

**University of Glasgow**

**Faculty of Education**

**Evaluation of the Dynamic Futures Project**

**FINAL REPORT**

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February 2007

## *Executive Summary*

### **Background**

In February 2004, the Scottish Executive Education Department commissioned an external evaluation of the Dynamic Futures Project (DFP) through the Future Learning and Teaching Programme (FLaT) under the leadership of Professor J. E. Wilkinson in the Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow with Dr G. Head as co-investigator.

The Project is located in the cluster of three primary schools and one secondary school in the Vale of Leven in West Dunbartonshire. The evaluation was undertaken between March 2004 and December 2006. During this time, qualitative data was collected through interviews with DFP staff, teachers and headteachers in the four schools involved. Data was also collected from a fourth primary school not involved in the Project in order to provide a comparison. In addition, focus groups were carried out with small groups of pupils in the schools in which DFP operated during this period. Finally, for the children involved in the Project and those in the comparison group, quantitative data relating to attainment, attendance and conduct was also collected. This is the Final Report of the evaluation.

### **Aims of the Dynamic Futures Project**

The key aims of the Dynamic Futures Project are as follows:

- To break down traditional barriers between pupils, teachers and parents
- For pupils to demonstrate:
  - calmer approaches to the school situation
  - better relationships with other children or adults
  - better concentration levels
  - more mature reactions in class to areas of challenge or difficulty
  - ability to understand own self and reactions to situations
  - higher levels of motivation
  - more developed sense of humour
- Teachers and parents to also demonstrate some, if not all, of the above attributes

The project was carried out over a three year period as set out below.

Year 1: March 2003 – February 2004

Ten pupils were selected from P7 in Haldane Primary School for participation in the project. Subsequently, two pupils withdrew.

Year 2: March 2004 – February 2005

Ten pupils were also selected from P7 in Highdykes Primary School whilst offering ongoing advice and support to the first group who were in S1 progressing to S2. One pupil subsequently withdrew.

Year 3: March 2005 – February 2006

Ten pupils were selected from P7 in Renton Primary School whilst offering ongoing advice and support to the first two groups who had moved to the secondary school. Two pupils subsequently withdrew.

In each of the three years, the pupils selected were those who were perceived to have problems with some aspect of emotional literacy, for example, issues with impulse control, anger management, relationship difficulties, motivation or self-awareness. Up to three staff in each of the schools, as well as the parents of the children, were invited to participate in the project to explore issues in terms of the emotional development of the pupils and of their own emotional literacy. The project offered activities and personal development opportunities to the young people, staff and parents based on the four principles of the Dynamic Futures Programme: responsibility, commitment, collaboration and self-evaluation.

### **Aims of the evaluation**

The aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To assess the overall impact of the Dynamic Futures Project on the teachers, pupils and parents in the three primary schools involved and the associated secondary;
- To identify what, if any, improvements it has made to pupil attitudes, participation, attainment, attendance;
- To identify what, if any, impact it has made on teacher/pupil relationships, school ethos and teaching and learning environment;
- To explore the impact of the involvement of the pupils on their relationship with their parents, the attitudes of parents towards the school, their child and their child's education.

### **Research questions**

Overall impact

- What assumptions underpin the design of Dynamic Futures Project? Do staff in schools share such assumptions?
- Have primary school teachers (principally headteachers, P6 and P7 teachers) detected an improvement in attitudes and behaviour in those pupils who participated in the project?

- How did teachers respond to the input from Dynamic Futures staff?
- How did participating pupils respond to the input from Dynamic Futures staff?
- Were parents of participating pupils aware of their child's involvement in the project and the reasons for such involvement?
- Have parents of participating pupils detected any improvement in their child's attitudes and behaviour?
- Have secondary school teachers with responsibility for S1 and S2 detected any particular behavioural problems in the pupils who participated in DFP? If so, what response has been forthcoming?

#### Pupil behaviour and attitude

- To what extent have participating pupils improved their commitment in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have participating pupils improved their collaboration in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have participating pupils improved their self-esteem in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have participating pupils improved their self-evaluation in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have any such changed attitudes and behaviour impacted on attendance and attainment in national tests?

#### Schools

- To what extent has the DFP been perceived by teachers to have impacted on relationships, ethos and pedagogy?
- To what extent are such matters rated by external experts (HMIE, Advisers, ITE/CPD staff)?
- How is the DFP work managed by the headteacher in each primary school?
- What communication mechanisms are in place as a consequence of DFP participation?
- Has teachers' own self-esteem improved?
- To what extent have school procedures/systems/arrangements been modified as a consequence of engaging with DFP?

#### Pupils and Parents

- Do participating pupils display greater co-operation, communication and better behaviour (e.g. less aggression) with parents?
- Are parents of participating pupils more inclined to 'listen' to their children?
- Are parents able to manage their children more effectively?
- Has there been an impact on the interaction between schools and parents?

## **Methodology**

The research used both a longitudinal and cross-sectional design involving both qualitative and quantitative data. The longitudinal aspect focused on three successive cohorts of P7 pupils and their teachers engaged with the Dynamic Futures Project and a group of pupils not involved as a comparison group. The cross-sectional aspect was focused on the perceptions of secondary school teachers based in the Vale of Leven Academy, on the support provided by local authority staff, the input from DFP staff and the response of parents. In addition, the third cohort of primary school pupils involved in the DFP was monitored to assess the developmental aspect of the DFP input.

## **Findings**

The findings can be summarised as follows:

- DFP staff are a major asset of the project;
- there is a clear commitment to the ideas that underpin DFP among all respondents;
- there is support for the project among school staff;
- there is strong support for the project from the Local Authority
- the participating pupils are generally enthusiastic about DFP;
- teachers and headteachers in primary schools indicated that they would find it difficult to develop and sustain the project without considerable staff development;
- teachers and headteachers in primary schools highlighted both advantages and disadvantages of carrying out DFP with selected small groups;
- teachers and headteachers in primary schools felt that if DFP were to operate at its optimum effectiveness within the primary, it would need to begin earlier.
- the Vale of Leven Academy is providing a high level of support for a significant number of pupils participating in DFP;
- a majority of the pupils participating in DFP are maintaining a level of attendance at the Vale of Leven Academy commensurate with average levels for the Authority;
- levels of academic attainment among pupils participating in DFP are no different from the attainment of those pupils not experiencing the project;
- the data on punishment exercises indicates that a number of DFP pupils appear to be experiencing difficulties at the Academy;
- in terms of the project's impact on the pupils involved, whilst the project's activities were clearly welcomed by the pupils, there is little evidence to indicate that the project has had any deep or sustained impact.

## **Key issues**

Three key issues emerged from the findings:

### **Sustainability and development**

The project is highly dependent upon the personal and professional qualities of DFP staff. Whilst this is a major asset, it is also a significant factor when considering how to develop and sustain the project. If teachers were to run this project in the future, they would require a considerable degree of staff development. Additionally, teachers involved in delivering DFP would have to be familiar with the philosophical and psychological theories that form the basis of the project.

Furthermore, any decision to use DFP beyond the period of the research would have to take cognisance of the degree to which the Local Authority has supported the project.

### **Effectiveness of DFP within primary schools**

Whilst there was clear support for the project among pupils, teachers and headteachers there was also a feeling of '*too little, too late*'. Teachers' and headteachers' comments concerning the earlier introduction of DFP indicate that they perceived the project as being worthwhile but there had not been the opportunity for them to engage with it in a more meaningful way in order to support the pupils involved and the other pupils in their current and future classes.

### **The operation of DFP in secondary school**

Contributions from teachers in the secondary school reflected the concerns of their colleagues from primary schools. Like them, they assumed the project to be of some value but their lack of involvement rendered them unable to comment authoritatively on how DFP operated within the school.

Primary teachers felt that, having begun supporting children, the DFP involvement in the pupils' experience of secondary school should reflect the level of commitment and enthusiasm they had been given at primary school. The evidence gathered from the quantitative data suggests that high levels of support were maintained at Vale of Leven Academy but it is not clear to what extent the DFP was influential in providing this support.

There appeared to be a tension between the qualitative responses of the primary teachers and pupils involved, and the experiences of the pupils at the Academy, as far as it can be assessed from the quantitative data. Whilst figures for attendance and attainment suggested that pupils' and primary teachers' expectations of difficulty and failure were not met, the pattern of punishment exercises indicated that life at school was still difficult for a significant number of the DFP pupils. In particular, the fact that DFP pupils appeared to do no better than a similar group who had not undertaken the project, has implications for how the initiative might operate in the future.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Dynamic Futures Project (DFP) is operating in the cluster of schools associated with the Vale of Leven Academy in West Dunbartonshire. The area served by the schools suffers from acute social and economic deprivation, despite occupying an attractive geographical location at the southern end of Loch Lomond. West Dunbartonshire Council has the second highest level of social deprivation in Scotland and the effect of such deprivation on the schools and pupils in the area is immense. Schools in West Dunbartonshire have the highest exclusion rate of any local authority in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2007). The most recent study undertaken on indices of deprivation in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2003) shows that, in terms of income, employment, health and education, West Dunbartonshire is suffering from acute deprivation, despite having access to services that are at the average level for other local authorities in Scotland.

In order to address some of the educational issues associated with low achievement levels, the services of Trust Dynamics were introduced into a number of primary schools in the Vale of Leven. Trust Dynamics is an independent company that provides courses for teachers and students, mostly around the themes associated with emotional literacy. The Dynamic Futures project aims to assist pupils who have been identified as having problems with emotional literacy to realise their potential in a collaborative context that supports the personal development of their teachers and parents.

Educationalists have long known that the affective domain of the human mind plays as important a part as the cognitive domain in learning. The work of Gardner (1993) and Goleman (1996) in America detailed what research showed about how the brain operates at times of learning and under emotional stress. As a result, the importance of emotional literacy, awareness of one's own feelings and the appreciation of the feelings of those around us and how they impact on the learning context has been the subject of much recent research and discussion (for example, Gray, 2002). Whilst much of the early work had a clear focus on learning and the learner, more recent work has turned toward consideration of the teacher's awareness of the impact of their own and others' emotions on learning. The importance of a positive school ethos and, in turn, the emotional effect of this on the learner, teacher and the whole community cannot be underestimated and is acknowledged by the Discipline Task Group Report in its recognition that *'discipline policy cannot, and should not, be separated from policy on learning and teaching – the two are inextricably linked'* (Scottish Executive, 2001b, p.8). Improvement of the physical and emotional health of the school community, including parents, is a principal aim of the Dynamic Futures Project.

The context in which learning takes place is of prime importance as are the relationships within this environment - those between pupil and teacher, pupil and parents, and parents and teacher; the very groups that are the focus of this evaluation. None of these are one-way relationships and all involve different power relations that must be considered. Simply expecting a pupil to change in response to some intervention is insufficient since it reflects deficit model thinking that assumes the problem lies completely within the object of the intervention. It too easily becomes a one-way process where the child's supposed 'deficits' are 'topped up' or ameliorated. Yet the social context and the systems and structures within which these learning relationships occur must be considered so that the intervention becomes multi-directional. While the intervention may result in changes and hopefully improvements to pupil attitudes, participation, attainment, attendance and to the school ethos and learning environment, questions must also be asked as to what extent the very structures, systems, practices and ethos in schools form barriers to learning. Such a consideration would provide a richer and a more complex approach that avoids some of the attendant pupil-blaming that can be attached in the application of uni-directional interventions. Hence this evaluation includes

research questions that investigate the assumptions made by Dynamic Futures in their design of the intervention and whether or not they have taken such things into consideration. Furthermore, it enquires about the extent to which school procedures, systems and arrangements have been modified as a result of engaging with the Dynamic Futures Project. Similarly, the evaluation explores the impact of DFP on the interaction between schools and parents.

## 2. THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To assess the overall impact of the Dynamic Futures Project on the teachers, pupils and parents in the three primary schools involved and the associated secondary;
- To identify what, if any, improvements it has made to pupil attitudes, participation, attainment, attendance;
- To identify what, if any, impact it has made on teacher/pupil relationships, school ethos and teaching and learning environment;
- To explore the impact of the involvement of the pupils on their relationship with their parents, the attitudes of parents towards the school, their child and their child's education.

### 2.2 Research questions

#### 2.2.1 Overall impact

- What assumptions underpin the design of Dynamic Futures Project? Do school staff share such assumptions?
- Have primary school teachers (principally headteachers, P6 and P7 teachers) detected an improvement in attitudes and behaviour in those pupils who participated in the project?
- How did teachers respond to the input from Dynamic Futures staff?
- How did participating pupils respond to the input from Dynamic Futures staff?
- Were parents of participating pupils aware of their child's involvement in the project and the reasons for such involvement?
- Have parents of participating pupils detected any improvement in their child's attitudes and behaviour?
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#### 2.2.2 Pupil behaviour and attitude

- To what extent have participating pupils improved their commitment in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have participating pupils improved their collaboration in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have participating pupils improved their self-esteem in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have participating pupils improved their self-evaluation in response to participation in the DFP?
- To what extent have any such changed attitudes and behaviour impacted on attendance and attainment in national tests?

#### 2.2.3 Schools

- To what extent has the DFP been perceived by teachers to have impacted on relationships, ethos and pedagogy?

- To what extent are such matters rated by external experts (HMIE, Advisers, ITE/CPD staff)?
- How is the DFP work managed by the headteacher in each primary school?
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#### 2.2.4 Pupils and Parents

- Do participating pupils display greater co-operation, communication and better behaviour (e.g. less aggression) with parents?
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- Are parents able to manage their children more effectively?
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### 2.3 Design and Methodology

The research deployed both a longitudinal and cross-sectional design using both qualitative and quantitative data. The longitudinal aspect focuses on three successive cohorts of P7 pupils and their teachers engaged with the Dynamic Futures Project and a group of pupils not involved as a comparison group. The cross-sectional aspect is focused on the perceptions of secondary school teachers based in the Vale of Leven Academy, on the support provided by local authority staff, the input from DFP staff and the response of parents. In addition, the third cohort of primary school pupils involved in the DFP was monitored to assess the developmental aspect of the DFP input.

Data from the first two DFP pupil cohorts, the comparison cohort and teachers involved with the DFP were gathered at two time intervals – May/June 2004 and May/June 2005.

Data from the secondary school teachers (all subject teachers, guidance and SMT staff), local authority administrators and DFP staff were gathered on a single occasion – October/November 2005. Data from parents was collected early in 2006.

The data collected was both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data consisted of attainment, attendance and exclusion data at two time intervals based on school records and national test results. The qualitative data consisted of focus groups with pupils and 1:1 interviews with teachers, parents, DFP staff and local authority administrators. All interviews were recorded with the approval of the interviewee.

The purpose of the focus groups was to enable participating pupils to express their views freely in a group context within a defined framework rooted in the DFP. Data from parents was obtained by telephone interviews for ease of access and confidentiality. Data from the third cohort of pupils was collected on one occasion in order to assess how the DFP is adapting in order to enhance responsiveness to the young people involved.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the main findings to emerge from the evaluation of the Dynamic Futures Project. The main sections reflect the perceptions of the stakeholder groups from whom information has been collected: Dynamic Futures staff, headteachers and senior management, teachers, pupils and parents.

#### 3.2 Dynamic Futures Staff Perceptions

The Dynamic Futures initiative had its origin in the synergy of ideas between two key staff members in conjunction with two private consultants in staff development. Experience in working towards Investors in People submissions identified that a more intensive approach was needed to supporting youngsters considered to be 'at risk', particularly at the point of transition from primary school to secondary school in areas of social disadvantage. This entrepreneurial collaborative approach by the key players was fundamental to Dynamic Futures being established.

As one of the key players had pre-existing contacts in West Dunbartonshire it was mutually agreed that a suitable location to implement the DFP ideas in social inclusion was the cluster of schools associated with the Vale of Leven Academy. It was thought that a more holistic human relations perspective to children having some degree of behavioural difficulties in the primary schools in the Vale of Leven would pay dividends when such children progressed through the Academy.

##### **Purpose of the DFP**

When asked about the main purpose of the DF initiative it became clear that the primary purpose was to help children form better relationships in their lives with teachers and parents in the hope that better relationships would help to promote children's potential in the schooling process:

*From the children we've met, they have tremendous potential and are basically very good. They have innate intelligence but they need to get their motivation right. They suffer from peer group pressure.*

It was clearly seen that the cause of children's problems lay in the inadequacy of their parenting: *The conditioning of the families is at the core of the problem, suppressing potential.*

The Vale of Leven is notorious for its social problems, despite being geographically located on the edge of one of Scotland's rural tourist areas, that is, Loch Lomond National Park. Such social handicap was seen as being perpetuated by some of the teachers:

*Teachers don't seem to listen; there's a lack of trust between parents and teachers with many parents not willing to engage in dialogue.*

In other words, it appeared to the DF staff that there was a pronounced lack of interest for improvement in both parents and teachers (though not all). *This is the way it was done and it never did me any harm* was a common observation.

## **Input from DFP staff**

In selecting the children to participate in DF activities, the headteachers of the three selected primary schools (referred to as Schools A, B and C) identified a group of about 10 children in each school in terms of being 'vulnerable', that is, in danger of dropping out of the schooling process but not acutely or imminently in such danger. At the end of their last year in primary school (that is, P7) and carried forward to the first year in the Academy (that is, S1) a range of stimulating activities such as mindmapping, circle time, physical and social events were organised by DF staff. Some of these activities took place in local hotels.

Individual laptops were also provided for each pupil to underline the seriousness of DF staff's endeavours. Initially the response of the 10/11 year olds was challenging for DF staff. However, over time, the youngsters have come to respect the approach of the DF staff: *Now we have a good collaborative team approach on a level playing field.*

When asked about the parental response it was recognised that parents were generally apathetic: *There needs to be more intense work with the parents*

As the children got older, however, it was also recognised that the influence of the parents was diminishing significantly and that the peer group was the strongest source of social influence.

## **Management**

An important issue in projects such as this, which essentially originate external to the schools, is how the relationship between the initiative and the schools is managed. The DFP staff were clearly aware that a sense of ownership of the initiative by the schools, characterised by trust, was essential.

Regular meetings have been held, both formal and informal, between DFP staff and the teachers and schools involved. Minutes of formal meetings are taken and regular e-mail communication takes place between meetings. The DFP staff were appreciative of the support provided by the Local Authority, especially in the form of the hardware referred to above and the training. However, DF staff considered that the resources to support the initiative were inadequate:

*Resources are not adequate. I'd like to have more resources to spend, more time to develop the project. We need 'away days' for facilitation. The seminars are adequate with pupils but we need more input with teachers and pupils.*

## **Perceptions of the DFP impact**

Turning to the perceived impact to date of the DFP, DF staff reported significant turn-round in several of the participating pupils. When pursued about DF staff's perception regarding the impact of the initiative so far on children's behaviour, some positive examples of improvement were cited:

*I've detected a greater maturity in the boys, based on my wide experience. A greater awareness of their own feelings and more considered opinions.*

Although it is early days, there seems to be some tangible evidence of the participating children being able to manage their own lives better, which is partly reflected in improved attendance at school.

In terms of the teachers' response, the initial response to the project's purpose and activities were mixed:

*Initially we had great support from the headteacher, but the two P7 teachers didn't 'buy into it'. However, in another school the response of the teacher was more positive and practical. In a third school the teachers have got a great deal out of it.*

DF staff were not too positive about the response of parents: *Had some good responses initially but very disappointed in our contacts with parents.* However, one DF staff member commented that *the mother of one wee boy articulated some good signs she had detected.*

In conclusion, a reasonable start seems to have been made in turning round some children's 'learned helplessness'. However, it is recognised that more intensive work needs to be undertaken with the class and subject teachers if the work is to be sustained.

### **3.3 Headteachers' and Senior Management Team response**

#### **Headteachers' and SMT perceptions of their role**

All the headteachers and members of Senior Management Team (SMT) at the Vale of Leven Academy who were interviewed became aware of the project through the Local Authority. The project was launched as a Local Authority initiative centred round the Vale of Leven cluster. The Local Authority identified three of the Academy's feeder primary schools and the headteachers were informed that their schools had been chosen. One headteacher justified the decision to take part through a recognition that the aims of the project as she understood them - transition, sustaining interest in education, and raising attainment -were appropriate for her P7 pupils as she felt that children did not always get the same support in secondary school as they do in primary. Being chosen rather than asked to take part was not problematic for any of the headteachers. At the Academy, the member of the SMT involved, identified a member of the pastoral care staff to whose guidance group the DFP pupils were be allocated. The teacher involved was enthusiastic and saw this structure as creating a clear line of communication between the Academy and DFP staff. This teacher subsequently became a member of the SMT.

The primary headteachers acted as the principal initiators of DFP in their schools. Having been informed that their school had been chosen, they established contact with parents, and sought consent for the children to take part. The headteachers, naturally, were also responsible for informing other staff and children generally that the project would be introduced to the school. They were also instrumental in choosing the pupils to be involved. They met with DFP staff and were given criteria for choosing children and were requested to choose ten pupils to take part.

The criteria on which choice was based were:

- emotional vulnerability;
- immature behaviour;
- anger management;
- background;
- anticipated difficulties with transition.

The headteachers, in conjunction with the class teachers who were involved, made the final decision on who participated. The teachers who took part were chosen only on the basis of

being the P7 teacher. Headteachers reported a mixed response among teachers to being chosen. As with any initiative, some appeared to be more enthusiastic than others and there was a general wariness of the project. Headteachers also detected concerns among their teachers that the project might undermine some of the work they were already doing. Generally, however, headteachers and SMT felt that their teachers were in overall agreement with the concept of DFP. They also indicated that input from DFP staff was an important factor in persuading teachers of the effectiveness of the project.

Throughout their involvement in the project, the primary headteachers saw their role mainly as facilitators, and this continued to be the case with SMT at the Academy. This role involved participation in the steering group for the project and liaison with DFP staff. At school level, it entailed talking with the children and teachers, being enthusiastic and looking for signs of progress on which to build:

*Now my role is to make sure that everything is in place to help [DFP staff]. I would say facilitating it, basically in the school. I think I can personally chat with the children ...after... show an interest...ask them how it's gone... just ask the kind of things they've been doing. And again, I think also talking to the class teacher to see if there is anything that the children are doing when they come back that she has noticed.*

They also saw their role as pivotal in a partnership in which they acted as a link among the various stakeholders, including pupils, parents, teachers, DFP staff and Vale of Leven Academy staff. As the final group of DFP pupils made the transition to the Academy, the primary headteachers role contracted to membership of the steering group. The member of the Academy's SMT who eventually assumed responsibility for DFP reported that she also saw her role as a facilitator and to allow DFP staff access to the children and to provide pupils and DFP staff with any required support. She reported being enthusiastic about DFP and giving the project her backing.

### **Headteachers' and SMT perceptions of the purpose of DFP**

All headteachers and SMT interviewed were clear that the main purpose of DFP was to support vulnerable children, especially at the stage of transition between the 'protected' environment of primary and the larger, more complex milieu of secondary school. They saw the project as tapping into Emotional Intelligence, helping children to make the right choices, helping them to become more independent, and instilling a belief in them. They saw DFP as providing the pupils with strategies to cope with transition and the new environment of secondary school:

*I think it is trying to achieve self-reliance from the children and building up their self-esteem and even tapping into this thing inside them that will make them see opportunities that first of all the education system can offer them, that life can offer them and a belief in themselves.*

*To achieve some sort of ease in transition for pupils who find secondary school daunting for whatever reason. It can empower them to have a bit more self-esteem and confidence as people. It can also help those with a bad background and home life, those who need outside support. This has proven to be true. DFP is [DFP staff], you can't separate the two.*

In addition to its main purpose as described above, headteachers considered that the project had been set up because between P7 and S2, some pupils, boys in particular, disengage with education. They saw it also as trying to achieve different things for different pupils: confidence for new situations for the wary; assertiveness for the bullied; improving

attendance for pupils with low attendance; for developing positive energies for those who might otherwise be negative about their learning. In addition, they saw the project as addressing the links among poverty, attainment, optimism and aspirations.

Headteachers' views of the assumptions that underpin DFP reflected a context of deficit. Some of this deficit was perceived to exist at home, as they felt the project assumed a generally negative attitude towards school, especially secondary school, among the parents of the children involved in the project. Other aspects of an assumed deficit were seen to reside within the children. If the aim of the project was to build self-esteem and build optimism, for example, then there must have been an assumption of low-self esteem among the children and a lack of optimism in their everyday experiences. Headteachers also identified underpinning assumptions that the children involved were not be experiencing quality support in their lives, and did not feel valued. There was also a perception that the project assumed that the assessment driven education culture prevented primary schools from supporting their pupils in more holistic ways:

*The assumption is that we are not building up the children and, to some degree, I would agree with it... and that we are very much [summative] assessment driven...and I don't know if we give children enough opportunities to develop particular skills.*

Finally, the headteachers felt that the project and DFP staff operated under the assumption that every child could be helped. In general, the headteachers shared these assumptions, and felt that a project such as DFP was necessary.

Headteachers' and SMT expectations of the project were modest. They saw the main indicator of success as pupils completing their secondary education. They also expected that truancy would become less of an issue and that the pupils would be more involved with the life of the school. In order for this to happen, they expected to see an improvement in the personal attributes of self-confidence and social skills in some of the pupils. The headteachers did not expect all of the pupils to benefit to this extent but felt it was realistic to expect that some, the majority, should have an enhanced school experience:

*That they'd improve from primary, concerns didn't come to fruition, they've been performing well at school, one pupil from a very bad background is never absent, so DFP has had an impact on her life. We're not looking for fireworks just the self-fulfilling prophecy not happening*

None of the headteachers expected to see any return *per se* for the primary schools involved.

### **Headteachers' and SMT perceptions of the input from DFP staff**

Headteachers' awareness of DFP activities taking place in their schools depended on their level of contact with DFP staff prior to the project starting and the number of sessions that had already run. SMT at the Academy had a similar level of awareness through participation in the steering group and contact with DFP staff. The headteachers and SMT were able to identify the general DFP areas of looking at pupils' interests and talents as well as more specific activities, dependent on what had taken place within their schools. Activities identified included:

- brainstorming;
- group warm-up games;

- mind mapping;
- brain gym;
- managing feelings;
- sharing experiences.

One primary headteacher indicated that, at an early stage in the project, DFP staff had set up meetings with parents. These meetings had not been successful but allowed DFP staff to experience *'what the school was up against'*. Later in the project, headteachers and SMT were aware that DFP staff had met some parents in a range of contexts but were unaware of any significant increase in parental involvement as a result. The headteachers were also aware that, sometimes, both members of DFP staff were present and that at others, only one worked with the children. They were aware that DFP staff shared their own experiences with the children and this was seen as a significant strength of the project.

Headteachers' and SMT responses to the input from DFP were positive. They were all interested in learning more about the project and looked for ways to use it to the benefit of the school. They commented on DFP staff's knowledge and understanding of children and of the importance of their input for the children's positive experience of the project. The only reservation expressed was that classroom teachers were not adequately involved.

All headteachers reported a positive response to the project from the pupils involved. They were variously described as *'enthusiastic'*, *'very, very positive'* and *'very eager to go'*. These were not the pupils' usual reactions to anything they did in school. The headteachers described how the pupils involved readily shared information with themselves and the class teachers in primary schools and talked about the project in a very positive way:

*They were very positive after their first session and they shared it. They very readily spoke to the class teacher and myself and the other pupils. They shared their experiences extremely well and they had a very positive feeling about it.*

Two of the primary headteachers indicated that parents had either not responded to the project or had only come to the meetings. The other primary headteacher, however, said that some parents had asked how they could become involved with DFP. These parents had talked with DFP staff, felt they were being supported by them and, in return, were supportive of the project. The experience of the Academy SMT was similarly mixed:

*[parents are] very positive, maybe because the kids have laptops in their rooms, but very few come to things when invited.*

The primary headteachers indicated that while their classroom teachers were supportive of the ideas behind DFP, reaction to the project was mixed. In the headteachers' and SMT opinions, class teachers were sceptical about the effectiveness of the project. They expressed uncertainty regarding the lasting effects of DFP, wondered if it would work at all with the more 'extreme' children. Primary headteachers reported that class teachers had seen no marked difference in the children who took part. However, the primary teachers did engage in conversations with the pupils regarding the activities they did in DFP and, in at least one case, had tried them in class. In the Academy, the SMT reported that the project was *'not advertised'* and that teachers would be unlikely to be aware of DFP to any great extent. This was the result of deliberate policy within the project not to have any pupils identified as participating in DFP.

## **Headteachers' and SMT perceptions of the management of DFP**

Headteachers' awareness of communication processes was varied. One headteacher had only had initial contact from the local authority, Vale of Leven Academy and DFP staff. All headteachers and SMT were members of the steering group from which information on the progress of the project was disseminated. Cluster meetings, email and telephone calls were other means of communication identified by headteachers. Towards the end of the evaluation, communication had become infrequent and the steering group had ceased to meet:

*Email and phone with [DFP staff], not regular. The last email was in February; I don't know what their plans are, very little feedback about D.F.P. I was part of the steering group (not in existence now, not for 18 months) and the contact in the school, but I don't manage [the project] as such.*

Other than initiating and rolling out the project, the headteachers were unaware of the local authority's role in managing DFP. Those involved in the steering group, however, were aware of a significant level of local authority support. The steering group included a Quality Improvement (QI) officer and an ICT coordinator as well as a representative of education services and a psychologist. The QI and ICT officers regularly attended steering group meetings. In addition, laptop computers had been issued to pupils involved in the project and a number of social events organised at authority level. Whilst unclear of the authority's management role, therefore, the headteachers were aware of a significant level of support and input from the council.

The headteachers' and SMT perceptions of their role in the management of DFP were that of facilitator at a functional level. Other than being members of the steering group, their role was simply to organise pupils and meeting places so that the project could take place. They also covered for staff if necessary.

In response to a question concerning the adequacy of resources and decisions about how they are used, the headteachers and SMT were unable to comment on the project as it was run, because DFP staff brought all resources. If the project were to run in the future, however, the headteachers would like to see it extended to include other children in the school and for teachers to have a greater involvement. A development on this level would have significant resource implications.

## **Headteachers' perceptions of the impact of DFP**

The headteachers and SMT whose schools were most involved with the project commented on a number of aspects concerning its impact.

Whilst there was a recognition that the pupils appeared to be committed to the project, this observation was qualified by a feeling among the primary headteachers that they were unable to comment authoritatively. They indicated that pupils attendance at school would not have been an issue in any case and they had hopes that relationships would have improved as the children matured. One head reported that one or two children whom she might have expected to exclude had not been excluded and that the project may have helped. In addition, the secondary SMT was able to report at least one example of significant success alongside continuing difficulties for others:

*Yes I can, not sure if it's attributable to D.F.P. One boy in the third year group has dramatically improved his self-esteem. He liked drama but felt he would get bullied; he is now the pupil council rep. for [local authority] schools. In the same group, one girl is pregnant*

*and will not achieve her potential. Maybe it needs to be more intense, more than three times a year... can lose touch with them.*

The headteachers and SMT felt that the class teachers had not been involved enough with the project to have gained a great deal from it. They were doubtful if DFP would have any impact on teachers' self-esteem as they were already coping with the children's needs and doing similar things.

The headteachers reported that the impact on parents had been minimal in the majority of cases. Parents who had attended meetings were willing to talk about their children but these were few in number and generally not the parents that the headteachers felt most needed to be involved. There appeared to be a difficulty involving parents and one head wondered if they saw class teachers as more approachable than heads.

In addition to providing extra support for those who needed it, the headteachers and SMT saw the main advantage of DFP as giving children an opportunity to explore their inner selves in small groups and in a fun setting. DFP also gave them a forum to express themselves without being ridiculed or feeling that they had to maintain their credibility with other pupils. The heads also identified DFP staff as a major asset, citing their personality, drive, and ability to communicate with children as significant factors, although several head also identified this as a disadvantage, claiming, for example:

*It is a two-man show, there are lots of kids out there who need it, but it needs [DFP staff's] personalities to drive it.*

Headteachers also highlighted the fact that the programme was not more widely available as a disadvantage:

*The disadvantage, I have to say, is that it's not open to other children. I would start it earlier in P7. I would engage the class teacher at an earlier stage...that's the way I would like to do it.*

### **Headteachers' perceptions on the future of DFP**

The primary headteachers were of a unanimous view that the project should have started earlier in primary school. In addition, they felt it should have been open to all pupils and worked as a whole-school initiative. One headteacher suggested that if it were to become the project for transition, then it should operate across all schools within the authority. This view was reinforced in the data collected from the SMT. One primary headteacher expressed reservations about the project continuing into secondary. She commented that building self-esteem, confidence and feelings of security was not a short-term project and that the pupils should not be seen as part of an experiment.

Expansion of the project was considered a matter of staff development by all the headteachers interviewed:

*Yes, developed and expanded (nine feeder primaries, lots of kids need it). It is not possible for it to be delivered by the class teacher, it needs [DFP staff] types to take them away and do it.*

The suggested mode was as a collaborative project involving DFP staff, teachers and headteachers. They all felt confident that, given the appropriate time, resources and staff development, the project could have become an asset to schools.

All the headteachers and SMT expressed a personal commitment to the ideas behind DFP and saw it as having the potential to be an important feature of a holistic approach to the learning, care and nurturing of the pupils with whom they worked.

*I like the idea, the concept. I think it's an excellent concept. I think there's a lot of good work already taking place and I do like the idea of work starting in the primary school and linking into the secondary school, and I think we do need an outside agency to help us with that .*

### **3.4 Teachers' response**

#### **Teachers' views on their role**

Within the primary sector, all of the teachers interviewed were involved with P7 classes at the time of the operation of the DFP within their schools. Some of the teachers were full-time and others were working on a job-share basis. The teachers interviewed at the Academy were teaching at least one of the pupils participating in DFP. The teachers were from a range of the school community including subject teachers from Science, Technology, Maths, English, and others who had a Guidance and Pastoral Care role.

In total, five primary teachers and nine secondary teachers were interviewed. All primary teachers reported that their reason for involvement was simply because they were the P7 teacher at the time and some pupils from their classes were involved with the project. One teacher did indicate that there were a number of similar initiatives, aimed at preparing pupils for adolescence, running in P7. Amongst teachers at the Academy, the level of awareness of the existence of the programme and which pupils were involved varied. Most teachers reported being unaware of the programme prior to being asked to attend the interview. However, others indicated that they had been informed of individual pupil's involvement with one teacher reporting that they had been given a list of DFP pupils at the start of the session.

Some teachers indicated that they had attended an information session prior to commencement of the project. In some schools this appears to have involved all the adults whereas in others the information session was a short meeting involving the teacher(s) whose class was involved, the Headteacher and DFP staff. All of the primary teachers reported that their understanding was that the schools had been nominated by the local authority to take part in DFP and, since they were the P7 teachers, then they were the logical ones to be involved.

In addition, primary teachers reported minimal involvement after the initial information sessions. The teachers indicated that they had been involved in the selection of pupils to take part but there had been reservations concerning the basis on which this had been done. None of the primary teachers were involved in the DFP sessions (other than observation of one or two) and their awareness of content came via the pupils who had taken part telling them what they had done. Similarly, Academy teachers reported little or no involvement with DFP beyond letting pupils out of class and filing information (where applicable). Some indicated that the extent of their involvement had been to read memos that had been sent but these were in the past and there had been no meetings or discussions concerning DFP.

The majority of the primary teachers felt they had little or nothing to contribute to the project. The reasons given were that, in addition to minimal involvement, there had been too few sessions in the school. One teacher's feedback typified primary teachers' responses. She indicated that taking the group away from the class was not conducive to her developing a personal contribution to the project. She felt that if the DFP were carried out with whole

classes with the teacher included, it would be to the benefit of all the pupils, herself as the teacher, DFP staff and the development of the project as a whole. The primary teachers also felt that the project had started too late in the session for them to become involved.

Nevertheless, they all saw the possibility of undertaking an active role had the project operated differently. In particular, four primary teachers felt that had the project started earlier, they could have acted as a link between DFP and classroom learning. Teachers in both primary and secondary settings felt that if they had been aware of the strategies used and issues addressed within DFP, they could have used, supported and built on them in classes. One teacher envisaged a possibility of wider staff development but again felt she did not know enough about the new project to comment with any authority. Similarly, most secondary teachers envisaged that they could have had a role to play:

*Yes... if I knew who the children were. In class and outwith there are kids with some difficulties. There are kids with difficulties in some classes. It would be helpful.*

### **Teachers' views on the purpose of DFP**

Primary teachers' understanding of the purpose of DFP was equally divided between seeing it as a transition issue or a project to support vulnerable pupils. Two teachers reported aspects of both purposes. A majority of the secondary teachers interviewed were aware that the main purpose of DFP was to address issues of transition:

*From what I've heard it's to make the transition from primary to secondary easier for those pupils who may have difficulty with the change. It's to give them a better start in secondary education.*

The sense of 'vulnerability' had a range of origins for the teachers. These included a variety of difficulties arising out of the pupils' backgrounds, behaviour, learning difficulties, aggression, low self-esteem and lack of confidence. A more general sense of vulnerability came through in the responses related to transition. Teachers saw the project as intended to help pupils '*cope with the change*'. In general, the teachers understood that the project was set up because, as one teacher put it: *...some children have difficulties with transition – so many children have so many difficulties*. The teachers felt that the project was put in place because there were concerns that children who had difficulties at primary school might experience even greater difficulties: *...as they go to High School where these may be magnified in the bigger environment*. Again, though, there was a feeling among primary teachers that the project had started too late in the session to prepare children properly for transition.

The teachers' views on the assumptions that underpin DFP, whilst varied, nevertheless were commonly grounded in deficit. One teacher felt the project was founded on the assumption that there are a number of children at primary school who are in need of extra support and help and that schools were currently not able to provide this help. This view of the underpinning assumptions was supported by other respondents in both primary and secondary settings.

The secondary teachers' views on why the programme had been set up were consistent with the purpose of DFP. They assumed that there are some pupils for whom transition was a difficulty and that they had been identified in primary school. There was a perceived assumption that those pupils identified would continue to experience difficulty in secondary school and the majority of secondary teachers shared this assumption (with only one exception).

*Some children don't like change. Secondary is totally different from primary school, especially for children with learning difficulties etc*

However among the reasons offered by teachers for continuing difficulty, were indications that the 'problem' of school was part of a wider issue that was not simply about pupil deficit, for example, the lack of support at home and deprivation in the community.

Another teacher felt that the principal underlying assumption was that vulnerable children could be helped in transition from primary to secondary. She felt that the important distinction between primary and secondary was how pupils are treated differently in each environment, describing primary as a 'cosy nest' but secondary as a place where vulnerable pupils might be liable to 'fly the nest'. All teachers agreed that there were issues for vulnerable pupils in transition and that something to address them was necessary. Only one teacher wondered if anything aimed at the pupil was the most effective use of resources and instead suggested that it was a wider issue of relationships and communication.

There was also a difference between teachers' hopes for the project and their expectations of what it might actually achieve. They all hoped that, from what little they knew of DFP, it would help some of the pupils in the long term. The primary teachers felt it was important that the project carried over into secondary school. From their experience of the project, however, they all expressed doubt about the level of impact that it would have in reality. A common comment was 'too little too late'. All primary teachers indicated that they would have preferred to have seen something done earlier for the type of children chosen for the project. One teacher pointed out that the pupils who took part in DFP had significant issues for a number of years and doubted how far the small number of sessions that had taken place in the school could address such deep rooted problems. Primary teachers also expressed reservations concerning the effectiveness of running the project with small groups. Instead, there was a suggestion that whole school, or at least whole class approaches would have been more effective. The reasons offered in explanation were two-fold: a wider approach would have benefited all pupils; regardless of any reasons given for selection, both the pupils who participated and the others in the class soon perceived why they had been selected and a wider approach would have avoided the possibility of labelling. They also indicated that there were a number of projects running within the authority that addressed issues related to social inclusion and that this project might have benefited from a closer liaison with them.

In addition, one teacher indicated, from what she knew of the project, that teachers should were addressing some of its aims anyway, as part of their daily interactions with pupils. Moreover, she doubted whether some of the aims could be met from a single project such as DFP.

The secondary teachers' expectation of DFP were that the pupils involved would have less problems with discipline and would cope with life in secondary school, generally. Interestingly, one of the teacher's expectations was that the programme would continue into fourth year when the pupils would be due to leave school, another point of transition.

### **Teachers' views on the input from DF staff**

Secondary teachers found it difficult to respond to the questions in this section as they were largely unaware of what happened in DFP sessions. Moreover, there was agreement that there was no feedback or discussion of DFP input. However, one teacher reported the pupils seemed willing and happy to go to DFP and from that observation was willing to assume that they had responded well to the programme. Another teacher reported that he had never once heard a parent mention the programme, including parents of those children involved.

When asked to outline DFP activities, the primary teachers' responses varied from a '*don't know*' to a fairly detailed list of activities. The ability to respond appears to have been directly related to the number of sessions that had taken place in the school and the teacher's level of involvement. The activities identified were:

- mind mapping;
- thinking about how to approach activities;
- how pupils feel about things and themselves;
- relaxation exercises;
- concentration to help with learning;
- little tricks of managing behaviour;
- rhymes;
- brain gym.

More significantly, perhaps, all primary teachers acknowledged the part that DFP staff play within the project. They were variously described as '*bursting with enthusiasm, friendly*', '*the right people to do the job*' and '*very calm and coped well with children*'. Moreover, the teachers praised the relaxed atmosphere, non-patronising approach, calmness, consistency and sense of humour that were significant features of the project. They were also impressed with DFP staff's assessment of the children as early as the first session.

Without exception, all primary teachers reported that the children enjoyed the DFP sessions. They said that the children were enthusiastic about the DFP activities and that they looked forward to the following session. One teacher reported that she found it helpful to remind pupils of the coping strategies they had learned whilst another indicated that she had not noticed any overall impact but qualified this observation with a reminder that the project had only been running for a short time.

All teachers, however, were disappointed in parents' lack of response to the input from DFP staff. Parents' responses, as reported by teachers, varied from indifference to outright opposition. In between these positions, teachers knew of attendance by some parents at invited sessions with a measure of interest in the project being detectable among those who had attended. Again, there was a suggestion from teachers that an earlier introduction of the project would have allowed for the context in which parents could be more involved to have developed.

### **Teachers' views on the management of the DFP**

Again, the secondary teachers interviewed found it difficult to respond to the questions in this section as they had no information regarding how the programme was run, how it was resourced and who made decisions regarding the use of resources.

Among primary teachers, with the exception of one teacher who helped organise practical aspects of the project within the school, none of the teachers felt they played any part in the management of DFP. They saw the project as belonging entirely to DFP staff, who planned and organised everything.

Teachers' awareness of communication processes was minimal and at a functional level. For example, one teacher was aware that letters had been sent to parents and another knew that the headteacher passed information to the depute who in turn informed the class teacher when the DFP sessions would take place so that she could make appropriate timetabling arrangements. None of the teachers were aware of any system in place to pick up on and

follow up issues that arose from the DFP sessions. Among secondary staff, there was recognition that some information was passed to teachers:

*Every week there's a staff newsletter and it sometimes mentions DFP.  
It's assumed that most teachers know what this is – there's also a family magazine  
which shows activities in the school.*

*Other than the initial information – when we start in August, Pastoral Care  
gets a list of names. If kids have to go out of school we get information...  
or maybe I have not assimilated...*

Apart from their involvement in initial meetings, and some observed sessions, the primary teachers felt a lack of involvement in the project. One teacher commented that there '*must be a team effort to help these children*'.

Similarly, teachers were unaware of the role of the local authority in managing the project. There was a general assumption that, since the initiative had its origins at an authority level, then they (the authority) would be funding it. There was certainly a feeling that the authority had decided to go ahead with the project, that the schools had been chosen by the local authority (i.e. they had not been given a choice in whether or not to participate) and that the primary class teachers in turn had been told that some of their pupils would take part in the project. Other than that, they were unaware of the level of authority involvement.

Finally, in this section, teachers were unaware of whether or not the project was adequately resourced. They were certain, however, that all decisions regarding the use of resources were the domain of DFP staff. Moreover, other than physical space and the use of learning support staff as cover to allow teachers to observe sessions, there was an assumption that all materials and other resources were provided by DFP.

### **Teachers' perceptions of the impact of DFP**

With only one exception, the primary teachers felt unable to offer any comment regarding the impact of DFP other than to say it was too early to expect any noticeable change. This was the case for each area of potential impact, namely, on pupils, teachers and parents. The one primary teacher who felt able to comment did so in generalised terms. Apart from detecting commitment to the project, she could see no impact on self-esteem, self-evaluation, attainment or relationships. Attendance was not an issue for her pupils prior to commencement of the project.

Only three of the five primary teachers interviewed felt competent to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of DFP. Of these, one commented that there were no advantages to the project unless it was extended to include all pupils from the start of schooling. Beginning at P7, she felt, was too late. This was a different teacher from the one who had expressed a similar reservation above. Other perceived advantages were that the children enjoyed the project and that they were likely to benefit from the extra attention. It was also stated that being chosen for the project might engender a sense of importance about themselves and the issues in their lives. The only disadvantage highlighted by primary teachers was the shortness of the project in the primary schools. The teachers felt it had been too short to be meaningful and to show any real results.

Generally speaking, secondary teachers were unable to perceive any impact of DFP, reporting that the pupils involved were no better or worse than others in the class or that they were part of a well-behaved, hard working class and did not present problems. They were also unable to comment on any impact on teachers or parents other than confusion or scepticism:

*Most teachers take the view: 'What's all this about?'*

However, despite being unable to identify impact, there were signs of support for the programme. For example:

*If it's helping to integrate, then that is a huge advantage. I don't see any disadvantages. Any help will do.*

*Any input that gives kids a chance to work in a safer and secure etc... socialising... cannot do any harm.*

Interestingly, two secondary teachers interviewed had mixed views, indicating that the impact of the programme had been more complex than might have been expected:

*The DFP pupils in first year have grown in confidence but this has led to greater disruptive behaviour at times. However, these pupils are popular and have a lot of friends. With the older ones, it is difficult to tell, but the boy in second year is well behaved. There's been some improvement in attendance and attainment in first year – but not so for the older ones. 3 of the 5 boys are alpha-males!*

*They've become more comfortable – but all the pupils have. They're very friendly. They seem more confident. They're "chatty". They're more 'cocky' but they're not disruptive*

Only one teacher reported a completely negative experience:

*The pupil is disruptive – he has problems concentrating. He has recently moved section so he's having problems across the school.*

### **Teachers' views on the future of DFP**

Despite their limited involvement, the teachers in both primary and secondary schools unanimously felt there was potential for a positive development of DFP. In particular, there was a consensus among primary teachers that the project needed to start earlier, although there was disagreement about when this should be. Suggestions included the beginning of P7, the start of P6 and even P1. This latter suggestion was made in the recognition that many pupils come to school with significant issues and that parents are more likely to be involved with the school in the early stages. A view was also expressed that if DFP were to become 'the one' then it should replace all other similar approaches. Another contribution anticipated the actual development of the project by suggesting extending the project into S1 and establishing a link between these pupils and next year's P7. In all, there was agreement that DFP was a 'good idea' and should be extended.

Similarly, in considering how the project could be sustained, there was recognition among primary teachers that staff at secondary school staff would need to become involved. There were also suggestions of how DFP could be sustained in primary schools through a rolling project of staff development led by DFP staff. There was a proposal from one teacher that stronger home-school links be set up via DFP staff to encourage parental involvement in the project. They felt that parents would be attracted by the presence of someone who was not a teacher and did not represent the school but was there to support children. Reservations to the further development of DFP centred round issues of the curriculum and the requirement of teachers to 'cope with [the] different hats [of] mentor and teacher'. Whilst all the teachers

agreed on the potential efficacy of the project, there was a feeling that it could not be allowed to interfere with other curricular demands on primary school teachers.

The level of personal commitment to maintaining the input initiated by DFP varied from none to total support for the ideas behind the project. In particular, there was a feeling that not being involved more in the project had not been helpful. This feeling was exacerbated by the fact that the children had been removed from class to take part. Three of the teachers indicated that they would have preferred to have been more involved and would have been willing participants in the project if they had been asked. One teacher indicated that she would support any project that was designed to help the children with whom she works. None of the primary teachers were aware of plans to continue DFP with the following year's P7.

Finally, all additional comments recognised that DFP was a 'very good idea' but was too short and came too late. Again the personal and professional attributes of DFP staff were recognised as significant strengths of the project.

Despite very limited knowledge of the DFP work, all of the secondary teachers interviewed supported the continuation and development of the programme. They saw it as offering a valuable and necessary service to vulnerable pupils. There was even a suggestion that the programme could be extended to include other pupils. There were opposing views, however, regarding the extension of the programme. One point of view was that it would require to become part of the life of the school:

*I'm not sure I can answer. I would definitely like to know more.  
There needs to be a mechanism if they want us to be involved  
but it has to be embedded in an organised programme e.g. 1 x term  
meeting to discuss progress.*

Another point of view, however, indicated that the programme would be best run outside of normal school hours:

*It should be sustained, probably outwith school hours, a youth group  
which focuses on people skills to increase confidence for pupils about  
to start secondary school.*

Finally, there was recognition that a programme such as DFP could not only offer support to vulnerable pupils, but had the potential to benefit teachers as well:

*In the little I know – yes. Teachers must be informed more –  
but need the support of experts.*

### **3.5 Pupils' response**

#### **Pupils' experience of DFP**

This section of the report is based on two sets of focus groups with each cohort of pupils. The first focus group took place whilst the pupils were in P7 in the primary school (with the exception of the first primary school to participate) with the second round of focus groups carried out in November 2005 by which time all participating pupils attended the secondary school in S1 – S3. The pupils unanimously agreed that DFP was fun. They all enjoyed going to DFP, liked the activities and reacted well to DFP staff. Typical comments included:

*It's fun, they do good stuff, you get out of class...there's a big massive discussion...big conversations. You have to hold something and you are not allowed to talk without it. It's easy to understand them. They teach you more. They teach you how to respect everybody.*

All the pupils felt that they had been chosen at random, their names having been pulled out of a hat. Activities described by the young participants included:

- mind mapping;
- Japanese counting;
- alphabet game;
- breathing exercises;
- making both sides of your brain work;
- saying 'hello';
- bullying;
- going to High School.

Some of the children reported that they had been given tee-shirts as an encouragement to take part and to develop a sense of belonging to the group. Others appreciated the fact that DFP staff talked about how they had been bullied.

By the time of the S1 – S3 focus groups, pupils reported that they had participated in DFP on an average of three or four times a year. They felt they had done much the same activities as they had in previous years but swimming and juggling had been recently introduced. In addition, two of the groups reported that they had been given laptops in order that they could keep in touch with DFP staff and do their schoolwork. The pupils reported, however, that they mainly use their laptops for listening to music and MSN messaging. One pupil reported her laptop had been stolen.

A number of pupils indicated that they had been set personal challenges, for example, to stop arguing with a particular teacher and to stop accumulating punishment exercises.

### **Pupils' views of the impact of DFP on transition.**

At the first round of focus groups, the children, with one exception, were all looking forward to continuing DFP at secondary school. The one pupil who did not want to continue was uncertain as to why, was puzzled as to what DFP was about and felt that secondary school would be different anyway. The pupils also appreciated that DFP staff and the others in the group would be familiar faces for them. Participating pupils who had been on a visit to the Academy had been pleased to see a member of DFP staff there.

A number of pupils felt they would have no problems with transition, regardless of whether or not they had been involved with DFP. They said that they did not believe rumours of bullying and a harsher regime as they already knew some people at the Academy. Most of the pupils were looking forward to going to secondary school, citing the different atmosphere as a positive feature.

At the second round of focus groups, the pupils in S1 and S2 reported little or no impact on their transition that they could attribute to DFP

### **Pupils' views of the impact of DFP in school**

The immediate reaction of all participants at both rounds of focus groups was that involvement in the project had made no change to their experience of school. However, after a little consideration, a few indicated that they felt there had been some improvements. Getting out of class alone seemed to have been beneficial in helping them cope at school but more significant comments included:

*Yes, [it] help[s] me to cope with the stress of work. If you write a story, you think about more to put in it.*

At the second meeting of the focus groups, one other pupil reported feelings of success, claiming that he would probably have been getting punishment exercises regularly, whereas, at the time of the focus group he had not had any for some time. More common, however, were comments related to just talking about things and being out of class.

In response to questions related to their attitude and behaviour, comments were again equivocal with 'maybe', 'a wee bit' and 'a bit better' being typical, with only two saying a secure 'better'. Some commented that their attitude towards school and their behaviour in class were already good whilst others acknowledged that they still did not behave well, with several indicating that they thought DFP would make no difference to their behaviour in future. A comment that could be regarded as summing up the pupils' views was:

*It's fun but school's still going to be boring. I misbehaved before [DF] and I still do.*

However, when asked how they now get on with teachers, some responses were more positive. More, especially girls, felt that they related better to teachers now and that teachers treated them better. Typical comments included:

*[I'm] maybe a bit more cooperative with teachers. I talk to them more. They are kinder to me more. They don't say that but I just think that.*

Other comments indicated that the pupils were less sure about their relationships with teachers and this was the case in both rounds of focus groups. Similarly, pupils in the focus groups were ambivalent in their attitudes towards school and the contribution that DFP had made to their experience. One pupil reported that his behaviour was improving and, whilst he acknowledged that DFP had been helpful, he nevertheless felt that much of the improvement was the result of his own growing maturity. It may well be the case, of course, that this level of self-awareness is itself in some degree due to the impact of DFP. At the second round of focus groups the pupils reiterated their appreciation of the programme:

*No, [school's] still boring but [Dynamic Futures] helps me cope a wee bit more because [DFP staff] are fun.*

*[DFP staff] don't treat you like children. They treat you like adults and give you respect.*

### **Pupils' views of the impact of DFP in the home**

At both rounds of focus groups, home appeared to be the context in which the pupils felt that DFP had impacted least. At the first focus groups, only two girls (in the same group and one as a reaction to the other) indicated that they spoke to their parents more. These same two

girls felt that, since they had started the project, their parents listened more. At the second focus group, one boy responded:

*Aye, I don't smash windows anymore. It's not as boring 'cos I've got the laptop.*

Elsewhere, there was widespread agreement that there had been little or no impact on the home and the children's relationships with their parents. Typical comments included:

*...that's the last thing I tell my mum  
[I] don't really listen at school so don't want to tell [my] parents*

Some of the pupils had told their parents about a couple of the activities they had done in DFP and most were aware that their parents had had letters and had been invited to meetings. However, none of them saw this as representing a meaningful difference. This was the case at both rounds of focus groups.

### **3.6 Parents' Perspectives**

Parents were contacted during February and March 2006 and 1:1 telephone interviews were carried out. The Vale of Leven Academy provided the research team with a list containing the names and contact details of 24 parents whose children were involved in the project. Of the 24, one declined to take part in an interview as her child had recently been removed from the school, another felt that she did not know enough about the project as she was the pupil's grandmother and had only recently taken the child into her care and five parents were unable to be contacted despite repeated efforts by the research team. In all, 17 interviews were carried out, five were parents of S1 pupils originally from Renton Primary, five were parents of S2 pupils originally from Highdykes Primary and seven were parents of S3 pupils originally from Haldane Primary. A copy of the interview schedule is available in the appendix.

#### **Interviewees' involvement:**

##### **How did you first hear about DFP?**

All of the parents were aware of their child's involvement in the DFP. Seven parents reported that they first heard of the Project through a letter from their child's primary school, four parents were informed by letter from Vale of Leven Academy and five parents first heard about the Project from their children while in primary seven. One parent initially heard of the Project in a letter from the two Dynamic Futures staff.

##### **What has been your involvement with DFP?**

Ten parents, representing almost 60% of those interviewed, reported no involvement at all with DFP, responses such as "*No involvement whatsoever, I would like to get more information*" were fairly typical. Three parents have had little actual involvement with DFP, but were kept informed by their children. The remaining four parents have met the DFP staff on a number of occasions at the Vale of Leven Academy, one parent stated:

*"I've attended all the meetings, met Hilda and Johnny who are absolutely wonderful people, very down to earth. They have helped me a lot with her transition, I'm a single parent and it has put my mind at ease"*

### **Why do you think your child was chosen to take part?**

Responses to this question were very mixed. Seven parents had no idea why their child was chosen to take part in the Project, while another two were unsure:

*“Because I’m a single parent maybe”*

*“Maybe because of low income, my husband is not in work”*

Two parents simply felt that because the school was involved in the Project, their children were automatically selected, while four parents thought that their child had volunteered to take part (*“she likes to take part in everything”*) and names were then drawn out of a hat. Two parents thought that their children were chosen to take part because of specific personal characteristics:

*“She’s very bright in certain aspects, but lacked a bit of confidence”*

*“Because she was quiet at Primary”.*

### **Purpose of the DFP:**

#### **What do you think the DFP is trying to achieve?**

Again, opinion was split on this question, and again, seven parents (over 40% of respondents) had no idea what the Project was trying to achieve. Four parents thought that the Project was aimed at helping pupils prepare for the future:

*“It’s trying to help them prepare for after school, looking for jobs” and “to get kids to make good choices”.*

Two parents felt the emphasis was on helping pupils with special needs:

*“It’s trying to improve on their social behaviour and to get them more involved with the community, especially the ones with learning problems”*

Two other parents regarded DFP as a kind of transition programme:

*“It is taking kids into high school in a confident way, encouraging friendships outwith primary school. It is more than just a transition project, for kids that are a bit vulnerable, it puts them on a good footing for high school”*

One parent thought that improving ICT skills and helping her child use the Internet by giving the pupils laptops was the main focus of the DFP, while another felt that the Project was trying to:

*“Promote self-awareness, confidence and to iron out any problems they had school wise”.*

#### **Do you think that it is necessary to do this?**

The parent quoted previously continued:

*“I don’t know about necessary, but it has really helped put her mind at ease. She has been bullied a lot by one person recently, she can speak to Hilda and Johnny as an independent third party”.*

Another parent took up this theme:

*“Yes, my youngest boy was bullied in S1 and didn’t feel able to talk to anybody”*

Eleven other parents agreed that there was a necessity for this kind of Project, comments included:

*“I think it’s a great idea”*

*“If it benefits them, it’s a very good idea”*

*“Yes, I totally agree, it’s been a great help”*

*“I think it’s a great idea”*

*“Definitely yes, to teach young kids of today about the difficulties in the outside world, they need to be shown and taught”*

*“Quite a good idea, especially the use of a laptop, it gives them a head start”*

*“Yes, definitely. In this day and age, we’ve got to turn negatives into positives”*

Overall, of the parents who had some knowledge or idea about what the DFP was trying to achieve, there was a great deal of positivity and support for the Project.

### **What do you expect from DFP?**

Three parents were unsure of what to expect from DFP, as they did not have enough knowledge about the Project. Six parents thought that the main outcome of their children’s involvement would be an increase in confidence, which would help them to make new friends at the Academy. Three parents felt that the DFP would help their children in the future for life after school:

*“Hopefully it will guide them in the right direction about what they want to do, it gives them a head start about careers”.*

The remaining five parents thought that DFP would benefit their children’s schoolwork in some way, three of the five identified ICT as the main curriculum area where improvement would be seen.

### **Input from DF staff:**

#### **Can you tell me the things that your child has done with DF staff?**

Eight parents (almost 50%) were unable to recall any activities their children had done with DF staff, the following comment is fairly typical:

*“I don’t know what he’s done, he never tells me anything”*

The remaining parents mentioned that their children had been taken out to lunches and dinners with the DF staff, had met up for discussions, taken part in self-awareness groups during school hours and had been on trips to the Glasgow Science Centre and the Tullichewan Trust (a nearby sports and adventure centre).

### **How has your child responded?**

All parents, except one who did not know how her child had responded, reported a very positive reaction from their children. Comments included:

*“He’s really enjoyed it, always wants to go along and is enthusiastic about meeting with everyone”.*

*“ Very positive for both her and myself, absolutely wonderful, a great help”.*

*“ She likes it, but doesn’t tell me much”.*

One parent mentioned that her daughter had really enjoyed being involved in the Project, but her laptop had been stolen and she was very upset about this.

### **Has there been any effect for you?**

Seven parents reported no effect from their child’s involvement with the Project, three of which were parents of S1 pupils who had only had a few months worth of involvement with DFP.

Other parents had noticed beneficial effects for themselves, two mentioned use of the laptops – *“I get to use the computer”* while others were happy for their children to be *“involved in something constructive”*. One parent felt that home life was easier as there were more friends at the house as a result of her daughter becoming more confident and outgoing. The issue of behaviour was mentioned by two parents:

*“His behaviour has calmed down a fair bit and I’ve learned from him to step back, calm down and listen more...he’s taught me a couple of things”.*

*“Seeing her settle in and not having the problems that our eldest boy had has affected me and her Dad”.*

### **Do you know how your child’s teachers have responded?**

Twelve parents, representing 70% of those interviewed did not know how their child’s teachers have responded to the DFP. The remaining five parents offered the following comments:

*“Teachers are quite supportive of it”*

*“They have responded really well, delighted with what he’s done”*

*“She gets on fine with them”*

*“I usually get letters, she is doing very well”*

*“I’ve not really heard anything, but they didn’t mind her going out of class”.*

### **Management:**

#### **How does the school let you know what is happening with DFP?**

Ten parents mentioned that the school informed them about DFP activities by letter, while two were contacted by telephone and one by email. The remaining four parents did not think that the school let them know what was happening with DFP:

*“They tend not to, they’re only involved with behaviour issues”.*

### **Perceptions of DFP impact:**

#### **Have you noticed any improvement in your child's attitude towards school?**

Eleven parents had not noticed any improvement in their child's attitude towards school; the majority mentioned that their children had a good attitude anyway. However two parents expressed some concern about bullying:

*"His attitude has been terrible the last few weeks, he's being bullied"*

*"Her attitude has changed since Christmas, since she hasn't seen them (Hilda and Johnny), she's getting bullied".*

Six parents felt that their child's attitude towards school had improved; four parents attributed an increase in confidence to this improvement, while the other two remarked:

*"He likes it more now, he's made new friends which has helped him settle in at school"*

*"He's been not bad lately, his attitude is improving but he's clashed with one teacher".*

#### **Has there been any improvement in attendance?**

All of the parents replied that there had been no improvement in attendance because their child's attendance had always been very good.

#### **Has DFP had any effect on how your child does in subject classes?**

Eleven parents were either unsure or thought that involvement in DFP had no effect on how their child performed in subject classes. Other parents commented that their children were doing well, but were not sure if that was due to their involvement in DFP:

*"It might have got him more interested in Science, he never was before".*

One parent noted that DFP staff had been supportive with any problems while another was quite definite that DFP had impacted positively on her son's schoolwork:

*"Computer skills and communication with people has improved, he does his homework on the laptop".*

#### **How does your child get on with other children at school?**

Twelve parents felt that their child got on well with other children at school, while two mentioned that their children were very shy but had shown some improvement due to increased confidence. Two of the twelve parents thought that DFP had helped their children socially:

*"Now he's got more friends, a large group, previously only one or two. It (DFP) has definitely helped socially".*

*"He likes going to it, it's helped settle him. He came from Glasgow at the end of Primary 6".*

One parent reported that her daughter got on fine with everyone except from one pupil who was bullying her. Two parents admitted that their children were having difficulties with other pupils:

*“He’s not getting on with others, very unhappy, no friends from Primary or any new ones. He’s found it difficult going to High School”.*

*“Not very well I’m afraid, he does get himself into a bit of bother”.*

### **How does your child get on with teachers?**

Apart from one parent whose child “doesn’t get on with any of them”, the response was very positive. Five parents mentioned that their children got on well with all of their teachers except one, while the rest reported that their children got on well with all of their teachers. One parent stated:

*“He loves them!”*

### **How does your child get on at home and with you?**

Thirteen parents said that their children got on fine at home as they had always done, while two felt that things had improved at home due to DFP:

*“He’s definitely better, more grown up, more interested in subjects and he watches more educational television on the Discovery Channel”.*

*“His behaviour has calmed down a fair bit at home, he’s not as aggressive”.*

For one parent, the situation at home was “horrendous”.

### **How much do you think DFP has helped, if at all?**

Most parents thought that the DFP had helped their children a lot. Twelve parents cited an increase in their child’s confidence and social skills as the main positive impact of DFP:

*“It’s taught him to interact more with other children”*

*“It has helped 100%. I don’t know how she’d have done without it, fantastic for her and me”.*

One parent highlighted the benefits of her child being provided with a laptop:

*“It probably has helped him, especially having the laptop for homework, the Internet and keeping in touch with his friends with MSN”*

Four parents of S1 pupils were unsure if the DFP had helped their children, as it was “too early to say”.

## **The Future:**

### **What do you think would make DFP better?**

Ten parents thought that DFP would be better if they had more involvement, contact and knowledge of what was happening. The following comment is fairly representative of this opinion:

*“Keeping parents more informed, I don’t know that much about what’s gone on, but it has helped”.*

Five parents responded that DFP was fine the way it was, one parent commented:

*“I think they’ve done well and I hope it carries on”.*

One parent answered, *“I don’t know”*, while another thought that the Project should last longer:

*“It would be better if they worked with them right the way through. I would like to be able to speak to them with my daughter about her subject choices”.*

### **Is there anything else you would like to say?**

Six parents did not have anything more to add and were happy that the interview had covered everything. Additional comments from other parents were mainly positive with one or two exceptions:

*“I would like some more information”*

*“How do you find out more about it?”*

*“They should involve the parents more, they never told me anything”*

*“He’s thoroughly enjoyed it”*

*“The careers aspect is good”*

*“He likes being involved in lots of groups, it keeps him off the streets”*

*“It’s a fantastic project, they should expand it to any kids that need help”*

*“Hopefully it will carry on right the way through school, it’s made a big difference”*

*“It’s a very, very good idea. I know other parents are supportive of it. Hilda and Johnny are good at giving you advice for dealing with kids, really helpful and very kind. It would be really good if they could extend it into third year”.*

### 3.7 Attendance and attainment

As indicated in Section 2.3, quantitative data were also gathered which is summarised in Table 3.1 below. In addition, national and local authority data were also extracted in order to allow the comparison among the three groups of pupils to be considered within both local and national perspectives.

**Table 3.1 School, Local Authority and National Data on Unauthorised Absence and entitlement to Free School Meals.**

School	% of unauthorised absences for Primary 7 pupils		% of pupils with Free School Meal Entitlement	
	2003-2004	2005-2006	2003-2004	2005-2006
Highdykes	0.6	0.7	26.4	22.6
Levenvale	0.0	1.0	26.5	22.9
Haldane	0.3	0.4	53.8	42.9
Renton	-	0.8	-	41.7
West Dunbartonshire	0.6	0.5	26.4	23.5
Scotland	0.7	0.9	20.5	19.0

Source: Scottish Executive

Table 3.1 sets the contexts within which the impact of the project is considered. The percentage of unauthorised absences was used as an indicator of the relationship between schools and their pupils. For example, a high percentage indicates a significant level of truancy, in turn indicating a considerable degree of disaffection with or disengagement from school. In this instance, the average for West Dunbartonshire is slightly lower than that for the country as a whole. Perhaps worthy of note is the low percentage of unauthorised absence at Haldane despite the high percentage of Free School Meal Entitlement. The pattern of unauthorised absence among this group of pupils at Vale of Leven Academy might be an indicator of the impact of DFP.

The percentage of Free School Meal Entitlement is frequently used as an indicator of deprivation albeit a rather crude indicator. There is an established relationship between deprivation and other factors affecting pupils' experience of school such as low attainment, poor attendance and disaffection with or disengagement from schooling. The Free School Meal Entitlement for the authority as a whole is above the average for Scotland, with the percentage for Haldane being more than twice the national average.

### 3.71 The Haldane cohort

**Table 3.2 Data on Individual S2 Pupils from Haldane Primary School now in the Vale of Leven Academy (2004/5) participating in DFP**

<b>Pupil ID</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>% attendance to May 2005</b>	<b>% unauthorised absences to May 2005</b>	<b>Punishment exercises issued in March 2005</b>
1 M	C	C	B	81.9	3.6	30
2 -	E	E	C	96.0	1.5	28
3 F	C	C	C	93.1	0.4	19
4 M	D	E	D	88.8	0.0	14
5 F	C	E	E	93.5	0.0	11
6 F	D	E	E	87.3	0.0	1
7 M	E	E	E	90.6	0.0	0
8 M	E	E	E	88.4	0.0	0

Source: Vale of Leven Academy

This cohort of pupils was in S2 at Vale of Leven Academy in session 2004/5 and, therefore, had one year more of the DFP than the Highdykes cohort. A comparison of averages with West Dunbartonshire and Scotland as a whole, shows that Haldane Primary School has 53.8% of pupils in receipt of free school meals, roughly double the authority average and more than twice the national figure (see Table 3.2).

Four of the eight pupils in this cohort had less than 90% attendance. However, none had less than 80%. In P7, the percentage of unauthorised absence for Haldane was 0.3% and this has risen to 0.7%, but still only equalling the national average.

Attainment levels in S2 for this cohort were significantly higher than those for either the Highdykes cohort or the comparison group from Levenvale. Two pupils had achieved level E in each of Mathematics, Reading and Writing and another two have reached level E in Reading and Writing. Only two pupils have not reached level D in any area with one pupil still at level B in writing.

Given the high percentage of free school meals for Haldane Primary, it could be predicted that this group would be the most challenging for the success of the DFP and this is reflected in the pattern of punishment exercises issued in March 2005. Over the twenty-one school days in March, only two pupils received no punishment exercises, and only one other pupil had one punishment exercise. The others received a number of punishment exercises that averaged from one every second day to one and a half every day.

In session 2005-2006 the cohort from Haldane moved into S3. Table 3.3 shows the data on attainment and attendance at the end of the session.

**Table 3.3 Data for S3 Pupils (2005-2006) from Haldane Primary School**

Pupil ID	Maths	Reading	Writing	% attendance to June 2006	Exclusions to June 2006	Punishment exercises issued from August 2005 to June 2006
1	D	C	B	74.73	2 days	19
2				Pupil changed school		
3	C	C	C	77.93	3 days*	6
4	D	E	D	85.37	2 days	15
5	C	E	E	93.09	0	0
6	D	E	E	85.9	0	0
7	E	E	E	98.94	0	6
8	E	E	E	93.09	0	2

Comparing the data in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 it can be seen that, as far as attainment is concerned, the group of pupils from Haldane Primary School made no improvement in the Academy. Whilst their attendance patterns remained a cause for concern in S3, some pupils attended less regularly (pupil id 1 and 3), whilst some attended more regularly (pupil id 7 and 8). However, punishment exercises seemed to have dropped for most of the group from S2 to S3.

A similar picture of male indiscipline is also evident among a number of boys in S3. Of the 48 punishment exercises issued to the former Haldane primary school pupils involved in the Project, 87.5% were for boys. Three pupils in particular received 83% of all the punishment exercises issued to the group of seven students. Pupils were excluded from school on seven occasions; boys were excluded for four days while one girl who fell pregnant during S3 was excluded for the remaining three days. Only two pupils from the group received no punishment exercises or exclusions throughout the year and both were girls. The pupils with the worst disciplinary records in S3 were also the worst offenders in the group during S2. One of the boys received 28 punishment exercises in S2 and had improved his behaviour slightly by receiving 19 in S3, while another boy increased his amount of punishment exercises from 9 in S2 to 15 in S3. Disappointingly, one boy who received no punishment exercises during S2 was given six in S3. It would appear that some of the pupils are actually experiencing more discipline problems rather than less as they move through the school, which suggests that despite three years of exposure to DFP, there appeared to be little positive effect. Overall attendance was 87.01%, the lowest average from the four groups during session 2005-2006 and was slightly less than the previous year's average of 89.09%. Two pupils in particular had poorer attendance compared to the previous year, one pupil's level was 81.9% during S2, this figure fell to 74.35 in S3 while the other had attendance levels of 93.1% in S2 and 77.93% during S3 although this dramatic fall is probably due to her pregnancy.

The pupil with the lowest attainment levels for reading, writing and maths is male and has the lowest attendance rate and the worst disciplinary record in the group. However, the two highest achieving pupils academically are boys who are also the two most frequent attendees and have no exclusions, although they do have eight punishment exercises between them during S3 compared to none in S2.

In addition to coming from possibly the most deprived background, this group was also the first DFP cohort. It is possible, therefore, that these factors have contributed to the apparently less effective impact of DFP as indicated by the quantitative data presented here. It is encouraging to note that the high number of punishment exercises issued to this cohort in S2 does not appear to have had an adverse impact on attendance.

### 3.72 The Highdykes cohort

**Table 3.4 Data on S1 pupils from Highdykes Primary School participating in DFP**

Pupil ID	Maths	Reading	Writing	% attendance to 31 May 2005	% unauthorised absences to 31 March 2005	Punishment exercises issued in March 2005
1	C	D	D	95.7	0.0	0
2	C	C	C	88.8	0.7	2
3	D	E	E	95.7	0.0	4
4	C	C	C	94.9	0.0	0
5	C	C	C	96.7	0.0	30
6	D	C	D	81.5	0.7	11
7	D	D	D	96.4	0.0	1
8	D	D	D	94.2	0.0	0
9	B	C	C	98.2	0.0	4

Source: Vale of Leven Academy

This cohort was in S1 at Vale of Leven Academy in session 2004/5. Taking free school meals as an indicator of deprivation, the percentage of free school meals in the cohort's Primary school was 26.4%, which is the average for West Dunbartonshire and well above the Scottish average of 20.5% (see Table 3.4)

The average level of attainment in Mathematics, Reading and Writing was around level C/D. However, one pupil had reached level E in Reading and Writing and only one pupil was at level B in Maths.

Attendance for this cohort was impressively high with only two pupils showing more than 10% absence from school. In addition, only two pupils had unauthorised absences at a rate of 0.7%, which is the average for Scotland. The percentage of unauthorised absences for this group as a whole is 0.2%, a fall from the P7 average of 0.6%.

The number of punishment exercises issued in March 2005 indicates a considerable variation in experience for the members of this cohort. Three of the nine pupils received no punishment exercises. All three had a good attendance record and no unauthorised absences, and had attained a mixture of levels C and D for Mathematics, Reading and Writing. Another four pupils received four or less punishment exercises in the month, thereby averaging one per week or less. However, one pupil received eleven punishment exercises. Given that there were twenty-one school days in March, this averages one every other day. Most strikingly, one pupil had thirty punishment exercises during the same period.

On the one hand, Vale of Leven Academy is to be commended in supporting this cohort to reach levels of attainment and attendance that are at least acceptable. Moreover, it would appear that the school is willing to support pupils whose behaviour is, presumably, a cause for concern by not excluding them. How far this level of support can be attributed to the DFP is not clear at this stage in the evaluation but should become more obvious in the next phase or the research. There is a suggestion, however, that whilst some of the pupils in this cohort appear to be benefiting from DFP, others' experience of school may be quite different.

Table 3.5 provides attendance and attainment for the Highdykes cohort.

**Table 3.5 Data for S2 Pupils (2005-2006) from Highdykes Primary School**

<b>Pupil ID</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>% attendance to June 2006</b>	<b>Exclusions to June 2006</b>	<b>Punishment exercises issued from August 2005 to June 2006</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	C	E	E	92.2	0	0	Male
2	C	C	C	63.83	3 days	9	Female
3	E	F	E	93.62	3 days	59	Male
4	C	D	D	92.29	1 day	3	Female
5	C	C	C	96.01	2 days	59	Male
6	D	C	D	68.60	15 days*	11	Male
7	D	E	D	92.02	0	0	Female
8	D	E	E	98.14	0	0	Female
9	B	C	C	99.02	0	1	Male

\* Excluded permanently

Discipline among S2 boys again appears to be problematic: 91.5% of punishment exercises issued and 83.3% of exclusions were for boys, one of whom was excluded permanently from the school (see Table 3.5). The behaviour of two of the boys appears to have rapidly deteriorated as the year has progressed. One boy received six punishment exercises in the first third of the academic year (August – the end of October) and a further 53 between the end of October and the end of June, while the other received 14 punishment exercises during the first period and a further 45 in the remainder of the year. This would suggest that the Project has had little positive impact on the behaviour of pupils with the worst disciplinary records. One of the boys with behavioural issues has however, managed to achieve level E for Maths and level F for Reading during his second year at the Academy.

Three pupils received no punishment exercises or exclusions during their second year at the Academy: two were girls with good attendance and high levels of academic achievement, while the boy also had high levels in both attendance and attainment. This particular pupil has also achieved level E in both reading and writing since the end of October 2005 (when the previous statistics were made available by the Academy) and has improved his attendance from 75% to 92.2%. Interestingly, the pupil with the highest academic attainment received the joint - highest number of punishment exercises, the joint - second highest number of exclusions and is male, while the pupil with the lowest levels of attainment has the best attendance, is the one of the best behaved and is also male.

The average attendance for the group was 88.4% during S2 compared to 93.6 % in S1 suggesting that some pupils are becoming more disillusioned with school as they get older.

### 3.73 The Renton Cohort

Table 3.6 provides attendance and attainment data for the Renton cohort

**Table 3.6 Data for S1 Pupils (2005-2006) from Renton Primary School**

<b>Pupil ID</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>% attendance to June 2006</b>	<b>Exclusions to June 2006</b>	<b>Punishment exercises issued from August 2005 to March 2006 **</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	B	C	B	77.39	29 days	27	Male
2	E	E	E	91.49	0	12	Male
3	E	E	E	92.91	3 days*	18	Male
4	C	C	D	89.10	4 days	10	Male
5	D	D	D	84.84	0	1	Female
6	D	D	D	81.38	0	0	Female
7	C	B	B	97.87	2	0	Male
8	C	E	D	95.21	0	2	Female

\* Moved to New Zealand 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006

\*\* S1 only changed from punishment exercises to detentions 19/4/06

The most striking point to note upon examination of the data from Table 3.6 is that 100% of all exclusions and 95.7% of all punishment exercises issued were for boys. In addition, three pupils were given detention after 19/4/06 and all were boys. Clearly, where there are discipline issues in the group, they exist almost exclusively among boys. While the two highest academic achievers were boys, the two lowest were also male. The pupil with the joint lowest achievement also had the lowest attendance levels and the highest number of exclusions, punishment exercises and detentions. Overall, the average attendance for the group was 88.7%. Only one pupil, a girl, received no punishment exercises or exclusions during the whole year, while one girl received no exclusions and only one punishment exercise. However, the two girls in question had the two lowest attendance levels in the group.

### 3.74 Comparison group

#### The Levenvale Cohort

**Table 3.7 Data for S1 Pupils from Levenvale Primary School**

<b>Pupil ID</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>% attendance to May 2005</b>	<b>% unauthorised absences to March 2005</b>	<b>Punishment exercises issued in March 2005</b>
1	B	C	B	89.5	0.0	1
2	C	D	C	94.6	0.0	0
3	B	C	C	98.2	0.0	0
4	D	D	C	94.9	0.0	0
5	D	E	E	99.3	0.0	0
6	C	D	C	94.9	0.0	0
7	C	C	C	85.9	2.9	3
8	C	D	C	94.9	0.0	0
9	D	C	B	65.2	0.4	0
10	D	C	C	89.9	0.0	1

Source: Vale of Leven Academy

In common with the Highdykes group, this cohort attended S1 at the Vale of Leven Academy in 2004/5. The level of free school meals at Levenvale is comparable to both that for Highdykes and the average for the local authority but is above the Scottish average(see Table 3.7).

Levels of attainment are comparable to those at Highdykes. One former Levenvale pupil has reached level D in Maths and E in Reading and Writing but three pupils are still at level B in at least one of these areas in comparison with the one pupil from Highdykes at level B in Mathematics only. However, there is a significant gap in level of attainment between this group and the Haldane cohort.

In common with the DFP cohorts, attendance among this group is acceptably high with six of the ten pupils showing more than 90% attendance and another three 85% or above. The one aberration being pupil 9 in this group whose attendance stands at 65.2%. However, this same pupil has managed to attain level D in Mathematics and C in Reading and Writing. The level of

unauthorised absence for the comparison group is slightly above that for Highdykes at 0.3% and has risen from 0% in P7. However, it is still less than half the current average for Haldane.

The most noticeable difference between this group and the others lies in the low number of punishment exercises. This may be a matter for DFP and Vale of Leven staff to consider for the future development of the project.

**Table 3.8 Data for S2 Pupils (2005-2006) from Levensale Primary School (Comparison Group)**

<b>Pupil ID</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>% attendance to June 2006</b>	<b>Exclusions to June 2006</b>	<b>Punishment exercises issued from August 2005 to June 2006</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	B	C	C	87.23	0	38	Male
2	D	D	E	95.74	0	0	Female
3	B	D	D	99.73	0	0	Female
4	D	E	D	90.69	0	0	Male
5	E	F	E	97.07	0	0	Female
6	D	E	E	95.74	0	0	Female
7	D	D	C	85.64	3 days	24	Male
8	D	D	D	97.61	0	0	Female
9	D	C	B	47.34*	0	1	Male
10	D	D	C	82.98	7 days	16	Male

\* School refuser

Table 3.8 relates to pupils from the comparison group, that is, those pupils who have had no involvement with the project but have a similar profile to those pupils who have been involved. In common with the other three pupil groups, discipline issues are related primarily to boys, in this case 100% of all punishment exercises issued were for boys and all pupils excluded were boys. The same four male pupils also had the worst discipline issues during the previous year although given that last year the total number of punishment exercises issued was 5 and the figure in S2 was 79, it would appear that their indiscipline has accelerated far more rapidly than offenders from groups who have been exposed to the Project. The remaining six pupils from this group received no punishment exercises or exclusions during S2 and no punishment exercises during S1.

Average attendance was slightly higher in S1 than in S2; 90.73% and 87.98% respectively. The attendance average in S2 would have been 92.49% if pupil number 9 (termed a school refuser by the Academy) is taken out of the equation, in S1 the average would have been 93.57%. Six pupils had attendance levels above 90% for both years.

Once again there is a direct correlation between the pupil with the lowest attainment levels and highest number of punishment exercises. This pupil is also male as is the case in the other three groups. The two highest achieving pupils are girls who have attendance levels above 95% and received no punishment exercises or exclusions throughout the year. Special mention must also be given to one of the girls who had achieved levels C, D, and C in S1 and progressed to levels D, E and E in S2.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Overall impact

DFP staff were clear that the main purpose of the initiative was to help children form better relationships in their lives with teachers and parents in the hope that better relationships would help to develop children's potential in the schooling process. The context in which this would take place was transition, sustaining interest in education, and raising attainment. The underpinning assumptions, therefore, were that there were a number of pupils whose experience of school could be improved and who were considered to be vulnerable during transition to secondary school. Among those teachers who were aware of DFP, there was a general awareness of and agreement with these assumptions.

In terms of DFP impact on improved attitudes and behaviour, primary teachers and headteachers were mixed in their responses. Whilst all felt there to be some intrinsic benefit within the initiative, they were unable to report any noticeable impact within the primary schools that could be attributed to the programme. Too little too late summed up the responses from primary schools. In both primary and secondary settings, headteachers and SMT responses to the input from DFP were positive. They were all interested in learning more about the project and looked for ways to use it to the benefit of the school.

As reported elsewhere, pupils' responses to DFP staff and programme activities were overwhelmingly positive. However, when pressed on how far they could attribute any perceived success in school (including improved motivation, attainment and behaviour), they were more circumspect. Initial responses tended to be non-committal or outright rejection of the efficacy of DFP but further probing produced some positive, albeit tentative, responses.

Whilst all parents were aware of their children's involvement in the programme, only two were aware that the purpose was to support transition. The majority of parents, therefore were unaware that their children were involved in the programme as a matter of transition and because they were perceived to be vulnerable. Indeed, whilst some parents attributed participation to a range of reasons, a significant number had no idea at all why their child was involved.

Initially, the majority of parents were unable to identify or justify any positive impact of DFP on their children. After further probing, however, a number of parents reported that either they felt their children's attitudes and behaviour were unproblematic anyway whilst others reported feeling that their children's attitudes towards school had improved. Some went on to report that this might be attributable to DFP. Parents generally thought that their children interacted well with other pupils and their teachers. They felt that this was in part attributable to DFP though they were unable to judge to what extent.

Only one secondary teacher felt able to comment on the impact of DFP in any detail. This teacher felt that whilst DFP had resulted in increased confidence, this in turn had been translated into more troublesome behaviour for some teachers.

### 4.2 Change in pupil behaviour and attitude

There was unanimous agreement among parents, teachers and headteachers that pupils were committed to the project. This was confirmed by pupils themselves in their reporting of enjoyment at the DFP sessions. Commitment to the school was less certain among pupils, but some were able to attribute coping with school to DFP, at least to some degree. The most

positive message came from parents who felt that their children's commitment to and attitude towards school had become more positive.

The data also indicate a measure of success regarding improved collaboration. DFP staff, headteachers and teachers all commented on pupils' willingness to share their experiences and to collaborate with others, at least within the context of DFP.

Evidence of improved collaboration within the general school context was more fragile. Whilst some pupils, girls in particular, commented that their relationships with teachers had improved, others indicated that they were less sure about their relationships with teachers. Similarly, parents were almost equally divided between those who felt that DFP had had a positive impact on their children's relationships with teachers and other pupils, and those who reported as unsure or thought that involvement in DFP had no effect.

Pupils own comments on self-esteem were vague, with most indicating that their estimate of themselves remained the same. However comments regarding feelings of success, coping with stress and being better behaved indicate that the programme may well have had an impact on self-esteem. Parents, responses appear to support the pupils' own observations of increased confidence and social skills.

This indication of impact, however, should be tempered with the perceptions of some respondents that they either could not tell or, in the case of some teachers that increased confidence has led to greater disruptive behaviour.

Self-exploration and evaluation has been a significant aspect of DFP and one which has been highly valued by pupils and teachers. Pupils appreciated the example set by DFP staff and reported that they were more self aware and had set themselves personal challenges. School staff saw the opportunity for self evaluation in a non-threatening environment as a major asset of the programme.

Evidence of success in changed attitudes, behaviour, attendance and attainment was tenuous. Whilst DFP staff had noticed pupils' increased maturity and ability to manage their own lives, teachers, headteachers and pupils themselves were less certain. Most school staff indicated that attendance would not have been an issue for these groups of pupils and this view was supported by parents. However, individual accounts of success were evidenced by teachers, albeit with some reservations.

These findings are confirmed within the quantitative data on attendance, attainment and discipline. Attendance was not a major issue for any of the groups, including the comparison group. Similar to the comparison group, the majority of punishment exercises were given to boys and most of these were accumulated by a small number of individuals in each case. Whilst the qualitative data indicate a perceived measure of success for the programme, this is not borne out by the quantitative data. The control group appears to have achieved greater success in terms of attainment and patterns of indiscipline are similar in each of the groups.

### **4.3 Schools' response**

Of each of the groups involved in the project, pupils, parents, teachers and schools, the latter appear to be the group that has benefited least in terms of the research questions. Whilst primary teachers were able to comment on the impact of DFP on pupils, their lack of participative involvement meant that they were unable to identify any impact on their own pedagogy, self-esteem or school procedures. This is at least in part attributable to the fact that there were only a few DFP sessions whilst the children were in primary school. Nevertheless,

some primary teachers' responses indicated that, despite their limited experience of DFP, they sensed that the programme had the potential to impact on the ethos of the school and relationships within it. Unfortunately, there was no evidence from external experts e.g. HMIE, Education Officers, to substantiate or challenge these perceptions.

The secondary teachers interviewed, apart from members of the Senior Management Team, were unable to comment on DFP as they were either aware of the programme only in general terms, or completely unaware of it at all.

The headteachers of primary schools, and members of SMT in the Academy were members of the steering group and were involved in cluster meetings. In each of these contexts, matters concerning DFP were addressed, although towards the end of the evaluation period, these had either become infrequent or had ceased altogether. Otherwise, they reported that their role within the project was to act as facilitator, organiser and cover for teachers. In short, they saw their role simply in functional terms. Consequently, DFP had no perceivable impact on school procedures or systems.

#### **4.4 Pupils' and Parents' perspectives**

Pupils indicated that they felt that DFP has had little or no impact in their relationships with parents. However, two pupils did indicate that they speak to their parents more and a third reported that they spend time using the laptop which distracts them from behaviours that were previously troublesome. However, perhaps pupils' responses to questions regarding home life should be seen in the generalised context of relations between teenagers and their parents.

Although none of the parents made direct reference to being more inclined to listen to their children, some of the evidence suggests that a minority were. Some reported better interaction between their own and others' children and one parent was enthusiastic about the benefits of DFP for both herself and her child. The majority of parents reported that their children were now easier to manage and they attributed this directly to DFP. A small number were able to give examples of how their children were now more manageable, whilst a little more than half commented that their children had always been manageable at home. Only one parent reported entirely negatively.

Teachers and headteachers saw no impact of the programme on the interactions between parents and school. Those parents who attended sessions and meeting were those that they would have expected. Moreover, teachers were unable to detect any impact on parents' own response to the programme other than among those parents who had attended DFP sessions. Neither pupils nor parents felt able to comment on this matter with any certainty.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings to emerge from the evaluation of the DFP project. Some of these raise issues for the sustainability of the Project.

#### **Key findings**

The main finding described in greater detail in the previous section, are summarised below.

- DFP staff were a major asset to the project and essential to its success.
- There is a clear commitment to the ideas behind the project from all involved.
- There is support for the project from school staff and the local authority, albeit with the reservations expressed by teachers and headteachers.
- The pupils involved are generally enthusiastic about the project, even where its central purpose is not fully understood.
- The evidence from the quantitative data is ambiguous. On the one hand, a significant number of pupils within the DFP cohorts appear to be experiencing difficulties at the Academy. However, their levels of attendance and achievement are acceptable. This statement requires further qualification in that the data on attendance matches that of the comparison group who have not participated in the DFP. Figures for attainment suggest that the comparison group are matching the Highdykes group (who are at the same stage in the Academy) but is behind that of the Haldane group who have received one more year of schooling and the DFP.

### 5.2 Summary

The external evaluation gathered a large amount of qualitative information from the various stakeholders that has been summarised in this report. In addition, some quantitative data on pupils' attendance and attainment was collected and this allowed a comparison to be made on the progress of the children involved in DFP with others attending the Vale of Leven Academy who were not involved, and with relevant figures on unauthorised absence and free school meal entitlement for Scotland nationally. The DFP operated in all three primary schools and for three academic sessions in the Academy. The main points to emerge from the stakeholders' comments concerning their role in the project, how it was implemented and managed, their views on the impact of DFP and its future development and sustainability have been highlighted.

Probably the most significant finding concerns the input from DFP staff. Everyone interviewed commented on the enthusiasm, commitment, personality and degree of understanding of children and the difficulties they face that the DFP staff demonstrate. There was a clear sense that they were the major asset of the project and are essential to its success. This was the perception in both primary and secondary contexts.

In addition, there was a clear commitment to the ideas that underpin DFP from all respondents. Children and teachers alike, including those teachers in the Academy who had had minimal, if any, contact with the project, commented on the need for such a project and for more of this type of activity in schools. In addition, all teachers and headteachers reported positively in terms of their understanding of the nature and purpose of the project. They were also encouraged by the children's reactions to DFP.

There was also strong support for the DFP from the Local Authority. A steering group was set up involving the primary headteachers whose schools were involved, a Depute Head and PT Guidance from the Vale of Leven Academy, representatives from the Local Authority (QIO and technical support), and DFP staff. In addition, the project was supported by a number of social events and the distribution of laptop computers to those pupils involved.

The pupils involved in the DFP were generally enthusiastic about the project. They were all able to list and talk about the activities they had undertaken and they had all enjoyed the DFP sessions. One or two were unclear about the aims of the project and some questioned its value beyond getting out of class. However, the majority felt that it either was helping in some way or at least had the potential to be helpful. Even those pupils who felt it was helping, however, were unable to give concrete examples of how they had been helped. This finding should be qualified by the fact that, in all cases, including the young people in S3 at the end of the evaluation period, the pupils had only undertaken a small number of DFP sessions.

There was a high level of enthusiasm for the project among Vale of Leven Academy staff. The Depute Head and the PT involved demonstrated a considerable measure of personal commitment to the project in the time they devoted to the steering group and accommodating the project within the school. In addition, they indicated that the initiative had strong support among other members of the Senior Management Team.

The teachers and headteachers in primary schools indicated that they would find it difficult to develop and sustain the project without considerable staff development. Indeed, some teachers, whilst enthusiastic about the ideas and activities behind DFP, commented that they would find it difficult to deliver the project at all as it entailed a quite different kind of interaction with children than the normal teacher-pupil relationship. Those teachers interviewed at the Academy also indicated that their lack of involvement would make it difficult for them to develop and sustain the project.

Teachers and headteachers in primary schools also commented on the disadvantages as well as advantages of carrying out the project with small groups. Whilst they recognised that targeting certain pupils allowed the project to have a clear focus, the children themselves were not slow to work out who was involved and why they might be taking part in DFP. Operating the programme with small groups was unproblematic for teachers and SMT in the Academy.

Teachers and headteachers in the primary schools commented that if the project were to be seen to work more effectively, it would need to be extended to include more pupils. They felt that working with a wider range of pupils would lend credibility to the project. In addition, they felt that the project and pupils involved would benefit if it were to begin at an earlier stage, although there was no agreement on when that stage should begin. Some respondents (possibly those who saw DFP primarily as addressing transition) indicated earlier in P7. Other participants (possibly those who saw the main purpose as supporting vulnerable children) indicated that the early stages of Primary education would be a more appropriate starting point. There was a clear consensus among primary school teachers and headteachers that beginning in the last few months of P7 was too late. Secondary teachers were unable to comment on this aspect of the project.

In addition to these comments, there were a number of significant findings arising from the quantitative data gathered to date: Vale of Leven Academy is providing a high level of support for a significant number of pupils within the DFP initiative. The extent to which DFP has a role or influence in this support is not clear. A high level of attendance was maintained among the pupils in the DFP cohorts. This was comparable with the attendance for pupils in the comparison group. Similarly, an acceptable level of attainment for vulnerable pupils was reached by the DFP cohorts. This was comparable with the comparison group. There were a

significant number of pupils within the DFP cohorts who appeared to be experiencing difficulties within the Academy. The Haldane cohort, in particular, may have proved difficult to support.

### 5.3 Issues and Implications

The findings of the evaluation highlight some issues and implications for the future of DFP and these are discussed below.

#### **Sustainability and development**

This is, perhaps, the major issue to arise from the report. The project is highly dependent upon the personal and professional qualities of DFP staff. Whilst this is a major asset, it is also a significant factor when considering how to develop and sustain the Project. If teachers were to run the project in the future, they would require a considerable degree of staff development. This development would entail, naturally, training in the activities and conduct of DFP sessions. Additionally, teachers involved in delivering DFP would have to be familiar with the philosophical and psychological theories that form the basis of the project. Indeed, given some of the reservations expressed above, it may be the case that the project would be best run by someone other than a class teacher. This issue was highlighted within the interim report but remains significant at the end of the evaluation period.

Moreover, this project was well supported by the Local Authority. Any decision to use DFP beyond the period of the research would have to take cognisance of the degree to which the Project was supported and any impact this might have had on the level of success achieved. Similarly, any other authority wishing to duplicate this initiative would have to be aware of the quality and quantity of support that operated in this instance.

#### **Effectiveness of DFP within primary schools**

Whilst there was clear support for the project among pupils, teachers and headteachers there was also a feeling of *'too little, too late'*. This may be the result of an understanding among primary staff that the main purpose of the project was to support vulnerable pupils and that the transition element had been subsumed into that in their perception. Teachers' and headteachers' comments concerning the earlier introduction of DFP, their desire to know more about the project, and their regret about not finding out more and how they could use it, all indicate that they perceived the project as being worthwhile, they felt it had the potential to be effective, but there had not been the opportunity for them to engage with it in a more meaningful way in order to support the pupils involved and the other pupils in their current and future classes.

#### **The operation of DFP in secondary school**

Contributions from teachers in the secondary school reflected the concerns of their colleagues from primary schools. Like them, they assumed the project to be of some value but their lack of involvement rendered them unable to comment authoritatively on how DFP operated within the school.

Primary teachers felt that, having begun supporting children, the DFP involvement in the pupils' experience of secondary school should reflect the level of commitment and enthusiasm they had been given at primary school. The evidence gathered from the quantitative data suggests that high levels of support were maintained at Vale of Leven Academy but it is not clear to what extent the DFP was influential in providing this support.

There appears to be a tension between the qualitative responses of the primary teachers and pupils involved, and the experiences of the pupils at the Academy, as far as it can be assessed from the quantitative data. Whilst figures for attendance and attainment suggested that pupils' and primary teachers' expectations of difficulty and failure were not met, the pattern of punishment exercises indicated that life at school was still difficult for a significant number of the DFP pupils. In particular, the fact that DFP pupils appeared to do no better than a similar group who had not undertaken the Project, has implications for how the initiative might operate in the future.

#### **5.4 Final comment**

There is little doubt that the Dynamic Futures Project was well received by those participating in its activities. The children chosen to take part were selected because of the vulnerable circumstances which would not equip them well to cope with the transition to secondary school. They all responded exceedingly well to the enthusiasm and informality of the DFP staff. The DFP sessions were seen as a welcome alternative to the routine of classroom life. This is perhaps the main hallmark of the initiative. However, what has not yet been demonstrated, is whether such activities have had a more profound impact. Maybe such potential impact will take time to emerge though undoubtedly each child's own circumstances at both home and school will exert a significant influence. It is therefore an open verdict as to whether the aims of the Dynamic Futures Project have been achieved.

With regard to the reaction of teachers, most of the primary school teachers soon realised the potential of the initiative in terms of supporting pupils who were likely to have difficulties with the transition to the secondary school. However, all of them highlighted the fact that the DFP input had been too slight to make a significant impact. The situation in the secondary school was somewhat less informed. Most of the secondary school teachers, who might have been expected to display some knowledge of the initiative, knew very little about it.

Given that the potential impact of the DFP, though well intentioned, was highly dependent on the qualities and approach of the DFP staff raises serious questions about the sustainability of the work. Teachers themselves did not feel able to adopt DFP practices without continuing support.

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## **APPENDIX**

# Appendix 1

<b>University of Glasgow</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Evaluation of the Dynamic Futures Project</b>	
<b>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DFP STAFF</b>	

**Name** .....

**Location** .....

**Date** .....

**Start time of interview** .....

**Finish time of interview** .....

**Interviewer** .....

**PLEASE INDICATE THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE INFORMATION  
SUPPLIED**

## **SECTION A: Interviewee's Role**

1. Can you tell me about the Dynamic Futures company and how the DFP programme was formed?
2. Can you tell me how you became involved with Dynamic Futures?
3. Can you tell me about your role in developing DFP?
4. What training/background do you have that allows you to contribute to the success of DFP?

## **SECTION B: Purpose**

5. What is your understanding of the purpose of the Dynamic Futures Programme?
6. What assumptions about children underpin the DFP?
7. What assumptions about teachers underpin the DFP?
8. What assumptions about parents underpin the DFP?
9. What assumptions about learning and teaching underpin the DFP?

## **SECTION C: Input from DF staff**

10. Can you outline your activities in schools?
11. Who decided what children were to be involved and on what basis? Was it the same in each school?
12. How have pupils in each of the schools responded to the input?

13. How have parents responded to this input?

### **SECTION D: Management**

14. Can you describe your role in managing DFP in schools?
15. What communication processes are in place to let different people know what's going on?
16. What role does the local authority play in managing?
17. Are there adequate resources to implement the DFP? Who decided how they are used?

### **SECTION E: Perceptions of DFP impact**

18. Have you detected any improvement/deterioration in attitudes and behaviour from those involved?

#### **Pupils:**

Commitment  
self-esteem  
self-evaluation  
attendance  
attainment  
relationships

#### **Teachers:**

Collaboration  
self-esteem

#### **Parents:**

Interest  
contact

19. Now that you have run the programme, what do you see as the advantages of the DFP?
20. Have/will you changed how you run the programme?

What reasons do you have for changing or not changing?

### **SECTION F: The Future**

How do you think the project should develop in the future? Why is this?

How would you propose that schools could sustained the programme?  
Any other comments you wish to make?

**Appendix 2**

**Interview schedule for headteachers and school managers**

<b>University of Glasgow</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Evaluation of the Dynamic Futures Project</b>	
<b>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</b>	
<b>FOR HEADTEACHERS</b>	
<b>AND SCHOOL MANAGERS</b>	

**Name** .....

**Location** .....

**Date** .....

**Start time of interview** .....

**Finish time of interview** .....

**Interviewer** .....

**PLEASE INDICATE THE CONFIDENTIALITY  
OF THE INFORMATION SUPPLIED**

### **SECTION A: Interviewee's Role**

How did you first hear about DFP and what made you decide it would be appropriate for your school?

How was the programme set up in your school and what role did you play in that?

What do you think you personally can contribute to the success of DFP?

On what basis were the children who took part chosen?

On what basis were the teachers who took part chosen? Did they readily agree to be involved?

### **SECTION B: Purpose**

What is your understanding of the purpose of the Dynamic Futures Programme? What is it trying to achieve?

In your view, why has it been set up?

In your view, what assumptions underpin the DFP? To what extent do you share these assumptions?

What do you expect from the DFP? Are these expectations realistic?

### **SECTION C: Input from DF staff**

Can you outline the DFP activities that take place in your school?

How have you responded to this input?

How have your pupils responded to the input?

How have parents responded to this input?

How have teachers responded to this input?

## **SECTION D: Management**

What communication processes are in place to let different people know what's going on?

What role, if any, does the local authority play in managing the project?

What role do you play in managing the project?

Are there adequate resources to implement the DFP? Who decides how they are used?

## **SECTION E: Perceptions of DFP impact**

Have you detected any improvement in attitudes and behaviour from those involved?

### **Pupils:**

#### **Commitment**

self-esteem

self-evaluation

attendance

attainment

relationships

### **Teachers:**

Collaboration

self-esteem

### **Parents:**

Interest

Contact

20. What do you see as the advantages of the DFP?

21. Are there any disadvantages? If so, what are they?

**SECTION F: The Future**

How do you think the project should develop in future?

In positive, how would you propose that it should be sustained?

How personally committed are you to helping maintain the input initiated by Dynamic Attitudes?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

**Appendix 3**  
**Interview schedule for Teachers**

<b>University of Glasgow</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Evaluation of the</b>	
<b>Dynamic Futures Project</b>	
<b>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</b>	
<b>FOR TEACHERS</b>	

**Name** .....

**Location** .....

**Date** .....

**Start time of interview** .....

**Finish time of interview** .....

**Interviewer** .....

**PLEASE INDICATE THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE INFORMATION  
SUPPLIED**

### **SECTION A: Interviewee's Role**

1. What is your main function in this school?
2. What is your connection with the DFP?
3. How did you first become involved?
4. What do you think you personally can contribute to the success of DFP?

### **SECTION B: Purpose**

5. What is your understanding of the purpose of the Dynamic Futures Programme?  
What is it trying to achieve?
6. In your view, why has it been set up?
7. In your view, what assumptions underpin the DFP? To what extent do you share these assumptions?
8. What do you expect from the DFP? Are these expectations realistic?

### **SECTION C: Input from DF staff**

9. Can you briefly outline the DFP activities that take place in your school?
10. How have you responded to this input?
11. How have your pupils responded to the input?
12. How have parents responded to this input?

### **SECTION D: Management**

13. How well is the DFP managed? Do you have a role in this?
14. What communication processes are in place to let different people know what's going on?
15. What role does the local authority play in managing the project?

16. Are there adequate resources to implement the DFP? Who decides how they are used?

**SECTION E: Perceptions of DFP impact**

17. Have you detected any improvement/deterioration in attitudes and behaviour from those involved?

**Pupils:**

commitment  
self-esteem  
self-evaluation  
attendance  
attainment  
relationships

**Teachers:**

collaboration  
self-esteem

**Parents:**

interest  
contact

18. What do you see as the main advantages of the DFP so far?

19. Are there any disadvantages? If so, what are they?

**SECTION F: The Future**

20. How do you think the project should develop in the future? Why is this?
21. If positive, how would you propose that it should be sustained?
22. How personally committed are you to helping to maintain the input initiated by Dynamic Attitudes?
23. Any other comments you wish to make?

## **Appendix 4**

### **Schedule for participant focus groups**

**University of Glasgow**

**Department of Education**

#### ***Dynamic Future Project***

#### **Focus Group Themes**

##### **Section A**

Can you tell me about your contact with the Dynamic Futures project?

How did you react to your experience?

Do you think things are any different for you now?

Tell us more.

Did you tell your parents about the Dynamic Futures project?

Did they show any interest?

Do you think things have been any different at home?

Do they listen more? More co-operation etc.

Do your parents talk with you about school?

What do you tell them?

##### **Section B**

Do you feel any differently about school since you've been involved in this project?

In what ways have things changed in your attitudes and behaviour in school?

How do you feel about school now?

Prompts: Same/More/less committed to school? e.g. better attendance/involved in OSHA.

How co-operative are you with teachers now?

Does the school do anything differently since you've been involved in the Dynamic Futures project?