEs, A Levels. Is this relevant for them at this stage?

Absolutely. Yes.

The corporate position of the school is communicated to the children a lot: "You are very lucky, there is a waiting list for this school, look at the person next to you". What is the purpose of that type of talk to an eleven year old children?

Err, well, I do it.

The last question provoked a slightly awkward and defensive response, but he rallied and reiterated the unifying and mobilising logic of high-expectation talk in his assemblies:

I do it. I will continue to do it. I have fully bought into the ethos of the school. I agree with what they want, what they are aiming for, and I want to communicate to the students that they are in an outstanding school. It was an improving school, and now it is outstanding. Saying it to them says we are not lucky, we are outstanding because of the teachers and students, and we need you to keep it up. We expect the best from you.

I challenge any parent to say they don't want the best. What's the way you put it – corporate position, well if so, then yes. If you aim higher, then you get there. If you keep them there, better.

I wanted to press this point further – students had asked me what GCSEs and A-Levels were after his first assembly, and some were confused. I put this to him.

It's advertising the success they can achieve. In other words, if they commit to us, we'll commit to them. We will help them be the 86% that get those A-Cs. Now that you are saying it – what does it mean to an eleven year old child hearing those statistics, now I am not sure. It'd be interesting to know what they thought.

Do you think they got it?

Well some would, and some would not, but I guess those that don't are the ones that it's important to reach as they need to know what they will need to succeed. It's good for them to hear it early, so they know what to do, and also hear of how successful the school has been.

Is this all about results?

Yes, you could say, but that's not all, you see in assemblies it's about celebrating achievement. I am bit embarrassed now you talk about me repeating myself, I guess I do. But you would not get that, it would not really work, me repeating myself, without all the positive stuff. I want to get much more of the children to do more in assemblies, and you have seen that.

Me: So what planning happens to go into this? Do you plan with your Year team to say the same things?

I am thinking about them in Year 9 now. You asked about Year 9 and options. This is a plan for the next five years. There can be no let up in this.

We want to get them from the very start of the year. I see what happens in Year 8 and 9 as a problem, they can stop thinking about why they are here, there are a lot of diversions at that age, but you need to keep it focussed.

If I have a minority that are turned off learning, completely disillusioned, they would drag others down with them. I can't let that happen, so yeah, keeping high expectations, repeating it, is part of it.

Imagine having to deal with a large minority of children in the Years ten and eleven who were not concerned about achievement. It's not what we want.

(11.07.12)

Mr Peel comes across as driven in these interviews, as he was in his assemblies. His comments on planning for Year eleven and ten compliment the account Miss Ketros gave of an English department tracking its students from Year 7 with an eye on results five years later. Repetition marked both; high expectations in assemblies, 'what went

well?' and 'even better if?', and variants of it, in lessons. In Mr Peels assemblies and in this interview the two practices were explicitly brought together, the former used to encourage students, and staff, to invest into the latter. The Head of Year 8, Mr Hoy, was equally forthcoming about the instrumental reasoning behind high expectation talk. As someone approaching retirement, this was put into a context of the changing roles of the school and educational expectations.

You can't get anywhere by scaring kids anymore. When I went to school I was scared of my teachers. They had the cane, and it got used. They were set out to scare you in the classroom. That's just not going to happen nowadays. It should not happen either. I would not want anyone in my classroom to be scared of me.

I think what you are getting at is, you need to encourage, nurture and push. There are much higher expectations of what the kids need when they leave, and what schools should be responsible for. Forget all this nonsense about falling standards. Ordinary kids leave school better trained than they did 20 years ago, and better than 10 years before that, when they could leave at, what was it, 14? So schools are being asked to do more, and we can't scare them into doing that.

This is why we need to encourage more, rather than just scare them.

(14.06.12)

His choice of triplet “*encourage, nurture, push*” suggests a difference in emphasis to Mr Peel, though not a different argument. Mr Peel made it clear that “*me repeating myself would not work without all the positive stuff*” and correctly reminded me of his deliberate celebration of a range of positive stories in assemblies which included achievements much broader than the numbers he repeated. This positivity was described by both teachers in instrumental terms, but also in ethical, moral and political terms, which had implications for the type of teacher that was valued at Heath High. Mr Hoy explained this whilst we discussed low expectations:

Do you think ‘high expectations’ are needed to compensate for low expectations elsewhere?

Big question to ask. Young people are viewed very lowly by most of society. The purpose of school must be to be positive and encourage them. Young people make very few good news stories, we should be about encouraging a

positive self image, and that's what I see what you call high expectations as being about. Young people spend most of an incredible amount of time in the education system, if they don't get that positive message from society they must get it here.

I think there is an impression in the school, from some teachers, that children should come into school, take in all the knowledge, and just leave with a set of exams. I don't think that is the ethos of this school. I don't think that this is what this school is about. It's not what the management want. It's not just about a great set of results, but having young adults, that by the time they are in Year 10 or eleven, you can talk to.

Fear would not work in creating that, so you always have to emphasise the positive. (14.06.12)

This ability to encourage and nurture, not just teach, was explained as a recruitment policy by the Head Teacher when I returned briefly to the school the following September⁸. These pastoral heads make clear that making high expectations believable to students meant the school valued staff with a high level of empathy and the ability to maintain a close social distance between themselves and the students. Again, the ability to work with and work on students' emotions through their own social affects was talked about as a key part of professional work at Heath High. Mr Peel put the emphasis on "push" over "nurture and encourage" in his assemblies and interviews, but neither were absent these fields or the rest of his work.

The emphasis on reinforcing positive messages was also key to Mr Peel's understanding of his pastoral mission and the broader role of the school. Earlier in the Year I had asked him if he thought it was the school's moral role to do this:

Yes, I think it is the role of schools. It's certainly what the school should do pastorally. The key is having a positive image of yourself, if a child is not getting it from elsewhere, and also a view of where they want to be, even if they don't really understand it exactly, as you said, but the direction they want to be going.

⁸ This interview, and analysis of it, takes up the last section of this chapter.

If someone is not motivated, for whatever reason, then yes, the school should do something.

If someone is falling behind the school can't just shrug its shoulders and say so what. For a start, disengaged pupils pull their peers down. We won't let it happen. I think every Year has a list who we focus on, and works out how to motivate those that are not getting that motivation, or for whatever reason, can't get it from home.

(06.02.12)

“For Whatever Reason”

“For whatever reason” was an interesting way of putting this point, not least because the Head Teacher used the exact same phrase when describing whole school work done to stop students’ disenfranchisement. The questions I had asked them both did not use this phrase, suggesting its use between school managers and teachers. Even if this is not the case, it is a politically adept, aware and sociologically significant turn of phrase. “Not getting it at home” brings to mind a cultural deficit model. Reay (2006) shows how schools approach working class children from a position of unacknowledged middle class normality. Thus, a ‘normal’ student is supported by their parents and able to understand and agree with what is asked of them in school. Out of these assumptions, a cultural deficit model dominates teachers’ assumptions of working class children. It matches the logic of new Labour’s third way project in education, which entailed building up the capacities of “disadvantaged groups” rather than challenging structural inequality and helping these groups “*help themselves*” (Garminikow and Green 2000:95). “For whatever reasons” suggests enough ambiguity to suggest racialised expectations (Gillborn 1990) but also understandings of material deprivation and a less sociological naïve understanding. Mr Hoy knew it was “a big question to ask” and placed the lack of expectation in the media. Again, we see the discursive malleability of high expectation and teachers’ ability to make it work with various political ideas. What is not malleable or ambiguous is where the buck stops. “*For whatever reason*” positions the school as the corrective agent in students’ lives and the teachers as their political and moral saviours.

What is also significant is the ease by which these heads of Year switched between talking about high expectations in economised, instrumental terms and with these moral, political ideas. The ethos of the school, results and its A-C economy were tightly bound. Listening to these teachers brought back the contradiction in the school ethos laid out by Mr Graham during the training day. In order to be a school that was not just “an exam factory” the school was going to have to continue to get the results. Mr Peel makes it clear that high expectations were a thought out response to future exams which started from the moment they entered school. The repetition of the phrase was a calculated attempt to ensure students “*don’t stop thinking why they are here*”. It staves off having to deal with a large minority of students not concerned about achievement- the language of contamination was frequently used. It orientates students to his 5 year plan, the aim of which is clearly defined- 86% students getting A-C including maths and English at GCSE. These numbers were intrinsically linked to the need to promote a positive self-image, to compensating for families, society, the media, if “for whatever reasons” students don’t get them elsewhere. For Mr Peel, new to the job, this was a key part of the schools mission and he completely bought into it.

For Mr Hoy, approaching retirement, this was contextualised through a history of changes in the education system- higher expectations in the school were a reflection of higher expectations in society. Both these teachers laid out how these economised high expectations notions were deeply embedded in the ethos of the school and were intrinsically connected to a broader positivity which entailed teachers being expected to do more than teach. What made these high expectations work, as Mr Hoy made clear, was a clear and ongoing attempt to shorten the social distance between adults and children in the school. The strong expectation from these heads of Year was for teachers, particularly form teachers, to socially invest in students through extended after school and lunchtime activities. The need to maintain a close social distance in order to nurture and encourage with is reminiscent of Bernstein’s argument that any effective teaching demands that “the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher” (1970: 344). That considerations similar to this were talked about openly and in economised terms illustrates the key arguments this chapter makes. In order to get results, the school has to be not just about results. In order to remain a school that is not just about results, the school had to keep getting the results. This contradiction, made explicit by the Head Teacher on the first training

day, meant economised versions of high expectations, concerns for students' welfare and a variety of moral and political ideas about the role of schools were considered complimentary.

6.3 “Help Me to Succeed”

I had the opportunity to closely follow how these ideas were enacted to categorise students in Year 7. In the first week of November, after half term, an email was sent out to all tutors informing them of the “Help Me to Succeed Focus Group” (copied below). The name of the group confirmed the strong influence of New Labour's educational rhetoric. Unpicking Mr Peel's motivations revealed an explicit and very tight connection between the tinniest performances of being a good student and notions of employability, stability of family life and academic success. These ideas were made explicit to students, provoking questions about how this positivity was interpreted by them and the extent to which this positivity contrasts to sociological accounts of schools' negative labelling. Following this intervention revealed parallels with the anxious form of inclusion described English in English.

This focus group was comprised of three students from each Year 7 form class. Pictures of these students were put up in the staffroom alongside their reports from performance review day. This data included the targets for each subject, their KS2 SATs test scores from primary school, Fischer Family Trust test data and CAT tests (reading age scores). This chart occupied the same position in the staffroom as the photos of the departed Year 11s from the previous academic year, complete with their plethora metrics and colour-coded highlights of students of concern, showing the ultimate goal of this intervention. This plethora of metrics on display, and the referencing of Performance Review Day and staff generated data, pointed to the ambiguous way teachers and school managers used data throughout the school. SIMS played a key role in presenting data and was present in the key structuring routines of school life, but it was used to confirm, rather than diagnose or direct the work of teachers when it came to questions of intervention. Mr Peel made it clear in his email to staff that this was based on information gathered for Performance Review Day. This was partly true. He later told me his long list included all students who had got significantly lower attainment marks in their PRD scores compared to the KS2

Sats. But from those, it was his and other teachers', subjective take on students which made the shortlist. "*We have noticed that are not coping with the move up to high school*", Mr Peel explained when he invited me to sit in on the group. A general unknowing forgetfulness about the requirements of high school: punctuality, uniform, losing books and particularly the state of the students' planners emerged as key dimensions in this subjective assessment. In English, Miss Ketros had described how SIMS did not say whether a student was mature enough to be included in her target group (14.06.11). The same principle but the opposite rule applied here, showing the delicate balance this software played between confirming and creating categories of student.

Students who were part of Help Me to Succeed group had to take a card around school with them and their teacher to fill out reports about their behaviour. At the end of the week, on Friday morning, Mr Peel met with these students to see how they had done. He asked them to put their cards in front of them, and prompted students to talk about what they had found difficult during the week and how they had coped with it, relaying incidents he was aware of to the rest of group. After this discussion ended, he repeated familiar words about how the school believed in them and knew they could achieve. The Friday morning session became a routine, and future weeks, students no longer needed prompting to talk about how they had overcome difficulties, where they had gone wrong, and how they had made amends. Students who had not got the required number of ticks had to attend a detention on Friday evenings. I attended this as he taught 7N Personal, Social and Health Education on the final period of Friday. The detention was in the same room. On the first occasion, we had to wait for students to drift in after school and he made his pep talk short and sweet. He explained that this was not a punishment, but extra help. The school was giving to them. He let term go after a few minutes. The week after, he was less forgiving. Some students had lost their report cards. Some tried to blame others for their behaviour- something he was never going to accept. His interventions were sharp. The look of embarrassment was palpable and he tore into them in a quiet, measured way. He finished by focussing on one student who had laughed at an inappropriate moment when he was admonishing another student:

“We want the best for you, your parents want the best for you. We want you to get the job that pays £30,000 so you can have a secure family. You can do this”. (09.12.11)

He was tired that day. So were many other staff and the students. It had been a long term. This partly explains his change in tone. But the message behind this version of High Expectation talk was the same: you *can*, not you *cannot*. These students were not naughty. They were not bad. They were disappointing. Their behaviour was always linked to learning, and the expectations the school had of them. I asked him in July about his choice of phrasing that day:

Again, with the Help Me to Succeed, in the second or third one, I think in December, you gave very specific advice, to one individual. You said that if they did not sort out their behaviour, they would not get a thirty thousand pound a year job. Like the other questions: why that example, why the numbers, what do you think they got out of it?

Did I specifically target it at one child?

The surprise at being asked about this was genuine. This was not his normal way of dealing with students. He frequently showed sensitivity to students' emotional well being when seeking to augment their behaviour. Picking someone out was definitely not his style. While the way these words were delivered was unusual for him and the school, the content was indicative of assumptions which underpinned his and other teachers' use of high expectation talk. In particular, they betrayed assumptions about social class and gender which I wanted to unpick. I reminded him that:

The behaviour you were referring to was general, and the words were to others, but you were directing it to one student

Right okay, I don't remember that using an example like that. I can't recall it, but I must have done it because overall I want them to be successful, but it's the little things that make all the difference.

I see deadlines homework than the content of the homework. I see the fact of being punctual important in terms of turning up for the job, and now that you say that, I went into a form class because a lot of them had turn up early. Yes I do give examples in life. I remember that incident. I am not sure about targeting it at one student though.

You said the deadline was more important than the content of their work.

What did you mean by that?

I believe so yes. I believe from pastoral point of view you are training them to work. A doctor will have to work with that, so will someone who has to get a burger out on time. These things affect all walks of life.

You and your Year team dealt with uniform and planner issues at the start of the year as well? Is this part of the same thing?

Yep. We are now following it as a school policy. These are now clear guidelines we give to parents- you will have to get a planner, you will have to get perfect uniform, or you will continue to get detentions. Its key to the schools development, yes presentation and organisation is key, as they are going to have to show these skills in life. (11.07.12)

This was a highly revealing exchange, showing the tight connection between questions of class and gender, economic competence, the schools' corporate position and the continual performances required of the good student. There a number of lines of analysis that can be followed here. The parallel with the performance management of learning in English and his comment that pastoral responsibilities are preparation for a life of work suggests the hidden curriculum is no longer hidden. Quoting £30,000 at them suggests this too. It is worth following the significance of this openness to sociological understandings of teachers' labelling and the classed notions of student's educational deficit (Reay 2006). The negative labels given to working class students make up a history of the discipline; Hargreaves' "worthless louts" Rist's (1970) 'clowns', "rowdy and louts" (Ball 1981) "hopeless cases" (Gilborn and Youdell 2000). Mr Peel's choice of words shows that 'Help Me to Succeed' continues the valorisation of the middle class family as a crucial norm in school life, but inverts the negative labelling of working class students rather than transcends it. Listing an income well above the median in 2011 betrays "the unacknowledged normality of the middle-class" (Savage 2003: 546). The assumption that all students had *parents* and telling a group of boys that they need to secure their own family, show how assumptions of middle class normality are profoundly gendered. Mr Peel makes clear that the outward

performances of presentation and organisation had very high social stakes; for the results of the school, for the economy and for students' lives and their future families.⁹

At stake in this inverted labelling is the form of anxious inclusion on display in English operating at a general and pervasive level, but also acute and focussed on those deemed to lack high expectations. The locus of failure, as in original accounts of educational triage, is the individual, but rather than being a "hopeless case", the progressive mission of the school aims to leave no child behind. It can't afford to. This is part speculation, as it only looks at the discursive possibilities being offered to students, not what they make out of these possibilities. I am acutely aware of the limitations of this research design which starts in the classroom and then follows teachers' motivations and professional identities, rather than students' complex patterns of interpretation and related identity formation. Students' reaction to the ideal roles afforded to them is multiple and dynamic (Thompson 2010). This is reminder that the concept of subjectivation in education denotes relative restriction in subject production, rather than direct domination. In certain circumstances, it is open to subversion through re-contextualisation (Butler 1997), pointing to political spaces where the school's notion of ideal learner is contested by students (Youdell 2010). But this part-speculation is important in comprehending both what Mr Peel is asking the boys in this group to do and the social significance of the wider prevalence of high expectation talk. The positivity on display here, in the context of hegemonic individualism and valorisation of the middle class family, encourages students who do meet these criteria to confront what is deemed deficient head on *and* confront the classed implications of these deficiencies head on. The repetition of high expectations mean the wider social significance of these minor infringements is made explicit, rather than coded in the classed words that make up the history of the sociology of education ("louts", "clowns" etc). Neither were these students directly labelled as failures through direct selection, at least in Year 7, as overt selection taken place in Year 9. In the Help

⁹ In preparation for this project I interviewed Baroness Estelle Morris, former New Labour's Secretary of State for Education. Her gendered assumptions about the middle class family were equally stark, confirming (Reay 2006). She told me: "*What we were trying to do was equip working class children with the skills to be resilient in the face of change. Middle class parents do this in a variety of ways. We thought schools should be doing this for working class children*".

Me to Succeed focus group, minute infractions were linked to their future worth as human beings and the normality of middle class life which would have been far from the norm for some students in the room. In more general examples of high expectation talk, what is important is what is unsaid, as the same logic pervades much, though not all, of the talk about pushing, nurturing and encouraging.

The claim about anxiety is based on teachers' deployment of a discursive repertoire that forces students to repeatedly confront their failures in terms of letting the school down, letting their parents down and letting themselves down as opposed to any inherent badness on their part. But these qualitative judgements are not so much diminished, as more inverted. What is being communicated implicitly to the some of the boys in the Help Me to Succeed focus group is that to *not* be like your parents, particularly your father (as you will provide for your own family) you need to perform set micro-practices which imply rejection of their values. Like the micro-practices in English, salvation comes in small manageable steps; in this case, a week's worth of ticks on a report card. The key point here is that the inversion of negative labels and the open, clear and explicit link to class and gender also inverts who is being asked to do the labelling. Like the performance management of learning in English, this inversion is used to narrow the choices the school gives students. In performative terms, it represents a calculated closing of the discursive field available to students. Rather than the external imposition of negative labels, which the students can accept, ignore, subvert, we see the controlled delegation of micro decisions which students have responsibility to adjust to. What is being officially recognised in students who accept "Help To Succeed" is their rejection of signs which are explicitly explained to them in class terms, which are given moral weight of their future roles as fathers. Mr Peels work suggests the enduring legacy of "notions of decency, decorum, cleanliness and filthiness and their ties to political, economic and moral categories" operating in schools (Dussell 2009: 31). For all the positivity, progressivism and the valuing of emotional connection to students, these ideas are a reminder that the social liberal version of progressivism espoused by New Labour worked with notions working class cultural deficiency, pointing to the persistence of subjectivating practices of class which have long lineages. In this instance, high expectation talk reproduces the maxim of Assessment for Learning that; "what level they are working on...and what they need to do to progress" (DCSF 2008: 6) at the level of a cultural performances of class. Mr

Peel told them what class their behaviour belonged to, and told them what they needed to do to get to the next level. Like the performance management of learning English, rather than being allowed to fester as educational other (Youdell 2006), something not recognisable, they are offered recognition through the notion that their social salvation is available through minute, achievable steps. The negative category is not permanent; rather, salvation is the school's economic necessity, its ethos, and Mr Peels moral mission. The rejection of signs of economic and moral deficiency students' were being asked to make was made as easy as possible, negative labels seemingly absent. They had consolation space, every Friday morning, to reflect on the steps they had taken in the week before, producing their card in an atmosphere of mutual support, making visible the small steps they had made to Mr Peel and their peers. The ideas being enacted in Help Me to Succeed had long lineages. The form of pastoral relationships enacted in this site had even longer ones.

6.4 Ethics and Numbers: The Role of the Pastoral Head

I wanted to understand the personal motivations behind Mr Peel's work and how these motivations influenced the practices of data collection and audit, I witnessed around Performance Review Day and after. Questions of what was right and wrong behaviour under-pinned his interactions with students. In assemblies and in Help Me to Succeed, these questions were economised and moralised, but for all his talk of numbers, much of his time was spent dealing with issues that could not be reduced to that. There were three students in his Year group whose status in a mainstream school was questioned by other staff. He played a key role in making sure they stayed in the school, working with parents to find strategies to keep them at Heath High. It would have made his job easier, and his final statistics better, if these three students were not there. There was no silt-shifting (Bartlett 1993) of these students out of the school. Despite all his talk of inclusion terms in the language of contamination (low expectations bringing the A-C students down), there was something more to it, otherwise I doubt he would have seemed so happy in his job. For me to describe much of this side of his job is ethically inadmissible in this analysis, as it concerned dealing with students' problems that were complex and personal. I saw the same zeal in the Head of Year 8, Mr Hoy's work. I was in his Personal, Health and Social Education class every Wednesday, which was straight after first break. Once he realised I had had a CRB check, was competent in

front of children and could follow a lesson plan, he often left me to take the first ten minutes of the lesson alone. He first used this time to check on new arrivals in his Year. Two Romanian students had joined mid-term. He used this time to briefly check in on their lessons. Throughout the year he also used this time to “deal with the crap”, by which he meant the petty fallouts and fights (rarely physical) of students in his Year, which he addressed during break time detentions. Witnessing him in action around the school, suggested to me that this was more than “crap” to him.

In order to understand what motivates this pastoral work, my line of questioning to Mr Hoy and Mr Peel began with their own experiences of education, their teacher training and then on to how they managed the recording of data and the sorting of students. What emerges is a deep identification with the ethical roles demanded of their work. The stories they tell of their past include cultural explanations of working class educational deficit, which were unambiguous but there is also sympathy, suggesting a low social distance from some of those they were describing. This sympathy was expressed through criticism of overly hierarchical staff student relations and the double standards this produces. The ethos of Heath High spoke through their accounts.

Mr Peel

Mr Peel revealed how his calling developed whilst he was a trainee teacher:

I was teaching in a very difficult school in Liverpool, it would it have been in the bottom school of the borough, and lowest borough in the UK. They had a lot of difficult family backgrounds. Don't quote me on this, but there was a lot of visible poverty in the school. I was quite keen to show them that there was another way. What we needed to do was give them skills to survive in society.

I'd like to quote you on that – you said what you thought. I won't press you on it, but the idea that teaching should compensate for poverty is a common one. What do you mean by skills to survive in society though?

Not to fight every battle, not to try and solve everything with confrontation, to try and reason and solve their problems. I suppose in that school I saw much fights and aggression, even towards staff, which I never really experienced. But I never got that, I never went in to shout at them. I never started off trying to fight fighters with fighting, when they were not allowed to fight back. I would not use

the fact that I was an adult to dominate them in a confrontation, or use the school rules if I could not dominate them. Even 6th formers would come with me for help if they had got angry.

What were the key things you learnt in that school?

They drummed in the three part lesson – it's still with me. I still back that. I know the framework changes all the time, but I like that idea. The other thing, I suppose, is "never back down". I still struggle with that, and I am new to the Head of Year position. I do back down – I think the students should see you back down if you have made a mistake. I have made mistakes and students should see that you can acknowledge that, so I guess I disagree with that.

(11.07.12)

He makes clear the soft skills which had marked him suitable for employment and promotion at Heath High, the experiences which had shaped his understandings of working class students' cultural deficits, and also something of the reason of why he was effective in making students at Heath High believe in his high expectations. Suffused throughout this work is Mr Peel's understanding of himself as ethical actor, concentrating on questions of right and wrong. In this answer, he applies this reckoning to himself. The Friday morning sessions of Help Me to Succeed were in part aimed at making students see themselves the same way. This chapter has concentrated on the hard aspects of this work, in assemblies and in the intervention group, where the meaning of results is made explicit. He was somewhat dismissive of the other side of the work, "the positive stuff", but this job involved a fundamental level of emotional dexterity, to push, console, and support and encourage, suggesting deep identification with his role. Our conversation moved onto how he dealt with disappointed students. I told him something of what I had seen in 7N:

The first time they (7N) got levelled in English and maths was fantastically rich for me. They saw their friends from primary school get different grades, and I saw these friendships being reassessed in the weeks after.

Do you see some of this as a year head?

No, not yet. We set them in Year 9 in science. Of course twenty students are disappointed in that they are in Set 5. The way I see it, is that they are in Set 5 so they are in a smaller group, so I can dedicate more time. We see a lot of disappointment then.

There is a Year 10 student this year who is Set 2, who started in Year 9 in Set 5. I believe a lot of that is because of the interventions we put in Year 9 we did in small group work. The danger is if you move them up too quickly.

What about Year 7?

The first time I will get a really good assessment of them will be on performance review day in Year 8, when I have seen them for the whole year and can compare, that will be with the help the teachers as well.

However, maybe this is the wrong thing to say, I do query the reliability of the data on performance review days – is there some bias with the link of behaviour to getting a low level, or this there an actual link? As a teacher, I have seen pupils get good grades for me and terrible grades for another teacher they have not got on with.

I don't think behaviour and performance should be linked, but it is difficult for it not to be. When students are underperforming and misbehaving, is it because they are not being challenged and they are bored? This is what I want to crack, whether it takes five or ten years.

Again, the ambiguous role of SIMS is apparent. The numbers it produces will be useful for comparison, but it will need the help of teachers to decode them. His worry that assessments of learning were being substituted for judgements about behaviour reflect both an economic concern (part of his five year plan), but also his earlier comments about teachers needing to back down. They are not always right. This argument was given more depth whilst we discussed Performance Review Day. He confirmed observations made in other areas of the school that ICT fulfils the role of confirming teachers' subjective assumptions about students;

Performance Review Day. Why is it the same for teachers and pupils? It's really management speak – do you find the parents engage with that or is it something for the school?

I suppose it's an audit and review of the whole school. I think they engage with the process, but I don't think they get the language. If you are interested, I can tell you what happens in the review?

Please do.

So in the Year 7, they get a plus, a minus and equal, not a mark. The minus needs an explanation. What matters is really is the plus and the minus and the equal, not the mark.

This is about your question on the negative aspects of levelling. It is to do with this. You had me thinking about that the other week. They should put something next to why they get the plus or minus, to make it about learning or it can come across the wrong way.

I could park to pick holes in these things – it also tells you about teachers as well. If a student is working within their level, but they are getting comments on their behaviour, it might be because they are not being challenged. There are loads of things we could start to unpick. I agree with it, but I don't think the format we have at the moment is targeted on learning. We can make it better.

(11.07.12)

My questioning he referred to was part of an ongoing conversation we'd had towards the end of the first term. He'd asked me how certain students in 7N were doing and how the year group in general were coping. I talked about some of the hidden anxiety I had seen in English and other lessons. This had been something that had not surprised him, but their emotional distress did concern him. The same concerns were evident in his discussion of the negative effects of labelling, and in his personalised thank you to students after the success of Ofsted in October. Like the maths teachers, he expressed awareness of the negative effects of the use of National Curriculum levels, but it is difficult to assess how the decision to present performance data in terms of plus or minus to students on Performance Review Days. Teachers used the levels students got in their Performance Review Day assessments for their own routines of target setting, so students would have noticed them.

Mr Hoy

Mr Hoy had a slightly different take on his role, which was shaped by his own experience at school and, like Miss Lee, years of experience in east London schools.

How did you first get involved in teaching?

I first got into teaching through the backdoor in many respects. I left a boys' grammar school at sixteen to join Coventry City football club. They offered me

an apprenticeship professional contract. My dad wanted me to do my O-Levels before I left. So I did my O-Levels, went to Coventry, had two years there. Final year, I was released. My dad wanted me to go back to school. I did not want to. Leicester City came in and offered me a one year contract, and my dad got it in the contract that I had to do three A-Levels. I passed them, not very well, but when the crux came, Leicester released me. Halifax and Lincoln came in for me. My dad was having none of it, and so I went to Loughborough College to do a PE teacher training course. So that's where it all started.

This was in the time of the 11plus?

Yes. I passed the plus by about two marks. The biggest problem was I did not want to go to grammar school. Because, one, they played rugby and two, all my friends went to the local secondary modern. I had to travel across town. When I got there, I was from the mining village. I was ostracised. A lot of the boys dads where professionals. I could not afford the uniform; it was put together with bits and bobs that looked like the real uniform.

Did you stick it out?

I did. My dad left school at 14, my mum left school at 13, so they encouraged me. My brother was in a factory. I was the first child in my family to ever go through education in that respect. First to university as well, but it was Loughborough college then, before it was a university.

What did you think about the 11plus system?

I can always remember sitting and taking the 11plus, and a lot of the boys and girls had been tutored, and I had not. I remember sitting there and thinking, this is going to decide the rest of my life at 11 years of age. You know, I did not want to work in the pit where my dad worked, or work in the shop, where my mum worked. I wanted something more. Being good at sport helped. I was not the most academic by any means.

Did that system have any strengths?

The 11plus had strengths in the fact if you went to the Secondary Modern, and you left at what was it, 15, and you worked in the pit or in a factory, er.. um, they did CSEs, so they were looked as a passport to industry and menial jobs, whereas O-levels where seen as a way into the professions e.g. solicitors' jobs. You knew what would happen.

What has changed? What was it like were you first taught? What do you think has got better and what do you think has got worse? Is it incomparable?

It's thirty-five years ago, so remembering is difficult. Discipline was sterner. The head of PE caned the whole class for messing about in an athletics lesson. I was watching, aghast. This was quite normal. There was a lot of teaching by frightening kids. There was not a lot of social contact between students and staff.

It was them and us. I went in there as a 22 year old guy, and I found it really alienating as they were not much younger than me.

How did that make you feel?

I was gobsmacked. I don't want to cane the kids. It was like teaching by fear, you have to see that in staff, you have to learn that you can relate to the kids, you have to learn to teach with a sense of humour, but it was a tough school in Leicester.

Teachers need a sense of humour, you can't have the attitude you are superior to them, but there was none of that.

Then I went to (neighbouring Borough in East London).

What was that like?

Also tough. No, tougher. They abolished the old grammar system and had merged two schools to be one. Forty members of the old grammar school staff left. It was tough, but that was the nature of the beast.

What was the nature of the beast?

No history of education in the school and the area. They left school, they went to work. Mostly Fords. None of the parents went to university. Racist. A big National Front area. But it was a tough school, on a big council estate, 1200 kids, most of them had failed their 11 plus, so why bother? It was second generation East End slum clearance, so most of them had come from Canning Town and around. The teachers that taught there got SPA which was Social Priority Allowance. Twenty-six pound a month. We called it danger money. Not bad for 1976. Several times parents came in wanting to fight with teachers.

I got promoted really quickly there, they saw something in me. I was twenty seven when I applied for a Head of Year job. Unexpectedly, I got it. This was a time when length of service mattered more for these things, and I went up two

levels on the pay spine. I rubbed a lot of peoples' backs up with that. Most of the time since I have done the Head of Year job.

It's more me. I will never be a head of maths. (14.06.12)

I feel that I have an affiliation with kids and on the whole I have done quite well.

There are three things to pick up on here. One is a piece of institutional history, which may explain the clear divergence between the managerial styles described by Miss Lee in Custom House not long after. Her description of a caring atmosphere contrasts with accounts of violence a few miles further east. As part of a Labour controlled borough, Miss Lee's school would have been under the influence of the ideas of the adjacent Inner London Education Authority. This body had developed a reputation for promoting progressive educational policies, especially under the leadership of Frances Morrell between 1983 and 1987. A key ally of Tony Been and Ken Livingstone, Frances Morrell introduced feminist and socialist ideas into the management of schools and encouraged the development of school leaderships which valued child-centred understandings of learning (Weir 2010). Mr Hoy's school, in a Borough controlled by the Conservatives, may not have been influenced by this institution. The second thing to pick up on, is his description of the white working class and the association of racism as part of its educationally deficient culture. It matched common comparisons made by teachers between East London's white working class past and a kind of post-racial multicultural present, marked by notable increases in exam results and a more pliable parent body. Stories of coming in to fight teachers, remind us of how the white working class is positioned as "excessive" (Reay 2007) in the moral economy of marketised schooling. We see a similar account in Mr Peel's account of excessive violence in his first school in Liverpool, although the racial dynamics in this school are unclear. In accounts like these, the white working class is given a low economic value. The Head Teacher would later explain the struggle to keep high expectations in white community schools in Suffolk and Essex, further east. Multiculturalism and immigration had specific value in the A-C economy of Heath High. But there is something more than the "abject "other" " (Reay et al 2007) at play in this instance. "*Most of them had failed their 11plus, so why bother?*" reflects his own experiences and that of his family. In the second week after I joined the school, he made a point of interrogating me about my research over lunch. Our discussion carried

on after the break, into his free period, and he outlined a history of successive government policies as he saw them. He made the point that though he'd always worked in comprehensive schools, this was the only truly comprehensive school he'd worked in. He illustrated this descriptions of the diverse trajectories of some his ex-students. He saw value in the mix of ethnicities and social classes in the school. This had instrumental value, for the results this mix brought compared to his old school, but also implicit in this conversation was a belief all schools should be more like Heath High. The third thing to pick up on is the continuing theme of the need to keep low social distance between teachers and the students. He politicised this, against both a left wing professional idealism and right-wing elitism:

As an aside, what do you think of Gove's assertion that we need to tighten up the academic rigour of the profession?

I think its rubbish. I feel deep down my beliefs are that a degree does not make a good teacher. Being able to convert that knowledge to children takes more than a degree.

What do you think it takes?

I think it takes having an affiliation with children, full stop. I have known lots of "Drs.", especially within science departments, who cannot deal with children. What is the word I want to use...teaching is art, not a science.. I think academically you need to have a degree, but then I did my B Ed 3 nights a week, at North East London Poly.

It was very very left wing. The first thing we saw was 7 Up¹⁰. We were all there to get the degree for more money, doing it after work. We were blasted with theories, and very little subject work. The buzzword was "childhood is a social construct" - the Victorians never had childhood for the middle classes and all that. What are you going to do to make this childhood good? They made us do a lot of theory, but what we learned was a complete waste of time. Practically it meant nothing. (14.06.12)

Whilst I was conducting the interview, I thought this anti-intellectualism was a reflection

¹⁰ 7 Up was the first of the 'Up Series' a TV documentary based on a the lives of fourteen British children, following their life trajectory from the age of seven in 1964 and revisiting their lives every seven years subsequently

of his earlier classed experiences of education. There was certainly an element of working class made good about his demeanour. 6th Formers who had been his previous students practiced their banter with him, mocking his wide ties, his taste in shoes and the origins of his seemingly permanent tan. But this was not the anti-intellectualism of a working class Tory. He was very supportive of the stand a group of young teachers had made around a strike in November. Rather, it reflected a cynicism towards latest policy trends he mentioned to me mixed with a distain for forms of elitism. What it also reflects is thirty years experience being in a pastoral role and his deep conviction that this role involved an extended social relationship with students. We moved on to what was different about Heath High:

It was big change to come a school that was multicultural, very progressive and with a very young staff. It was energetic. Lots of things were going on for the students. We had head that led from the front. A senior management team where there was no them and us. This is unusual. And also the competition in this borough, competing with grammar schools and other schools is difficult. At my last school, the problem was getting students in. The old borough was very much a closed shop. At my last place, they kept people out. The doors were locked. They did not want people to see inside.

How does pressure for results change with that competition?

Coming from the school in the (neighbouring borough) it was about survival, and the numbers that mattered where the ones you got through the door. Here, it's different. This is a very data heavy school though. Coming in from Key Stage 2, we get so much data and we have the people in the school that can sift and slice it and give it to you so you have particular groups of students that come in from primary school. Children from junior schools then testing of the CAT and NFER we do in the first two weeks. We also use the FFT¹¹ data, we know where they are, what is expected of them straight away. Throughout the year there are contacts with them every term with reports. This information is fed through to the students.

What does that mean for your work?

Each form tutor will have their stats up to date. We meet every half term to check on their progression. Data will be a big part of that. As a Head of Year I

¹¹ Fischer Family Trust Data is metrics based

am constantly aware that children need to be reaching their targets. I have to check, there is a line of command, which goes from the senior leadership meetings, from me, down to class teachers. At points in the year, I am the one in the middle, between the subject teachers and the Head Teacher. We check at Performance Review Day in October with an individual meeting with their form tutor and parents. We have interim reviews where we check over them.

The planner is really very important for my job in that respect. What is in it is key for my role. At the Performance Review. We sit down with form tutors and parents and we set their targets. And also, as a Head of Year, it gets you about as you are constantly talking to staff. It might be that the child is struggling to keep up in certain situations. Most of the problems are with boys not writing in their planners. Planners are really useful Year 7 to 9 – I don't know if they make a difference after.

There is a lot of pressure on students to be self organised and self motivated. High expectations. Individual learning. It means something. We put it on them in a big way. It's a big step for Year 7s to come in that transition. It says hey, you are a mature young person, and then we do all we can for the ones that can't cope. We see it in their planners. It's a thankless role though. Five hours on your job. Every week I look at the ones who can't organise their work in it. Mostly boys. If they don't have it by Year nine, they never will. I have got a very very strong Year team, who can cope with what we ask them to do and that can relate to the kids.

They all want to know how well they are doing. The students understand it more than their parents. They all want to do well. They are really sharp about what level they are on, others in the room, they know what they are on. There is a proportion of them that are being tutored. A lot of them are also tutored prior to doing their 11plus.

Sorry, I want to pull something up...you just called the Key Stage 2 stats, 11 plus.

Well basically, it is, isn't it?

Thank God I am retiring soon!

(14.06.12)

This last comment brought the separate threads of our conversation together. His experiences of tutored students and their keen grasp of levels and the academic hierarchy tallied with the experiences of maths teachers. The comment jarred, though, with his effusiveness about the progressiveness of Heath High compared to his other schools. He gave an accurate description of a young dedicated staff. Yet what was all this dedication for if students' futures had already been decided at eleven years old? We spoke about this in the staffroom in my final week in the school, around a month later. "The goalposts have moved but the game is the same" was his responses. This comment summarised his earlier explanation of high expectations; that society demanded much more of students and teachers than they did in the past. It also reminded me that he described, with much sarcasm, that benefit of the 11 plus was, that students knew what would happen to them after. As a metaphor, it works on a number of levels. So much of his time and effort went into encouraging, nurturing and pushing to ensure students stayed in the game. There were an additional plethora of stats with which to analyse how students were doing in the game. Rather than the cane, "working through fear", as he had earlier put it, students were recognised as self-motivated and self-organised, and expected to fulfil those roles. His comment, though, should not be confused for cynicism. Though retired, he was back in the school working part time as a Personal, Health and Social Education teacher, when I briefly returned to the school for additional interviews the following September.

6.5 Changing Expectations

The ideas expressed by Mr Lee and Mr Peel found strong support from the Head Teacher, Mr Graham. During a long interview on my final day in the school, Mr Graham laid out his managerial and educational philosophy which lay behind the type of subjectivating practices described in this chapter. He gave this ethos a political dimension, contrasting it to the policies of Michael Wilshaw and Michael Gove. Their policies threatened Heath High's version of high expectations on multiple fronts. Changes to GCSEs and the demotion of vocational courses within the A-C economy mean some students' high expectations would no longer be recognised. Changes to schools' governance had a direct impact on the number of additional students the school had to take on. These shifts threatened the school's market position,

encouraging an intensification of systems of audit and measurement, targeting specific departments and students. His narrative brings to the fore, how policy shifts between different paradigms of marketised governance are felt at the micro-level and the existence of keenly felt ideological animosity.

I began by asking him what his managerial priorities were at the school;

I think what you don't have in this school, and this is my number one priority to stop, is a number of pupils in the school, that, for whatever reason, are totally disenfranchised with the school. We do everything in our power to stop this. This is not because we are in a better area or have a richer intake. Ours is the second poorest in borough, though it's pretty average nationally. So when the Ofsted inspector said to me, "which students can I interview" I said to her "you can interview anyone who you want."

I can guarantee that any student in this school, even the ones that are in and out of our disciplinary system, will speak highly of one member of the senior leadership staff at this school, even though they may not like coming here. If you have a student that has problems and cannot be in lessons, it makes it even more important that there is one member of staff they can talk to.

Is this how it was planned from the start?

I don't think it's planned at school as such. I was here from the start, and I had my ideas of how the school should be. And then people who came in shared my views on the way a school is run and what we want from the school and what we want, and I think that is what you are looking at. It developed like this. So when I leave, the school might change direction.

What interested me is how you keep high expectations whilst having differentiated results.

I think we do that quite well. We try and say from the start that all we expect is that they do their best. I try to phrase it in a way then, that for different groups of students doing their best, will mean different things and different levels of achievement. Some kids will leave with 10 Grade As, for others the achievement will be measured in different ways.

One of the important things which I place emphasis on is schools should not just be about examination results there are a lot of other things involved.

We really recognise the different achievement of students – you would have seen (Mr Peel) last year, he was very good at this in Year 7 –making sure we

recognise the different interests of students. I think there was one kid, we did this poetry slam thing, he did really well at this. It was someone you would never think would do well at that kind of thing. What we try to do is continuously reinforce the message to the whole Year group that they can succeed in different ways. We should not only be judging the academically gifted.

The government just see the results, but there are lots and lots of other things that go into making a successful school.

Do you think high expectation talk also has an instrumental purpose as well?

Oh absolutely, we constantly talk about how we can do the best by these students. It's a constant drive – if you have high expectations of people they will raise their game, simple as that. It's something we instil in the staff, so I am not surprised you hear it a lot.

We ask, are we doing the best by the children here, and we have to say, as a management, sometimes we are not, and we have to communicate that to the staff. Now you have mentioned results and asked me about them. High expectations help results, but we are proud that Heath High is not, like some other schools in East London, just a sausage factory for results. The staff do so much extra work, they are not contractually obliged to do with running clubs and events.

What type of skills does that take in teachers?

One of the key things we look for evidence of interview, is the ability to build relationships with students. It sounds strange to say it, but I have met a lot of teachers who can't. We don't want them. We get teachers who can build good relationships with students, because if you can build good relationships, creating an atmosphere where there are high expectations is a lot easier. There are some schools that have a "them and us" with the students, they still get results, but it's a lot more difficult. Ofsted say this when they come round our school, the staff and the students get on with each other. It's something we have tried hard to create from the start here.

There are simple ways of building good relationship with students. I keep on staff to find something you have in common with students, if you don't have

that, then they will listen to you because of the results, but it won't be for any other reason, and that relationship the school has with the student, is not a stable one. The range of activities we do here as well, they are important because they generate mutual interest between staff and students. The first thing we say to new staff is; look if you have a club you want to do, start it as soon as possible. We did the Ready Steady Cook challenge last year – that was fantastic as we had members of staff working with students – and there were some little rogues in that group – having a relationship with staff that was not about results. Those sort of things, getting staff to have good relationships with students is key, and also, we make no distinction between teaching staff and support staff. Staff know that everybody will be made to feel welcome. I speak to other people in other schools, and it's just not like that. There was one member of staff that went to another school in the borough, it gets the results, but they spoke to me and they said after day one they hated it. I would not want that to be the case I am looking for people who can build those relationships in interview.

That's why we talk in a positive manner to staff. The way we try and manage staff is the same as what we pass down to the students, it I speak to my school improvement partner, and she says, you need to write down how you got this the way it is. She wanted to know how we get Outstanding; how we did we do it? We got it because of the relationships we have with children and between, I hope, staff. An example of this is when we did a parental feedback forms for Ofsted. We got 650 forms back. Another school in the borough got 60. Also, the student response was overwhelmingly positive.

Mr Graham is undoubtedly selling a version of the school here. But it is one that tallies with key aspects of the work of these pastoral heads and their accounts of their work. His professional pride shines through. So does the validation of a particular kind of educational professional. It provides context to Miss Lee's description of herself as a people person in the last chapter, Mr Hoy's beliefs about what makes good teaching and Mr Peel's concerns for students' ethical behaviour. Their beliefs about teaching and their professional worth found recognition in the stated ethos of the school. Mr Graham's comments on the difference between instrumental relationships, just about grades, and stable relationships, built on mutual interests are telling. For the Head

Teacher, concerns for students' wellbeing and the "constant drive" to get are inseparable in his analysis of the school. Both represent "doing the best by children".

Here we get a glimpse of what Mr Peel was referring to, when he said he completely bought into the ethos of the school. These dual concerns were condensed in his assemblies; his pep talks extolled high expectations in the most economised of terms and then students took over, showing their creativity, and the dedication of his year team of form tutors, pushing their students to present sections of the assemblies. Running through these accounts is the valorisation of recognisable aspects of emotional labour. Teachers have to "*build good relationships*", "*nurture, push and encourage*". What is required in these different formulations, is deep affiliation to the roles required of them. They have to manage their feelings in accordance of the schools expectations, in order that students work to the same values. The words of these pastoral heads suggest less of a transmutation of feelings (Hochschild 1983) associated with emotional labour, but more a form of "*Philanthropic emotion management*" (Bolton and Boyd 2003), whereby an "emotional actor may decide to give that "*little extra*" during a social exchange in the work place" (ibid: 291). For the work of Mr Peel and Mr Lee, always on call for the next problem, the affective side of the work is attached to ethical and political concerns. Their work also suggests a deep need to be needed, a hunch supported by Mr Hoy's return to school after retirement. This ethos, though, contrasted to the ideas about pedagogy and management espoused by the then new head of Ofsted. His vision of teaching and teachers was fundamentally opposed to what was being officially celebrated:

How does this ethos contrast with Sir Michael Wilshaw?

I hate it. I hate. (he leant forward). I have been there. The way he ran that school. I hate it. But the problem is, the way he runs the school, he has changed things and the results are exceptional. It's run like a prison camp, and the students don't have any room to express themselves.

(long pause)

In my opinion.

(long pause)

The issue comes when he goes from a school. And also what happens when the kids leave. I think you will find that staff can't work there for long either. It's not an adequate situation.

This was a strong show of anger from a calculatingly professional manager. The school he was talking about, was Wilshaw's old school, Mossbourne Academy. Wilshaw had boasted of his time there that "if anyone says to you that "staff morale is at an all-time low" you will know you are doing something right." (Stewart 2011). Its managerial style is positioned in direct contrast to Mr Graham's own. Animating this anger is the difference between a school just being about examination results and a school *not* just being about examination results. This opinion was not an abstract judgment. It was a pressing concern. He had mentioned this implicitly when he talked about the dangers of not being able to recognise the different high expectations. At stake in this was the status of community schools like Heath High. This position emerged whilst we talked about the results:

Going back to results, you said they were improving. What would be the pressure if they were to plateau or fall?

I think you do then get intervention from the local authority. Local authorities are under a lot of pressure with schools judged satisfactory, so they are the ones that come under the microscope. In terms of results, I am aware that there are one or two schools that are under tremendous pressure due to their results.

How much pressure is on you and the management the school to keep results up each year on year?

That is a constant pressure. So much of the work of the school is simply aimed at keeping results up. Already we have been back for two days, and we have looked at all our results from last year, and how we dipped last year, and we need to make sure it does not become a dip next year as well, because, I think, then people do start looking and making judgements. If that happens people around the borough and other schools will start talking. But unfortunately the goal posts are changing. My school improvement partner will ask why they are down. The council will start muttering. The governors will start talking. We've had some comments from them that say "well X school has got these results". We have to explain it's not quite the same. It's very very interesting actually.

How does your management team look at results? What is the process, is it monthly? Termly?

We look at our overall performance in the last three years. We could have a dip. What we are currently looking at student performance and performance

of...students in their classes. So we are getting a picture of where we are. So we will some departments, which are doing very well, other departments where they might be issues, so we are starting to identify departments where they may be problems, and also looking individually at students to look at why they did not achieve. We also look at whether there is underachievement in certain areas.

As we get more information we obviously benchmark our results against local authority schools and national averages.

His last comment invoked David Milliband's (2004a: 9) original aim for Assessment for Learning; that it would allow Head Teachers to "compare against local and national benchmarks" (Miliband 2004a: 9). What is significant here is the process of stratification which pressure to keep results induces. He also outlines the processes of departmental triage described in the previous two chapters from a managerial perspective, showing how the cascade of accountability described in English starts at the top.

Going back to something you said- you and your management team go into individual student performance? Is that senior leadership focus or a Year team thing.

It's about both. It's about C/D. The C/D students get a lot of attention.

Is that a good thing?

No its not, but I am afraid the whole systems been geared up towards the dc. The whole performance of this school centres around 25 students. Each year you will have 25-30 students on the C/D borderline, if they all do very well, the school does very well, if they all do poorly, the school does poorly. I am afraid that's the reality.

The changes, I will tell you that will mean for us. I can see were its all going. All the modular stuff is going to finish, reduced importance on lots of vocation subjects, because Gove does not like their impact on league tables. To me we have to be very careful the system does not disintegrate, because to me the whole academy system is driving schools apart.

What do you mean by that?

Well, if you take (local Borough) there are 17 schools in the borough, now 4 of them have left to become academies. I don't see them in the borough any more. Their Head Teachers don't come to meetings. They feel they are not part of (local borough) Not all them, some of them are committed to the borough and to working with other schools.

And also the fact that community comprehensive schools have to do certain things that academies don't. The community comprehensive schools have an unfair burden placed on them e.g. excluded students and taking numbers over roll, which we have to do.

Are there any examples you can think of?

Also a lot of the new stuff is not directly applicable to academies, but are to community schools. Like all this new performance management stuff. Academies don't have to follow them. Such as: The whole new teacher appraisal programme, which we have to follow. They have freedom in terms of the curriculum, which we do not have. I think the thing we find most difficult is the exclusions issue and kids over roll because (Local borough) is absolutely bulging with kids. But if you get to an academy, they have 6 forms of entry. They have 180. They stick to 180. They might have less because they have expelled someone. In our Year 11, we are supposed to have 240, we have 256. I just cannot see how that is fair.

Sixteen students can have a big impact on the Year group. Particularly as the ones coming in don't necessarily do very well. Its 7% of our results we could be talking about. So it's interesting to look at our GCSE performance. The ones that have been directed in by the local authority do not do as well as the ones we have had since Year 7. This is the system, we are in it, and we have to look carefully at things like this.

It's going to be really hard to judge what happened this year with what happened in previous years, and I think the GCSE English results might be a foretaste of that (06.09.12).

There is a sense of unfairness that underpins what he says here, which also underpins his denunciation of Wilshaw's practice, which has led to a beggar thy neighbour approach to schooling. What his account reveals is how subtle shifts towards the

consolidation of a traditionalist paradigm in educational governance work at the micro-level, setting in motion a cascade of accountability which works down to the micro-level of formative assessment. The social liberal model of Academy schools targeted resources at schools deemed failing, in poor areas. The traditionalist paradigm allowed any school to opt out of local authority cooperation, if it was rated well by Ofsted. This had a direct impact, driving up numbers, through its statutory requirement to take on new and excluded students as a local authority school. The social liberal model of education encouraged the development of vocational courses. Heath High used these to ensure different students could show their high expectations. Gove removed many of these qualifications from recognition in the A-C economy. New Labour introduced coursework and allowed re-sits in GCSEs, Gove banned re-sits, early sittings and took course work out of GCSEs. As the history teachers described in the forward to the data chapters explained, this had a direct effect on results. The type of learning subjectivities seen in the English department, and the fact that getting time to speak to teachers was incredibly difficult, hints that they knew throughout the year poor results were on the way. Crucially, each of these changes implies amendments to the learner valued across sites. The school would have been able to manage each of these shifts on their own. Taken together, they indicate a threat to the school as it was currently constituted. Mr Graham's assertion "We have to look at these things carefully" suggests a school whose status community ethos is on the edge. The social liberal model of education built up in the school, which he extols in this interview, relies on the goodwill and commitment of a staff not just committed to a school that is not just about results. The contradiction outlined on my first day "in order to be a school that is not just about results, we need to get results" is still in operation in what Mr Graham says, but the slow grind of regressive educational policies suggests it's a contradiction that cannot go further.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how high expectations play a key role building an ideal learner across Heath High, showing the clear operation of hegemonic individualism. This was accompanied by a concomitant focus on students' wellbeing and a concerted effort to validate all students. This was both a moral calling for Heads of Year and the Head Teacher and also a calculated attempt at goal transference, talked about in the

language of numbers. As in English, the transference of goals was only possible by relating to, and centring on, students emotions and interests. The A-C economy was all about numbers, but these numbers required a social and emotional investment in students in order for them to share the goals of the school. This was deliberately calculated (“working through fear could not work”- Mr Hoy) but had to be also heartfelt and real. “Students have to believe it” explained the Head Teacher, as we discussed his staff’s repetition of high expectations. Therefore there could not be a “them and us attitude” (Mr Graham 06.09.12) in the school. For heads of Year, the school’s mission was their own. Some students’ lives were a weekly drama they lived in and worked for. Each hurdle in these students’ lives, was a hurdle heads of Year and form tutors had to jump as well.¹² Enfranchising them in the school’s ethos of high expectations entailed a level of social empathy and a degree of emotional labour that would be incredibly difficult unless they believed in their roles. They had to be with students’ on the road to educational salvation, not just be source of discipline.

Their work shows how social liberal ideas about education were deeply embedded in institutional life at Heath High. A range of progressive ideas about education were articulated as concomitant to marketised governance and were integral to Heath High’s version of high expectations. These ideas were expressed in the way SIMS was used to find students who would need extra high expectations to augment their failure to show correct conduct, through infractions of uniform and failure to maintain a planner. Underpinning the positive messages of their work were assumptions about working class cultural deprivation, which were expressed in explicitly gendered forms and were racialised in the context of a history of demographic shift in the area and by comparison to other schools’ teachers had worked in. The lack of negative labelling failed to mask these social assumptions; rather they forced students themselves to do the work of labelling. The social liberal ethos at Heath High, though, was under threat. Conversation with the Head Teacher revealed that several changes to curriculum, examinations and governance had direct impact on the school’s market position. He revealed the incredible pressure his managerial team would be subjected to with a drop in the results. The practices of audit he mentioned, looking closely at students

¹² This type of drama was the subject of reality TV programme *Educating Essex*, first shown in my first term at Heath High. Staff and students commented on the similarities with the teachers, plot lines and students in this series.

and departments, puts a new perspective on my experiences in English. Subtle shifts in the balance of the school's A-C profile suggested in a cascade intervention, running down and across school life. These pressures reveal the ways which a shift toward traditional paradigm in education, over questions of curriculum, examination and school governance, assert themselves at the micro level, forcing departmental actors to question the way they audit their students, with potential consequences for the type of learner valued.

Chapter 7: New Questions about Ideal Learners

Looking back across the year, two key themes emerged as important points of analysis which link the specific practices at Heath High to broader sociological concerns about the construction of ideal learners. They suggest new questions about the construction of ideal learners in British education. This thesis concludes briefly outlining these themes and detailing the questions they raise. The first and main theme is that of departmental agency. On my first day in school, department emerged as a key mediating site, translating the demands to get results into policies which would have a fundamental effect on the types of learner valued in the GCSE History. Mr Neil's dilemma, to follow a path which was against his personal and political beliefs, or to stick to them, reflected the types of agencies felt throughout school life. His unease and hesitancy reflected the social pressures within the school which translated marketised structure into meaning at the micro-level. He expressed counter-hegemonic discourses which are easily recognisable to sociological critique, notable in his assertion that all students have a "*right to history*". But his colleagues' passion for the subject is less easy to place. Throughout the year, normative professional ideas and subject specific passions emerged as both the exercise of and expression of agencies at the departmental level which cannot be reduced to marketised governance. These seemed difficult to place on a political scale; they were not consistent with teachers' union affiliations or my hunches of their voting behaviour. Yet, within the context of marketised governance and these departments relative pressure to get results, these could result profoundly political articulations, directly challenging hegemonic individualism and the wider logic of marketised governance as experienced in their department. This suggests we need to question the role of teachers' professional subjectivities in the construction of the ideal learner but also question what this subjectivity is, how it manifests itself and how critical enquiry can register it.

The second theme I return is the ethos of the school, the social liberal ideas about education which underpinned this ethos and the threats to this ethos from a newly dominant traditional paradigm. In my the final interview with Mr Graham he said Heath High was never going to be an exam factory, comments which were very similar to

those he made in his speech on the first day in school. Yet on both occasions the phrase and was accompanied with extended analysis of exam results. Teachers and pastoral Heads would make the same point in different ways, switching between moral and political ideas about their role at Heath High. The contradiction, laid out on the first day, that in order to be a school not just about results, the school had to get results, was being pushed towards a resolution by a drip of policy announcements. Each having a regressive impact on the school's A-C profile of Heath High, This suggests understandings of students' learning subjectivities needs to be attuned to the influence of multiple discourses within marketised governance, their historical formation and questions of continuity and change at the micro-level.

7.1 Departmental Triage

The exploration of the differences between the ideal learners constructed in Maths, English and Citizenship in Chapter 5 demonstrated the variegated impact of marketised governance on the micro-construction of learning subjectivities. Comparison between these departments show an inter-subject differentiation which adds nuance to important sometimes catastrophist and totalising accounts of neoliberalism and education policy. Heath High was dominated by hegemonic individualism in the form of its version of high expectations, but there were spaces in which this was challenged or deflected. These departmental agencies were fundamentally structured by their exposure to the School's A-C economy. The exploration of triage by Youdell (2004) provides key insights of how units of educational governance constitute themselves in response to market pressures and how these pressures work at the market level. By extending the concept of triage to departments at Heath High, analysis was able to include the existence of unique departmental cultures and counter-hegemonic discourses within an appreciation of the structuring impact of market governance at Heath High. The agencies outlined in chapter 4 were marginal or contingent, but had direct influence on the type of learner valued in these departments. Departmental triage also captures atomising and fragmentary effects of marketisation to internal life at Heath High. Departments' relative exposures to the A-C economies worked to contain counter-hegemonic discourses about students learning subjectivities within these specific sites.

The stark divergence of practice in maths, English and Citizenship was by illustrated role of SIMS in these departments and how teachers talked about its influence in their work. The three examples in the following sections show *extension*, *negotiation* and *opposition* in the relationship between departmental performance management and the construction of progression in the classroom. I joked with Miss Lee about the measuring Citizenship with the colour codes this software produces. Her response to the use of this software illustrated her opposition to successive education reforms, starting with the 1988 Education Act. In English, it played a direct and structuring role in how internal assessments were conducted. The cycle of learning and the cycle data collection and analysis mediated through SIMS converged. The logic of audit, measurement was extended directly into students' learning. In Maths, the use of SIMS had a negotiated place within their broader ethos of the department. Direct assessment of learning, tests were used to fulfil the demands set by SIMS. But Maths teachers took care to de-contextualise these tests from learning. In policy terms, this divergence broadly maps on to whether formative assessment practice in these departments resembled the open, exploratory learning conversations imagined by the original Assessment for Learning research (Black and Wiliam 1998a) or the structured, levelled versions of the learning conversations outlined in the government's appropriation of this research (DCSF 2008a). In critical terms, this variation represents the difference between extension, negotiation and opposition to the use of standards which are held complicit in the consolidation of a classed, racialised and gendered academic hierarchy and the reification of hegemonic individualism. Crucially, this variation raises questions about the complex interplay of structure and agency in the construction of ideal learner and the discourse which inform. Each department posed this question differently.

The example of maths provokes questions about what teachers' political and professional agency is and how it expresses itself. There was no explicit reference to political critiques in this department, unlike the assertions of Mr Neil and Miss Lee in History and Citizenship respectively. If there was an 'ism' that guided the department, it was the Methodism of its founding Head, who had left to follow his other calling, as a missionary, before I arrived. I spent most of my time with Miss Parvispor, who expressed frequent opposition to the logic of marketised governance as it was expressed in her classrooms, and she linked to her union work, which was directed

towards teachers' freedoms. Other teachers in the department did not make these links, less still the links of Miss Lee and Mr Neil in history, but they did buy in to the ethos of their department, and as such their work chafed against the wider logic of marketised governance. Passion for maths was an agency in this circumstance, directly influencing the type of learning subjectivities they valued through their understanding of what maths was: a process of solving problems, not rules that give results. The collective nature of the dialogue she enticed from students is marked contrast to the confessional practice in English, where students' talked about themselves and themselves as learners of levels. Students', who came up to display their working out, often incorrect, were aiming their performance at a collective goal. The specifically individualising role of confessional talk as understood by Foucault (1990), present in Edwards (2008) and Fejes (2008) accounts of contemporary education practice, is deliberately undermined by the affective nature of the play Miss Parvispor and her colleagues is trying to pedagogically create in her classrooms. Miss Parvispor's exclamation, "*Math is fun!*" was a deliberate affect of emotion, a typical example of the effusiveness required of teachers of Year 7. It was also a direct challenge to the hegemonic individualism expressed by some of her students. This utterance was typical of frequent and calculated interventions designed to make learning not about grades.

These acts can be theorised as examples of de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing of sedimented meanings of hegemonic individualism in school through the frame provided by Butler (1997), or as an example of the disarticulation and re-articulation of discourse shown Newman and Clarke (2009). These frames are useful. The focus on the discursive is important as it illuminates the field of ideas about learning which inhabit Heath High and their influence on students learning. But making maths fun, by definition, had to spill over into the emotional and affective, into the domain of culture. The structure of feeling outlined by Ortner (2005) has conceptual traction here. In many lessons, it did not *feel* like I was in a high school. These dimensions were key to understanding how the agencies of these teachers were enacted and how they were experienced by students. What success they had in challenging hegemonic individualism depended on the effectiveness of these dimension of their work. Pedagogic principles were built around this notion, seen in puzzle plays and in the build a school project at the start of the term. This is not to say these pedagogic tricks

banished hegemonic individualism from the classroom, or that these teachers were necessarily expressing an explicit form of resistance. Miss Parvispor derided Ofsted's notions of learning, but at the same time she, and the rest of the department, were proud of the results they got within the system. Theirs were partial penetrations and complicit resistances, but they had an effect on students' learning experiences. Through pedagogic means, these teachers showed students it was possible to be publicly wrong, be valued for being wrong, and give non-judgemental joy to others for the public act of being wrong. Students were told to forget levels while learning was taking place. Teaching in Miss Lee's Citizenship department also raises questions about the influence of counter-hegemonic ideas on students learning subjectivities. Her professional biography revealed ideas about learning that are more recognisable to existing sociological critique. Her career history is a tale of the marginalisation of social democratic ideas about education's role from the core of the curriculum, but these ideas still had tangible influence at Heath High. She had carved out a position for herself in which she could enact a residual form of learning which was influenced by her respect for a form of teaching which existed before the 1988 Education Act. Her feelings on these matters were less ambiguous than those of her colleagues in English- she disagreed fundamentally with the "cult of standards" as it gave to those "who already had", but marginalised within a department students saw once a week. As a result, motivating students to see learning as something more than grade acquisition was sometimes difficult and she was under pressure from management, mentioned in a guarded but clear way. But she defended the territory she had carved.

In English, the performance management of learning raises more troubling questions. At stake are professional concerns for the trajectory of Assessment for Learning research, the type of anxiety on display and the potential spread of instrumental forms of pedagogy across different sectors of education, including Higher Education. The deployment of Assessment for Learning strategies in these lessons represents the worst fears of those associated with the original research. Assessment Reform Group member Sue Swaffield worried that: "*Students, parents, teachers, school leaders, local authority personnel, and policy makers may be socialised into a flawed interpretation of Assessment for Learning. I predict that this normalisation will be pervasive, self-reinforcing, and seen by the vast majority (if it is noticed at all) as unproblematic.*" (2009: 13). Her fears are partially true. Assessment for Learning strategies were used

to bring the local educational market into the class room, transferring pressures directly onto students, but these practices were just not understood as Assessment for Learning practice. Only Miss Lee, the most widely read teacher I interviewed, talked about the original research at length. The performance management of learning in English is significant in of itself, particularly as it was combined with elicitation of talk about the self to achieve goal transference. It suggests a powerful set of subjectivating practices, especially as they had strong affinity wider articulations of hegemonic individualism within the school. They also have wider salience, beyond the department. Heath High was rated an excellent school by Ofsted whilst I was there, suggesting these practice were validated across English schools during my time in the field. The final comments by Mr Graham show how the pressures which pushed the performance management of learning were increasing, suggesting a cascade of audit in new areas of the school.

The same pressures, ideas, software and systems of governance run across English schools, suggesting an opening for a more thorough interrogation of the social meaning and consequences of students asking and answering "*What Went Well?*" and "*Even Better If?*". The question here is one of width; how common is it? But it is also one about depth; what learning identities are formed under these circumstances? In particular, what are the consequences for longstanding concerns in the sociology of education for nuanced questions for the classed nature of ideal the learner? What is at stake for students lives when those that know their best is not good enough have to keep on trying? I got hints that Heath High's inclusion had sharp edges. Anxiety was inbuilt into these routines, felt most keenly at the bottom of the academic spectrum, but also at the top, were being good was never as good as "*Even Better?*". There is always a "what if?" in these routines. I got a bigger hint of the type attitudes teachers had in response to some students' suffering this. In some case it revealed true gap in adults' emotional register, all the more apparent because of their deep felt attachment to students' well-being in all over sections of the school. In others, real sympathy but resignation, like Mr Peel's response to my description of students in 7N. These practices also have significance beyond schooling. As marketised governance shifts social relations in Higher Education, focussing institutional attention on questions of students' welfare, their satisfaction, the quality of feedback given to them and teaching we quality, we might ask what forms of pedagogy become necessary to meet these

new performative demands. A pressing concern might also be what forms of learning will students, who have been schooled in this way, expect to buy from their institution. At stake here is a form of knowledge documented by well by Ball (2003): fragmented, economised, instrumentalised.

7.2 Social Liberal Education under Threat

Heath High's position as a new community school, opening around the turn of the last century, means it is unsurprising to see the institutional sedimentation of social liberal ideas. As such it presented a unique chance to analyse the progressive limits of this vision of learning and its complementarities and conflicts with a traditional educational paradigm, which asserted its dominance during my time in the school. Mr Graham explained how he had built the school up from his vision of what a school should be like, recruiting on the basis of teachers' ability to relate to students. As a result, the ethos he built up was unique. Throughout my year at the school, I never once heard an adult raise their voice to a child. I found this impressive, as it contrasted to every other school I attended. It was not the case that the origin of this relative calmness lay in the social composition of the students. Heath High's students came from a range of backgrounds. It was a "*true comprehensive*". The broader point to make here lies in Mr Graham's assertion that his number one priority was stopping a critical mass of students becoming disenfranchised from the school. At stake in this assertion was a professional agency about what form of marketised governance would operate at Heath High. His disgust at the regime implemented by Sir Michael Wilshaw during his time at the Mossbourne Academy was absolute. I was surprised to see a very measured man use the word "hate". The reason why Heath High is being used as an example of the enactment of social liberal educational ideas is not just because staff frequently defined the ethos of the school against "*elitist*" and "*divisive*" (Mr Graham) policies. Ideas about the cultural deficit of working class children were common and were structured into to concerns about its A-C profile. The notions of enfranchisement that Mr Graham worked with made Heath High a good, ethical place to work, compared to other schools, and maintained the schools' "good position".

This explains why explanations of high expectations among staff switched between the moral, political and economic with ease. For students, this ethos meant they faced

relentless and sometimes forceful positivity, aimed directly at their identity, with interventions directed at their outward countenance which worked on very old ideas about class and culture. Looking back at the across the year, what stands out is the similarities between students and teachers' roles in the school. Both were producers of performative outputs, managed on the same day, their management mediated through the same piece of software. Students were being explicitly prepared for work, staff where working. Analysis of Mr Peels assemblies revealed frequent occurrences of "we're in it together" style articulations, his comments about Ofsted being particularly telling. This does ask the question what sort of learner is constructed when students' learning is like teachers' labour. There problem with Heath High's relentless positivity is that it takes place in an environment of starkly differentiated outcomes. The ethos of the school meant it did all it could to ameliorate the resulting demoralisation, but like the performance management of learning, it suggests particularly anxious form of educational inclusion.

This ethos, though, was under threat. The shift towards a traditional paradigm was heralded with sharp discursive contestation over questions of students' agency in the classroom. Experience at Heath High show how this is felt at the micro-level, where policy shifts work to re-shape the conditions of governance which influence the construction of ideal learners. A steady drip of policy changes shifted the goal posts for the school. Analysis of these shift suggests new questions about the construction of the ideal learner and the existence of multiple discourses within marketised governance, their historical formation and questions of continuity and change at the micro-level. The traditionalist paradigm described in Chapter 2 asserted itself through decisions about examinations, which sought to reassert the primacy of elitism and changes to curriculum, which sought to reassert the primacy of knowledge over skills. The change reflected in Ofsted policy during my time in the field was stark, in October 2011 it validated its version of independent learning at Heath High (Ofsted 2011b). A few months later, Wilshaw spoke out directly against preference for teaching styles (Ofsted 2012). Ideas about learning espoused by government would frequently jar with practice at Heath High. Sometimes these would be openly opposed. Sometimes they would circulate, if they resonated with teachers' own experiences. The example of Miss Kahn, in history, on the first day of my time in the school is a case in point. Problems with the behaviour of one student in her first year of teaching meant she

bought into the idea of reasserting adult authority. She articulated a phrase “we need to be control” taken straight from Gove (BBC 2011), taken from the Borough’s behaviour management office. Her intervention played a decisive role that day, complementing the changes to entry policy and pedagogic style being debated in response to changes to GCSE structure and content. These subtle changes stood in contrast to Heath High’s version of high expectations, which was reflected in the unease and ambiguity implicit in the some of Mr Graham’s formulations in his final interview. The head teacher told us on his final day that “*We need to try and recognise all the different ways that they can achieve. This is something that is getting lost with the way policy is heading.*” (06.09.12). The contradiction he outlined on the first day, that in order not to be a school just about results, it we have to get results, was being pushed towards a resolution.

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Glossary

ARG	Assessment Review Group
BERA	British Educational Research Association
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Science
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EBI	Even better if
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
PEE	Point Evidence Evaluation
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIMS	School Information Management System
WWW	What went well

Key Staff Members

Miss Ketros,	Teacher of Maths
Miss Parvispor,	Teacher of Maths
Mr Hughes,	Teacher of Maths
Miss Lee,	Head of Citizenship
Miss Lilly,	Teacher of English
Miss Bedia,	Teacher of English
Miss Kahn,	Teacher of History
Mr Neil	Head of History
Mr Peel,	Head of Year Seven
Mr Hoy	Head Year Eight
Mr Graham	Head Teacher