

THE EVALUATION OF THE
MORAY COUNCIL / KEITH GRAMMAR SCHOOL STANDARD
GRADE IN S2/3

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
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Foreword

The Curriculum Flexibility Project is a bold and ambitious initiative undertaken by the staff at Keith Grammar School to improve the educational experiences and attainment of their pupils. The S1/S2 element on which we report in this document represents only the first stage of the curriculum reorganisation which is planned throughout the school, and which will extend through S3 to S6. There are many interesting and imaginative changes still in the planning stages.

We are grateful to the staff, the pupils and their parents for welcoming us into their school and for giving us the time to explore the many educational issues raised by the changes which have been introduced. We hope we have been able faithfully to represent the wide range of views expressed and that others planning similar developments will learn from the experiences of these enterprising professionals.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION 1

The Evaluation Aims and Methodology	2
1.1 The Aims of the Keith Grammar Curriculum Flexibility Initiative	2
1.2 The Remit of the Evaluation Project	2
1.3 Methodology	2

SECTION 2

Planning and Introducing the Changes	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 The Rationale for Change	7
2.3 The Consultation Phase: School Session 2000 - 2001	7
2.4 The Development Phase	8
2.5 The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process	11
2.6 The Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process	12

SECTION 3

Changes in the S1 Curriculum	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 The Primary and Secondary Liaison Activities	18
3.3 The Changes to the New S1 Course	22
3.4 The Inclusion of all Pupils in the Revised S1 Curriculum	26
3.5 Reviewing the Changes to the S1 Course	32

SECTION 4

Monitoring Change in Motivation and Attainment	44
4.1 Introduction	44
4.2 Perceptions of Challenge and Motivation	44
4.3 Perceptions of Pupils' Attainment	47
4.4 Monitoring the Courses: Qualitative Information	50
4.5 Monitoring the Courses: Quantitative Information	54

SECTION 5

Choosing Subjects for Standard Grade	61
5.1 Introduction	61
5.2 The Process of Selection of Subjects for Standard Grade	61
5.3 The Participants' Perspectives on the Processes of Selection	61

SECTION 6

The Courses in S2	68
6.1 Introduction	68
6.2 The Teachers' perspectives	68
6.3 The Parents' Perspectives	73

APPENDIX 1: Staff Questionnaire

APPENDIX 2: S1 Pupil Questionnaire

APPENDIX 3: Parents' Questionnaire

APPENDIX 4: Table 3.2 Pupils' Perceptions of Homework Allocations

APPENDIX 5: A Comparison of S2 and S3 Exam Results - June 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE AIMS OF THE KEITH GRAMMAR CURRICULUM FLEXIBILITY INITIATIVE

The Curriculum Flexibility Project initiated by Moray Council and the staff of Keith Grammar School (KGS) explores how to tackle lack of progress at S1/2 by offering the challenge of Standard Grade courses in S2. This entails the development of a revised 5-14 curriculum across 16 school departments, including provision of a new S1 course. This considerably strengthens and contributes to wider, strategic approaches adopted by the school to tackle under-achievement and low expectations by:

- increasing the pace and level of challenge in new S1 courses, which nevertheless still articulate well with P7;
- bringing Standard Grade into S2/3 to increase the pace and challenge in these two years;
- allowing more extensive progression throughout the larger cohort of pupils in S4/5/6;
- allowing deeper progression through an earlier start in Higher courses for more able pupils;
- improving articulation by enhancing S6 experiences.

SECTION 1

THE EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The S1/S2 phase of the Curriculum Flexibility Project on which we report in this document, represents only the first stage of the curriculum reorganisation which is planned throughout the school, and which will extend through S3 to S6. There are many interesting and imaginative changes still in the planning stages which will be evaluated in phase 2 of the evaluation, 2004-2007.

Aims of the Evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation project is to assess the successes of the processes and procedures of the early stages of the changes implemented in the first revised S1/S2 courses of the initiative, through data collection designed to allow the perspectives and experiences of school staff, the Primary Headteachers, pupils and parents to be articulated. The evaluation project started in February 2003 and ran until the end of May 2004. It has three main aims.

- **Aim 1**

National Priority: Framework for Learning

To evaluate the impact on the quality of and approaches to learning and teaching for staff and learners involved in the project through the implementation of the revised 5-14 curriculum across 16 school departments, beginning with the current S1 year group.

- **Aim 2**

National Priority: Learning for Life

To evaluate the views and experiences of parents of young people involved in the project and any impact on staff and pupils in cluster primary schools

- **Aim 3**

National Priority: Achievement and Attainment

To evaluate in more quantitative terms any impact of the project on attainment, achievement, progression and levels of preparedness for the future, including careers guidance and post 5-14 subject choices.

Methodology

The methodology included interviews with the key stakeholders: secondary senior management team; and selected primary Headteachers, secondary teachers, focus pupils in the cohort and their parents, questionnaires to all the secondary staff, the pupil cohort and parents. In addition, observations were conducted of secondary classrooms; primary/secondary liaison

activities and ASG meetings, together with attendance at parents' evenings, and scrutiny of Keith Grammar School documentation.

SECTION 2 PLANNING AND INTRODUCING THE CHANGES

The Rationale and Consultation Phase

The school's (KGS) decision to move Standard Grade to S2 and S3 was developed as a consequence of the SMT examining both the national picture of underachievement at the end of S2 based on the HMI 'Standards in Quality' subject reports, and the school's own audit routines which indicated pupil dissatisfaction with S2. It was conceived by the Headteacher and developed in collaboration with the Local Authority and the SMT as a proposal for the staff to consider. In addition to the consultation with staff there was also a lengthy period of consultation which involved a number of other stakeholders: the Local Authority, the Primary Headteachers in the Associated Schools Group (ASG) and parents. (Sections 2.2, 2.3)

The Development Phase

During the development phase one of the Depute Headteachers led the extensive mapping and audit of the existing S1/S2 curriculum, which included examining whether any content and skills were being replicated in some subject areas. Subsequently, a number of staff were involved in re-writing the curriculum in all subject areas to produce a revised S1 curriculum ready for implementation in August 2002. During the process the SMT consulted with other Local Authorities to identify similar initiatives elsewhere and some staff visited other schools to observe their practice. (Section 2.4)

The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process

The Primary Headteachers' who were interviewed welcomed the introduction of moving Standard Grade to S2/S3 and the potential benefits to the pupils. They felt they had been consulted both at Associated Schools Group (ASG) meetings and by visits to the individual schools. They did not expect the proposed changes to involve any demands additional to the routine processes of primary/secondary liaison. (Section 2.5)

The Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process

The majority of the secondary teachers who were interviewed were generally positive despite their realisation of all the work which it would clearly involve. The anticipated advantages included maintaining the momentum of the enthusiasm brought from primary school; offering a curriculum progression better matched to low attainment pupils; advancing the pace for high attaining pupils. Their initial concerns expressed centred on: the maturity of the pupils at key points (e.g. choice of subjects, sitting key exams a year earlier than those in other schools); the ability of low attainers to keep up with a faster pace in the curriculum; ensuring that all essential knowledge and skills were covered; and having too many formal examinations from S3 onwards. (Section 2.6.2; 2.6.3)

The staff had been supported through being allocated some development time or money to develop courses and through departmental meetings and discussions. (Section 2.6.4)

SECTION 3 CHANGES IN THE S1 CURRICULUM

The Primary and Secondary Liaison Activities

Were 5-14 elements normally done in S1 moved down into primary and, if so, how well did primary pupils and teachers cope? Did Primary teachers need special training for this and if so how was it delivered?

Overall it appeared that the prior existence of an active and effective ASG paved the way for liaison activities which were supportive of the changes and put little pressure on the primary schools. The processes evidenced included:

- Continuation of the ongoing revisions of 5-14 in the ASG.
- Primary staff meetings with secondary Heads of Departments.
- A liaison project with a science teacher visiting to take lessons in the primary class.
- Topics covered in the primary being taken account of in the secondary.
- Cross sector working groups in some subjects, e.g. ICT, health, technology.
- Limited requests for work to be covered in the primary, e.g. certain vocabulary in modern languages.

The primary school staff had not had to alter their curriculum to any degree beyond the scale of the normal fine tuning activities already established by the ASG, and as a consequence, there was no additional pressure or special training required. The changes made appeared to be completely contained within the secondary curriculum (Section 3.2).

How did the secondary school fit the curriculum into reduced time available?

Our data from the teachers support the information from the SMT (see section 2.4.1) that audit of the existing curriculum prior to the evaluation period identified certain topics that were being duplicated across different subjects during S1 and S2. The data indicate that the main strategy for reducing the timescale of the course had been to cut out material, either that where content or skills had been duplicated across subjects in the past, or which was regarded as redundant, or which was regarded as the most readily dropped from the course. Despite these cuts, the SMT felt reassured that the new S1 curriculum had appropriate coverage of skills and strands, and reinforcement of activities across subjects, e.g. investigating. The changes had also prompted improvements such as streamlining with primary 5-14 and with Standard Grade requirements, and the modernisation of the curriculum. An increase in pace had also been introduced, and there had been some reduction of assessment. Some respondents felt there had been a loss of some enriching educational experiences for the pupils. (Section 3.3.)

Did the pupils have to do more homework?

Because the school were aware that secondary schools had been criticised for not allocating enough homework, the school staff had given the issue of homework some thought and attention. A homework policy was in place in which good practice was set out, and an external reviewer had reassured them their practice was in line with the national recommendations. Our data from the pupils and parents indicated that while, not unexpectedly, there was a wide range of opinions about levels of homework, it was clear that there was a significant minority of pupils who felt, and whose parents felt, for a variety of reasons, that the allocation was sometimes excessive. The school had increased the amount of homework to bring them in line with the national average, and they thought the parents of the cohort pupils would perceive that homework was increased compared to the previous S1 year groups (Section 3.3.2).

What were the key decisions made vis a vis the inclusion of all pupils in the revised S1 curriculum?

The liaison processes which supported the primary pupils' transition to the secondary school comprised visits to the primary school, the cross sector staff meetings and the induction days. It was clear from the information given and the discussions observed that the staff of both sectors expended a lot of time and effort on the exchange of information which would allow for a smoothly managed transition from the environment of the primary school to that of the secondary. A wide range of information was exchanged, and additional induction time had been organised for pupils identified as having special needs. On the basis of these discussions, pupils were assigned to classes, were identified for special support, or were placed on a 'confidentials' list which teachers could use as appropriate when difficulties arose. Academic information was communicated by reference to the 5-14 level of the child's work and PIPS scores. (Section 3.4.1a, 3.4.1b, 3.5.2)

How was support given to slower or less mature learners?

A number of strategies were used to cater for the wide range of attainment levels present in the S1 cohort. Differentiated materials were planned, but had not been observed in use during our classroom observations. In some subjects there was 'broad-banding', but the spread of attainment could still be quite large within any one class. Differentiation by outcome, where all pupils are given the same teaching or learning experiences, with pupils attaining what level they are able to achieve, was the norm. This was supplemented by teacher support whenever possible, with additional support for those allocated specific learning support input, or regular auxiliary assistance. (Section 3.4.2)

Reviewing the Changes to the S1 Course

The Teachers' Perspectives

The majority of staff who were interviewed and who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the way in which the first year of the new S1 course had gone. They considered that the course was an improvement on the previous course, that the pupils coped well and worked enthusiastically, and that overall the pace of work was right for most of the pupils. Their main concerns were associated with the loss from the course of specific content or learning experiences. Many indicated that further cuts might be necessary. (Section 3.5.1)

The Pupils' Perspectives

As a consequence of an extensive programme of induction, the pupils had felt well informed about the changed S1 course which they were to be experiencing. Few regarded any subjects as 'very hard'; the subjects they found most difficult French, German, science and mathematics were similar to those indicated as difficult by pupils in the year above (S2). Those subjects indicated to be the most interesting were those in which there was an element of 'hands – on' activity – PE, art and design, technical studies, music and science. The subjects in which they indicated they worked best related to the subjects they enjoyed most. The negative experiences reported related mainly to feeling that they were being rushed, and feeling they needed more support than the teacher had time to give them to assist with their learning. (Section 3.5.2)

The Parents' Perspectives

The majority of the parents considered that they had been well informed about what their child would be doing in S1/2 and overall felt happy with their child's experiences in S1. The parents expressed a diversity of views on the pace of the curriculum, but with respect to the positive responses, parents of high attaining pupils were generally positive, as were parents who perceived that their child received adequate support. The most positive effect reported with respect to the pupils was the perception of motivation and stimulation, and being able to drop disliked subjects.

They indicated concerns about the degree to which their children were familiar enough with some subjects to choose at the end of S1; that work sometimes was rushed and not necessarily revised and understood; that there was potentially too much pressure on the youngsters. (Section 3.5.3)

SECTION 4

MONITORING CHANGE IN MOTIVATION AND ATTAINMENT

Have the new arrangements for S1 and S2 increased challenge and motivation for pupils?

The information from the teachers and parents suggest that the revised S1 course and Standard Grade in S2 provided the pupils with increased challenge and resulted in the majority of the pupils being better motivated and applied in their work. (Section 4.2)

How is progress monitored in the different subjects?

There were conflicting views on the evidence so far available on the effects on attainment so teachers were reluctant to make judgments as to whether the revised S1 course had had a positive effect until they had received the end of year S2 exams and Standard Grade results in S3, although some teachers cited evidence of pupils having improved knowledge and skills in S2 (Section 4.3.2). Differences in the pupils, course content and in assessment were reasons given for not being able to do direct comparisons with data from tests in previous years (Section 4.3.1 a). Teachers seemed reassured that the high attainers were benefiting, but had concerns about the progress of low attaining pupils (Section 4.3.1b). Some parents commented favourably on their child's progress in S1 and S2 (Section 4.3.3).

How are the new courses being monitored?

The data sources which were available to us in monitoring the effectiveness of the new S1 courses, or considering how they were being monitored by the staff are mainly qualitative. Both researchers and school staff agreed that although pupils' general progress was monitored by ongoing test results in many subjects, at this stage it is impossible to generate quantitative data which can afford any meaningful comparisons with the previous courses and their outcomes. One of the difficulties identified by the staff was the naturally occurring fluctuations which they experienced from year group to year group in attainment levels and other characteristics which might affect the outcomes in year 1. For a variety of reasons, the National Tests or the use of 5-14 curriculum levels were not regarded as a useful resource in monitoring attainment, added value or general trends (Section 4.4.1).

Some concerns were expressed that while the advancement of Standard Grade into S2 might deal with the problems of the old S1/2 courses, sitting Standard Grade one year earlier might have an adverse affect on grade outcomes. The Assessment Manager systems were not operational in the schools in this Authority at the time of our interviews, although within some departments pupil records were beginning to be centralised (Section 4.4.1).

Departmental reports to SMT and departmental meetings were also vehicles for monitoring. Pupils were increasingly being involved in forms of evaluations which had informed changes in courses. In addition to the qualitative data reported, quantitative data collected by the school for monitoring purposes in the form of 'behaviour plans' and 'timeouts' are expected in the future to provide evidence of increased motivation. These have been collected by the school for a number of years, but are now being collected more systematically (Section 4.4.1).

The MidYIS scores of the pupils were being collated as a baseline for future monitoring. However the MidYIS tests are an indicator of ability, not a measure of attainment. (Section 4.4.2)

How will the School Measure Pupil/student motivation and the level of Challenge in the Learning Experience? What are the baseline measures for these?

It was reported by the SMT members early in the 2003 session that quantitative evidence of this was likely to be seen as a reduction in the number of 'behaviour plans' and 'time outs'. Although the quantitative data on these incidents does not support the reports from teachers that motivation has improved, the methods of recording and the circumstances of allocation have changed over the last year. The data for these records is now more systematically recorded and should provide an indicator of behaviour and motivation patterns for the future (Section 4.5.1).

What have been the Effects on Attainment and More General Achievement Measures?

The school do not regard the National test measures as a secure quantitative measure of attainment. They have introduced MidYIS tests for pupils which are seen as an indicator of ability (Section 4.5.2).

Have there been changes in pupil subject choices?

The data indicate there were large variations in the numbers of pupils choosing some subjects at Standard Grade. The SMT indicated that these fluctuations were within the normal variations seen from year to year.

At this stage it is suggested that no firm conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative data presented. It is likely that the pupils' Standard Grade results at the end of S3 will provide the first comparative quantitative indicators of pupil attainment and achievement.

**SECTION 5
CHOOSING SUBJECTS FOR STANDARD GRADE**

The school set in place a series of activities and events to assist pupils and parents to choose subjects for Standard Grade: booklets for pupils and parents; the guidance teachers discussed possible options with classes and individuals. Additionally, two parents' evenings were arranged when pupils and parents could discuss progress in subjects, and another to discuss subject choice with the guidance teacher (Section 5.2).

A strategy employed by the school to deal with potential concerns with subject choices made at the end of S1 was to plan to build flexibility into the system in later years, and to encourage pupils to make enjoyment of the subjects, rather than career choice, the main reason for subject choice at this stage (Section 5.3.1).

While the new arrangements were generally welcomed by the pupils, their responses in interview indicated that the changes were seen as having as many minuses as plusses. The most frequently mentioned benefit was being able to drop subjects which were disliked (Section 5.3.2a). Pupils made choices on the basis of enjoyment (the most frequently indicated); career choice; and the limitations of the column options (Section 5.3.2b).

Just over half of the parents were happy with the information provided and the meetings arranged by the school to assist the pupils make their Standard Grade choices. Many felt the information for pupils on the choices for Standard Grade could perhaps be better targeted towards their age level and concerns (Section 5.3.3a).

Some parents expressed positive views about the new timing. With respect to concerns about the timing of the choice point, parents' reservations centred on two issues: the earliness of the timing with respect to the pupils' knowledge about the subjects; and the associated level of maturity of the pupils, the majority feeling their children were too immature to be choosing at this stage (Section 5.3.3b).

SECTION 6

THE COURSES IN S2

To what extent are all pupils embarking on Standard Grade from the start of S2? What about pupils with special educational needs? Are any selection criteria used?

What contingencies does the school have in place for pupils in S2/S3 who find the pace of dealing with Standard Grade too much one year early?

While the majority of pupils were taking Standard Grade courses, some pupils were taking Intermediate courses for certain subjects and for those who required support for learning, the school had provided alternative courses, for example, Access courses. The pupils who took these courses were identified by the guidance and support for learning staff (Section 6.2.1).

How well were the new arrangements for Standard Grade operating?

In tackling the Standard Grade materials earlier were there maturity problems and if so, how were they overcome?

The Teachers' Perspectives

The majority of the teachers felt that most pupils were well prepared in key areas for starting Standard Grade courses in S2; that overall they were coping well in their Standard Grade and other courses and that the pace of work was about right for most of the pupils. The staff also indicated a number of positive outcomes for pupils starting Standard Grade in S2 in the form of their heightened motivation, positive attitude, enthusiasm, sense of purpose and a positive response to raised expectations of the pupils in S2 (Section 6.2.2a).

Where staff expressed concerns about starting Standard Grade courses in S2, they focussed primarily on issues relating to the less able pupils and the curriculum. These included reduced coverage prior to Standard Grade and having to choose subjects after limited exposure to them. As a result it was felt that some of the less able pupils were not coping so well as others (Section 6.2.2b). The possible effects of a lack of pupil maturity was mentioned in only one subject area. The SMT indicated that none of these concerns had been raised with them and that they had observed some classes where pupils expressed a high level of maturity for their age (Section 6.2.2c).

In their final comments the majority of all sectors of the staff indicated they were positive about the project and that any concerns were outweighed by the benefits to pupils undertaking Standard Grade a year earlier (Section 6.2.2d).

The Parents' Perspectives

Forty six percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire. The majority of parents of the pupils felt happy with their child's overall experience of beginning Standard Grade in S2. 74% of the parents thought their child was coping well in S2 in most of his/her subjects; 64% were happy with the overall progress their child was making in S2; and 45% thought their child received enough support for his/her learning in the classes. A positive aspect of beginning Standard Grade in S2 indicated by 43% of parents was that it enabled their child to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1. The parents expressed a diversity of views depending on the particular circumstances and experiences of their child. The most positive effect reported was the challenge and motivation of the course and resulting progress for their child in S2 (Section 6.3a).

They indicated concerns about the lack of time to study different subjects, or to cover the curriculum; pupil anxiety about performance through taking Standard Grade at the end of S3; about their children being the first to experience the new system; and the prematurity of deciding whether it had been a success (Section 6.3b). Some parents expressed concern about the possible effect of maturity at the time of the exams (Section 6.3c).

DETAILED INDEX

1	Evaluation Aims and Methodology	2
1.1	Aims of Keith Grammar School Curriculum Flexibility Initiative	2
1.2	The Remit of the Evaluation Project	2
1.3	Methodology	2
1.3.1	The School Senior Management Team	3
1.3.2	The Secondary School Teachers	3
1.3.3	The Primary Headteachers	3
1.3.4	Primary/Secondary Liaison Activity Meetings	3
1.3.5	The Pupils	4
1.3.6	The Parents	4
1.3.7	Scrutiny of Keith Grammar School documentation	5

SECTION 1 THE EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 The Aims of the Keith Grammar School Curriculum Flexibility Initiative

The Curriculum Flexibility Project initiated by Moray Council and the staff of Keith Grammar School (KGS) explores how to tackle lack of progress at S1/2 by offering the challenge of Standard Grade courses in S2. This entails the development of a revised 5-14 curriculum across 16 school departments, including provision of a new S1 course. This considerably strengthens and contributes to wider, strategic approaches adopted by the school to tackle under-achievement and low expectations by:

- increasing the pace and level of challenge in new S1 courses, which nevertheless still articulate well with P7;
- bringing Standard Grade into S2/3 to increase the pace and challenge in these two years;
- allowing more extensive progression throughout the larger cohort of pupils in S4/5/6;
- allowing deeper progression through an earlier start in Higher courses for more able pupils;
- improving articulation by enhancing S6 experiences.

1.2 The Remit of the Evaluation Project

The overall aim of the evaluation project is to assess the successes of the processes and procedures of the early stages of the changes detailed above, i.e. the changes in the first revised S1/S2 courses of the initiative, through data collection designed to allow the perspectives and experiences of school staff, the Primary Headteachers, pupils and parents to be articulated. The evaluation project started in February 2003 and ran until the end of May 2004. It has three main aims.

- **Aim 1**

National Priority: Framework for Learning

To evaluate the impact on the quality of and approaches to learning and teaching for staff and learners involved in the project through the implementation of the revised 5-14 curriculum across 16 school departments, beginning with the current S1 year group.

- **Aim 2**

National Priority: Learning for Life

To evaluate the views and experiences of parents of young people involved in the project and any impact on staff and pupils in cluster primary schools

- **Aim 3**

National Priority: Achievement and Attainment

To evaluate in more quantitative terms any impact of the project on attainment, achievement, progression and levels of preparedness for the future, including careers guidance and post 5-14 subject choices.

1.3 Methodology

To achieve the evaluation aims, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the following respondents and sources. Further details of the methodology are also described in the relevant sections and included in the appendices.

1.3.1 The School Senior Management Team

A face to face interview with the Headteacher, and a face to face interview with the two Depute Headteachers together were held in November 2003. Subsequently, a second interview with both Depute Headteachers was held in May 2004 to gain further clarification about the information on the planning and development phase. All members of the school management team (SMT) completed a questionnaire sent to all the school staff in March 2004. (see section 1.3.2).

1.3.2 The Secondary School Teachers

Face to face interviews with sixteen teachers were undertaken in March and April 2003. The three guidance teachers were interviewed together as a group and the remaining teachers were interviewed individually from the following ten subjects: art, biology, business studies, English, geography, home economics, maths, modern studies, physics and support for learning. Key areas covered in the interview included introducing the changes, the changes in the S1 curriculum, the pupils, support and staff development, and looking ahead to Standard Grade.

A questionnaire was sent electronically to all the teachers (including full time, part-time and temporary) at Keith Grammar School in March 2004. The teachers were asked either to complete and return it electronically, or alternatively to print a copy and return the completed copy in a prepaid addressed envelope supplied by the researchers which was available at the school office. Twenty five of the forty seven teachers who were on the school staff list at the time the questionnaires were sent returned a questionnaire, a response rate of 53%.

Five of the respondents who returned questionnaires comprised the SMT (20%), fifteen were principal teachers (60%) and five (20%) were class teachers. Proportionally, the returns represented all of the SMT, approximately three quarters of the principal teachers and approximately a quarter of the class teachers. Eight of the twenty five who returned the questionnaire had been teaching at KGS for sixteen years or more, seven for between eleven and fifteen years, one for between six and ten years and nine for five years or less. All but one were in full time posts. Returns were received from all but two curricular departments. The questionnaire is presented in appendix 1.

1.3.3 The Primary Headteachers

Face to face interviews were conducted with three Headteachers of the five associated primary schools in June 2003 (N=1) and May 2004 (N=2). The schools were selected to represent a range of types of primary school (e.g. small rural, small urban) one of which was the main associated primary school. The interview explored their general views on the project and Keith Grammar School's consultation process with the primary schools, and the ways in which the secondary initiative had impacted on the primary school.

1.3.4 Primary/Secondary Liaison Activity Meetings

A researcher attended the primary/secondary liaison meetings at three of KGS' associated primary schools at which the new intake of pupils for the session 2003-2004 was discussed. At these meetings the primary Headteacher (PHT), met with both the Depute Headteacher (DHT) of KGS who had responsibility for S1 and S2, and the Principal Teacher of Support

for Learning. The purpose of the meetings was for the secondary school to gather information about each of the pupils who would be moving on to KGS in August 2003.

The principal teacher of English also attended one of the meetings at the request of the Primary Headteacher (School 1) in order to examine examples of the P7 pupils' writing. Therefore although present at the meeting and occasionally taking part in the discussion, the principal teacher predominantly spent the time reading the pupils' portfolios.

A researcher also observed two Area Schools Group meetings held at KGS in April and June 2003 when items relevant to primary/secondary liaison were on the agenda.

1.3.5 The Pupils

The pupil cohort in the evaluation entered KGS in August 2002 as S1 pupils. The S1 classes were set for maths and English using the national test results, and the Middle Years Information System (MidYIS) scores from tests set at the start of S1. The MidYIS tests which the pupils completed are produced by the Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre, University of Durham and designed primarily to be taken on-entry to secondary school. They form a baseline for Value Added measures in secondary schools. For further details see <http://www.midysisproject.org>.

In addition to following the whole pupil cohort in S1, twenty four focus pupils were selected as a small sub sample in consultation with the guidance staff to be representative of each level of MidYIS (scores A, B, C and D), to be either shadowed in classrooms or interviewed. Level A score represents the highest level, and a Level D score the lowest level.

Face to face interviews were conducted with eighteen of the original twenty four focus pupils, either in small groups or individually in June 2003. The pupils interviewed were chosen on the basis of their availability on the day. The interview explored the pupils' experiences in S1.

In June 2003, questionnaires were sent to the school for completion by the S1 cohort and the year above, (S2 pupils for comparison). The questionnaire was administered to the S1 and S2 pupils and completed by them in their personal and social education class. The returns were S1, N=91 and S2, N=45, a percentage return of 93% and 52% respectively. The questionnaire is presented in appendix 2.

Classroom observations were conducted on sixteen occasions when the pupils were in S1 (school session 2002 – 2003) and when they moved to the year above in S2 (school session 2003 – 2004). The subjects observed included accounting and finance, art, biology, craft and design, English, French, geography, graphic communication, history, maths, modern studies, physics, science, and technical subjects.

1.3.6 The Parents

Telephone interviews were conducted with fourteen parents of selected S1 focus pupils in June and October 2003. Additional information was gathered opportunistically from sixteen parents at a Parents' Evening in April 2003. The interview explored the consultation with parents about the initiative, their child's experiences in S1 and views on the forthcoming Standard Grade course in S2.

In March 2004 a questionnaire was sent to the parents of all the ninety eight cohort pupils who had moved into S2. Forty five questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 46%. These were the parents of the first pupils to have the one year revised curriculum prior to

starting Standard Grade in S2. The parents were asked to complete the questionnaire and return the completed copy in a prepaid addressed envelope. The questions were designed to elicit information on the parents' views of their children's experiences in both S1 and S2. The questionnaire is presented in appendix 3.

Only five parents, responded positively to a request to be interviewed about their child's experiences in S3 (the year above the evaluation pupil cohort), and four of these (two of A MidYIS pupils and two of C MidYIS pupils) were interviewed by telephone. The fifth parent was not available at the time the interviews were carried out. In view of the fact that the sample was very small and was not judged to be representative of parents of the year group, the data is not included in this report.

1.3.7 Scrutiny of Keith Grammar School documentation

Scrutiny of the school consultation, planning, and development documentation was undertaken at the outset and during the evaluation period, particularly in the later stages prior to interview with both Depute Headteachers in May 2004. The following data given to the researchers by the school was also examined:

- Standard Grade subject choices of the pupil cohort at the end of S1 and Standard Grade subject choices of the year above (S2 for comparison);
- the pupil cohort MidYIS scores from the test taken in both S1 and S2;
- the pupil cohort (S2 pupils in session 2003 – 2004) Standard Grade test results taken in April 2004, and the Standard Grade test results of the year above (S3 for comparison);
- 'Behaviour Plans' and 'Time out' numbers for the pupil cohort when in S1 and S2, and for the year group above in the previous three years.

The researchers were unable to collect the intended data from the events listed below.

- Attend departmental meetings of selected subjects when relevant;
- Attend cross subject group discussion in full staff meetings when relevant;
- Attend P7 induction meetings (PTs, Guidance and PSE groups) for incoming S1;
- Observe school board meetings when relevant;
- Observe pupil council meeting when S1 course is an agenda item.

Despite attempts and enquiries of the school as to when it would be appropriate to attend the events, the researchers were neither notified nor invited to attend. However, it should be noted that for some events, e.g. departmental meetings, the researchers were advised that there was not always a fixed agenda and therefore it was uncertain as to whether it was appropriate for the researchers to attend.

DETAILED INDEX

2	Planning and Introducing the Changes	7
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	The Rationale for Change	7
2.3	The Consultation Phase	7
2.3.1	Consultation with the Local Authority	7
2.3.2	Consultation with the School Staff	8
2.3.3	Consultation with the ASG Primary Headteachers	8
2.3.4	Consultation with the Parents	8
2.4	The Development Phase	8
2.4.1	Phase 1 May 2001 - November 2001	9
2.4.2	Phase 2 November 2001 - January 2002	10
2.4.3	Phase 3 January 2002- May 2002	11
2.5	The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process	11
2.5.1	The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of the Project	11
2.5.2	The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of the Consultation Process	11
2.6	The Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process	12
2.6.1	How was the Project Introduced to the Teachers?	12
2.6.2	What were the Teachers' Anticipated Benefits?	13
	a) Generally keeping up the momentum of the enthusiasm	13
	b) Advantages for low attaining pupils	13
	c) Advantages for high attaining pupils	13
2.6.3	What Were The Teachers' Initial Concerns?	13
	a) The level of maturity of the pupils	13
	b) Adverse effects for low attaining pupils	14
	c) Adverse effects for high attainers beyond Standard Grade	14
	d) Curriculum coverage	14
	e) Too many formal assessments and exams	14
2.6.4	What Support, Resources and Training Were Available for The Teachers?	15
	a) Development time and resources	15
	b) Staff development in curriculum design	16

SECTION 2 PLANNING AND INTRODUCING THE CHANGES

2.1 Introduction

An important feature of any development is the conception and introduction, as this is the stage when ownership of the project and the ideas begins to be established. In this section we detail the events which occurred prior to the start of the evaluation project: Keith Grammar School's Senior Management Team's (SMT) rationale for the project; their consultation activities with the various stakeholders; and the process of planning and the subsequent development of the revised S1 curriculum. The account of these activities as outlined to the evaluators by the senior school staff are presented in paragraph 2.2 - 2.4. The data on the consultation process derived from interviews of three Primary Headteachers and sixteen secondary teachers are presented in paragraphs 2.5 - 2.6.

2.2 The Rationale for Change

It was reported to the researchers that the rationale behind the Keith Grammar School's (KGS) decision to move Standard Grade to S2 and S3 was developed as a consequence of the SMT examining both the national picture of underachievement at the end of S2 based on the HMI 'Standards in Quality' subject reports, and the school's own audit routines. The audit from the previous few years had showed a high degree of negativity in the pupils' perspective of the value of their learning in S2. Many of the pupils thought they were not progressing. The school examined their pupils' P7 results against those achieved by the pupils by the end of S2, and found that frequently little or no progress had been made.

We were extremely concerned about the national picture of under-achievement in S2. It was my belief that we were actually repeating parts of the curriculum in different subject areas, that children were being de-motivated. In fact what we were not doing was preparing children for the level of work and activity that they would have to undertake in Standard Grade. (Depute Headteacher)

Equally the SMT thought that the enthusiasm and motivation which pupils had at the beginning of the first year was lost by the end of second year.

...Also with a view to motivating children and giving them an idea of a more cohesive experience, rather like building on the 5-14 experience in primary school which is so valuable and so very rich. There were things that I personally felt that we were losing the focus for children, we were losing the motivation, we were losing a lot of the enthusiasm, that was clearly there in P7. (Depute Headteacher)

2.3 The Consultation Phase: School Session 2000 - 2001

The proposal was initially conceived by the Headteacher and developed in collaboration with the Local Authority and the SMT as a proposal for the staff to consider.

2.3.1 Consultation with the Local Authority

The Director of Education and Moray Council staff were consulted at an early stage, and the Education Officers came to the school to discuss the school's ideas in depth. The SMT reported that they were favourably impressed by the Local Authority's positive attitude towards the plan. An HMI was also invited, and s/he was reported to be extremely supportive, committing her/his own time to consulting with the school, and advising throughout the process, which the SMT had found extremely helpful.

2.3.2 Consultation with the School Staff

The Director of Education attended the consultation activities with the school's own staff. The idea to move Standard Grade to S2/3 was introduced at an after school meeting. The SMT indicated in interviews that were very favourably impressed by the positive attitude that the staff showed towards the idea, with very few negative comments being expressed. Indeed the Depute Headteachers reported that there was a *buzz of excitement* about it. They thought that *people had been waiting, for some kind of change*.

2.3.3 Consultation with the Associated Schools Group Primary Headteachers

Following on from these early consultations, Keith Grammar School SMT then met with the ASG to explain their idea to the Primary Headteachers. The SMT indicated their awareness that whatever changes they made to the curriculum at secondary level would potentially have an impact on the associated primary schools' work. The initial queries made by the Primary Headteachers about the project focused on whether it would entail an increase in their workload, but KGS SMT were interested, however, to find that several of the Primary Headteachers acknowledged that they were already aware of an increase in the level of attainment in P7. One Primary Headteacher suggested this was an effect of Early Intervention working through the school, *where there was a proper structure, and there was a lot of reading going on*. KGS SMT indicated that the primary schools were already presenting the school with children at level E, *very soundly at level E*. The SMT thought that all the Primary Headteachers were quite excited by the whole idea of the project.

2.3.4 Consultation with the Parents

Parent consultations took a variety of forms, presentations by SMT members and a principal teacher to parents at dedicated Primary School Parents' Evenings, in addition to presentations to the school boards who had accepted an invitation from KGS. Following on from this, the parents were also invited to come in to KGS for personal discussion, to phone in comments, or send in written ones. KGS put out questionnaires to all the P7 parents and invited them to Parents' Evenings at KGS. However, as the parents had already received a significant amount of information and the primary schools had reported (in a questionnaire to secondary school) no negative feedback from parents, the school did not have a large attendance at the first Parents' Evening. The two Depute Headteachers suggested that this was indicative of the fact that *our parents are very supportive of whatever we do*, which they found very encouraging. Those parents who did respond to the consultation *more or less said that they were dissatisfied with levels of attainment in S2 as well*. The main concern expressed to the school by the parents was the possible lack of maturity of the pupils at the end of S2 when Standard Grade choices would be made. The SMT indicated however that, at the Parents' Evenings, they had tried to show that the breadth of choice would be maintained throughout the subsequent years, and pupils were not being restricted into career choices at the end of S1.

2.4 The Development Phase

Introduction

During the development phase one of the Depute Headteachers led the extensive mapping and audit of the existing S1/S2 curriculum, which included examining whether any content and skills were being replicated in some subject areas. Subsequently, a number of staff were involved in re-writing the curriculum in all subject areas to produce a revised S1 curriculum ready for implementation in August 2002. Each department was allocated £1000 for cover

days for this activity and other staff development opportunities (see section 2.6.4). During the process the SMT consulted with other Local Authorities to identify similar initiatives elsewhere and some staff visited other schools to observe their practice.

2.4.1 The First Development Phase, May 2001 – November 2001

It was reported to the evaluators that the first development phase, from May 2001 to November 2001 examined the way the management of the process of change was going to be planned and designed. One of the Depute Headteachers who had particular responsibility to take forward the reworking of the 5-14 curriculum into a one year experience, set criteria for this phase. He/she firstly wanted to ensure the staff felt supported and guided through the process, so that they did not feel at any stage that they had a huge unmanageable chunk of work to do; and secondly to ensure that there was consultation throughout the process, and that the teachers' work was being acknowledged and approved throughout the whole process. On reflection, the Depute Headteacher considered that through the careful organisation of the process and the timing of it, these criteria had been achieved.

The organisation of the first in-service day was identified by the SMT as an extremely important part of the consultation process. This had begun with a presentation by the SMT of the current position relating to the project to ensure that staff were fully briefed. This was followed by the staff dividing into subject departments, with some joining together where there were possible cross-curricular links identified by the SMT. This provided an opportunity for staff to discuss the implications of the Standard Grade in S2/3 project for themselves and their departments, and also to discuss cross-curricular issues to eliminate any content and skills which were being replicated in some subject areas:

I organised it in such a way that staff were working in departments to look at their own curriculum, to audit what they did, and working in cross-curricular groups. That was when I saw the excitement starting to be generated. The communication was improved enormously and the feedback from that initial day from staff was positive, they said that they had not been aware of other people delivering things which were exactly the same as they were. Sometimes you would find that in three subject departments the same things were being delivered at different times. What I was concerned to do was reduce the overlap to eliminate the extraneous material that staff really didn't feel was serving the purpose of preparation for Standard Grade. Also to make them aware of these cross-curricular areas which perhaps were areas that could be developed as well as eliminated in certain areas. What I wanted to see was where things were delivered and where progression could be built in, in a cross-curricular way rather than year by year, with a view to saving time obviously.

(Depute Headteacher)

Following on from the initial staff meeting the Depute Headteacher scrutinised the whole 5-14 curriculum, across every subject, and prepared an audit document, which divided up the strands and the skills. The audit document was used as the basis for the curriculum mapping process that subsequently took place. The initial audit identified what was covered in S1 and S2 together. Using the audit document, the relevant staff were then asked to look at how and what they would prioritise, and then position it onto a one year curriculum map. In addition they were asked to identify anything that they felt was not already in the 5-14 curriculum, but which was essential for Standard Grade preparation. This gave the staff permission to deviate from the standard 5-14 curriculum.

The audit documents were designed to be used by both the primary schools and S1 or S2 at KGS. This enabled the Depute Headteacher to identify the areas of coherence and progression which, s/he said, s/he had been told were already there in 5-14 across primary and secondary, but s/he considered *had not in fact been*. At that time all the primary schools audited their own curriculum, so the Depute Headteacher had documents from P6, P7 for all

the associated primary schools. At an ASG meeting the audit documents were discussed and plans were made for streamlining the curriculum between primary and secondary so that there was even more cohesion across the schools.

Subsequently the Depute Headteacher met with the principal teachers to examine assessment in each subject, including looking at when elements were being assessed, and what type of assessment was being used. This process culminated in a map of all the 5-14 strands that were being covered, all the skills, and in some departments *we actually gave permission for the balance between strands and skills to be weighted slightly differently.*

The Depute Headteacher reported that this had brought the recognition that in some departments the skills were actually more important than the strands. For example, in technical subjects and home economics in particular, it seemed there had not been sufficient emphasis on skills, and staff had perhaps felt that it was the volume of paperwork that had to be done that was important. However the Depute Headteacher firmly held the view that the skills were the foundations of the subject and therefore it was important that they were developed. The Depute Headteacher emphasised that the above process had been very valuable as it allowed staff the opportunity to identify and discuss with each other possible cross-curricular links, for example, in environmental studies.

The SMT reported that at the next in-service day they had shared with the staff the departmental priorities which had arisen from the original audit. They were able to prioritise the 5-14 strands and skills, and to change the weight and the balance accordingly. In addition they were able to look at the gaps which had been identified, and to prepare a curriculum plan which was a whole school curriculum plan, rather than a fragmented departmental plan.

A consultative committee was set up comprising the second Depute Headteacher, who at the time was a Principal Teacher, together with representative staff from other departments. The committee was charged with examining problems arising from the ongoing discussions. For example, whether the school should decide to set classes, or to have mixed ability classes for the Standard Grade in S2/3 project, and where support for learning staff should be used. Two of the committee members visited a number of schools to look at their different methods, i.e. schools that were totally set, and schools that were mixed ability. Other issues considered by the committee were the age and maturity of pupils and how this would be dealt with if it became a key factor in the development. This very broad consultation involved all the staff and ran in parallel with all the other curricular consultations.

As the needs and circumstances of different departments varied, regarding whether to set the classes or not was eventually decided by individual departments. It was decided that for the Standard Grade in S2/3 project the Senior Management Team would tolerate very broad flexibility in practices across the school. In maths, for example, it was felt that there was quite a major difference in terms of skills for those pupils that were going to be in a Credit, compared to a General or Foundation class therefore there was a case for setting. In other subjects it could be considered less important.

2.4.2 The Second Development Phase, November 2001 - January 2002

The second development phase ran from November 2001 to January 2002. At an in-service training day the Depute Headteacher fed back to the staff the details of the Audit Summary from all subjects, and the identified curriculum overlaps. Information was also given to the staff about the writing carried out by staff in the curriculum group, and the key progression strategies identified for the departments.

On the same day, a number of staff gave feedback on several initiatives that had been taking place; the principal teacher of home economics on behalf of a cross-curricular group and the principal teacher of physics about a science initiative, which was a cross sector initiative within the ASG. The Depute Headteacher thought both these were useful, and it was stimulating for all the staff to observe a department in action (home economics). They considered there were a lot of positive initiatives running alongside the main development.

2.4.3 The Third Development Phase, January 2002 - May 2002

The third development phase ran from January 2002 to May 2002. The SMT were able to give a briefing of the current position to a full staff meeting and staff were given the date for the final course verification departmental meetings. The departments were required to have the final schemes of work prepared for these meetings and a fully integrated homework plan submitted to the SMT. This was to ensure they were ready to commence the new S1 course in August 2002.

The evaluation project began subsequently in February 2003.

2.5 The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process

2.5.1 The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of The Project

In the initial data collection all three Headteachers interviewed reported they were positive about the project:

A great idea, quite positive.

I was quite keen initially that they were intending to do this move because I did feel that one of the areas to be addressed was the treading water issue in S1/S2.

(Headteacher 3)

One Headteacher indicated that s/he had initially been initially concerned about the possible impact on the primary school, and another commented that there had been mixed feelings amongst the primary school staff. S/he reported that some of the parents had initial worries but the Headteacher of KGS had been able to reassure them. S/he also felt that it would be beneficial for pupils to have a couple of years to study between the Standard Grade and Higher examinations:

Two years to do Highers is beneficial for some pupils. (Headteacher 1)

2.5.2 The Primary Headteachers' Perceptions of The Consultation Process

Responses from the Primary Headteachers indicated that the proposed changes had been introduced at an ASG meeting attended by the Secondary Headteacher and Depute Headteacher, with all the primary school Headteachers and a Local Authority representative present. The KGS Headteacher and the Depute Headteacher had also visited the primary schools to discuss the project in the early stages when it was simply a proposal.

The Primary Headteachers suggested that at the time they had been revising 5-14 as a matter of course as part of their school's and the ASG's Development plan, and the proposed changes had not involved any demands beyond what were the normal routine processes of primary/secondary liaison (see section 3.2.1). These discussions had been ongoing through the first year of the implementation of the project in S1 in 2002.

2.6 The Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Project and the Consultation Process

It was the secondary staff who were likely to bear the significant proportion of the work associated with the initiative. In this section we explore how they were introduced into the planning process, the benefits and difficulties they anticipated, and the support they were offered or sought to take the changes forward.

2.6.1 How was the Project Introduced to the Teachers?

The teaching staff reported in their interviews that they were first informed about Keith Grammar School's proposal to move Standard Grade from S3/4 to S2/3 at one of their regular full staff meetings (see section 2.3.1). The radical nature of the proposals took several staff by surprise:

Surprise, it was just so totally out of the blue, but I suppose my first impression was, oh that might work, it's worth a try. I was quite impressed at the boldness of step and the idea, yes I could see certain people who it would really benefit.

The teachers' reports of their first reactions indicated mixed views. Most recognised the possible pros and cons of the change and had concerns about the implications of the change for their own subject areas. However, the majority of the teachers who were interviewed were generally positive despite their realisation of all the work which it would clearly involve:

My first reaction was I was really enthusiastic about it. I thought it was a very good idea and I thought probably exactly what was needed at the time. I thought it would give the school a sense of direction, a sense of purpose that had been kind of lacking in it and I was really very enthusiastic to start.

Obviously there are concerns and there will remain concerns, and we'll probably get a clearer idea of how it's impacted on teaching in the next two years. But no it certainly didn't detract from my feeling, yes I really would like to be involved in this'.

The scale of the changes daunted a few:

I'd heard of individual departments before, doing this, in maths and things like that. But I wasn't aware of any school doing that right across the board. So I did realise that it was genuinely a big idea and my views haven't really changed. I'm still very much ambivalent about it. So I've never really changed my views from the start, which is, there are pros and cons.

All but one of the teachers who were interviewed considered that they were given the opportunity to comment on the proposal, both in mixed groups following the initial introduction and subsequently at staff meetings. There was, additionally, an opportunity for teachers to respond individually by completing an individual return. Only one teacher, of those who were interviewed, expressed concern about the way the proposal was introduced at the staff meeting:

This was really our first official information that this was even under consideration, in fact. So, I think some people felt it was a bit of a fait accompli at the time.

2.6.2 What Were The Teachers' Anticipated Benefits?

The staff perceived advantages which ranged across the following three categories:

- a) **generally keeping up the momentum of the enthusiasm which first year pupils brought to their work:**
I was very positive basically because in S1 there is an enthusiasm, and this enthusiasm would start to go downhill through S2. It's that enthusiasm, keeping that momentum going within the subject, that I thought would be a good idea.
- b) **advantages for low attaining pupils, particularly in later years in the school:**
It meant that you could get a good, clear, very much more structured curriculum in first year. Yes, you could examine and see the problems that were occurring in fourth year with kids who maybe were on the lower ability scale who were so disillusioned in such areas they felt they weren't going to achieve anything more than they would have done in one year or ten.....to give them a radical curriculum in the upper school.
- c) **advantages for high attaining pupils:**
Was it two years ago, we set the classes in Science in Section year and I had a very able class and I really felt that in Second year they were not being challenged and this seemed like an ideal way to address that, by putting them onto certificated courses that proved much more meaty at that stage. So with that particular group in mind that I was teaching, I thought yes that would really have benefited those pupils and then in Standard Grade.

2.6.3 What Were the Teachers' Initial Concerns?

The initial concerns expressed centred on: the maturity of the pupils at key points (e.g. choice of subjects, sitting key exams a year earlier than those in other schools); the ability of low attainers to keep up with a faster pace in the curriculum; ensuring that all essential knowledge and skills were covered; and having too many formal examinations from S3 onwards.

In the interviews the following areas of concern were identified, the first of which was raised by the majority of interviewees.

a) **the level of maturity of the pupils**

This had particular resonance for the teachers of subjects in which personal experience beyond the classroom could have an effect:

My main concerns in Subject X are the maturity of the kids. It requires a build-up of experience that obviously they won't have completely obtained at S3. And a year at that time is a big, big chunk of a child's life, and, our kids are going to be judged against a lot of other pupils who are a year older, and I think that will be quite clear in the quality of what they write and the maturity of their replies.

However, a complicating factor in these perceptions was the inevitable natural variation in pupils' maturity and skills from intake to intake:

One small concern was that at the presentation side at the end of third year, would they have the maturity, would the standards be lower? But..... the S1 groups that I have are already producing better work than they are in S4, because we're dealing with individuals.They can be presented for Standard Grade and achieve well, just as well at the end of Third Year, or not. No-one knows, it's an unknown. But we are blessed as well with exceptionally good first years this year.

Difficulties relating to maturity and subject choice could, a number of teachers felt, be overcome. They thought that pupils who had perhaps made the wrong subject choice in S1, or who changed their ideas about what they wanted to do, would have the opportunity to pick up new or extra subjects in senior school.

b) adverse effects for low attaining pupils

Potential difficulties were anticipated with respect to both low attainers and pupils with learning difficulties:

The poorer kids, you're not going to speed them up.

My main concerns were the people who really would not have enough background when it came to starting Third year, well starting Standard Grade course, moving to Second year. And I felt there would be quite a tail there that would need some kind of support, or maybe separate classes, or something in that area to get them through. Or possibly even sitting in Fourth year. So, you might have a Third and Fourth year cohort sitting the Standard Grade.

However, some teachers expressed the view that some of these pupils often struggle even now when they have had two years prior to Standard Grade:

The ones that are really struggling are going to find it difficult, but then they would have found it difficult anyway because, usually the ones that are really struggling at the lower end are not going to perhaps improve so much over Second year that's going to make them, significantly advanced. I'm talking about the youngsters that would be needing a little bit of support for learning.

c) adverse effects for high attainers beyond Standard Grade

Some expressed concern about the possibility that the high achieving pupils in Standard Grade would be penalised by being advised to take an extra course before Higher.

I think that we may be looking at, in that year where we do a higher S4, we might looking at a very small class. And we would advise a lot of them if they still have credit grades to go into Intermediate II, just for safety's sake I suppose.

d) curriculum coverage

Concerns with curriculum coverage touched on two aspects: actually covering the necessary content, and pupils having time to learn in enough depth to succeed in Standard Grade at the grade levels which the school had previously produced. Would classes be able to cover the curriculum in one year rather than two? Would pupils have gained the background knowledge and skills to do as well as before in Standard Grade? For some subjects such as science and maths, several teachers expressed concern about the increase in the density of the content or knowledge which it was necessary to cover:

You can't miss anything out with (subject) it is all about building blocks. Everything has to be done. We can't collapse a topic or a subject because it's just not possible. It's a rush to get everything in, to give them the best chance at Standard Grade. This is what I'm concerned about.

But these concerns covered both academic and practical subjects:

My main concern was the fact that from a practical subject point of view, would they have as much of a grounding in practical skills that I would have liked to have seen by end of second year, and how that would then relate to what teaching they still need and how much progress they can then pick up on in a third and fourth year, - well, now a second or third year, a year younger than before.

e) too many formal assessments and exams

There was also some concern expressed that a consequence of moving Standard Grade a year earlier would be that pupils would be subjected to too many formal assessments and exams:

The disadvantage is in terms of maturity about such a young age group going through formal examinations at that age. And also the fact that it would create extra tiers of assessment for pupils, rather than giving them a grounding in skills and knowledge, that it would lead to an overemphasis on them being examined more, and the effects that that would have on certain children.Especially, the 4th year and Higher Still because there is more internal assessment, and, having that back on to even more of that when they get into 5th year.

Although the positive, motivating side of examinations was identified, the fear expressed that was this would be dissipated by a relentless regime of exams throughout and beyond secondary school:

When they know there's an exam on the horizon suddenly life becomes quite serious, and it may well be that by bringing it into S3 you actually get that earlier. You know, the thing that's beginning to I suppose alarm me, it's okay to do that once or twice in your career, to pull out all the stops, but if you're doing it in S3, S4, S5 and again in S6 – four years in a row sitting exams. What kind of effect does that have on you by the time you get to S6? I mean, I think there comes a point at which you think, "Another exam! More exams!" And I mean they're looking at 3, 4, 5, 6 and then four years at university possibly...It's a big commitment – eight years of your life to doing nothing but exams!

2.6.4 What Support, Resources and Training were Available for The Teachers?

As detailed in section 2.4, the Depute Headteacher was extensively involved with leading and co-ordinating the development of the revised S1 curriculum with the staff. It was necessary for the staff to initiate development action on their S1 curriculum and potentially in Standard Grade to begin the processes of change. In our interviews we asked what kind of support they had received, and whether they had sought or received any kind of staff development to assist them in their tasks.

a) Development time and resources

Support from the Senior Management Team for developing the revised curriculum was provided in the form of development time or money that departments had been allocated. These were deployed differently in different departments. For example:

We were paid to write a section in our own time and we were given money for books....We like the books, the children like the books.

We came together I think once a week. We all chose a level so I was D, E; somebody else was E, F; somebody else B, C, D. We decided on the way the course was being run so everything should coincide with what everybody else was doing, so it was well planned. But it took a long time to do, to actually sit down, go through 5-14, go through Standard Grade, to decide what was a priority in the first year and what could be left 'til the second year.

However, not all of the time allocated could be used in some departments because of staffing problems:

We did reasonable development, but because of the staffing problems we couldn't actually take up the days that were allocated, we just couldn't afford to because it's difficult enough to get subject cover teachers. So we didn't get the full days that we needed for that, but we've kind of gradually produced, three packs of material which is good material so....basically we're pleased with that.

Time for the actual production of materials just had to be found, but time for reflection was more difficult to secure:

I think we could have done with time for reflection. I think with the reality of teaching I think it's very difficult to get the chance to pull back and there's never a time in the year, even at exam time, when you can actually, give yourself a chance as a department to sit down and say "let's look at what's happened". We just want to go away and think, without having to say what's the end product or the report or whatever.

b) Staff development in curriculum design

Contact was made by the SMT with each of the thirty two Local Authorities about their curricular plans, and they reported that responses were received from the majority, including North Lanarkshire which was particularly helpful. Contact was also made with a number of schools which had dropped Standard Grade to S2/3 for particular groups of pupils, or individual subjects, and their experiences were considered. It had also been reported to the researchers by the SMT that a member of the maths department had visited several schools in Aberdeenshire and returned enthused by their experiences of Standard Grade maths in S2/3:

I have encouraged them to speak to colleagues in their fields in other schools. Some have visited other departments on occasions where they have known of something going on. We have relied on staff professionalism, but we have allowed them the opportunity to take up whatever they feel they need. (Depute Headteacher)

However despite all this activity, some staff appeared not to have been able take the time to visit other schools. This was due to staffing shortages in a particular department:

There are other schools that have taken this subject down to S3 and I suppose really we should have made a move to try and see some of these people. It would have been nice, had this been a year when we were fully staffed. That would certainly have been one of my ambitions, how I started the year off, but we have been horrendously affected by staffing this year and really you couldn't excuse anybody even for a day, if it wasn't absolutely necessary. So, it's kind of gone by the board.

For most staff, their departmental colleagues were clearly the main identifiable source of relevant expertise in curriculum development:

We certainly didn't get any training. I don't feel that we needed anything like that.

I'm quite a new professional but there's teachers in the department that have been here or have been teaching for year. They've had to develop courses for 5-14 so I've been following by example, so I didn't think there was any need.

Staff development? I think we knew what was expected of us and we knew when it had to be achieved, is that what you mean?.....I can't think of any staff development off hand, I honestly don't know what could have been provided to know whether I'm lacking in that.

With respect to staff development, some felt they were undertaking such a novel enterprise, there was nothing but their own past experience they could look to for assistance:

I don't know what kind of support they (SMT) could have supplied us with. How do you know when nobody's done it before what should go into a (Subject) curriculum that's only going to deal with one year rather than two? I suppose it was quite isolating to do it by yourself because you weren't really sure that you were getting it right. It's only, a small department, when we're all here, there's only four of us. That's not an awful lot of heads to think, "Are we sure we're getting everything in here? Is that exactly what we want to teach?" We'll probably know better when we audit it, when we come to talk about it at a departmental meeting and think about what we did and what we felt about it and whether it worked.

DETAILED INDEX

3	Changes in the S1 Curriculum	18
3.1	Introduction	18
3.2	The Primary and Secondary Liaison Activities	18
3.2.1	The Primary Headteachers' Perspective	18
	a) Primary and secondary liaison activities	18
	b) Fitting the curriculum into the time available	20
	c) Primary staff training needs	21
3.2.2	The Secondary School Perspective	21
3.3	The Changes to the New S1 Course	22
3.3.1	Changes to the S1 Course Content and Pace	22
3.3.2	Managing the Amount of Homework	24
	a) The school's perspective	24
	b) The pupils' perspectives	25
	c) The parents' perspectives	26
3.4	The Inclusion of all Pupils in the Revised S1 Curriculum	26
3.4.1	The Primary/Secondary Transition Arrangements	26
	a) Looking at the needs of individual pupils	27
	b) The induction arrangements	28
3.4.2	Support for the Slow or Less Mature Learners	28
	a) Differentiated materials	29
	b) Reliance on the teacher	30
	c) Support for learning services	30
	d) Support for high attaining pupils	31
3.5	Reviewing the Changes to the S1 Course	32
3.5.1	The Teachers' Perspectives	32
	a) The positive perceptions of the staff	32
	b) Staff concerns and reservations	33
3.5.2	The Pupils' Perspectives	34
	a) The positive perceptions of the pupils	34
	b) The negative experiences of the pupils	37
3.5.3	The Parents' Perspectives	39
	a) The positive perceptions of the parents	39
	b) Parents' concerns and reservations	40

SECTION 3 CHANGES IN THE S1 CURRICULUM

General Aim 1

To evaluate the impact on the quality of and approaches to learning and teaching for staff and learners involved in the project through the implementation of the revised 5-14 curriculum across 16 school departments, beginning with the current S1 year group.

3.1 Introduction

In order to condense the two years of 5-14 into one year, the senior management and the teachers had to take decisions concerning the ways in which this could be effected. We address the research questions indicated below, and give an account of the secondary and primary school staff, pupils' and parents' views of the strategies employed, how they were implemented and the experiences of the participants during the first year of the revised S1 curriculum in the school session 2002 - 2003.

The three main research questions addressed were:

Were 5-14 elements normally done in S1 moved down into primary and, if so, how well did primary pupils and teachers cope? Did Primary teachers need special training for this and if so how was it delivered?

How did the secondary school fit the curriculum into reduced time available?

Did the pupils have to do more homework, and use more school, home and community study facilities?

3.2 The Primary and Secondary Liaison Activities

Were 5-14 elements normally done in S1 moved down into primary and, if so, how well did primary pupils and teachers cope? Did Primary teachers need special training for this and if so how was it delivered?

3.2.1 The Primary Headteachers' Perspective

a) Primary and secondary liaison activities

From the perspective of the Primary Headteachers, there has been little change to the primary 5-14 curriculum as a result of the secondary school revision of its S1 course. The primary/secondary liaison activities were well established and no additional demands appear to have been made on the Primary Headteachers, resulting in little change in the upper stages curriculum in the primary schools.

The Primary Headteachers suggested that at the time the secondary school consulted with them, they had already been revising 5-14 as a matter of course as part of their schools' and the ASG development plan, and the proposed changes had not involved any demands beyond what were the normal routine processes of primary/secondary liaison:

Yes it was introduced to us as Heads at an ASG meeting initially and we had been quite far down the path of looking at curriculum crossover and the transition from P7 to S1. We had previously had meetings with different departments looking at the 5-14 elements and so, it didn't come as any great shock to us to consider that we would be looking at making sure there was a good articulation between the primary and secondary transition point. So as far as I am concerned certainly, my view is that it didn't actually entail any extra work for us at all. (Primary Headteacher 3)

These discussions were ongoing throughout the cohort pupils' first year at KGS.

Last year (discussing the curriculum, e.g. social subjects) would have been, as part of ASG, part of our development plan, and we arranged to meet with the Heads of Departments after that. Last year we spent a morning with each Head of Department, geography, history and modern studies. Another Headteacher and myself, and then we reported back to the rest of the ASG meeting. (Primary Headteacher 2)

Another example given was the science liaison project which had been part of the ASG development plan and which had been developed before the Standard Grade in S2/3 project had begun:

It was where the science teacher comes into every feeder primary school and does a project on forces with them, and then the children visit the lab in the secondary school with the class teacher. They do an experiment and they actually take their liaison booklet with them and they complete it there. (Primary Headteacher 2)

In the social subjects the primary schools had given the social subject departments in KGS an account of the topics they covered:

They then looked at the topics that they were covering in S1/S2 and any changes that were made, practically all the changes that were made that I am aware of, were from the secondary side of things. (Primary Headteacher 3)

Other examples of cooperation included the following areas of the curriculum: modern languages, music, ICT, health and technology:

The ASG meets once a term and we have working groups in areas of the curriculum. We now have ICT, Health and Technology working groups, whose function is to see that we are following a common curriculum across the primary schools. Last year we looked at everything taught in social subjects at KGS and in the primaries – and checked that there was no duplication and that there was progression. (Primary Headteacher 1)

We met in the ASG with the Modern Languages teacher. S/he gave us a list of vocabulary that s/he would be happy they knew.....And we got good feedback from the secondary. They are happy with what we are doing. (Primary Headteacher 1)

We had a meeting with PT of Music at the ASG and identified common themes. Practically everybody in S1 passed E or F in Music - maybe E – which is very good at end of S1.

As the above quotes indicate, the three Headteachers suggest that there was little change in the curriculum in the upper stages directly as a result of the project. Rather, curriculum continuity was being tackled at ASG level prior to the project and changes that were made were largely as a consequence of this ongoing work which had been done regularly in consultation/negotiation with secondary colleagues. Where necessary, it appears from the Primary Headteacher interviews, the secondary staff changed their curriculum to develop on from the work of the primary schools:

.....they (KGS) were looking for areas where, for instance, say it was graphics, well if it was covered in Maths and Geography then they decided on which one was going to do it and streamlined that but it didn't have a knock on effect down into the primary school..... Some of that had already been done previously and so there was very little required to be done, as I say, the vast majority of curriculum change had been in S1. (Primary Headteacher 3)

However, this Headteacher acknowledged that an occasion might arise in the future when a particular aspect of the curriculum would be moved down into the primary school, where the

secondary school staff decided there was something they couldn't fit in and that might be better taught or tackled in the primary school.

Observations at ASG meetings in 2003 during the focus pupils' first year confirmed the co-operation between the primary and secondary sectors, for example, the PTs of Languages and ICT gave a presentation to the Primary Headteachers and detailed elements of the curriculum they expected the pupils to have covered prior to starting Keith Grammar school. The observations also confirmed that secondary staff in certain subjects, ICT, modern languages and health, would be working together with Primary Headteachers during the current school year. Days were allocated for staff across the sectors to work together on the development plan to ensure the implementation of the revised 5-14 guidelines.

It does not appear from the experiences of the three Primary Headteachers who were interviewed that the secondary school consulted them specifically about changes to the S1/2 curriculum as a result of the Standard Grade in S2/3 Project. Rather, this was an ongoing feature of the work of the ASG liaison work which was working well before Keith Grammar school developed and implemented the Project. As one Primary Head explained:

No they were looking at S1 and 2 themselves and then devising their programme and then after that the Social Subjects, we did liaise with. It was part of the ASG anyway, so it all linked in rather well. (Primary Headteacher 1)

I think the secondary had decided that they were going to try it. And that they certainly had meetings with us to see if we could tell them of any problem areas, which would have largely been "were the children ready?" Because you do have some P7s who are Level A, Bs and Cs. And there were concerns like - what is going to happen to them?.. (Primary Headteacher 2)

b) Fitting the curriculum into the time available

The Primary Headteachers did not think that they had had to 'squeeze' any more into their upper stages curriculum. Neither had they had to increase the pace of the curriculum as a consequence of the project, this varied from year to year, depending on their pupils' level of attainment:

I don't feel that it has made any difference to us because the kids who we have in P7 are the kids that we have had from P1 to P6. And they will have been going along the right pace, and there will be some who are well through D and into E. And there will be some who are going through the A's and B's and that's where they are regardless of what changes there have been with the Standard Grades. It hasn't affected us in that way at all. I certainly haven't felt more pressure to get them through extra things. Now to be perfectly frank they get through at the pace that we are able to cope with depending on the kind of clientele we are dealing with from year to year, so that hasn't changed.

(Primary Headteacher 3)

Primary Headteacher 1 indicated that pace was something that her/his school had been required to tackle anyway. It had been one of the points for action in their last Inspector's report (November 2001) and that consequently there *is more pace here too*. S/he did not feel that they had to cover more content but they had to make sure that skills are taught. S/he felt under no pressure from KGS to *do more, as they are happy with what her/his school is doing*.

Her/his school's philosophy is to push the bright ones so that they are not bored, but admitted that they were *not fully there yet, but were working towards it*. The school is introducing Support for Learning to work with P6 and P7 pupils who are struggling, for example, in maths.

c) Primary staff training needs arising from the development and implementation of the new revised 5-14 curriculum in the upper stages

There does not appear to have been any specific staff development for the primary school staff directly related to the Standard Grade in S2/3 project. The three Headteachers who were interviewed did not indicate that they felt that this was really necessary, although as one commented:

...I mean hindsight is always a wonderful thing. I suppose if there had been issues andwhere they were areas that we were feeling that we were under pressure from it then, I would probably say that yes, there should have been more staff development and they should have been looking at this, but given that there hasn't been, it hasn't bothered me at all that there isn't... (Primary Headteacher 3)

The staff development that had been useful had been targeted at particular curricular areas that were a concern for the particular primary schools, for example science in School 2 and maths in School 1. However, these were not considered by the Headteachers to be a consequence of the Project, but rather the normal needs of each school. Primary Headteacher 2 did however acknowledge that in the future joint staff development with the secondary school would be useful *if it was well organised*.

3.2.2 The Secondary School Staff Perspective

The starting point for changes in the revised S1 course identified in interview by staff from one department was the improvement of their liaison with their primary schools:

Well, taking S1 and S2, I mean right from the start we're going to have to get the primary/secondary liaison a lot sharper. I think before we've looked at S1, S2 really to get them prepared for Standard Grade but if we've only got one year then we've got to be pretty sure that we're doing the job right from the start. So I think that's going to be very important. Last year the senior teacher, visited the Primaries. ... Basically, so we can get a very firm view of exactly what the pupils are like, so that as soon as they come up here, hopefully we will be catering right for them. And then after that, we looked at our S1, S2 year plans, what we do there and we've tried to compress it, and revise it as well because you can't be sure when you do it first time.

They were of the view that they could not continue to proceed as if S1 was a fresh start, and that:

.... I think we're going to have to look not just at the grades, but at the kind of work that they've done and the kind of input that they've got and the kind of advice that they've got and get some kind of consistency with that.

Table 3.1 indicates that sixteen out of the total of seventeen secondary staff respondents had been involved in the subsequent writing of the new curriculum. Almost half of these sixteen had visited the primary school and had been involved in the kinds of discussions described above.

Table 3.1 Secondary Teachers' Development Activities

(Number of respondents, N=17)

	Yes	No
Were you actively involved in writing the revised S1 curriculum?	16	1
Did you visit any of the associated primary schools?	7	10
Did you visit any secondary schools already implementing curriculum flexibility?	0	17
Did you get some extra time or resources allocated for the development work?	14	2

3.3 The Changes to the New S1 Course

As the data on the primary/secondary school liaison indicate, there was little pressure for the primary courses to change. It appeared that the main changes occurred wholly within the S1/S2 courses of the secondary school. In order to reduce the timescale of the course from two to one year, several strategies had to be deployed – reducing duplication, condensing, cutting out material, cutting down on experiences, or increasing the pace. The processes of decision taking started with the curriculum audits initiated by the SMT. The resulting courses which were developed were run for the first time in 2002-2003, and we were able to ask the teachers for their views on how well these had gone in our questionnaire in 2004. Information presented here on the teachers', parents' and pupils' perspectives on the course are derived from both questionnaires and interviews.

How did the secondary school fit the curriculum into reduced time available?

3.3.1 Changes to the S1 Course Content and Pace

One of the main aims of the collaboration between subject departments had been to identify and reduce the duplication of topics. The extensive mapping exercise undertaken by the staff in the period prior to the beginning of the evaluation had identified certain topics that were being presented to pupils more than once across different subjects during S1 and S2 indicating opportunities for reduction (see section 2.4.1). The Depute Headteacher had encouraged the staff to be creative in the use of this opportunity to change their courses:

I also suggested that staff should feel free to be creative with their S1 curriculum, to add anything that they thought was essential for preparation for Standard Grade which did not currently exist in the 5-14 programme. I think that had quite a liberating effect as well. We are very conscious of working within these tramlines, and to give it that sense of freedom. People were saying, "Oh, so it is okay to put this, I have always wanted to put this in". We are getting that kind of comment. When that was completed for the timescale that we had allowed, people were taken through a very, very structured process and they were actually guided to each of the next stages and asked to report back on each stage of that. (Depute Headteacher)

As a result of the exercise, in some areas, the curriculum had been subjected to cuts in the content or skills covered. In some subjects the reduction in content appeared less problematical than others, and reduction was effected by cutting out duplication and other material considered redundant. Despite these cuts, the SMT felt reassured that the new S1 curriculum had appropriate coverage of skills and strands, and reinforcement of activities

across subjects, e.g. investigating. The choice for some cuts had been determined by the changes in Higher Still – this was particularly so in English:

I suppose to some extent what's fallen out is because of the change in Higher Still. They would have been doing critical listening, but critical listening has disappeared, just as we all got used to it and wanted to do it. We've had to up some of the things as well, like textual analysis, which didn't exist on the First year course before, but now does because of Higher Still. I suppose in a way it's odd, the adjustments we've had to make because of Higher Still rather than because of what happened to the curriculum

As an English teacher pointed out in interview, in courses which involved a series of experiences, rather than coverage of content, cuts were more difficult – e.g. a book is going to take a certain amount of time to read and to discuss and this cannot be reduced. They therefore simply read fewer novels and wrote fewer critical essays. In some subjects, e.g. mathematics, cuts might mean the loss of material considered essential as a basis for going forward in Standard Grade.

And for many respondents, there was potential loss of the more enjoyable, less pressured aspect of the curriculum:

So we've tried to home into the kind of key (subject) elements and tried to address them and make sure that they're being addressed and that they're taught properly and assessed properly and everything. The one area that, that I think we're probably quite sad that we're going to have to lose is the kind of meatier area, that we were moving towards doing meatier work in S1/2 and film studies which the kids enjoy. It's very much their kind of thing, their area of interest. And really, if we're going to address the traditional reading, writing, listening, talking properly, that's really obviously going to have to go and that's a shame.

In other subjects, there was concern that this might be the pupils' only experience of the subject at school – so decisions had to be made - what did they really need to know?

I am very disappointed that e.g. we haven't been able to touch on (topic X), or we haven't been able to touch on (topic Y). Obviously on the other hand the pupils will cover that in Standard Grade anyway. We were quite conscious of thinking when we were devising the courses about pupils who wouldn't take the subject in Second year. We thought to ourselves if a pupil is only going to do (the subject) for one year, what would we most like them to have an awareness of. Maybe from that point of view some pupils are missing out but on the other hand I don't think that is at the expense of the greater benefit.

Some respondents indicated that while there were few outright cuts, time spent on some activities or a shift in emphasis had occurred:

When it was two years, the course was equally weighted between knowledge and understanding and problem-solving and we were using Heinemann books. Now since we've had to develop this new S1 course we've geared more towards knowledge and understanding. We've actually got new books which is basically knowledge and understanding, so something's had to give because we've had...there's just so much to cover that it's more weighted towards knowledge and understanding so we'll have problem-solving back in later on.

Changes or *pruning* of the methods of assessment were noted by two of the sixteen respondents in the questionnaire:

Three summative assessments have been introduced instead of continuous assessment.

In the open questions, seven of the sixteen respondents indicated that a key change in their S1 curriculum was concerned with its streamlining, with respect to its beginning - through closer

links with the primary curriculum; its overall content - through implementing the 5-14 guidelines; and with respect to the endpoint - which was now linked more closely with Standard Grade:

The new course is more closely linked to the 5-14 guidelines. Agreement was reached between the primary and the secondary as to course coverage, so there is less overlap.

Complete review of the course in order to ensure it covered all of the areas needed as preparation for Standard Grade.

I helped develop the workload for S1 and made the course more intense and applicable to Standard Grade as of an earlier stage. The work was made more relevant to the Standard Grade.

Compacting two years into one, and the consequent revision of the S1 curriculum had given some teachers the opportunity to modernise, fine-tune, or deepen the S1 curriculum.

Updated hardware meant changes to worksheets and allowed us to focus on up-to-date techniques for solving problems using modern software. Introduction of a new unit for learning about how the computer works.

In art we constantly change the curriculum choices anyway. The extra development opportunities gave us a chance to fine tune some courses and cut out the dead wood from others.

In addition, or alternatively to cuts, **an increase in pace** was indicated from some of the teachers interviewed:

I don't feel like I'm doing that much more different from what I was doing before. It's maybe a bit quicker than it was. ...We are working at a pace covering what the pupils need to know before they get to Standard Grade. There's been a few things from Level F that we would have done in the past, that we have had to put to one side because they're in a Standard Grade course, and we don't have enough time to do them in the first year. But the pace is still there, in fact the pace has increased. The pace is so that we can cover what they need to know before they go into second year.

3.3.2 Managing the Amount of Homework

Did the pupils have to do more homework?

a) The school's perspective

Because the school were aware that secondary schools had been criticised for not allocating enough homework, the school staff had given the issue of homework some thought and attention. A homework policy was in place in which good practice was set out, for example that work started in class should not be given as homework. They had also in 2003 employed the services of a private company to monitor by a questionnaire to parents the amount of homework given to pupils, which indicated that the parents were generally happy with the amount of homework given to pupils, which was average compared to elsewhere in Scotland:

We used a private company to survey parental attitude about how much homework they thought the pupils were getting. The amount was bang on the national average. Previously they would have been getting less than the national average.

(Secondary Headteacher)

The school now considered they were in line with the nationally recommended amounts, and as they had increased the amount of homework to bring them in line with the national

average, they thought the parents of the cohort pupils would perceive that homework was increased compared to the previous S1 year groups.

b) The pupils' perspectives

Both pupils and parents were asked about the level of homework. Our data from the pupils and parents indicated that, not unexpectedly, there was a wide range of opinions about levels of homework.

From the questionnaires and the interviews, the perceptions of individuals on the amount of homework varied, sometimes depending on the amount of homework given by individual teachers for a particular subject, sometimes as a consequence of the pupil's attitude to work. As the Depute Headteacher highlighted, the approach of individual pupils to the same homework may be completely different:

We do have a policy and we do have guidelines. It is very much left up to guidance to monitor how much homework is being allocated. We had one little girl who was spending hours doing homework which was not really hours of homework, it was more to do with her attitude to work and her conscientiousness. We were able to sort that out quite easily. Guidance do keep a very close eye on workload. (Depute Headteacher)

However, it also varied depending on whether pupils had to complete class work as homework. From class observations there was evidence that, for example, in one subject, in addition to the homework, pupils were sometimes asked to complete work at home if it had not been completed in the lesson. In another subject, pupils were given five questions to complete in class and five questions to do for homework. The pupils who completed the ongoing class work were allowed to start their homework in the class. In another class pupils had to complete the class worksheet as homework. The pupils who had nearly finished in the time allotted were given additional homework as well.

In the questionnaire, pupils were asked to indicate the number of hours they spent doing homework in each subject in a typical week. A note of caution has to be sounded in the interpretation of the figures in Table 3.2 (appendix 4), as although these may have been perceived by the pupils, whether they correspond to 'reality' is a different matter, and will possibly be different for different pupils for reasons such as given above.

The subjects in which pupils reported they were given the most homework, per week, were geography 19%, maths 15% and science 14%. This was in contrast to the lower levels (5% and less) that S2 pupils reported for these subjects. However this level of homework perceived by the S1 pupils is at variance with the school's view (section 3.3.2a).

The amount of homework was spontaneously raised by some pupils in the interviews. Their views on this supported the questionnaire data, i.e. pupils perceived they had more homework in maths, science and languages.

Maths - Yeah, we get quite a lot of homework and we're expected to be able to know what to do and get down to it. Girl Level A

Homework was too much because we had to try to fit in all the stuff that we'd missed. To fit it into one year. Every night, well it was every night. Some nights more, there was like three pieces in a night. Boy Level B

Yeah, we got an awful lot of homework. It depends on what subject, if it was Maths it would take me like an hour or something like that. Girl Level D

c) The parents' perspectives

As with the pupils, there was a range of opinion among the parents about the level of homework their child received in S1. Their views reflected the specific experiences of their child with particular teachers and subjects, and no doubt, their child's ability to keep abreast of the work given. In the questionnaire, one third (33%) of the parents indicated that their child's homework was 'about right', 40% thought that it was 'too much', *Too much homework*, and approximately one quarter (22%) indicated it was 'not enough'. However in contrast, in S2, 53% of the parents indicated it was 'about right'.

In the interviews conducted with parents of the focus pupils (representing a range of ability), a range of attitudes were expressed from parents regarding the level of homework.

Certainly the first two terms, we were slightly concerned with the vast amount of homework. Then that kind of eased off in terms 3 and 4, and it seemed to level off. Obviously I think there was a bit of feet-finding in that term, in how much time they had to get through everything. He/she is an able child and coped with it without any problem really. (Parent of high attaining pupil)

One parent with a child in a higher year commented that their child had more homework in S1 than the older sibling.

I did really feel that there has been a lot more homework on (name of pupil)'s part. With (name of older sibling) I felt that in first year the homework wasn't a great deal.

Some parents appreciated the support given when children had identified specific needs for additional input. Speaking about a child who had record of needs, the parent said:

He/she did struggle with homework, used to panic. I spoke to the teacher a few times about it and he/she said that if he/she couldn't manage to do it at home, he/she could do it in his SFL classes and they would help him/her with it. He/she coped with homework not too badly.

At the other end of the ability spectrum a parent said his/her child *had got on really well* but that *I don't think that they get enough homework*. She explained that the family had recently moved to the area and that she based this view on the homework her child got at primary school and from speaking to parents at the secondary school that her child would have attended.

3.4 The Inclusion of all Pupils in the Revised S1 Curriculum

What were the key decisions made vis a vis the inclusion of all pupils in the revised S1 curriculum?

3.4.1 The Primary/Secondary Transition Arrangements

The liaison processes which supported the primary pupils' transition to the secondary school comprised visits to the primary school, the cross sector staff meetings and the induction days. All three primary Headteachers indicated that they had a long-standing good relationship with the Support for Learning department at KGS, and the transition arrangements between the two sectors had been detailed and lengthy, but had simply built on what had been in place before the project started:

To be perfectly honest the procedures that were implemented, and that continued last year really were a continuation of what previously happened. There has always been a very good liaison with regards to pupils with special needs going up to the Grammar. We always have had the principal teacher support for learning coming down to the school to discuss at an early stage those children that we had concerns

about with regard to the transfer. And where needed we've implemented an extended transition period and that continued last year. And in certain ways, the pupils with special needs already have quite a good safety net concerning their transition. I feel that is one of the things the Keith Grammar and the feeder primaries do very well. (Primary Headteacher 3)

It was clear from the information given and the discussions observed, that the staff of both sectors expended a lot of time and effort on the exchange of information which would allow for a smoothly managed transition from the environment of the primary school to that of the secondary. A wide range of information was exchanged, particularly if the child was considered likely to have difficulty, for whatever reason, in fitting into the secondary school system and was likely to need some form of support.

a) Looking at the needs of individual pupils

A number of meetings between primary and secondary staff (Primary Headteacher, Secondary Depute Headteacher and Principal Teacher (PT), Support for Learning) for the transfer of information about pupils were observed in April and May 2003. These meetings were to discuss pupils in the year below the cohort pupils who entered KGS in August 2003. Pupils who were considered likely to have difficulties were first identified through the primary/secondary liaison meetings.

At the liaison meetings the staff involved participated in an extremely thorough process in which very detailed information was exchanged about pupils likely to have difficulties. Important information included whether the child had a medical problem or a record of needs and was likely to need specialist support. Additional informal information such as social interests, friendships, family details and features of the pupil's behaviour was also exchanged. A Primary 7 to S1 Transfer sheet was completed for every pupil under the following headings: Name, Siblings, Record of Needs/Referrals, Agencies Involved, Special Educational Provision and Attainment Levels for Reading Writing and Maths. Sections of this form were filled in at the meetings observed.

The Primary Headteachers gave details of each pupil's attainment in National Tests and other information about the pupil's ability levels, including the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) scores, (assessment tests for primary schools provided by the University of Durham). Any siblings who were already at KGS were also noted. Each pupil's character, friendships, behaviour, family circumstances, likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and their sporting, dramatic, musical and artistic abilities were discussed.

The Depute Headteacher discussed each pupil's characteristics with the Primary Headteacher to allow her/him to decide in which of the three first year classes it would be best for the pupil to be included. For example, whether it was important for the pupil to be with her/his friends, or if the pupil had an older sibling in the school then the new entrant would be in the same house as her/his sibling. Also considered was whether there were reasons for keeping a pupil apart from another pupil.

The information gathered from these meetings was used by the secondary staff to draw up class lists. A subsequent area schools group (ASG) meeting of all the Primary Headteachers with the secondary Depute Headteacher and PT of Support for Learning was observed. At this meeting the Depute Headteacher provided the first drafts of class lists. This provided an opportunity for the Primary Headteachers to recommend readjustment of the lists to suit the particular needs of their pupils, and was particularly relevant for pupils from very small rural schools.

The researcher observed a further level of in-depth liaison between the primary and secondary staff when the PT Support for Learning withdrew from the ASG meeting to meet the two P7

teachers from one of the associated primary schools. The PT for Support for Learning read out a description of each pupil taken from the information provided by the Primary Headteacher at the earlier liaison meeting, and asked each P7 teacher to respond regarding its accuracy. At the end of the process, the researcher spoke with PT Support for Learning who reported that the session had been very useful, providing a greater level of knowledge for the school.

The PT Support for Learning reported that the primary school records of all the pupils were available to the support for learning staff. Pupils with formal Records of Needs entered automatically into the support for learning remit for support. Other pupils might be put on a list of 'confidentials' – based on the pupil's learning needs and any behavioural difficulties. This identified children who might be likely to encounter difficulties in specific subjects. The list of 'confidentials' was passed to all teaching staff at the beginning of the year, with an open invitation for staff to get back to support for learning colleagues if they felt there was a problem which needed actively addressing. The list was updated during the school year. The folders of pupils with no identified difficulties were retained by the guidance staff, who might issue their own 'confidentials' list on a daily basis. If problems arose with individuals in this group, teachers approached Guidance staff who subsequently alerted support for learning colleagues as appropriate.

b) The induction arrangements

Regarding provision for special needs pupils, the Headteachers explained that in addition to the two days induction provided for all pupils to help them with transition, these pupils had additional day visits. This provided a longer period of time for the pupils to become familiar with the staff and the school:

Probably from the exam period when the S4, 5, and 6 are out on the exams there are extra sessions where the children, apart from the two days induction period that all children have, the pupils with special needs were set up a special programme whereby they will go at different times during the week to spend time in the base and learn about it and they will meet some of the key support workers who will be working with them the following year, the Support for Learning teacher, and so on. And they get a chance to get to know the school in slightly extended ways because they have much more time, so they may have, depending on the child, depending on the programme set up, they may have four or five or perhaps more extra visits to the Grammar School. As I say, it depends on the child, for some children perhaps only one or two hours are necessary, and they are quite happy, but as you can understand lots of children have special needs. Coming from a small school going to a larger one, they do have initial worries about what it is going to be like, though we have done this for quite a number of years now. We make sure they are quite happy with the transition period though by the time they do their two day induction along with everybody else, they are very au fait with the place and quite happy and settled. (Primary Headteacher 3)

The transmission of key information and the attention given to the induction days were very thorough. In the next section we consider the subsequent arrangements made within the secondary school to support those pupils who were potentially vulnerable to the loss of one year's general education before Standard Grade.

3.4.2 Support for the Slow or less Mature Learners

How was support given to slower or less mature learners?

Secondary staff have always deployed a range of different mechanisms for managing, within one class, pupils with a range of attainment levels. As the pace of the new curriculum is

increased and the level extended, managing these differences becomes even more important than before.

Most of the teachers interviewed expressed the view that teaching a class in which there were pupils with a range of attainment levels was a challenge to their skills to which they had to give daily attention and the observation data supported this assertion. The principal means through which they did this varied from subject to subject along the lines already documented in previous research studies in Scottish secondary schools (Simpson and Ure 1993). They fell into the following categories:

a) Differentiated materials

Differentiated materials were planned by a number of subject departments. For example, in maths, the S1 classes were set by ability using a number of indicators – e.g. the National Tests and the MidYIS scores. The maths teacher explained that the curriculum is differentiated depending upon the 5-14 level at which pupils are working:

Everybody covers the same according to their level so that when the pupils come in August they all did a block of number so whether it be B, C, D, E or another level, everybody did number and we try and keep the course the same as much as possible. Everybody's doing a different level so we have differentiated stuff for them.

All four maths class sets were observed by the researchers, and at each level all the pupils were working on the same tasks, although a variety of learning activities was usually provided. For example in one classroom pupils were engaged in mental maths, played a game to complete co-ordinates on a grid done on an overhead projector, and worked through an exercise from their maths text. In another maths classroom mental maths was again used to introduce the lesson before the teacher went through examples of the topic for the day on the blackboard. Pupils were then all asked to work through a series of exercises from their textbooks.

The Science Department had been liaising with Support for Learning Department to provide differentiated material. The Principal Teacher explained that a disadvantage had been that:

The commercially produced materials were only available to us in June so it has been a very, very short development time, which was not our choice, but the delay of the publishers. Next year I hope the less able pupils will be supported more appropriately and I think the more able pupils will have more than enough challenge.

Observations in science classrooms suggested that this differentiated material was not yet being used. All pupils worked on the same task and completed the same workbook to record their observations etc. Consequently dealing with a wide range of ability in the classroom caused some of the teachers to express their concern about the inclusion of all their pupils in the curriculum:

I like my class, don't get me wrong, I like all the pupils in my class but I find my class hard to teach because in this particular new course because I have a really quite bright boy. He's really keen on (the subject), he's really a little bright spark and he's very keen and I have a couple of pupils, about three, who are not as bright as he is but quite good. They're on the ball too. Then I have a big gap and I have a lot of kids who are really struggling and I find that hard to teach.....Now catching up, I could quite catch up easily with the four or five, let's say four, but the less able pupils are, oh dear, very hard. And I feel I'm failing them, I feel I haven't enough time to spend with them to explain what's going on, you know.

For this teacher, as for others, the suggested solution was setting. However in spite of the difficulties of dealing with a wide ability range, classroom observations suggested that most pupils responded with enthusiasm to the revised S1 curriculum and the practical activities. There was often a very calm atmosphere and the pupils were attentive. Where a teaching

auxiliary, or in particular a learning support teacher was in the classroom, the help they were able to give to the low attainers was considerable (see section 3.4.2c). This allowed the science teacher more time to support the rest of his/her pupils.

b) Reliance on the teacher

The principal means through which teachers dealt with pupils with a range of attainment levels in S1 was through their skills and experience, but the challenge to teachers dealing with a class with a wide range of attainment is exemplified in the following two observations. In one class while pupils were doing a task from an exercise book the teacher went round the room responding to pupils' queries. Some of the quieter pupils did not get help as the teacher was diverted by interacting with pupils to keep them on the task. Pupils who were having difficulty often did not wait their turn and started to play about or misbehave, so that by the time the teacher attended to them it was often to reprimand them rather than provide the help they needed. In another class where a learning support teacher was present in the classroom for the period and he/she and the teacher responded to pupil questions, the learning support teacher had to spend a significant time on dealing with a number of discipline problems.

As a consequence of these particular circumstances the teaching and learning experience could be a frustrating and unproductive one for both the pupils and the teachers.

The staff were aware that they would need to review this first year of the revised curriculum and a number had planned differentiated materials in the next session. Within English, any setting procedures were regarded as approximate, and all pupils engaged with key texts and activities:

But I will have some top pupils, but that's not true because when you set them there's no way of setting it properly. So there will be, there are in fact a few pupils in my class who could have easily been in the other ones. And the same things are going well as always go well. You know they're the ones who understand the more complex novels that we've tried to use, things like Skellig, which was very kind of highly symbolic. So, the things that capture them are the things that have always captured them, and good literature just captures people.

This teacher also felt that there was evidence of the increased challenge and motivation for pupils:

I'm certainly using things that I would probably not have used in S1 before. I'm using texts that I would probably consider to be S2 texts, with a mixed ability class as well. And they've responded really very well. It doesn't seem to have made any difference. I am not aware of any difference. Perhaps therefore the things that we have been giving them have, in fact, been too simple for them for some time.

c) Support for learning services

The Depute Headteacher explained that support for learning staff were deployed to work in classes where a number of pupils required extra support, and did not solely work with one child.

One of the main priorities for the services of support for learning was, and remains, those pupils with Records of Needs and those identified as being at high risk. A learning support teacher described his/her role which varied according to the curricular subject and what was planned for the particular teaching period

I'm with S1 about 50% of my timetable. I have one pupil I see one-to-one three times a week. There were great concerns when he moved into S1 that he wouldn't cope. So that's been the first thing and he's coping brilliantly. Had a review meeting and that's fine. Helping him, mainstream backup if he's not understanding, and then I have him along with two other first year pupils once a week where we deal with literacy and group work. Anything else the boys are concerned about. But that's

mainly literacy skills.....That's three pupils and then (name of pupil) comes twice more on his own. Then I go out into class and my remit is pretty much the same actually. In the first instance I'm there to help pupils with a Record of Needs. Then I'm there for any other pupils who are on our confidential list who have learning difficulties of whatever level. And then I'm also there to help the rest of the class. I never sit with one pupil.

In S1/2 the support appeared to be concentrated in the main subjects of maths, English and science, although teachers in these subjects did not always have the support they would have liked because of the demands on the support for learning staff time, and some staff felt overstretched. For example, one teacher suggested that learning support was only available where a pupil had a Record of Needs.

Another teacher pointed out:

.....some of these bottom second years I have go without learning support and there's lad can't read and there's another one just tries to do the work but hasn't a clue what he's doing. Another girl the same. So, if I'm sitting reading, I'm not helping them and if I'm helping them, he's sitting there doing nothing because he can't read. That's what it's like, it's very difficult. And the other ones are being ignored who haven't got enough up top and we should be encouraging them to move along, but I can't get to them. You know they've got enough, that they are making progress if they have input from me. But they're not getting enough of it, because I'm over there.

Teaching auxiliaries also provide classroom support for pupils with a Record of Need. Observations in classrooms where learning Support for Learning teachers were present indicated that their support was targeted primarily at the low attainers. Teaching auxiliaries were also present and gave support in some classes to pupils who had a Record of Needs. The observation data frequently highlighted the crucial help that learning support can give. A teaching auxiliary helped a pupil with a Record of Needs and a low attaining pupil who was sitting beside him/her to complete a task that would have been impossible without that help.

Observations in another classroom illustrated the different levels of support available to pupils with different types of needs. The class was going to do a National Test. Two low attaining pupils were withdrawn from the class by the learning support teacher to complete the test. The Record of Needs pupil had the teacher read him/her the questions and monitor his/her progress. In contrast, a low attainer with dyslexia struggled to do the test. This pupil fidgeted and played about with items in his school bag and did not apply himself fully to the test. The teacher monitored this behaviour and reprimanded him.

The pupils in their interviews voiced the opinion that frequently bad behaviour was the outcome of struggling with the work:

You could see them just struggling away. And they would just sit and they would think about it and they wouldn't do anything. I think some people who are, like they misbehave in the class, they're the ones that struggle because they're not doing anything else. (Girl Level C)

The teachers were well aware of the difficulty of getting support in the classroom, and recognised that the Learning Support Department did not have infinite resources to deal with all the pupils who could benefit from support.

d) Support for high attaining pupils

Although the Learning Support staff acknowledged their remit for also giving assistance to the high attainers, they indicated that they were not asked for this. One teacher however commented to us on their needs:

It's a shame that learning support goes in with the pupil who needs it from,- I don't know how to say this,- you know who are poorer or who have difficulties or whatever, who

need it. I would like to see learning support in with the top set to help the better kids along. Just that extra body in the room to help. But on the whole I'm really happy with learning support.

Observations in classrooms where learning support teachers were present indicated that their support was targeted almost exclusively at the low attainers, although there were a few occasions where high attaining pupils received some attention.

3.5 Reviewing the Changes to the S1 Course

3.5.1 The Teachers' Perspectives

a) The positive perceptions of the staff

i) *the course content and pace*

The results from questionnaire data in March 2004 indicate that the respondents were generally pleased with the way in which the first run of their new courses had gone. Of the seventeen respondents who had been involved in teaching the revised curriculum, everyone indicated that they thought overall the pupils had coped well with the course; thirteen (76%) thought that the new S1 curriculum was much improved; eleven (65%) thought it had resulted in less repetition of work for pupils.

Table 3.3 The Teachers' Review of the S1 Curriculum

(number of respondents, N=17)

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Number of respondents.		
	Agree/ Strongly agree	No view either way	Disagree/ strongly disagree
The S1 curriculum in 2002/3 had been improved from the one I had taught previously.	13	3	1
As a result of the revision of the S1/S2 course there is now less repetition of work for pupils in the revised S1 course.	11	4	1
Overall I think most pupils coped well with the revised S1 curriculum.	17	0	0
Overall I think the pace of work was about right for most of the pupils.	16	1	0
Overall the slower, less mature learners got enough support in S1.	10	3	4

The seventeen respondents held generally positive views about the experiences offered the pupils in S1.

Positive comments included the following:

An improvement in pace and challenge has been made.

The study programme was made more user-friendly for S1 pupils. The rest of the (subject) curriculum was made less repetitive, had less overlap with other subject areas and was more dynamic.

Almost all (sixteen) of the questionnaire respondents thought the pace of work in S1 was 'about right' for most of the pupils:

Positive aspects would be the pace of work; this has improved and most students are keeping up.

ii) The effects on pupils

In open responses, ten indicated that pupils were well motivated, giving examples of less boredom and more dynamism and impetus. Their comments exemplified their view that classes were more challenging, with less revisiting of work already covered and with pupils enjoying success, and tackling work in a more businesslike way.

Less boredom, more challenging classes and a greater pace of work were expected and achieved.

One respondent gave the following more detailed comment:

The pupils really enjoyed the opportunities to use ICT in experiments which were introduced into the S1 course. In fact, I think the pupils enjoyed all of the experimental work. S1 pupils always tend to enjoy practical work, but I think the pupils coped very well with those experiments which were more challenging than the previous work done in S1. I think the pupils felt this was 'real science'. I think most pupils felt they had achieved success at their level.

Their views on the effects on motivation and attainment are set out in detail in section 4, but there was a general view that that the revised course was a better preparation for Standard Grade and the impending S2 course gave focus and purpose to S1 work:

They are learning more "new" things, with a clearer "focus"....i.e. S Grade at the end of the course. There is now more purpose in what they are learning. S2 is no longer the "lost" year.

b) Staff concerns and reservations

i) the course content

Eleven of the seventeen respondents who had been involved in the revised S1 curriculum offered views on some aspect of their S1 course that they felt had not gone so well, only one noted that there had been no difficulties. Their reservations with respect to the course content mainly focussed on the loss of materials or pupil experiences from the course. Several respondents, while maintaining an overall positive view on the new S1/2 arrangements, regretted the loss of some enriching learning activities which were not directed towards passing exams.

For example for one subject in which teachers had previously had some degree of freedom in deciding how and when to cover aspects of the curriculum, the new pace and cuts meant that any degree of freedom was, at least for the moment, removed:

You normally have a set number of things that you have to get through but you have liberty, I suppose, to decide when you do them, and we've taken that liberty away. We've created a very highly structured course in what is not a very highly structured subject normally. And I suppose that if we're happy with it, if this works we'll loosen it up and the elements will become things that you slot into particular parts.

Five respondents described changes to the old S1/S2 curriculum which had resulted in some aspects being lost, supporting the earlier interview data. For example, one noted that some content areas had been dropped, and another that there had been a reduction in variety of knowledge topics covered and a reduction in variety of practical activity.

One explained that the revised curriculum was *condensed with a loss of variety, breadth and depth* and another that

*some of the more practical work and the investigations were reduced. Some work such as ***topics were moved to the Standard Grade course.*

Despite the degree of cuts which had initially been put in place, as a result of running their revised S1 curriculum for the first year, nine of the seventeen respondents considered that they will need to cut it down further or redistribute the time in the future:

We tried to include too much. The course content has been reduced and will be reduced again next year.

The coursework was a little over ambitious, so more time has been given to the delivery of the six units covering (subjects). Some pupil tasks were altered to reduce the amount of writing required, which freed time for more pupil practical work and discussion, and made it easier for those with writing difficulties.

ii) The effects on pupils

The effects noted as 'not going well' with respect to pupils covered a variety of features. These included concerns about the level of support for slow learners or those with poor motivation, and to some extent, the lost sense of enjoyment.

The fact that lessons were sometimes quite rushed, some pupils were understandably disappointed to be unable to complete tasks.

Some pupils felt like guinea pigs and thus felt under pressure to perform and succeed.

Homework seemed to be a problem for some classes but not others.

Pupils are poor at written instructions, and they will partly complete a task to a minimum standard before going on. Also their understanding of written work is poor and carrying out the tasks from worksheets seems to be a mechanical process.

3.5.2 The Pupils' Perspectives

The data from the pupils are based on a questionnaire completed by all the cohort S1 pupils, together with classroom observations and interviews with eighteen focus pupils, either in small groups or individually. Where quotes from pupil interviews are used, the MidYIS level of the pupil is indicated, with the high scoring pupils Level A, and the low scoring pupils Level D.

What have been the experiences of pupils to date?

a) The positive perceptions of the pupils

How well informed were the pupils about the new course?

Almost all the pupils interviewed were aware they would be following a revised S1 course, either by letter to their parent or from secondary staff visits to the primary:

Yes we had been told quite a few times. By mum and dad, then by our teachers, and then again by our teachers. (Girl Level A)

Because we had Mrs X (guidance teacher) coming up to our class and she was explaining everything – what would happen, what would be the first year, doing our exams in third year. (Girl Level D)

The secondary staff had undertaken a programme of induction which lasted around six or seven weeks in order to inform pupils, and in particular, to reassure them that the course they were to be undertaking in S1 was not a two year course condensed into one year, since a lot had been pruned out of the course which they had already covered in primary school.

How difficult or easy had they found the new course?

Table 3.4 shows that few subjects were perceived by the cohort group of S1 pupils as 'very hard', with French 16%, geography 14%, home economics 14% and maths 12%. All other

subjects were below 10%. When the figures for 'very hard' and 'quite hard' are combined, approximately a half of S1 pupils considered the following subjects to be very/quite hard: German 56%, French 55%, science 55%, and maths 47% and geography 42%. Approximately one third of S1 pupils perceived the work in PE, technical studies, history and art to be easy.

Due to the differences in ability levels and characteristics that are experienced from one year group to another year group, it is difficult to make a direct comparison with the year above (S2 pupils) about the level of difficulty of subjects. However, the subjects that S1 pupils found most difficult: French, German, science, maths were the same subjects that the S2 pupils found difficult, although at different levels, for example, French S1 55% and S2 71%.

Table 3.4 The Pupils' Perceptions of the Subjects in S1/S2
(percentage of questionnaire responses)

How hard did you find the work in each subject in S1? (percentage of questionnaire responses)								
*Value is the valid %, the % of pupils who take the subject, not the % of the whole sample								
Sample Size: S1, N = 91 S2, N = 45	Very hard		Quite hard		Okay		Easy	
	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
English	4	9	37	38	45	44	13	9
Mathematics	12	7	35	36	34	47	19	11
*S1:N=61, S2:N=26 French	*16	*32	*39	*40	*38	*20	*7	*8
*S1:N=32, S2:N=20 German	*6	*16	*50	*37	*44	32	*0	*16
Art & Design	7	4	11	16	53	40	30	40
Business Studies	2	**	23	**	47	**	28	
Computer Studies	1	4	26	42	51	38	22	13
Science	9	9	46	54	34	36	11	0
Geography	14	7	28	24	41	58	18	9
History	2	2	33	16	35	62	30	18
Modern Studies	1	7	28	16	50	51	22	24
Home Economics	14	11	20	13	40	24	26	51
Music	3	2	22	9	50	47	23	42
PE	3	2	9	11	45	31	43	56
Religious Education	4	7	21	24	47	33	24	36
Technical Studies	1	7	24	18	37	29	37	47

**Pupils did not take Business Studies in S2

Clearly the level of ease or difficulty in a particular subject varied between individual pupils:
I think that Maths is quite easy and Science has been okay. I liked the physics, that's the easiest one and chemistry..... (Boy Level A)

Science was a little bit harder. Just when we had to do these sheets and I didn't really understand them that well. (Girl Level C)

The importance of the teaching style and of the teacher giving an explanation was a reason given for a subject being easier:

Subject X and Science. Well I get on with my X teacher and she explains it really well and where, if we don't understand something he/she's really good and she'll tell us what to do again and explain it 'til we understand.(Girl, Level D)

English appeared to be considered easier by the more able than by the less able pupils:
English really easy. I find it quite easy because we're getting to do all the story writing now, but the talks are quite embarrassing. (Girl Level A)

It's mostly English that I need help in. - I'm not very good at writing things down and spelling and things like that (Boy Level D)

What have pupils found most interesting in their S1 course?

When asked 'what are the three subjects you found most interesting in S1 and why?' the most popular subjects mentioned in order of frequency were: PE, art and design, technical studies, music, science, geography and history. The main reason pupils cited an interest in a subject was that they enjoyed it, it was fun and the nature of the subject. Talking about physics a pupil said, *I want to learn about how things work;* and for modern studies *because I like finding out what's happening in the world;* for craft and design, *because I like making things out of wood and metal.* When pupils talked about enjoying a subject they mentioned a particular task they had carried out specific to the subject e.g. geography - learned about earthquakes, history - learned about Mary Queen of Scots, music - play an instrument, science - doing experiments. They also enjoyed subjects where there was a variety in the learning activities, including history, geography, science, technical and art:

We done a lot of practical, painting, drawing and all sorts, I also enjoy this subject and have learned new skills. (Art and Design) (S1 Pupil)

Science is cool because of all the experiments and drawing. (S1 Pupil)

The aesthetic and practical subjects were more interesting for some pupils because they were considered to be less demanding than written work in the more academic subjects.

It had a wide range of things to do, a fun and relaxing subject. (Music) (S1 pupil)

Instead of sitting doing boring work you are up on your feet creating things (Technical Studies). (S1 Pupil)

The S2 pupils' responses mirrored those of S1 pupils, although a greater number of pupils mentioned the particular subject being interesting:

I found History most interesting because it was really interesting stuff we were doing, like, slavery, I liked it! (S2 Pupil)

I thought Art was interesting because of the variety of projects we worked on and I liked doing it. (S2 Pupil)

What aspects of the S1 course have pupils enjoyed the most and why?

There was a range of subjects that pupils had enjoyed which depended on their individual interests:

I've enjoyed it and learning all the new subjects that we never got a chance to in Primary school. I didn't find the work too hard. Some of it was challenging but maybe that's a good thing! (Girl, Level A)

Geography, Music. I like Technical as well. (Girl Level C)

I like science. We did a lot of writing but it was fun as you were doing it because you know when you're writing you are going to be doing an experiment to find out that stuff. (Boy Level C)

In what classes did pupils feel they worked best in S1 and why?

When asked 'what are the three subjects you worked best in S1 and why?' the most common response was because they enjoyed or liked the subject. Pupils thought they worked best in the similar subjects to the ones they found most interesting, the aesthetic and practical subjects. The highest responses were in order of frequency: PE, technical studies, art and design, music, computer studies and to a lesser extent science and history:

I work hard because it's fun and a challenge, I like it and want to learn more about making things, and I get on with the teacher. (Technical Studies)

I enjoy it even though it's hard. (Art and Design)

I enjoy it! Simple as that! I always find if you enjoy something, you work better at it. (Art and Design)

I enjoy doing computer work, creating slide shows and doing other stuff. I enjoy music anyway but with the 'hands on' lessons enforced this view. (Music)

However, despite enjoying a subject, the pupil's relationship with the teacher frequently influenced their engagement with a particular subject:

You can really enjoy the subject but it's just the teacher that puts you off.
(Boy Level B)

The S2 pupils' (year above) choice of subjects in which they worked best was similar to those for S1 cohort pupils, principally the aesthetic and practical subjects. Additionally, S2 pupils commented on the quality of the teaching to a greater extent than S1 pupils:

(I worked best in X because of) a good teacher; because the teacher makes it easy; because the teacher is ace; the teacher helped me to improve my skills.

b) The negative experiences of the pupils

What have pupils found most stressful in their S1 course?

The pace of the work, frequency of tests and the amount of homework were considered by some of the pupils interviewed to be the most stressful aspect of their experiences:

I found, sometimes it was quite stressful doing all the tests. (Girl Level A)

Yeah. It was a lot harder because all the teachers were pushing you and pushing you to get more work done, especially in science (Girl Level C)

What aspects of the SI course have pupils enjoyed the least and why?

When asked 'what are the three subjects you found least interesting in SI and why?' the pupils gave a variety of reasons: they didn't enjoy/disliked/hated the subject; the subject was either boring or not interesting; they either were no good at the subject or couldn't understand it; it was too hard or difficult; the teacher did not explain things well or they did not have a good relationship with the teacher or felt they were not getting the level of adult support they needed to progress their learning. This was particularly so for the low attaining pupils:

A lot of people get help yet a lot of other people don't. They don't get noticed.
(Girl Level D)

I just sort of like try to cope with it. Could have done with a lot of extra help in (subject). (Boy Level D)

The classroom observations confirmed the pupils' views whereby the quieter, more patient pupils who put their hand up for help often received less attention, because the teacher's attention was directed to pupils who became disruptive if they did not receive help fairly promptly. Not all pupils were of the view that they did not get sufficient help. One girl said:

I think there was enough support, and you did get help from the teachers quite a lot. You weren't just by yourself during the whole year so you did get support, if you needed it....but some start misbehaving if they're struggling with it so... Well it does interrupt quite a lot of the classes, doing that. And you don't feel as though you are doing the work.
(Girl Level A)

Other pupils attempted to work but because of their frustration were observed misbehaving in class:

I thought it was quite difficult in some of the classes that you didn't really enjoy - Modern Studies and IT. It was hard to pick it up when you didn't really enjoy it. Just that I didn't enjoy the subject. It was hard - you didn't know what to do because you weren't interested and just lost interest. (Level C Girl)

How did the pupils find the pace of the SI course?

Clearly there was variation in level of pace between some subjects which some pupils coped with better compared to others. The pace of work in science and maths was considered to be fast by pupils of all ability levels:

You feel rushed in most of your subjects. So it's, you feel pushed to do it which is good but maybe sometimes a bit too much. (Level A Girl)

Too fast. Maths and Science were quite fast. (Level B Boy)

Faster in Geography and Science and things like that. (Level D Boy)

For other pupils the pace of work was at their level.

3.5.3 The Parents' Perspectives

The data in this section are derived from parent face to face and telephone interviews and the responses to the questionnaire.

a) The positive perceptions of the parents

i) *the course content and pace*

The majority of the parents considered that they had been well informed about what their child would be doing in S1/2 and overall felt happy with their child's experiences in S1 (see table 3.5). The parents were asked in the questionnaire if the amount of work covered in S1 was 'about right' for their child, and whether it was 'too rushed' for their child. Many parents thought the amount was 'about right' (45%), although 31% did not. Around one third (31%) disagreed that it was too rushed.

Table 3.5 Parents' Views on the S1 Course

(percentage of questionnaire responses)

1. How much do you agree with the following statements?			
	Agree/agree strongly	No view either way	Disagree/disagree strongly
I felt well informed about what my child would be doing in S1 and S2.	65	22	11
Overall I am happy with my child's experiences in S1.	60	24	13
Overall I think my child benefited from the new S1 curriculum.	26	36	35
Overall I think the amount of work covered in S1 was about right for my child.	45	22	31
Overall I think the amount of work covered in S1 was too rushed for my child.	49	13	31
S2 has been good for my child because s/he has been able to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1.	43	27	28

The interviews with parents of the focus pupils inevitably produced a diversity of views on the pace of the curriculum, but with respect to the positive responses, parents of high attaining pupils were generally positive, as were parents who perceived that their child received adequate support:

I think my child has benefited as at the moment he is coping and the momentum is kept going so he can't get bored, but I know he feels that sometimes the teachers feel pressured and can't give the support that he is looking for.

He/she coped quite well. He/she is quite intelligent. I would like him/her pushed a bit more. (my child) is very happy there, the teaching has been quite good. I can't see any problems. (Parent of high attaining pupil)

He/she managed to keep up. The auxiliaries have to do the writing for him/her but, he/she managed very well. (Parent of low attaining pupil)

The parent of a pupil with a Record of Needs felt that S1 for her child had been:

very good, he/she coped well. Because of his/her learning difficulties I was really worried when he/she first went to the Grammar about how, he/she was going to cope,

and he/she proved everybody wrong. The first four days, he/she didn't like it but the second week, they went back into a full week, he/she coped very well and enjoyed it. It was fine.

ii) The effects on pupils

Only 26% indicated that they felt their child had benefited from the new curriculum, the help from the teachers and were happy with the effects of the changes:

I think they get a good response from their GUIDANCE TEACHERS and can always ask for help when ever they need it and have a wider range of choices to prepare themself (sic) for the future.

We would like to say that we think KGS have done a great job in implementing this new scheme and support them wholeheartedly. We think the scheme is good for the pupils and their education.

In both open and closed questions, the parents were asked in the questionnaire about the benefits of their child having only one year before starting Standard Grade. Almost half of the parents (43%) saw it as a benefit that their children would be able to drop subjects that they were not interested in after one year, and thus be able to concentrate on subjects they like, (section 5.3.3b):

The only benefit is the ability to drop subjects quickly that were of no interest to the child.

Ten of the parents in the open responses suggested that a perceived benefit was that their child was working hard and concentrating more and that there was less time for complacency and boredom:

More inclination to study (with additional homework in S1).

b) Parents' concerns and reservations

Perhaps because this was an externally managed evaluation, a high proportion of parents who responded took the opportunity to express a wide range of concerns about different aspects of the initiative – only two did not take the opportunity to express a concern. These included questioning the wisdom of such an innovation, and views that it was really far to soon to tell, but they would have preferred that their child had not been involved in the initial run. The overall picture appeared to be that they felt that while the changes would undoubtedly benefit some proportion of children, it was not suitable for all.

With respect to S1, specific concerns were raised about:

- whether their child had enough time to familiarise her/himself with the different subjects;
- their perception the work was too rushed and not enough time was given to aid understanding;
- the level of stress and pressure on the children.

i) the course content and pace

The parents' comments on the content of the course in the open questions related mainly to the brief period which their children had to experience each subject:

More pressure to achieve right from the start of S1. Less time to make adjustment to secondary school without burden of having to make long term decisions. In S1 very little time devoted to: Modern Studies, History, Geography & Technical Studies so not enough experience of them to gauge interest / ability. Maths & English courses should never have been squeezed as they are now. Subjects such as Art and English particularly benefit from students maturity – there is now less time for this to develop

Having only one year before starting coursework is not a long enough period for my child to settle into secondary education and 'get to grips' with all the different subjects. To make decisions about which subjects he liked / disliked & which ones to continue with into S2 after only 10 months in S1 was far too quick & rushed.

The introduction to science was too rushed with barely any exposure to the separate subjects of physics, chemistry & biology. Prolonged staff absences (i.e. sickness, maternity) are much more critical.

The unfortunate element indicated by the last quote was an additional factor identified by a few parents – that there had been staff absences and vacancies in key subject areas. Under normal conditions staffing difficulties cause problems for the teaching of subjects, but with only one year before Standard Grade, any significant problems in securing qualified teachers in any subject can create serious lapses in the pupils' education:

Teacher shortages would be a problem under normal circumstances but a massive problem with this system.

However, the main focus of concern related to the perceived pace of the curriculum, with half the respondents (49%) indicating agreement that it was too rushed. One parent felt that S1 could have gone better for her child had things not seemed so rushed:

I just felt that they were rushing them, everything was being rushed. It was just too quick for them. I just feel that they need a few months to find their feet. It just seemed to be all go from day one. The maths teacher said at one of the meetings that he/she didn't feel the children were mature enough to take in some of the concepts they were working with. (Parent of average attaining child)

They didn't seem to have time to do any revision work. Again, (name of child) coped with that, but a less able child, if they didn't absorb it first time, the concern would be, would they get a chance to go over it. I don't think so. (Parent of high attaining pupil)

Everything is rushed. Due to the tight schedule there is no time spent going over anything that is not understood straight away.

ii) the effects on pupils

I feel my child is under more stress and until their results are known, I do not see a benefit.

Not mature enough. Too much pressure on them in class to keep up with curriculum.

As there was a big variation in the characteristics of the children, so there was some variability in the parents' views on the general effects on their children. But the negative effects on the pupils seemed particularly related to the perceived level of support and the associated pressure on the child who was not understanding or struggling to keep up. There appeared to be three groups of children who were particularly vulnerable to the pace issue: children who were slow learners, but generally progressing much as expected by parents and teachers; pupils with specific learning difficulties who were frustrated by their experiences of failure; and children with Records of Needs who were allocated special support. The parents of slow learning pupils and those with special needs, but who did not have a Record of Needs expressed specific concerns about perceived lack of support:

I think my child has benefited as at the moment he is coping and the momentum is kept going so he can't get bored, but I know he feels that sometimes the teachers feel pressured and can't give the support that he is looking for.

I feel that the teachers haven't had the time to sit with the children that don't understand what they are trying to get across to them. Their aim is to get in the work by the end of the year.

Another parent indicated concern about the level of support when a 'middle of the road' child encountered difficulties:

He/she gets there in the end. He/she is the kind of child that needs an awful lot of encouragement. I can relate back to primary if he/she had a teacher who really boosted his/her confidence and spent a lot of time with him/her, he/she had a good year. He/she could possibly do better in maths with a bit more encouragement but I totally understand that in big classes you can't have one to one. So we try to boost it at home. A lot depends on the relationship between him/her and the teacher.

And another observed :

The school seems happy to move along at a slow pace allowing the brighter kids to flourish and the slower ones to maintain their own pace for lower gradings. There does not appear to be any attempt to get them to try to improve to get into higher groupings.

DETAILED INDEX

4	Monitoring Change in Motivation and Attainment	44
4.1	Introduction	44
4.2	Perceptions of Challenge and Motivation	44
4.2.1	The Teachers' Perceptions of the S1 course	44
4.2.2	The Teachers' Perceptions of the S2 course	45
4.2.3	The Parents' Perceptions of S1 and S2	47
4.3	Perceptions of Pupil Attainment	47
4.3.1	The Teachers' Perceptions of S1	47
	a) General Perceptions of attainment	47
	b) Attainment of low attainers	48
	c) Attainment of high attainers	49
4.3.2	The Teachers' Perceptions of S2	49
4.3.3	The Parents' Perceptions	50
4.4	Monitoring the Courses: Qualitative Information	50
4.4.1	Monitoring the S1 Courses	50
4.4.2	Monitoring the S2 Courses	53
4.5	Monitoring the Courses: Quantitative Information	54
4.5.1	Quantitative Indicators of Motivation	54
4.5.2	Quantitative Indicators of Attainment	56
4.5.3	The Pupils' Preparedness for the future	58
4.5.4	Identifying Project Effects	59

SECTION 4 MONITORING CHANGE IN MOTIVATION AND ATTAINMENT

4.1 Introduction

In the following section we examine the effects of the implementation of the revised curriculum, in terms of the outcomes of increased motivation and attainment, as well as the general monitoring of the courses. The data are derived from interviews with teachers, parents and pupils and from the questionnaires.

Have the new arrangements for S1 and S2 increased challenge and motivation for pupils?

4.2 Perceptions of Challenge and Motivation

4.2.1 The Teachers' Perceptions of Challenge and Motivation in the S1 Course

To what extent did teachers' feel that challenge and motivation had increased? There was a general consensus from the interviews that teachers considered this aim had been achieved for the pupils:

I think that the tasks, the specific formal tasks really giving them very firm input and then getting them to do it and draft it and getting a final version. I think there's been a real sense of purposefulness both for me and that they've been kind of settling down very well for that.

It has (improved) because we've only got one year to do something that they've previously had two years and can't help but be motivated or be hurried to do things. They're actually looking forward to going into Standard Grade, they're looking forward to starting it.

One teacher suggested that the challenge came from the faster pace of the curriculum:

They can get challenge because let's face it there's always something else to do. We haven't a minute to spare, we've always got something else to do. I mean we haven't a minute to spare, we're always working, doing work. Motivation? I don't know. I think we always had motivation. I think the children like (the subject) and they always like doing experiments and they liked the scientific approach.

Some teachers felt that underlying the success was keeping up the momentum generated by the excitement of the primary pupils as they came across into secondary. The 'work ethic' had to be established in S1 and was indeed being kept up – which previous courses had failed to do:

I think maintaining a work ethic. I suppose that really encapsulates most of it, as far as I'm concerned. That they do have a work ethic from primary school, and it tends to kind of tread water in first and second year, and if we could just kind of tap into that and keep it rolling on, then hopefully we wouldn't have ... if that can keep building up then I could see knock-on effects right up into Fifth year and Higher results.

My initial reaction was "oh dear, what are we doing?" But I am coming round to the idea now that it's going well and I'm enjoying it, and the kids are well motivated because we're gearing up for Standard Grade next year instead of "oh, we're gearing up for second year", or "gearing up for another year of this", so they are motivated. I wouldn't say there was anything that was going particularly badly.

However another interviewee did not think the new S1 course has increased challenge and motivation for children in her top S1 group because of the loss of time to cover aspects of their course which most effectively gave a context for this:

because I think challenge comes from problem-solving. That's where I think challenge comes from. And that's what it should be. "Go on then, see what you can do with that" and we're not getting that.

Within this subject, problem solving is a skill that they try to teach from the beginning of S1, and it is a skill that this teacher found that pupils have problems with, but that they learn through the years. Now that they are concentrating in S1 on knowledge which needs to be covered in order to give a basis for problem-solving, he/she is:

worried about what this is going to do in third or fourth year because they've not had the two years to build on.

In the questionnaire, seventeen teachers indicated they had delivered the revised S1 course and they held generally positive views about the pupils' experiences in S1. Nine respondents agreed with the statement 'overall there is evidence that the revised S1 curriculum raised the motivation of the pupils', and in the open questions ten respondents indicated that pupils were well motivated, giving examples of less boredom and more dynamism and impetus. Their comments highlighted their view that the classes were more challenging and pupils enjoyed success.

Pupils were well-motivated and aware that the changes were made in their best interests.

They tackled the work with enthusiasm.

Increased motivation due to elimination of repetition and better cross curricular links.

Correspondingly there was evidence from the pupils that they had responded to the challenge:

I've found I've enjoyed it and learning all the new subjects that we never got a chance to in primary school. I didn't find the work too hard. Some of it was challenging but maybe that's a good thing! Girl Level A

4.2.2 The Teachers' Perceptions of Challenge and Motivation in the S2 Course

The questionnaire data indicated that the teachers thought the positive attitude of the majority of pupils was being maintained in S2. Twelve of the twenty one respondents who were teaching S2 classes in the 2003/2004 strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement '*Overall there is little evidence of increased motivation in S2 compared to previous S2 year groups*'. Only three respondents strongly agreed/ agreed with the statement. When asked about challenge and motivation in the open questions, nine respondents indicated that the pupils were demonstrating increased motivation through more commitment to their tasks, by undertaking more meaningful work, and by their attitude to classwork, homework and assessments. The achievement of good marks in turn had a motivating effect:

Meaningful work being undertaken, and they seem to be rising to the challenge of increased workload, homework etc.

Work done on time, good high marks in past papers (foundation) makes pupils feel good, improves self-confidence.

Attitude to assessments, homework and class work. 'Can do' attitude.

Definitely improved because all opted for the subject whereas in the past a small number did not like (subject) owing to the old computers and the consequential largely irrelevant course content.

However, one of the nine respondents qualified her/his response by emphasising the unique nature of the S2 year group.

It should be stated that this experiment has been conducted with a very good year group. Some of these pupils are also very bright. Perhaps the brightest year I have seen since coming to Keith Grammar. In other words, this is not the average type of intake both behaviourally and academically. Taking this into account therefore I would have to say that these pupils do seem to be displaying increased motivation.

This comment was supported by another respondent who noted that this was a *better cohort of pupils in S2*. And another who explained that it was difficult to make a comparison with recent S2 classes because:

We had recently begun to broad-band our S2 classes and noted a marked improvement in motivation in the first and second classes. This was less so in the third of the three classes.

However the school noted that there was a discrepancy between these teachers' views that the cohort group is a very able one, and the overall year MidYIS scores.

The teachers considered that increased motivation was also demonstrated by more purpose in the learning and more focused learning in S2. Seven respondents felt that they had evidence of this:

In general, they are more inclined to 'have a go' at new or challenging work. They are more inclined to complete practical work, and not use it as an excuse for social conversation. They are more organised at returning homework. They are more enthusiastic towards their studies, and keen to learn more. They seem overtly keener to achieve success.

Probably there is much more focus on the exams ahead and therefore the momentum is kept going.

Showing greater awareness of where they want to be next year. Looking ahead to what they can achieve potentially and thinking about courses earlier – more focussed!

It was considered by some respondents that motivation in S2 was due to the revised S1 course which had been a good preparation for the pupils to move on to Standard Grade:

...The pupils have a very good attitude towards their studies, and are motivated and interested, in the majority. The pupils seem to have a clear understanding of the S1 work, which has been a good foundation on which to build.

Motivation is much better in our current S2 compared to S3. I feel the project is important in looking at ways of revising attainment and in tackling S2 we are going to the heart of the problem.

A small number of teachers disagreed that pupils were better motivated, for example a Support for Learning teacher considered that the poorer pupils were less motivated. For these pupils it was suggested there is an *earlier realisation of their limitations, and there is evidence that behaviour and attitude are perhaps deteriorating.*

4.2.3 The Parents' Perceptions of Challenge and Motivation in S1 and S2 Courses

Evidence of increased pupil motivation and application in both S1 and S2 was supported by some of the parents in the open questions of the questionnaire:

She has been stimulated and interested by most of her courses. She had good reports from the majority of her teachers at parents' evening. We anticipate benefits in S4 and S5.

She has been kept challenged and interested in S1 and S2. We hope there will be a future benefit with more time to devote to Higher exams which will ultimately be more important

My daughter has had to work a lot harder towards her Standard Grades at an earlier age and has kept her brainpower motivated. Both my son and daughter help each other in struggling with homework.

4.3 Perceptions of Pupils' Attainment

How is progress monitored in the different subjects?

4.3.1 The Teachers' Perceptions of Attainment in S1

a) The teachers' general perceptions of attainment

The data presented here is derived from the teacher interviews and questionnaires. The quantitative data is discussed later in section 4.5.

The data from the teacher questionnaires suggests that the staff were evenly divided as to whether there was increased attainment from pupils in S1. Of the seventeen respondents involved in teaching an S1 class in the previous year, five disagreed with the statement 'overall there is not much evidence that the revised S1 curriculum raised attainment of the pupils', compared to four respondents who agreed with it. Seven had no view either way, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Support for learning staff, who have a view across the subjects, indicated that while it was difficult to make comparisons with previous classes:

It's certainly not lowered the achievement. It's definitely not and I would say it has increased it...

However, one teacher was getting conflicting messages from the tests.

The tests are not telling me the same messages. Now, as I say, the test is not that good. And they were trying their best, it was heads down and everybody writing furiously. The writing – I mean this is really interesting – the writing, seems to me, to be better than the reading, and that's the wrong way round. All the national test results tell you that pupils read much better than they write, and yet ours seem to be writing much better than they read, which is just kind of something we can't understand.

One explanation which the teacher felt might explain the test results, was that there are more girls than boys in the year group and *girls write better than boys. It might be that that we're seeing that as well.* However, whatever the test results were indicating, this teacher was convinced the explanation might lie elsewhere than in the secondary school:

I suspect ...I don't know what they're telling me. And until maybe I see the whole four of them I won't know. The other thing, the other factor that occurred to me, which is not to do with the course, is primary schools, like the rest of us, have leapt onto the bandwagon of proving that pupils are achieving. And one of the ways of doing that is to wait very late in your year and then test them, right before they come to secondary. So that the grades that we initially had for these pupils, at the beginning, when I set them, are not actually grades that they had when they came in the door. I set them, on the grades that I had at Easter time, and now, of course, they'd actually been sitting tests right up to the very moment of transition probably. It might be, therefore, that what I was actually seeing is that they've been testing high in primary, at the very last moment that you can do it. And, therefore, to develop, between that and March is just too short a time. So that primaries have actually moved their testing dates forward as well, and we've moved ours back. And that may have an impact on it. They certainly did have, I think, slightly better grades when they came, than you might normally expect.

A number of teachers indicated that perhaps, on balance, the higher attainers were benefiting more than the low attainers, others felt that the overall patterns of attainment had perhaps changed:

You can't have everything. They've lost the problem-solving but they've had a massive amount of rote work and I think their skills have improved there. Their tables are better. 'How do you change something to percentage?' and you'll get "multiply by 100" – no longer do I have to wait for that. No, things are coming on. I get the answers back faster. There's a higher level of response, but if we could just have that and more time to do problem-solving. Perhaps we could spend all first year learning the basic skills and all second year doing problem-solving. (laughter). I don't know, something perhaps of that suggestion.

At the time of interview, differentiated materials were not yet available in most subjects. One teacher indicated that because of this, and because there was no learning support for her class, he/she felt the management of the learning could have been better. Although the very able child in her class is doing very well he/she thinks it is quite hard for him, and that the less-able pupils are also suffering.

b) the teachers' perceptions of the experiences of low attainers

The main views expressed concerned whether the low attainers were benefiting:

Well it's working okay for my really bright pupils and a few pupils who are able pupils, more able pupils. But I'm not happy with the less able.

There was some concern that less able pupils were being de-motivated because they were having to do so much in a short time and that consequently they are not doing so well:

But then of course, they wouldn't have done well in the old course anyway probably. I find that children generally do like (the subject) and I'm worried that because I'm expecting this fast work rate, maybe children who find writing more difficult..... For instance, I've three children in the class who will not read. I'd say "do you want to read?", "no, I don't want to read", and we've been told if they don't want to read, you don't make them read. So I'm frightened that they might be de-motivated because they find it so difficult.

I've got the full range (of attainment in the class) and certainly I would say that the able ones, I think are doing well, and the middle group, which I think are often the ones in mixed ability, are the ones who are pulled on. They seem to be doing well. The poorer ones, they need very much support of various kinds. I think they need that, because they could start falling off.

The view was expressed that if things did not work out too well in S1 for the slower learners matters would be improved through the range of S2 courses offered.

c) teachers' perceptions of the experiences of high attainers

In general there was more confidence expressed that the normally high attainers would have benefited. However, one teacher expressed concern that this might be at some cost to the others:

I would basically say for the top ones its a great triumph, but it's such a small percent, do we do this course for them? I mean the concern is what do we do for the better pupil, we always tended to cater for the poorer pupil, and now at last, the better pupil is getting something, all be it not individual. But, they are a small percentage.

4.3.2 The Teachers' Perceptions of Attainment in S2

In responding to the open question asking whether the teachers expected to see increased pupil attainment in the S2 cohort compared to previous year groups, four of the sixteen teachers who responded to this question considered it was difficult to systematically compare the attainment 2003/2004 S2 cohort with previous years. They explained that in their view *you will not be comparing like with like, or a department did not have an input before, or changes to the practical elements of the course, or different assessments were used.*

One respondent explained in more detail:

Practical abilities were not assessed in the previous S2 years and knowledge and understanding and problem solving were not reported separately. Certainly, in (subject area), pupils in Standard Grade are supplied with clearer statements of learning objectives and technically should find revision more straightforward.

Several respondents did not wish to make judgments about attainment until either after the exams at the end of S2, further ahead until the Standard Grade results at the end of S3 and one respondent beyond to S4. Respondents commenting on waiting until the S2 exam results said:

...would show that they are coping well with the Standard Grade course.

...would wish to compare the S2 and S3 results after these exams.

Look for not only increased grades, but also pupils who were socially more mature and responsible, and emotionally more able to cope with change.

I would hope to see improved Standard Grade results at the end of S3. At this stage I do not know if the difference will be significant, it is still too early to tell.

Other respondents identified evidence of already raised attainment in the S2 cohort compared to previous year groups in the form of increased pupil knowledge and skills:

Pupils are managing to pass standard style questions, homework and assessments. In the past, S2 would not have had the necessary skills to cope with this level of work.

Far more theory knowledge and evaluating skills

In S2 more able to tackle topics previously only dipped into.

The standard of the degree of difficult attempted is higher.

4.3.3 The Parents' Perception of Attainment in S1 and S2

The parents were not directly asked about the attainment of their child, but an indication of their satisfaction can be gauged from the questionnaire data. Sixty four per cent indicated they were *'happy with their child's overall progress in S2'*, and 74% indicated that their child was *'coping well in S2 in most of his/her subjects'* (table 6.2, section 6.2.2). In the open questions when asked about their overall view of how happy they were with their child's experiences in S1 and S2 a few parents commented favourably on their child's progress:

For our child, she has excelled in all subjects with the support of very dedicated staff.

Both myself and my husband are delighted with (name of child) progress. She is coping well and is very happy at school and with her subjects. She is not in any of the top classes but this causes us no concern because we understand that she has to work hard. It is still early days for us to make any judgment!

4.4 Monitoring the Courses: Qualitative Information

How are the new courses being monitored?

4.4.1 Monitoring the S1 Courses

The data sources which were available to us in monitoring the effectiveness of the new S1 course, or considering how they were being monitored by the staff are mainly qualitative. Both researchers and school staff agreed that although pupils' general progress was monitored by ongoing test results in many subjects, at this stage it is impossible to generate quantitative data which can afford any meaningful comparisons with the previous courses and their outcomes. One of the difficulties identified by the staff was the naturally occurring fluctuations which they experienced from year group to year group in attainment levels and other characteristics which might affect the outcomes in year 1. For example, when asked what information would tell staff that the new course was achieving its goals, one teacher replied:

I don't know the answer to that question. It would be easier to see, or to answer that if I had the same level of ability this year as what I did last year but, they're happy, they're hard-working. How much of that is being in first year, being in a new school and wanting to impress, I don't know. I suppose in years gone past the motivation of the pupils would begin to tail off towards the end of first year but it's still there. Then I don't know because I've had different sets.

There was not a co-ordinated approach as to how the different departments would monitor attainment levels if tests were to be used and, for most teachers, the first secure indicator they would identify was the outcomes of Standard Grade or even Highers:

...If you are going to take it down to assessment material, well, assessment materials can be made more or less difficult.....So I know that there are some subjects, have made a conscious decision to have a demanding an end of topic test. Whereas other topics and subjects had a more accessible test, so you can't really evaluate using that, you can't evaluate on previous experiences, I suppose at the end of the day, it would be the performance in Standard Grade that would be the best indicator. What kind of baseline that the First year courses provided for future development and you could take it back to mid-year scores, but again I think its too early to say.

At the end of the day it's a certificate that decides that it worked, or that it didn't work, isn't it?

Well I suppose we should only really judge it with our Higher results and again, from a kind of pure speculation, I would reckon that we would have two-thirds or maybe even a half of the Higher cohort after this, than what we would normally have. And whether of course we pick the rest of them up the year after that(When asked to explain further) Well I just think by the end of S3, I think we would have maybe two-thirds of the top class, the top credit class, really having sufficient maturity to sit Highers at that stage. And normally we would be thinking about, kind of, forty, we'd be thinking about a class and half / two-thirds of a second class.

However, there were some concerns that while the earlier teaching and learning experiences of Standard Grade in S2 might deal with the problems of the S1/2 5-14 courses, sitting Standard Grade one year earlier might have an adverse affect on grade outcomes. For example, one teacher considered that for the less able pupils:

Time will tell. I think they should cope. Maybe they will be pupils who with an extra year would have gained a credit pass but will go away with general. That's a possibility. That would be more an area of concern.

For a variety of reasons, the National Tests or the use of 5-14 curriculum levels were not regarded as a useful resource in monitoring attainment, added value or general trends. Negative evaluations of the national frameworks and materials were made in science – because the curriculum did not cover all the topics at every level; in English because of their unpredictably:

I think, to be honest, I think the national tests are so variable anyway that it's difficult to make any sense of them really. You get some kids that you think, right, they're ready for this and they fail miserably and then another kid you think, hasn't got much hope in them and they pass it.

A maths teacher referred to the levels, but was reluctant to use them as a basis for deciding the success of the changes with respect to attainment:

I mean most of mine came in at level D or just past the level D when they came in to first year and some of them are achieving level F in the certain strands. I mean D,E,F, that's quite a jump but I can't say there's been a huge increase in achievement.

The Assessment Manager systems were reported to be not operational in the schools in this Authority at the time of our interviews, although within some departments pupil records were beginning to be centralised:

which we've never done before, and put them onto computer, and that's allowed us to keep better tabs perhaps on how we're all coping together, if you see what I mean, rather than just individual classes. So, effectively you can sort of lift off the (subject) marks for S1 and see how people are doing.

He/she explained that nevertheless, they have to use the national tests and usually do so before they report on pupils since they felt parents like to have a firm grade from the national tests. However, the teachers preferred to monitor progress by a more continuous form of assessment rather than using departmental tests. Almost everything that the pupils do:

is redrafted and goes into their folio, so that all the good work is kept with a grade on it and a comment on it, and they actually profile it themselves. So when we get that work, so, when, for example, suppose they were writing a short story....the teacher looks at it, corrects it up, talks to the kid if they can about how to improve it, it's redrafted, it goes back to the pupil and they record all of this ...It's almost like a continuous assessment. There's a lot of that.

In interview with the two Depute Headteachers, the DHT who was responsible for leading the management of change of the revised curriculum, reported that s/he required the staff to either

evaluate the new course at the end of each term or at the end of each unit, whichever was appropriate for their subject area. This was a considerable in-depth exercise which included coverage of the skills, homework, the pace of the course, pupil motivation, the level of challenge and how pupils were coping with this:

I asked them to look at the coverage of the strands, how those were being met, the coverage of the skills, homework, looking at the quantity which was essential because I had asked them to integrate the homework plan a year ahead, so that homework was effectively used from one piece of work to another, that it wasn't an ad-hoc add-on. I also asked them to evaluate the pace of the course because it was very difficult for them to decide how that was going to work out and I think the most common thing that emerged was the fact that people had put too much into the one year. This year there has been a lot of refining. I asked them also to look at the pupil response and their level of motivation and asked them to evaluate for their individual subjects. The final one was to assess the level of challenge and how the children were coping with that. There was a section which asked for additional comments or requirements and through that way I was able to identify any gap in resourcing, or development time or time to reflect. (Depute Headteacher)

The Depute Headteacher also highlighted that in order to monitor the pupils' progress, the school had quality assurance systems in place. An important element of this was a meeting with each department.

We have a very large interview with each department, and they go through a lot of procedures and systems within the department and so it is quite vigorously done. Also the figures that we are getting for quality assurance we are looking at different ways of putting back information to departments, so that they can see. A lot of departments have asked for whole-school information to be fed back to them so that they don't just know that X is at the top of their class. They are wanting to see how X is doing across the board. We are looking at giving that kind of information.

(Depute Headteacher)

For the teachers the main vehicle of monitoring the effectiveness of courses appeared to be via the departmental meetings. For example, a teacher reported that in one department, each individual teacher did their own ongoing evaluation and they used the departmental meetings to discuss how things appear to be working:

It is monitored through regular (subject) department meetings. Each member of staff does their own ongoing evaluation which they use as a forum to discuss the effectiveness, and how well they feel we perceive the pupils have coped with the tasks.

The processes were similar in another department:

We talk about it at departmental meetings. We'll keep tabs on, I mean when all these national tests come in we'll have all the kids' names and all the national test results, so that we can see how they're doing and what kind of picture that's telling us about the classes, about the setting, about how they're attaining. I suppose it's mainly done really quite informally, in terms of what we say to each other, what is working and what is not working.

The teachers in this department had not ventured to ask the pupils' views, though one indicated he/she was tempted:

I might be tempted, I am tempted at the end of the year to try to do a little audit, with the pupils. I've done it before at Higher. I've never done it with S1. And just, a very simple one, what did you like about the course, what did you dislike about the course, what did the teacher do that helped you, what did the teacher do that hindered your learning, and just do a little summary of that in what we're getting back..... I think that would be a useful thing to do this first time round because it might well be that

what they perceive isn't what we perceive at all. I might add a question about pace, I don't know how to phrase that for first years.

By the time of interview with the Depute Headteachers, (November 2003 when the cohort pupils were in S2), they reported that several departments had in fact asked the pupils to evaluate either particular units of work or the whole course, and this was already established practice in certain subjects:

For example in home economics, the children actually evaluated each unit of work which they found interesting, challenging. Things that were too difficult or too easy. They looked separately at the written work and the practical work and as a result of that there has been a re-writing of part of the curriculum. It was very, very well done and I was really impressed by the level of maturity in the pupil response. They were open and they felt that they could be open and knew that as a result of their comments something would be done about it. I think that is quite rewarding.

In the art department, exactly the same thing. They do it with every class anyway, every year group, that is done automatically. But this year particularly, evaluating the courses, and that was a very, very positive response. That course is virtually staying as it was, it was very good. The same sort of feedback has been coming in from all departments. There have been slight adjustments as a result of what children have said. There has been a greater involvement in the curriculum development from the support for learning team. They have felt that their role is much more valid because they are not just delivering and supporting in the classroom, but they are actually looking at the best way to deliver the courses. I think the level of support has actually improved. (Depute Headteacher)

4.4.2 Monitoring the S2 Courses

In section 4.4.1 above, the teachers reported that the exam results at the end of the first year of the Standard Grade course were an important means of monitoring the pupils' level of attainment. Additionally the Depute Headteacher indicated that the teachers had the pupils' S1 and S2 MidYIS scores as indicators of ability which were used for tracking and monitoring purposes. The meetings of Senior Management Team with individual departments were ongoing in S2. In interview in November 2003 the Headteacher when asked how the S2 course and pupils were progressing, reported that in addition to the formal quality assurance reports informal reports from the principal teachers were positive.

First impressions were all positive. Some staff said that S2 pupils had some identifiable knowledge gaps compared to S3 pupils, but these were bridgeable. Motivation and attitude in S2 pupils was better than in S3 pupils. Most departments are reworking the first year course after its first run through. They have not been instructed to do this by the SMT but have rewritten things on their own initiative, for example some courses where too much content had been put in. (Headteacher)

Other forms of monitoring the pupils, such as identifying pupils who were having difficulties 'cause for concern', were extended to S2 and S3 years as well as in the upper school.

We have always monitored progress in all year groups by sending out lists (to teachers) and asking for 'cause for concern'. It has mostly been in senior school, but this year we have done it for S2 and S3 as well. So what the staff would be doing on a regular basis would be flagging up any issues of concern, pupil by pupil, for individual pupils. As a result of that appears that quite clearly that no-one is having major issues in coping. I don't have any solid evidence which is what the teachers say to me that in some of the classes where we have S2/S3 pupils working together, S2

are coping every bit as well and in some cases better than S3. We do have a good S2 year. We couldn't have hoped for a better year to start the initiative.

(Depute Headteacher)

In addition to the qualitative data reported, the quantitative data being collected by the school for monitoring purposes in the form of 'behaviour plans' and 'timeouts' as evidence of increased motivation is discussed in greater detail in section 4.5. These have been collected by the school for a number of years, but are now being collected more systematically.

4.5 Monitoring the Courses: Quantitative Information

General Aim 3

To evaluate in more quantitative terms any impact of the project on attainment, achievement, progression and levels of preparedness for the future, including careers guidance and post 5-14 subject choices.

Section 4.4 highlighted the difficulties of generating quantitative data which could afford any meaningful comparisons with the previous courses and their outcomes. This was identified as a difficulty by both the SMT and teachers because of the naturally occurring fluctuations which they experienced from year group to year group in attainment, and the changing nature of the courses.

In this section we detail those forms of quantitative datasets on the pupils collected by the school during S2 to address the research questions indicated below. At the outset of the project the SMT indicated to the researchers that any improvements of a quantitative nature would be difficult to attribute to the project because of other initiatives within the school that were also in place. The data presented here show the school has established mechanisms for collecting baseline measures on pupil motivation for future years.

4.5.1 Quantitative Indicators of Motivation

How will the School Measure Pupil/student motivation and the level of Challenge in the Learning Experience? What are the baseline measures for these?

The qualitative reports from the secondary teachers and the SMT documented in section 4.2 indicate perceptions of raised pupil motivation and levels of challenge for pupils in S1 and S2. It was reported by the SMT members early in the 2003 session that quantitative evidence of this was likely to be seen as a reduction in the number of 'behaviour plans' and 'time outs'.

If a pupil initially misbehaves after the class settle down to work, they get an initial warning from the teacher which is recorded in the pupil diary and which goes home to parents. If they continue to misbehave they are given a 'behaviour plan' - a form to complete on which the pupil has to tick relevant boxes. They have to reflect on their behaviour - what were they doing? What can they do to put things right? They will either do this in the class or may be removed to complete it. If as a result of this their behaviour improves, they do not go to 'time out', which is a more serious stage, and they may remain in the class. If the pupil has many behaviour plans, a report goes to the year heads who will contact the parents. Hence it is generally agreed that the figures for behaviour plans and 'time outs' will reflect the levels of motivation of the pupils.

At this point the quantitative data available to the researchers does not appear to support the qualitative views expressed by SMT and teachers. Table 4.1 shows that although there was reduction in the number of pupils on behaviour plans in S1 (N=29), when they moved to S2 (N=18), the number of pupils in 'time out' increased from fifteen in S1 to twenty five in S2.

A Depute Headteacher explained that the figures reflected the difficulty the school had experienced with staffing during the 2004 session when a large number of supply teachers had to be used, most notably in Maths and English. The supply staff were allowed to ‘fast track’ the behaviour system and send pupils straight to ‘time out’. The introduction of a specific room in the 2004 as a staffed base with a Support for Learning teacher and two auxiliaries for pupils with behaviour problems, has also meant that teachers have been more inclined to use it because the pupils now receive one to one help with subjects in ‘time out’. Inevitably, in comparison with previous years, this had resulted in a greater number of ‘time outs’ for all year groups.

The pupils take work from the class with them and will get help if their behaviour comes from a lack of understanding (of the subject). (Depute Headteacher)

Table 4.1 Keith Grammar School Analysis of Behaviour Management Sanctions S1-3
(Pupil cohort in S1 and S2 highlighted in **bold**)

a) BEHAVIOUR PLANS: Number of pupils receiving sanctions

Year Group	2001	2002	2003	2004
S1	39	20	29	37
S2	17	7	15	18
S3	45	43	30	36

b) TIME OUTS: Number of pupils receiving sanctions

Year Group	2001	2002	2003	2004
S1	17	17	15	18
S2	25	28	16	25
S3	27	22	20	28

c) Number of occasions on which the pupil cohort received each sanction in S1 and S2
(figures for S2 in **bold**)

S1 and S2 (in bold)	1-2 Occasions	3-5 Occasions	6-10 Occasions	11-15 Occasions	16+ Occasions
Behaviour Plans	11 (12)	8 (5)	4 (1)	5 (1)	1 (8)
Time Outs	9 (7)	1 (8)	2 (1)	0 (2)	4 (6)

Table 4.1c. above indicates the number of occasions that individual pupils received the behaviour sanctions in S1 and S2.

The school has therefore begun to establish a baseline for accurately measuring the pupil behaviour and number of times they are sent out of a class for misbehaviour. As an overall trend the figures in Table 4.1 cannot be considered robust because the method of recording the data changed at the beginning of session 2003 onwards, with all the ‘behaviour plans’ and ‘time outs’ sent directly by the member of staff issuing them to the office staff who recorded them using the Phoenix system. Prior to that statistics were kept but were not considered accurate as they depended on teacher returns.

An additional factor which may have an influence on the number of recorded ‘behaviour plans’ and ‘time outs’ has been the introduction in the 2004 session of ‘solution focusing’ training in behaviour management in which four members of staff have undertaken training. This identifies solutions to accentuate pupils’ positive behaviour. As a result of a meeting with the year head, guidance staff, behaviour support staff and an SMT member, pupils are recommended for this intervention.

4.5.2 Quantitative Indicators of Attainment

What have been the Effects on Attainment and More General Achievement Measures?

The school has collected data for the pupil cohort in reading, writing, maths and science in the form of MidYIS scores. The Headteacher reported that the school favoured the use of the MidYIS scores over the National Test results as more secure indicators of pupil ability.

In Moray the Mid YIS tests have now moved to S2 so that this year's S2 have had to do it twice (already done in S1). As a minimum there has been a noticeable improvement, the scores are good. The pupils are the best behaved, most enthusiastic and motivated, however they are a good group of kids. (Headteacher)

The number of cohort pupils at the different levels is indicated in Table 4.2 which illustrates an overall picture of increasing numbers of pupils at levels A (highest level) and B, with a corresponding decrease at levels C and D (lowest level) as they moved from S1 to S2.

Table 4.2 MidYIS scores of Cohort Pupils in S1 and S2

MidYIS score*	S1 Pupils N=93	S2 Pupils N=91
Level A	21	28
Level B	27	33
Level C	28	15
Level D	17	15

*Level A score is the highest level and Level D score is the lowest level

The data in Table 4.2 does not reflect the scores of individual pupils, with some pupils scoring lower in S2 than S1 as well as individual pupils improving their scores. Members of the SMT reported that the scores for each pupil have been given to subject departments to enable them to monitor and track pupils and ultimately compare the scores with the Standard Grade results at the end of S3. It is likely that comparisons will be made with the year group above, for example, the numbers of pupils with MidYIS A and B scores who achieved credit level at Standard Grade will be compared, as will those of lower MidYIS scores and Standard Grade results.

We do have two years of MidYIS results for this year group and their PIP scores from P7. What we can gain from that is expectations of Standard Grade performance for each pupil which is a new service that they (CEM Centre, University of Durham) are offering and it is quite useful. I think that as a baseline measurement will be very useful. (Depute Headteacher)

When asked about pupil attainment in the questionnaire, several teachers indicated at the time (March 2004) that they wanted to wait and not pass any judgement until they had seen the exam results for both S2 and S3 year groups.

The examination results from selected subjects (those which have a similar number of cohort pupils and pupils in the year above taking the subject) are detailed in Table 4.3. The cohort pupils in S2 and the year group above (S3 pupils) took the exams in April 2004, towards the end of the first year of their Standard Grade course. The full exam results are in appendix 5. In so far as any comparison can be made between the two year groups it should be noted that

is it is expected there would be a natural variation. The SMT indicated at the beginning of the project that the cohort pupils (S2) are a particularly able group and it would be difficult to make a comparison with the year above. Despite the S2 cohort having experienced a different curriculum prior to starting the Standard Grade course, the exam results show similarities between the year groups.

Table 4.3 A Comparison of S2 and S3 Pupil Exam Results taken in April 2004 at the end of The First Year of the Standard Grade Course
(Standard Grade, Grade 7 scores not included)

Subject	S2 Pupils (due to sit Standard Grade at end of S3)	S3 Pupils (due to sit Standard Grade at end of S4)
Art and Design		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	9	6
General Grades 3 & 4	22	20
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	3	3
Chemistry		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	9	5
General Grades 3 & 4	7	9
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	7	9
English		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	13	18
General Grades 3 & 4	73	58
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	7	8
French		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	25	15
General Grades 3 & 4	4	8
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	18	18
Maths		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	32	27
General Grades 3 & 4	14	22
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	26	25
Modern Studies		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	5	5
General Grades 3 & 4	15	7
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	5	10
Physics		
Credit Grades 1 & 2	10	13
General Grades 3 & 4	25	15
Foundation Grades 5 & 6	4	8

In discussion about the exam results with a Depute Headteacher, it was reported that an important feature of attainment was the difference between the year groups in the attitude of the less able in the cohort group, *their application is more pleasing, the effort they are putting in, they are trying their best.*

4.5.3 The Pupils' Preparedness for the Future: post 5-14 subject choices

Have there been changes in pupil subject choices?

As part of the evaluation the researchers identified the cohort pupils' subject choices for Standard Grade at the end of S1, and compared these with the year group above who had traditionally chosen their subjects at the end of S2. The purpose of this was to identify whether having to choose subjects a year earlier had been in any way influenced by the revised S1 curriculum, for example, pupils may have only experienced a six week teaching block in certain subjects in S1.

Table 4.4 Standard Grade Subject Choices in 2003 - 2004 of S2 cohort and S3 Pupils

	S2 N=96	S3 N=88
Child Development	10	12
Administration	17	23
Childcare Studies	41	37
Physics St Grade	60	38
Physics Int.	5	8
Chemistry	38	36
Biology	51	37
Biology Intermediate.	7	10
Modern Studies	25	32
Geography	36	19
History	33	30
Accounting and Finance	6	2
Computing	41	37
Health and Food Technology	10	15
Craft and Design	45	32
Art and Design	33	33
Graphic Communication	20	14
Physical Education	20	14
Music	23	31

Table 4.4 identifies the subjects chosen by pupils, but not including English, French, German or maths which all pupils take. For some subjects there are larger differences between the year groups, for example, Physics S2: 60, S3: 38. However in discussion with the Depute Headteacher it was reported that there has always been a variation in the school from year to year in the subject choices of pupils, due to a number of factors such as family influence and pupils wishing to take subjects together. It is therefore not possible to attribute the pupils' subject choice for Standard Grade to the revised S1 curriculum.

4.5.4 Identifying Project Effects

How will the school know that any improvements in more quantitative measures can be attributed to this project and not to work being carried out through other initiatives?

As discussed in section 4.5.2, at this stage at the end of S2 although the cohort pupils' S2 exam results compare favourably to the S3 year group, the school indicate they will not be judging any improvements until the end of S3 when comparisons will be made with the year group above. One Depute Headteacher also indicated that it would probably require several years beyond that of pupils going through Standard Grade at S2/3 before any judgements on the effects due to this project will be evident.

DETAILED INDEX

5	Choosing Subjects for Standard Grade	61
5.1	Introduction	61
5.2	The Process of Selection of Subjects for Standard Grade	61
5.3	The Participants' Perspectives on the Processes of Selection	61
5.3.1	The Teachers' Perspectives	61
5.3.2	The Pupils' Perspectives	62
	a) General responses	62
	b) The basis for the pupils' choices	63
5.3.3	The Parents' Perspectives	63
	a) The procedures for choosing the subjects	63
	b) The timing of the Standard Grade choices	65

SECTION 5 CHOOSING SUBJECTS FOR STANDARD GRADE

5.1 Introduction

Following the completion of the new S1 courses, both pupils and teachers had to review the situation: pupils through their choices of subjects, the teachers through putting in place procedures which ensure pupil and parent needs are met by the new arrangements. In the past there had been a variation in the readiness of pupils to choose subjects for Standard Grade. In the school's view some pupils had already made up their mind before they entered secondary school, and equally there were those pupils who felt S2 was too early. The requirement is now to select subjects for Standard Grade at the end of S1.

In this section we look mainly at the outcomes of the processes of subject selection at the end of S1 and at the anticipated benefits, and the problems ahead for the newly timed Standard Grade courses and beyond from the perspectives of the teachers, pupils and parents.

5.2 The Process of Selection of Subjects for Standard Grade

Three PSE classes were observed while the guidance teachers discussed subject choices and possible options. The key message given by the teachers was if the pupils were uncertain at that stage about which subject to choose, they should choose ones they were interested in and were good at thus predisposing them to get good grades.

The pupils received an information booklet describing all the subjects and indicating the other levels at which the subject could be taken, as well as Standard Grade. Another information booklet 'Which Way Now?' described careers and levels of qualifications required (SEED). Additionally, two parents' evenings were arranged when pupils and parents could discuss progress in subjects, and another to discuss subject choice with the guidance teacher.

5.3 The Participants' Perspectives on the Processes of Selection

5.3.1 The Teachers' Perspectives

The guidance teachers' comments suggested that they thought that the answer to many potential concerns with subject choice at the end of S1 was to build flexibility into the system in later years, and to encourage pupils to make enjoyment of the subjects rather than career choice the main reason for subject choice at this stage:

I think the biggest difference is that up until now it's really been the beginning of careers education with S2. But we have decided together that we didn't want the focus to be so much on careers education for choice of courses with first year, but more to get them to be looking at their own skills and their own enjoyment of subjects. Going with the idea that if you enjoy something and are prepared to work hard at it you get good results in the end. And to look at patching in, if necessary, between, during fourth year, if they then change. Most, a lot of kids have no idea in second year what they want to do. So we were presuming that it would be even more so in First year. So, rather than look at careers as being the most important thing, to look at it in a different way. But having fourth year actually gives us a lot more flexibility. Because if we have the Standard Grades by the end of third year, then it gives us the whole of fourth year. 'Cause that, I must admit is my worry, my main worry when this whole thing was brought up was the suggestion of Highers in fourth year, you know, because it just, I couldn't see that at all.

Basically kids in first year, even second year, they've all changed their minds so many times that at this moment in time when you come to do choice of course with first years, we're all of the opinion that it's important they do what they enjoy.....So, their future isn't written in tablets of stone at the end of first year.

We've always had situations right through where suddenly a kid's gone into sixth year suddenly discovers that they need physics. And regulations will have changed. And by and large it's always possible to deliver.

A guidance teacher also indicated that while s/he felt the formal communications with parents on course choices were adequate, the communications with the pupils on these processes could perhaps be better targeted towards their age level and concerns. S/he had in mind asking pupils in the senior school to take a lead in devising a child friendly format for information.

The guidance teachers were aware too of some subject teachers' concerns, also expressed to us, that pupils might not have enough experience of subjects to make choices for S2. For example that in some practically based subjects pupils would not have had the same experience of the various disciplines before making their choices as previous S2 pupils, and similarly in the subjects offered as 6 week blocks. However, in a number of subjects, the changes had meant that the pupils had indeed retained interest to the end of the year, and the early choice point had helped secure the aim of keeping the pupils 'inspired':

I think the experience of a lot of (subject) teachers, is that this can be a difficult time of year. I always felt that the more able pupils weren't being stretched and a little bit bored - 'we are going through the motions here', and the less able pupils seem to be struggling and struggling to remain motivated and obviously when it gets to course choice and course choice has been made, the pupils only become less enthusiastic towards the subject that they won't be taking.....but I really haven't felt yet the lessening of enthusiasm amongst the first year pupils, they still seem to be quite inspired.

5.3.2 The Pupils' Perspectives

a) General responses

What were the views of the pupils on the new arrangement?

While the new arrangements were generally welcomed, the pupils' responses in interview indicated that the changes were seen as having as many minuses as plusses:

Well I think it's just a bit too early. If they left it a couple of months, it would be, I'd say you could get a better look at each of the subjects. But it's good that they've moved it a year forward but I think they've moved it too far forward. They could have just done, maybe like half a year to start with or ... (High attainer)

Too soon. Just because you don't really get much of a taste of what all the subjects are about. You don't get time to cover everything that you would like to. My sister just said, like pick the subjects that you most enjoy and she helped me sometimes with my homework. In some subjects I struggle with my homework. (Average attainer)

Better, because if you don't like a subject you can drop it but then it's like too soon as well! I kept thinking to myself like, if we stayed on for another year, like other second year and third years, that we would learn more and I'd get better grades or something. That's what I keep thinking. (Average attainer)

I don't think it's too soon to choose the subjects, I think it's too soon to do the exams! And it's good that you're not doing the subjects you don't like anymore. It's fun doing that side of stuff but when you know you're going to be doing exams in, like a year away it makes you...(shrugs negatively). (Low attainer)

Many S1 pupils thought there were advantages in choosing subjects at the end of S1 in that they could drop subjects they had difficulty with, were less interested in or had a poor relationship with the teacher:

It's better. Cause you don't have to put up with all the teachers that you don't like. (Low attainer)

The advantages of dropping subjects were also identified by the teachers and parents.

b) The basis for the pupils' choices
What was the basis for the pupils' choices?

Both the S1 cohort and the year group above (S2 pupils) reported choosing their subjects for Standard Grade for similar reasons, the most frequently mentioned indeed being because they liked or enjoyed the subject:

I like doing art and I also find it relaxes you. You can also express how you are feeling through artwork instead of words all the time. (S1 pupil)

I like making circuits and writing and carrying out experiments. (Physics) (S1 pupil)

S1 pupils also made choices related to their future career or usefulness in later life or whether they were good at a subject or achieved good grades:

I like it and I need it to be a doctor. (Chemistry)

I would like to be a marine biologist and I enjoy it! (Biology)

Because I get good grades and you need computing for modern work.

For some pupils the choice of subject was related to having to make a choice of a subject in a particular column and its preference over other subjects:

It was the best out of Modern Studies, Geography and History. S1 pupil

This subject (Biology) was okay, but better than physics. S1 pupil

5.3.3 The Parents' Perspectives

a) The procedures for choosing the subjects

How happy were parents with the way Keith Grammar School helped pupils to choose their Standard Grade subjects?

As indicated in Table 5.1, over half of the parents (58%) were happy with the information provided and the meetings arranged by the school to assist the pupils make their Standard Grade choices. The parents' views also supported that of a guidance teacher indicated earlier in section 5.3.1 who thought that the information for pupils on the choices for Standard Grade could perhaps be better targeted towards their age level and concerns. Almost half of the parents (46%) strongly agreed/agreed with the statement that, '*some of the information on subject choice given to my child was difficult for her/him to understand*'.

Table 5.1 The Parents' Perceptions of Choosing Subjects for Standard Grade
(percentage of questionnaire response)

How much do you agree with the following statements?			
	Agree/ Strongly agree	No view either way	Disagree/ strongly disagree
I am happy with the information and meetings the school arranged to tell parents about subject choice.	58	18	22
Some of the information on subject choice given to my child was difficult for her/him to understand.	46	22	29
My child was not really mature enough to choose his/her subjects for Standard Grade at the end of S1 .	73	9	18
I think the end of S1 was an appropriate time for my child to choose his/her subjects for Standard Grade.	20	9	69
S2 has been good for my child because s/he has been able to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1 .	43	27	31

In the interview data a range of views was expressed on the school's handling of the process of choosing subjects, the majority being positive. Comments included the informative nature of the booklet received, the opportunity to attend two parents evenings, one to talk to subject teachers and the other to consult guidance teachers and obtain careers advice before making informed choices. One parent thought the school had supported the pupils through the whole decision process "*relatively well*". Additional comments included:

The school had an open night which we attended. I think that helped and gave him/her a bit of guidance. He/she could also speak to people out in the field of what he/she was interested in and that gave him/her some help. He/she is interested in Law. I don't think the actual subject choice was greatly important. Not at that point. It is important in that he/she has to pick the subjects that will give him/her the results she needs.

I think it has been reasonably well handled...The actual process of making choices, there was an opportunity to go and speak to all the different teachers you wanted to. You were able to discuss with the teachers whether they thought that they would be capable of continuing with the courses. Whoever you wanted to speak to was available, at a parents evening.

Basically, it was just a list of subjects, pretty much information on the subjects. We got that from (name of pupil). We got a booklet. It was quite informative, but he/she is very young, it was difficult for him/her to really know what he/she wanted to do and what he/she really wanted to study. But he/she found it quite easy because there were certain subjects he/she did enjoy and those were the ones he/she chose.

One parent considered the school's role in the process had been helpful but that more assistance could have been given:

When you go and say you are struggling between two subjects, when you go to that subject teacher, they say they are not there to decide one way or another. We are just here to tell you how he/she is doing. I think you could be given more help and guidance from that point of view.

b) The timing of the Standard Grade choices

Some parents expressed positive views about the new timing. One parent thought that *lots of kids know what they want quite soon. There are obviously some who don't know but (my child) knew what he/she wanted.* This parent thought that her child had had enough experience of some subjects:

In some ways I think it is a good idea if they get to choose what they want to do, focussing on their careers. There might have been a lot of maybe extraneous stuff, they are able to focus better.

Another parent was absolutely sure of the advantages for her child in choosing sooner rather than later:

The comparison there is that he/she has a cousin who is exactly the same age in (name of another school in the same area). He/she is having to do art and having to do music, and he/she is an extremely bright child, who without a doubt will go great places educationally. He/she is so frustrated it is unbelievable. He/she would rather swap the art for maths. The music for something else. So there is the beauty that (name of child) was actually able to say very quickly I want to ditch this, I don't enjoy it. I felt he/she was mature enough to do that.

Another parent acknowledged that although initially she had had reservations about her child choosing Standard Grade subject after less than one year in the school, it had been advantageous because they had been able to drop subjects that they were not interested in. This view was supported by some of the pupils (section 5.3.2).

But in his/her case, I think it will help him/her rather than hinder.....He/she has got rid of the subjects he/she is not interested in. He/she can concentrate on what he/she wants to work at, and not have any dreads about going to a class that he/she doesn't really want to.

As with the parents interviewed, the advantages of choosing subjects earlier was recognised by a number of parents. Forty three per cent of the questionnaire respondents saw the change as enabling pupils to drop subjects they were not interested in after one year, and thus allowing them to concentrate on subjects they liked (table 5.1).

S2 has been good for my child because s/he has been able to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1.

The only benefit is the ability to drop subjects quickly that were of no interest to the child.

With respect to concerns about the timing of the choice point, the parents in the early interviews had expressed reservations which centred on two issues, the earliness of the timing with respect to the pupils' knowledge about the subjects and the associated level of maturity of the pupils.

Table 5.1 shows that 69% of the parents did not think that the end of S1 was an appropriate time for their children to choose their Standard Grade subjects, with only 20% agreeing that it was. Nearly three quarters of the parents (73%) considered that their child was not mature enough to choose their Standard Grade subjects at the end of S1.

They were concerned that coverage of some of the subjects was such that the pupils might not have had sufficient knowledge of a subject to be able to make an informed choice, for example in those subjects which were done in six week blocks:

I still think it is a bit early.....I think that is a problem especially now where they only have small blocks of history, geography, modern studies. It is quite difficult for them to think after only maybe 7 or 8 weeks that they want to do that for the next two years.

Questionnaire responses included these views:

Not enough time to evaluate what subjects really were about and how they would affect their choices.

Having only one year before starting coursework is not a long enough period for my child to settle into secondary education and 'get to grips' with all the different subjects. To make decisions about which subjects he liked/disliked and which ones to continue with into S2 after only 10 months in S1 was far too quick and rushed.

Having to drop subjects that have now subsequently become appealing.

Seventy three per cent identified lack of maturity as a concern, with almost half of the parents in the open questions identifying this as the main disadvantage for their child of having only one year before starting Standard Grade:

Was still trying to settle in and was a bit immature to make choices.

The children are not mature enough to realise the importance of the choices made in subjects.

I feel it's difficult for her to fully understand at her age the full importance of the Standard Grades.

DETAILED INDEX

6	The Courses in S2	68
6.1	Introduction	68
6.2	The Teachers' Perspectives	68
6.2.1	The Lower Attaining Pupils	68
6.2.2	The Pupils in Standard Grade Courses	68
	a) The positive perceptions of the staff	68
	b) Staff concerns and reservations	70
	c) The effects of maturity	71
	d) Final comments	72
6.3	The Parents' Perspectives	73
	a) Positive perceptions of the parents	73
	b) Parents' concerns and reservations	74
	c) The effects of maturity	74

SECTION 6 THE COURSES IN S2

6.1 Introduction

In June 2003 the cohort pupils moved up from S1 to S2. This section details the pupils' experiences in S2 in their first year of the Standard Grade and other courses from the perspective of the school and the parents. Data has been collected at the end of S2 from the pupils, but this forms part of Phase 2 of the evaluation and will be reported on at a later stage.

6.2 The Teachers' Perspectives

6.2.1 The Lower Attaining Pupils

To what extent are all pupils embarking on Standard Grade from the start of S2? What about pupils with special educational needs? Are any selection criteria used?

What contingencies does the school have in place for pupils in S2/S3 who find the pace of dealing with Standard Grade too much one year early?

In interviews with members of the SMT in November 2003 at the end of the first term of the new S2 arrangements for the cohort pupils, it was reported to the researchers that although the majority of pupils were taking Standard Grade courses, some pupils were taking Intermediate courses for certain subjects. This was no different from practice in previous years. However a new Intermediate course had been introduced for science:

We used to have Standard Grade science but the scientists didn't like that because there was no progression from it so they argued that instead of having a science class for those that wouldn't be able to gain a general or credit in a science, they should introduce the Intermediate 1. That is a lovely group to see because they made quite a fuss because it was new, and they got them all white lab coats. Home economics have always had Intermediates as opposed to Standard Grades. They are all entering subject choice courses but some of them are Intermediates. (Depute Headteacher)

For those pupils who required support for learning, the school provided some alternative courses, for example Access courses in some subjects such as modern languages, which were identified as difficult subjects for less able pupils. The pupils who took these courses were identified by the guidance and support for learning staff:

The children who are identified with the support needs are following appropriate courses. It's a mixture. We have a very small group doing Access, three doing modern languages, a small German section, and that is very successful because they are perhaps one of our most difficult classes. Modern languages is often a problem area for the less able and this is working quite well. We wouldn't want a lot of them in this particular group, but it is quite small. That was through consultation with support for learning. (Depute Headteacher)

6.2.2 The Pupils in Standard Grade Courses

How well were the new arrangements for Standard Grade operating?

In tackling the Standard Grade materials earlier were there maturity problems and if so, how were they overcome?

a) The positive perceptions of the staff

The results from the staff questionnaire support the senior managements team's view that overall, the cohort pupils were managing well with the Standard Grade courses in S2. Of the twenty five respondents who returned a questionnaire, twenty-one indicated they were

teaching S2 in the 2003 - 2004 school year (covering fifteen different curricular areas and support for learning). Table 6.1 shows that the majority of these respondents indicated that most pupils were well prepared in key areas for starting Standard Grade courses in S2 (N=18); that the S2 pupils were coping well in their Standard Grade and other courses (N=18); and that the pace of work was about right for most of the pupils (N=17). Despite thirteen respondents disagreeing with the statement 'S2 pupils are not coping with the Standard Grade curriculum as well as the S3 pupils', nine still thought that for some pupils, starting the Standard Grade courses in S2 was proving too challenging. Nine respondents thought that as a result of the revised S1 course, they were now having to teach areas of the curriculum that would have been included in the old S2 curriculum.

Table 6.1 The Teachers' Review of Standard Grade in S2
(number of respondents, N=21)

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Number of respondents (Total Number =21)		
	Agree/ Strongly agree	No view either way	Disagree/ strongly disagree
I feel most pupils are well prepared in key areas for starting Standard Grade courses in S2.	18	3	0
Overall the S2 pupils are coping well in their Standard Grade and other courses.	18	3	0
Overall I think the pace of work was about right for most of the pupils.	17	2	1
Overall there is little evidence of increased pupil motivation in S2 compared to previous S2 year groups.	3	5	12
I think the S2 pupils are not coping with the Standard Grade curriculum as well as the S3 pupils.	4	4	13
In S2 I am now having to teach areas of the curriculum that would have been included in the old S2 curriculum.	9	6	6
For some pupils, starting the Standard Grade courses in S2 is proving too challenging.	9	4	8

In the open responses, when asked for their views on the most positive aspect of the move to Standard Grade in S2/S3, sixteen respondents who were teaching S2 offered a response. Several indicated that the revised S1 course had been a good preparation for the pupils to move on to Standard Grade:

The pupils have a very good attitude towards their studies, and are motivated and interested, in the majority. The pupils seem to have a clear understanding of the S1 work, which has been a good foundation on which to build.

Positive aspects would be the pace of work; this has improved and most students are keeping up.

Ten respondents commented on the heightened motivation, the positive attitude, enthusiasm and sense of purpose of the pupils in S2. Motivation is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.2.

Enthusiasm of pupils is undoubtedly much better than in core S2.

I think the most positive is that the S2 pupils feel special and take their responsibilities much more seriously than they would have if following a conventional S2 course.

Several teachers also commented on the raised expectations and attainment of the pupils:

The brighter pupils are always willing to go the extra mile and will also come up with the goods just as they would have done at the end of S4. They will however, be more motivated as we have, thankfully, lost our obsession with re-inventing the wheel and re-teaching S1 in S2.

The most positive experience for S2 pupils would be the increased expectations, which is bringing them on faster than they would have been in the old 5-14 S2 course.

Pupils are highly motivated, attainment is up.

One respondent felt that the most positive aspect of Standard Grade in S2/3 was *pupils being given earlier responsibility for the choice of subjects they wished to study*. Another highlighted the experiences of the less able pupils who it was thought would achieve well.

We need to wait until next year to see, but I firmly believe that pupils in lower ability sets will do just as well, even better, than they would have done at the end of S4.

Two respondents suggested that moving Standard Grade had had a positive effect on behaviour. One commented on *the positive attitude of pupils* and the other that *there is less class indiscipline*.

When asked what measures the school had in place for pupils in S2/S3 who might find the pace of dealing with Standard Grade one year early too much, both the Depute Headteachers were of the view that there were no pupils experiencing major difficulties, and if there were in the future, each pupil's needs would be dealt on an individual basis:

We are not really encountering difficulties. If we did, each case would be dealt with individually with everybody involved in that discussion. But I really don't anticipate that. (Depute Headteacher)

In interview, the Headteacher supported the Depute Headteachers' views and reported that in individual meetings with the principal teachers, which had included discussions about the Standard Grade course and S2 pupils, he had received positive feedback from each department. However, he pointed out that some staff had indicated that *some S2 pupils had knowledge gaps compared to S3 pupils, but these were bridgeable*.

One positive feature of the S2 cohort doing Standard Grade reported by the Headteacher, was that motivation and attitude in the S2 pupils was better than in the S3 pupils. Other supporting evidence of this was a reduction in the number of S2 pupils on behaviour plans and time-outs compared to previous year groups. *The pupils are the best behaved, most enthusiastic and motivated*. This statement was qualified with, *however they are a good group of kids*.

Other evidence that the pupils in S2 were managing with the Standard Grade course was the absence of parental contact with the school. The Headteacher was of the view that this reflected that S2 pupils were managing the Standard Grade course and had made no complaints to their parents.

b) Staff concerns and reservations

In the response to the open questions, while one respondent decisively said there were no 'least positive' aspects, fourteen staff offered views on what they considered was the least positive aspect of the Standard Grade course in S2. Six respondents had concerns which focussed on issues relating to the less able pupils and the curriculum. These included reduced coverage prior to Standard Grade:

In maths the pupils are missing the year of exposure, and as a result are taking longer to assimilate the necessary expertise.

I have reservations about the lack of preparation of poorer pupils for Standard Grade now. They have missed out on a year of (subject) and clearly are struggling with the more technical aspects of the course. This did happen in the past but I detect a feeling of despair rather than difficulty coming from them.

As a result of this it was felt that some pupils were struggling or having difficulties.

Learning support – pupils struggling – Standard Grade not for all!

Negative aspects would be that less able are struggling with the work and constantly trying to 'catch up.'

Some expressed concern about pupils having to choose subjects after limited exposure to them:

Having to make course recommendations for Standard Grade so early, based on minimal experience in each science subject.

Subject choice in S1 after 6 week block in S.1

One of the respondents, a Support for Learning teacher indicated that, for some pupils, starting Standard Grade in S2 was proving too challenging and that, in his/her view, S2 pupils were not coping with the Standard Grade curriculum as well as the S3 pupils. S/he went further and explained that s/he felt that poorer pupils were less motivated. These pupils had an *earlier realisation of their limitations* and that *their behaviour and attitude were perhaps deteriorating*. However this teacher acknowledged that h/she had a limited view of S2 classes

As a support teacher I spend my time with the most challenged pupils therefore it is unfair to make 'across the board' opinions.

Although other respondents offered similar concerns, these were considered to be outweighed by the benefits to pupils undertaking Standard Grade a year earlier.

With only one year of 5-14 having been covered in secondary school, there are areas which have not been covered in S1 which must be built on in S2. So these have to be covered before the pupils can move on to the Standard Grade work. This means it takes longer to teach Standard Grade topics. However, I do think that overall the positive outweighs the negative.

The least positive is that they do appear to take longer than the S3 students to grasp concepts but I believe that this will improve as they get used to Standard Grade work. I do not feel that this will disadvantage them in the long term.

c) The effects of maturity

The issue of the pupils' lack of maturity, particularly with respect to their skills in language was raised by two respondents:

Pupils lack maturity, in reflective & critical writing.

Some S2 pupils may have had problems in reading / interpretation of materials since their English skills had not developed as much as the S3 pupils.

However when the issue of pupil difficulty or maturity in S2 was discussed with the SMT, they held the view that this did not appear to be a problem across the whole year group. One of the Depute Headteachers commented that the high level of pupil maturity was apparent from the observation of classes:

I focus my classroom observation on S2 classes and did the whole year group through the English and was incredibly impressed by their choice of poetry and literature related to 'love'. That required a level of maturity, first of all to select it and to have the courage to stand up and read it. The variety was quite amazing. (Depute Headteacher A)

Another Depute Headteacher indicated that none of the concerns indicated by the teachers (see above) had been raised with the SMT by the staff:

I would say that the quietness of the staff is quite remarkable. It is just the norm now, it is just continuing, and I would say that that speaks volumes. I don't think I have anybody say anything to me about the progress in standard grade classes in terms of difficulties. Nobody has really said, they can't do it, they are too young. I haven't had anybody say, which I think is probably one of the fears that was voiced at the beginning, that pupils wouldn't be mature enough. (Depute Headteacher B)

The Headteacher endorsed the above views: *not a single member of staff has expressed negative feelings or are concerned about the outcomes. I have heard nothing about maturity of pupils at all*, and also highlighted that at another school within the Local Authority all the pupils in S3 were taking English Standard Grade in S3.

d) Final comments

Respondents to the questionnaire were given the opportunity to express final comments on the project and the majority of these were positive from all sectors of the staff.:

Motivation is much better in our current S2 compared to S3. I feel the project is important in looking at ways of revising attainment & in tackling S2 we are going to the heart of the problem.

As far as my own subject is concerned, I am very pleased that we have undertaken this new initiative. There are obviously some drawbacks (such as having to make subject choices in first year when most pupils have no idea what they want to do) but the benefits of increased motivation and morale (staff and pupils) far outweigh the disadvantages.

Once the first cohort sit their Standard Grade exams I doubt that there will be any obvious difference in attainment between the 2 year groups which would justify the decision to move standard grade. My only slight concern is that sitting exams in third year means that the average pupil's maturity (and standard of written English) may not be as good as the pupils in fourth year.

One respondent who was positive about the project, commented that for the high achieving pupils the real results will be after S3 and further qualifications (vocational or academic) in S4.

6.3 The Parents' Perspectives

The data on the parents' perspectives is derived from the questionnaire completed in March 2004 when the cohort pupils were over half way through their S2 year.

a) The positive perceptions of the parents

The information from the parents' questionnaire are presented in table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Parents' Views on the Standard Grade Course in S2
(percentage of questionnaire respondents)

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Percentage of respondents		
	Agree/ Strongly agree	No view either way	Disagree/ strongly disagree
My child is coping well in S2 in most of his/her subjects.	74	9	13
S2 has been good for my child because s/he has been able to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1.	43	27	28
I am happy with the overall progress my child is making in S2.	64	18	17
I think my child gets enough support for his/her learning in his/her S2 classes.	45	16	40
I think my child is struggling in some subjects in S2.	51	13	36

The questionnaire data show that the majority of parents of the cohort pupils felt happy with their child's overall experience beginning Standard Grade in S2. The majority of parents thought their child was coping well in S2 in most of his/her subjects (74%); were happy with the overall progress their child was making in S2 (64%); and thought their child received enough support for his/her learning in the classes (45%). A positive aspect of beginning Standard Grade in S2 considered by forty three per cent of parents was that it enabled their child to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1.

Able to concentrate on the subjects she wants to in S2 and she is looking forward to S4, S5 and S6 to complete her Highers in a better managed time scale.

The responses to the open questions produced a range of views regarding the Standard Grade course. In addition to the positive comments already highlighted in sections 4.2.3 and 4.3.3, about the challenge and motivation of the course and resulting progress for their child in S2, there were general positive responses indicating that they were pleased with their child's experience in S2.

Coping overall – enjoying most subjects & progressing well.

Our child appears to be happy and able to enjoy tackling the work up to present.

All teachers are happy with her and say that with time her confidence will improve.

b) Parents' concerns and reservations

As already detailed in section 3.5.3b, parents expressed some concerns on aspects of the initiative of starting Standard Grade in S2. These were raised by between ten and twenty percent of the parents, depending on the area of concern. They focussed on:

Not enough time to study, or study different subjects or cover the curriculum:

S1 was far too rushed, it is okay if a child is confident and able to cope but I fear if a child is insecure it will find it very hard. S2 has been head down homework 2 hours most nights, at the end of it, the child finds little time for other activities or hobbies which they must have to unwind at times!!

My child in S2, finds that there is not enough time spent on, say, certain topics within e.g. (subject) → (topic) as it's time to move on to the next topic. Pupils don't fully understand what they are doing.

S1 experiences were fine. But S2 experience too much pressure. Not enough time to cover work.

I do not really see the sense in bringing the exams forward. Why do they go to school for 4 years if exams are after 3 years? Why not give them the full amount of time to improve on their knowledge and understanding?!

Anxiety about performance:

He found that S1 was a bit of a struggle at the start but once he was into it he was OK! S2 he finds has a lot more work and feels there's a lot to take in & not enough time to take it in!

We are slightly concerned about her having time to catch up with subjects that she finds a struggle and this has been reinforced by some teachers telling her that the course had to be rushed.

Anxiety that their children were the first to experience the new system:

A small number of parents expressed the view that the project needed to be given time to see how it would work.

It is difficult to comment on which is a better system when you don't have an older child to compare against. I wish this system had been running for a few years before. I don't like being the first to try it out.

Like every other new project it has to be given a chance and at the risk of sounding totally selfish – I wish it hadn't been in my son's S1/2, however, with support I'm confident he will achieve his best.

c) The effects of maturity

Some parents expressed concerns about whether their children would be mature enough to cope with Standard Grade examinations at the end of S3. As one explained, her/his child's year will not be as mature as the rest of the entry, and s/he was concerned whether her/his child was *old enough to understand all the work given*. Another parent asked what would happen if the child had chosen the wrong subjects.

I don't think he will be mature enough to cope. I don't think at this age they are fully aware about how important the exams are & will not be willing to put in the study time required of them.

Do not feel she will do as well as if she had had the additional year of learning. This may dent her confidence. Almost all other pupils sitting standard grade will be a year older & wiser.

One parent explained in more detail and highlighted the issue of how their child's Standard Grade results will compare with the rest of the year group across Scotland.

- 1 Will he be mature enough to handle the formal exam?*
- 2 What if he changes his career choice, therefore his choice of subjects are wrong?*
- 3 This is his only chance to sit his Standard Grades and if by chance he doesn't do well he can't resit his Standard Grades again.*
- 4 If he fails his Standard Grades and gains Intermediates, how will prospective employers gauge his results against someone who gained Standard Grades at the same age by S4.*

APPENDIX 1**Keith Grammar School: Evaluation of Standard Grade in S2/3 Project Staff Questionnaire****BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Please ***put a cross (x) in the appropriate box***

1.1 Please indicate which of the following roles or tasks you are required to serve/perform in your current position at the school? <i>Please put a cross (x) for all that apply.</i>			
Deputy Headteacher	Principal Teacher	Class teacher	Other

Number of years teaching	Years 0-5	Years 6-10	Years 11-15	Years 16+
1.2 How many years since you qualified as a teacher?				
1.3 How many years have you been teaching at Keith Grammar School?				

	Full time	Part time	Temporary
1.4 Are you currently full time, part time or temporary?			

1.5 Which subject/s do you teach? Please <u>underline the main subject</u> if you teach more than one subject.
a)
b)
c)

Teaching S1	Yes	No
1.6 Did you teach S1 last year (2002/3 school year) at Keith Grammar School?		

If **yes**, please go to the **question 2a**.If **no**, please go to **question 7**.

2. How much do you agree with the following statements?					
<i>Please put a cross in one box for each statement below.</i>					
	Agree strongly	Agree	No view either way	Disagree strongly	Disagree a lot
a) The S1 curriculum in 2002/3 had been improved from the one I had taught previously.					
b) I was involved in planning and developing the revised S1 course.					
c) Overall I think most pupils coped well with the revised S1 curriculum.					
d) Overall I think the pace of the work in S1 was about right for most of the pupils.					
e) I think that many pupils were not really mature enough to choose their subjects for Standard Grade at the end of S1.					
f) Overall the slower, less mature learners got enough support in S1.					
g) Overall there is evidence that the revised S1 curriculum raised the motivation of the pupils (in 2002/3 school year).					
h) Overall there is not much evidence that the revised S1 curriculum raised the attainment of the pupils (in 2002/3 school year).					
i) As a result of our experiences in the first year of the revised S1 curriculum, we plan to reduce the amount of work we will cover with this year's S1 pupils.					
j) As a result of the revision of the S1/S2 course there is now less repetition of work for pupils in the revised S1 course.					

<i>Please put a cross in one box for each question below.</i>		Yes	No
3a. Were you actively involved in writing the revised S1 curriculum?			
If yes , please go to the question 3b . If no , please go to question 4 .			
3b. Did you visit any of the associated primary schools?			
3c. Did you visit any secondary schools already implementing curriculum flexibility?			
3d. Did you get some extra time or resources allocated for the development work?			
3e. What were they key changes made to the old S1/2 course?			

4. What difficulties did you find in last year's revised S1 course, and what changes have you made to try to get over this?

5. What sort of things did you think went really well for pupils in S1 (school year 2002/03)?

6. What sort of things did you think did not go so well for pupils in S1 (school year 2002/03)?

Teaching S2	Yes	No
7. Are you teaching S2 this school year?		

If **yes**, please go to the **question 8**.
 If **no**, please go to **question 12**.

8. How much do you agree with the following statements?	<i>Please put a cross in one box for each statement below.</i>				
	Agree strongly	Agree	No view either way	Disagree strongly	Disagree a lot
a) For some pupils, starting the Standard Grade courses in S2 is proving too challenging.					
b) I feel most pupils are well prepared in key areas for starting Standard Grade courses in S2.					
c) Overall the S2 pupils are coping well in their Standard Grade and other courses.					
d) Overall there is little evidence of increased pupil motivation in S2 compared to previous S2 year groups.					
e) Overall the pace of the curriculum is about right for the S2 pupils.					
f) In S2 I am now having to teach areas of the curriculum that would have been included in the old S2 curriculum.					
g) I think the S2 pupils are not coping with the Standard Grade curriculum as well as the S3 pupils.					

9. As a result of running the revised S1 course last year, and the experience of the pupils in S2, what do you think have been the **most positive** and **least positive** aspects of the move to Standard Grade in S2/S3?

10. In what ways do you think pupils are showing **increased motivation** in S2 compared to previous S2 year groups?

11. What evidence are you expecting to see of **increased pupil attainment** in S2 compared to previous S2 year groups?

12. Please add any comments you wish to make on any aspect of the Standard Grade in S2/3 Project.

Thank you for giving your time to complete this questionnaire.

Please return it electronically via email to Margaret Gooday: m.a.gooday@abdn.ac.uk **OR if you have completed the form by hand**, you can collect from the School Office, a prepaid addressed envelope provided for your reply and post it directly to **Margaret Gooday**.

All responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

3. What are the three subjects you found most interesting in S1 and why?

Name of Subject	This subject was most interesting because:
1.	
2.	
3.	

4. What are the three subjects you least enjoyed in S1 and why?

Name of Subject	I least enjoyed this subject because:
1.	
2.	
3.	

5. What are the three subjects you worked best in during S1 and why?

Name of Subject	I worked best in this subject because:
1.	
2.	
3.	

6. Apart from Maths and English, **which six subjects** from the list below have **you chosen for S2** and **why?**

French	History	Computing
German	Modern Studies	Accounting & Finance
Biology	Art & Design	Administration
Chemistry	Music	Craft and Design
Physics	Physical Education	Graphic Communication
Geography	Health and Food Technology	Childcare Studies

Please *name the six subjects* and for each subject *tell us why you chose it.*

1. **Subject name:**

2. **Subject name:**

3. **Subject name:**

4. **Subject name:**

5. **Subject name:**

6. **Subject name:**

APPENDIX 3

Keith Grammar School: Evaluation of Standard Grade in S2/3 Project Parents' Questionnaire

1. How much do you agree with the following statements? <i>Please tick one box for each statement below.</i>					
	Agree strongly	Agree	No view either way	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a) I felt well informed about what my child would be doing in S1 and S2					
b) Overall I think my child benefited from the new S1 curriculum.					
c) Overall I think the amount of work covered in S1 was about right for my child					
d) Overall I think the amount of work covered in S1 was too rushed for my child.					
e) My child was not really mature enough to choose his/her subjects for Standard Grade at the end of S1 .					
f) I think the end of S1 was an appropriate time for my child to choose his/her subjects for Standard Grade.					
g) Some of the information on subject choice given to my child was difficult for her/him to understand.					
h) I am happy with the information and meetings the school arranged to tell parents about subject choice.					
i) Overall I am happy with my child's experiences in S1 .					
j) My child is coping well in S2 in most of his/her subjects.					
k) S2 has been good for my child because s/he has been able to drop subjects s/he did not enjoy or was not good at in S1					
l) I think my child gets enough support for their learning in their S2 classes					
m) I think my child is struggling in some subjects in S2 .					
n) I am happy with the overall progress my child is making in S2 .					

2.	Far too much	A little too much	About right	Not quite enough	Not nearly enough
a) The amount of homework my child had in S1 was:					
b) The amount of homework my child has in S2 is:					

3a).	Do you have an older child at Keith Grammar School or one who has left school during the last two years? (please tick as appropriate) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
3b)	If Yes , in what ways do the S1 and S2 experiences of your child who is now in S2 compare with the S1 and S2 experiences of your older child?

APPENDIX 4

Table 3.2 Pupils' Perceptions of Homework Allocations

How many hours do you spend on homework in a typical week for each subject? (percentage of questionnaire responses)								
<i>*Value is the valid %, the % of pupils who take the subject, not the % of the whole sample</i>								
SampleSize:	0 hours		1-2 hours		3-5 hours		More than 5	
S1, N = 91	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
S2, N = 45								
English	28	53	64	42	9	0	0	2
Mathematics	22	51	62	44	15	0	0	2
*S1:N=61, S2:N=26 French	*36	*46	*56	*50	*8	*4	*0	0
*S1:N=32, S2:N=20 German	*29	*50	*71	*45	*0	*5	*0	0
Art & Design	45	96	50	2	3	0	1	0
Business Studies	86	**	10	**	0	**	1	**
Computer Studies	60	80	35	13	0	0	1	0
Science	10	42	76	51	14	2	0	0
Geography	18	53	64	40	19	2	0	0
History	35	69	58	27	6	0	1	0
Modern Studies	32	56	60	38	6	2	1	0
Home Economics	31	76	57	22	8	0	3	0
Music	55	80	42	16	2	0	1	0
PE	89	91	10	4	1	0	0	0
Religious Education	45	87	43	7	9	0	0	0
Technical Studies	85	96	13	0	1	2	0	0

**Pupils did not take Business Studies in S2

APPENDIX 5**A Comparison of S2/3 Exam Results - June 2004****Subject: English**

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	2	1
Grade 2	11	17
Grade 3	45	30
Grade 4	28	28
Grade 5	5	6
Grade 6	2	2
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Maths

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	18	12
Grade 2	14	15
Grade 3	12	16
Grade 4	2	6
Grade 5	11	19
Grade 6	15	6
Grade 7	22	7

Subject: French

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	3	1
Grade 2	5	5
Grade 3	16	13
Grade 4	9	9
Grade 5	6	11
Grade 6	12	7
Grade 7	4	1

Subject: German

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	0	2
Grade 2	9	6
Grade 3	8	6
Grade 4	9	1
Grade 5	1	2
Grade 6	0	0
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Art and design

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	2	0
Grade 2	7	6
Grade 3	15	15
Grade 4	7	5
Grade 5	2	2
Grade 6	1	1
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Craft and Design

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	3	0
Grade 2	6	6
Grade 3	9	4
Grade 4	5	8
Grade 5	6	9
Grade 6	3	3
Grade 7	3	0

Subject: Music

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	3	8
Grade 2	12	15
Grade 3	7	5
Grade 4	1	3
Grade 5	0	0
Grade 6	0	0
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Accounts and Finance

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	1	
Grade 2	1	1
Grade 3	2	1
Grade 4	1	0
Grade 5	0	0
Grade 6	0	0
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Administration

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	2	2
Grade 2	4	5
Grade 3	2	4
Grade 4	4	5
Grade 5	1	5
Grade 6	3	0
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Computing

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	5	9
Grade 2	13	19
Grade 3	8	6
Grade 4	3	1
Grade 5	4	1
Grade 6	1	0
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Modern Studies

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	0	0
Grade 2	5	5
Grade 3	11	5
Grade 4	4	2
Grade 5	3	4
Grade 6	2	6
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: History

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	5	8
Grade 2	6	8
Grade 3	3	5
Grade 4	9	5
Grade 5	7	2
Grade 6	3	1
Grade 7	0	0

Subject: Biology

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	1	0
Grade 2	3	7
Grade 3	6	9
Grade 4	19	11
Grade 5	13	5
Grade 6	10	6
Grade 7	2	0

Subject: Chemistry

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	3	1
Grade 2	6	4
Grade 3	2	3
Grade 4	5	6
Grade 5	7	9
Grade 6	0	0
Grade 7	15	14

Subject: Physics

Number of pupils obtaining overall grade	S2	S3
Grade 1	4	6
Grade 2	6	7
Grade 3	17	6
Grade 4	8	9
Grade 5	4	8
Grade 6	0	0
Grade 7	0	2