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## Initial Encounters: Moving to Secondary School

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**In this chapter we look at the impact on pupils when they first arrive at secondary school. Transfer is often described as an anxious time but it is perhaps more accurate to say that most pupils generally feel excitement tinged with a touch of apprehension. In the following pages we look at what schools are doing to make transfer a satisfactory experience for most pupils and suggest some areas where new initiatives may be required.**



It would seem only reasonable to assume that the pupils' first impressions will have a part to play in deciding the way they will cope with their start at secondary school. Some newcomers will seek to immerse themselves fully in the playground activities, seeking to ingratiate themselves with both more senior students as well as the leaders among their own peers. Others, of a more reserved nature, will perhaps look for like-minded pupils and seek to join the computer or chess club where they can take refuge during lunchtimes and breaks. Because these earlier experiences can have an impact on a pupils' academic performance, causing dips in progress, this process of transfer (often also termed *transition*) from primary to secondary school has therefore been given considerable attention by recent governments. For example, one of the aims of the National Curriculum under the then Conservative Government of Mrs Thatcher, was to improve the continuity between the primary and secondary curriculum, while in the early stages of New Labour's term in office, schools were required to write into their development plans specific proposals to improve transfer arrangements. This was followed up by the

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award of Beacon Status to two authorities, Suffolk and North Lincolnshire, who were charged with improving the quality of the transfer process in other parts of the education system.

### Transition as a continuous process

Two main theories have dominated the debate about transfer. The first of these might be described as a 'matching' theory whereby it is argued that transfer works best when the school environment fits the young adolescents' perceived psychological needs and dispositions. In the United States this *stage-environment fit* theory was first proposed by Eccles et al. (1984). According to these researchers a poor fit resulted in dips in both pupils' attitudes and also their attainment. Key elements in the young adolescent developmental stage, according to Eccles and colleagues was a desire to be free to make their own decisions about where to go, what to do and whom to do it with. This was coupled with what might be termed 'goal aspirations' or the stirrings within an individual of what he or she would like to do with their lives on reaching adulthood. These researchers contrasted the ways in which primary (or in the United States, elementary schools) contrived to create an environment in the senior part of the school which supported these developmental characteristics so that the pupils were encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning and for the organization of some aspects of the classroom, whereas at secondary school pupils reported more competition, less freedom to make their own decisions (for example they were told where to sit) and work that consisted mostly of teacher-dominated classroom discourse where learning was very much controlled by the teacher.

Indeed, there has been some work in the United States suggesting that there is a link between the capacity of pupils to identify matching school environments and the onset of puberty. Miller (1986) for example, compared parental reports of their children's development and used this to investigate the 'match' between pupils' *ideal* view of their freedom to make decisions in school and the *actual* reality. Pupils' beliefs about decision making were assessed at the beginning of the final elementary school year and then again towards the end of the spring term. Girls, who showed signs of early development, were more likely to recognize that the actual allowed amount of decision making was less than their ideal, so that the person-environment fit was poorer for these pupils. Boys who reached puberty earlier detected little difference but this, it was suggested, was partly because it was more difficult for parents to decide the rate of pubertal development in their male offspring.

Although not developed as a specific theory, these ideas about person-environment matching were very popular in the United Kingdom during the 1970s and in the early 1980s, partly because they supported the notion of a three-tier system in which middle schools acted as a transition between the primary and secondary ethos (Hargreaves and Tickle, 1980). Some Local Authorities found the concept of a middle school very attractive because it

enabled them to convert to comprehensive education using the existing school buildings. Thus it was argued that there was a key period in the development of pupils as they moved from childhood to adolescence requiring a special kind of school (Schools Council, 1972) but whether this period took place from the ages of 8 to 12, 9 to 13, or 10 to 14 seemed to depend largely on the number and size of the available schools in the particular Local Authority.

The notion of a 'person-environment fit' suggests an approach based on gradual change to match the developmental changes taking place within the individual. This leads to an emphasis on continuity at transfer, particularly curriculum continuity, including both subject matter and teaching methods (Gorewood, 1986). Indeed, some schools went further in their desire to make the secondary transfer school appear more like primary by isolating Year 7 so that, as far as possible, the form teacher took most lessons, children were provided with a separate playground to keep them away from the dangers of mixing with their older peers and increased use of various pedagogic strategies such as group work was encouraged. Research by Youngman (1978) and Youngman and Lunser (1977) tended to suggest, however, that such dramatic organizational adjustments were not necessarily cost effective. Their research showed that pupils' reactions to the move to secondary school varied considerably and that for many pupils the effects were transitory and lasted only for a relatively short period. Such findings were supported by other research in Northern Ireland (Spelman, 1979) and in Scotland (Dutch and McCall, 1974). The first of the Oracle (Observational Research and Classroom Learning) evaluations of primary schools between 1975 and 1980 also took up the question of transfer and found mixed reactions among pupils in one school which adopted the policy of separating Year 7 from the remainder of the year groups. Pupils in this school told interviewers that they regularly risked breaking out of their own playground to mingle with older peers because it was 'more fun' and because 'they wanted to test themselves'. Testing could involve joining in impromptu games and generally learning to survive in situations where they were in hostile crowds. As in the earlier studies dips in attitudes and attainment were relatively small for most pupils over the course of the first year in secondary school and the different environments (three-tier versus two-tier systems; protected Year 7 versus no differentiation) appeared to make very little difference to pupils' attitudes. For most pupils the trauma of transfer (slight apprehension mingled with anticipated excitement) had been forgotten by the middle of the first term. In only about 12 per cent of pupils were the dips sustained and relatively serious (Galton and Willocks, 1983).

### Transfer as a status passage

An alternative approach to the problems of transfer, which offers a different perspective on the above research findings, borrows from anthropology and makes use of the concept of 'status passage' (Measor and Woods, 1984). In

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most societies the move from childhood to adolescence, or indeed any change in status such as getting married, involves a number of special rites which are designed to initiate an individual into their new status. Accompanying this change in status there is likely to be a certain amount of folklore which includes myths about what happens during the induction process. Transfer when viewed in this light, bears many of the hallmarks of a status passage. Going to big school marks a point in time when 'grown ups' such as parents and teachers, no longer see pupils as children but as 'young adults'. Initiation into the big school involves a series of rituals to do with new subjects, moving to teachers in different parts of the building rather than spending time in a single classroom and learning how to cope with different organizational arrangements, such as mastering the procedure for selecting one's lunch from a cafeteria style self-service menu. Accompanying this change in status are certain myths such as '*the royal flush*' whereby new pupils are alleged to have their heads held down the lavatory bowl while another pupil pulls the chain. These myths appear to be global.

As Measor and Woods (1984) point out, the view of the transfer process as a status passage is at odds with the previous notion that the main tasks of the primary and secondary school is to ensure that there is as much continuity as possible. These authors point out that if the process of transfer was so managed that the changes before and after the move to the big school were minimal, then pupils would have little evidence to suggest a change in status. In this approach, therefore, the desire for continuity needs to be balanced by an element of discontinuity which recognizes the need in pupils for some 'outward signs' that they are successfully managing the change from childhood to young adolescence. The anxiety, or more properly the apprehension, mingled with excitement, which arises during the transfer process is therefore largely a result of this continuity-discontinuity mix. This can be seen in the way that pupils talk about their hopes and fears during the last few weeks of primary school. They worry about losing existing friends but are looking forward to making new ones. They are looking forward to doing new subjects but worry whether they can cope with the work. In the same way they look forward to meeting and having more teachers but are concerned about whether some teachers will be too strict. In this version of events transfer is full of these kinds of dilemmas. Transfer schools need continually to review their approach to transition to take into account changing trends in primary and secondary education so that the continuity-discontinuity balance changes according to the circumstances pertaining in the feeder schools.

In practice, during the 1970s and 80s, the person-environment match that saw primary schools as centres of exciting innovations and secondary schools as dull, formal and hidebound by tradition, was often the subject of myth. The Oracle research (Galton et al., 1980) demonstrated that, in practice, primary classes were not hubs of creativity in which children discovered things for themselves, nor did pupils work for a large part of the time cooperatively in groups and nor were these schools places where pupils participated in the decision making about how the class and the curriculum

was to be organized. Other studies, notably that of Mortimore et al. (1988) and Alexander et al. (1989) confirmed that this was the case so that, although classroom organization differed between the primary and secondary school, the forms of instruction were very similar. In primary schools children sat in groups but worked alone whereas at the secondary level they more often sat in rows but again worked alone, and direct instruction was the norm in both kinds of establishment. In one way, therefore, there was continuity of pedagogy in that pupils experienced much the same teaching, albeit within different structures (mixed ability versus bands; single/pair seating versus groups etc.). Viewing the process of transfer as a status passage would suggest that one of the reasons for the persistent decline in attitudes, referred to in the first chapter comes about because pupils expect to be taught in different ways after transfer but this rarely turns out to be the case, particularly in the core subjects of mathematics and science where the decline in attitude is steepest.

However, notwithstanding this argument, the introduction of the National Curriculum was specifically designed to improve continuity according to the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker (1993). A repeat of the original Oracle study mainly using the same primary and secondary school as in the late 1970s, however, showed that there were a number of significant changes which had taken place with regard to the administration of the transfer process and that schools had moved to eliminate some of the immediate anxieties which earlier studies of transfer had highlighted. Some of these changes were less the result of fresh thinking about transfer and had more to do with the changed circumstances of schools, particularly the decline in the power of the Local Education Authorities and the 'market forces' approach to education with its emphasis on parental choice, which had been the flagship of the Conservative administration (Tomlinson, 2005).

### Induction days: 1970s to the present

Thus in the late 1970s when the first Oracle transfer study was carried out the choice of secondary school was largely determined by the Local Authority, who allocated pupils largely to the school catchment area in which they resided. For the most part, therefore, secondary schools gave little thought as to how to accommodate parents' and pupil wishes so that a 'take it or leave it' attitude tended to dominate. Thus in most cases in the original study children visited the school for one morning only. There they were addressed by the Year 7 tutor, given a conducted tour of the school and then packed back to their primary feeder schools before lunch. A Parents' Evening would be arranged towards the end of the Summer Term prior to transfer but its main purpose would be to instruct the audience on the rules of the school and the clothing policy, particularly the required items for PE and various sports (Galton and Willcocks, 1983; Delamont and Galton, 1986).

By the 1990s however all this had changed. Most schools had Liaison Committees where issues of transfer were considered. Unlike the 1970s these

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arrangements were less hierarchical in that the chairperson tended to rotate between the primary and secondary headteachers. In an effort to gain as many new pupils as possible several Parents' Meetings now took place and this involved opportunities to visit classrooms and see pupils (brought in especially for the evening) engaged in various curriculum activities. In some cases the transfer school's facilities were available for use by the primary schools, particularly science laboratories, drama studios and ICT suites. But as suggested earlier, the reasons behind these moves often appeared to have less to do with the actual transfer process and were more concerned to encourage pupils' parents and pupils to choose the particular school so that its numbers could be boosted and its finances increased. Hence these contacts were often supplemented by regular newsletters and other documents, designed to inform potential clients of the advantages of bringing their child to the particular institution.

The major change, however, was in the treatment of pupils prior to transfer. Now almost every local authority organized a Transfer Day during the late Summer Term when all children whose parents had opted to send them to a particular school spent a whole Induction Day on the premises. In most schools the Induction Day followed a similar pattern. Pupils were initially divided into their tutor and form groups and spent some time getting to know each other through a series of ice-breaker activities. There would be an assembly at which the school Principal would welcome the new pupils followed by a conducted tour of the school. Whereas the tour in the 1970s was often superficial with the volunteer pupil briefly stopping outside a room to say, 'This is where you do French', or 'This where you queue for snacks', these latter tours were generally conducted by the form tutors with frequent pauses to allow question-and-answer sessions. In most schools the tour was followed by an early lunch to avoid the queues when the main body of pupils finished morning sessions. In between and during the afternoon there were various lessons, a mix of core and other subjects. These lessons were generally made as exciting as possible so that for example in Science there would be plenty of explosions and lots of smoke accompanied by strange smells. The final session would usually consist of questions and answers about any remaining issues that the pupils might have. Sometimes these were conducted by the Year 7 Coordinator but more often space was allowed for the visiting primary intake to question existing Year 7 pupils. At some point during the day there would be an early introduction into the school routines and rules, generally during a tutor meeting with the pupils.

Interviews with the pupils (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002) found that the response to these activities was generally positive. Pupils found that their immediate anxieties were dealt with. These usually consisted of whether they would make new friends and get on with pupils from other primary schools, getting to see what the new teachers were like and working out practical arrangements such as how one paid for lunch, what one did in break time and where to put one's bag. The conclusion of the Oracle Replication Transfer Study was that, in respect to these activities designed to improve social adjustment, little more could be done. Indeed, to do more would be perhaps

to tip the scales too far away from the direction of maintaining some degree of discontinuity; in this case slight apprehension on the parts of the pupils so that they would continue during the summer vacation to see the move to the new school as a significant change in their status.

## Transfer and pupils with special needs

One important change concerned the efforts made on behalf of children with special educational needs. In most secondary schools, the SENCO now played an important part in the arrangements preceding transfer. They visited the various primary schools to identify pupils at risk, and made arrangements for these children to visit the secondary school separately from the remaining intake so that they had a longer period to adjust. Yet as other studies (MacBeath and Galton, 2006) have shown this increased liaison often has little to do with the learning needs of these special pupils and has more to do with administration; making sure that there are enough learning support assistants for the numbers of children with learning difficulties who are expected to come to the school in the following year.

The situation with regard to special needs has been exacerbated by the decision made by the New Labour Government to switch to a policy of almost total inclusion. In the publication, *Removing the Barriers for Achievement* (DfES, 2004a) it was argued that placing more children in mainstream and creating closer links with outside children's services would result in improved expectations and that educational disadvantage would thereby be reduced. In practice, this has not happened in most schools. While, according to Tomlinson (2005), pressures by knowledgeable middle-class parents for specialist segregated facilities within some schools have concentrated precious resources on more 'contemporary' highly publicized disabilities such as Autism, ADHD and Dyslexia this has often been at the cost of providing adequate support for pupils with lesser levels of special educational need, a conclusion also reached by the Audit Commission (2002).

The intention of the New Labour Government had been to place educational provision of the disabled members of the community within the framework of the equal rights legislation and as such inclusion has generally been welcomed by teachers. Some critics did argue, however, that the initiative was driven, in part, by the Treasury's enthusiasm for the savings that might result in reducing the number of special schools. In practice, as MacBeath and Galton (2006) have documented, schools lack the necessary expertise, funding and resources to make inclusion work effectively. In Year 6 the pressure to do well in the league tables has meant that the special needs children only get the teacher's attention on rare occasions. In one school visited the two Year 6 classes were divided in February into three groups. The first group, *the certain level 4s* were taught by one teacher, the next group, *the borderline level 4s* were taught by the other teacher while what were described as the *no hoppers* were assigned to an untrained classroom assistant.

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After transfer the situation rarely improved. SENCOs were often too busy to support teachers who said they felt insufficiently skilled to tackle the various types of learning disorder that they encountered. Most of the SENCOs' time was taken up with administrative tasks and in meetings with other welfare agencies and parents. The favoured solution was therefore to allocate such children to a Learning Support Assistant (LSA), often someone with a maximum of two days attendance, on a special needs course (Macbeath and Galton, 2006).

Wedell (2005) has argued that the *velcro-ing* of LSAs to pupils in this way is a form of within-class segregation and suggests that there is little likelihood of a change in the circumstances of these special needs pupils while the 'standards agenda' continues to drive the reforms and the assumption that improvements are best achieved through whole-class teaching is maintained. This view, perhaps surprisingly, has been supported by Ofsted (2004) who, despite their continued enthusiasm for whole-class teaching, have commented that the inflexibility of school and classroom organization are sometimes 'handicaps to effective developments' in pursuit of inclusive policies. The National Workload Reform, particularly the introduction of time for teachers to carry out planning, preparation and assessment tasks (PPA time) has led to a massive increase in the numbers of unqualified staff. There are now 115,000 teaching assistants according to Frean (2007). This works out at two unqualified staff for every three teachers. Many, with responsibility for children with special needs are now required to plan, teach and assess these pupils' work (Galton and MacBeath, 2008). The following description appears to be typical of what now takes place:

My primary role is working with a child who has a statement for 15 hours. A lot of the lessons she doesn't need one-to-one support so I work with the gold group which is the lower-ability group. When any writing is involved I tend to work with that group of children. I also do the reading schemes for those. (TA, 7 years experience)

There is a lack of systematic research concerning the impact of transfer on this group of children but insofar that changes to the transfer procedures have taken place since the 1980s it would seem that they have mainly concentrated on the administrative and the social aspects of transfer. The quality of the educational provision has received little attention.

### Bridging Units as an aid to curriculum continuity

Following the fall of the Conservative government, New Labour continued to take the view that the continuing dips in attainment and the persistent decline in attitudes were primarily caused by a lack of curriculum continuity. One particular strategy for overcoming this problem was to develop what have become known as 'Bridging Units'. These consisted of a series of exercises, mainly in English, mathematics and sometimes science, which pupils started in the last few weeks of their primary school. The books with the



pupils' work then moved with the pupils to the secondary school and further exercises and worksheets were continued during the first month in Year 7. The aim of the Bridging Unit was to enable teachers to gain insights to the capabilities of the primary children and to build on these as part of the work which was continued in the secondary in the first weeks after transfer. The first of these units, developed by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) met with a mixed success. An evaluation as part of a government-sponsored study (Galton et al., 2003) found that these Bridging Units were received with mixed feelings by both primary and secondary teachers. This was particularly true of the mathematics units. Teachers at primary level said that throughout the year the need to devote each morning to literacy and numeracy activities meant that the rest of the curriculum was squeezed so that children missed out on things like art, drama and PE. There was also little time available to do extended investigations based around certain topics. Generally primary teachers tended to use the time after the National Curriculum statutory tests in May to do more imaginative and creative activities that the children had missed out on during the early part of the year. Consequently there was a certain degree of resentment at having to devote more time to the core subjects, particularly since the topics chosen by the QCA for mathematics included fractions, a topic which was 'done to death' already during Year 6 as part of the National Curriculum. Where primary teachers did do the units, therefore, they tended not to follow their logical order but to pick and choose from various sections which they thought would be more interesting to the pupils. This made a mockery of the idea of continuity.

For the secondary teachers there were also problems. To begin with, not all transfer schools had distinct catchment areas because under the current system now operating pupils might feed into Year 7 from around 10 or 15 primary schools. While the main proportion of Year 7 pupils would come from perhaps three or four main feeder schools others might contribute as few as half a dozen pupils. Given these few numbers it was likely that liaison with some primary schools would be poor and that pupils might arrive for the first term after the move to secondary school having not done any of the Bridging Units. This presented problems to the teachers, who then had to have some pupils doing the work that others had already done in the main feeder primary schools. This situation could be further exacerbated in some inner-city secondary schools in larger conurbations where there were high rates of pupil mobility and where the Year 7 intake was often distributed across a large number of primary schools.

Moreover there appeared to be uncertainties among secondary teachers as to the purpose of the Units. Many teachers saw them as yet another element in the process of social adjustment by giving them work with which they would have been familiar from primary school, thus providing an easy introduction into academic life in the secondary school. Where this view prevailed certain consequences followed. For a start, teachers spent less effort in reviewing the previous work done before transfer, since they did not see the curriculum continuity issue as of vital importance. This in turn produced

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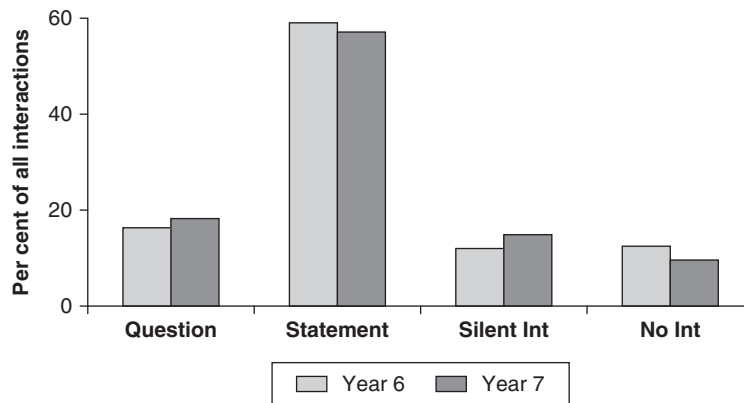
indifference on the part of the pupils who thought that the teachers were not interested in the work and therefore did not take the initial task set at secondary level seriously. More importantly, because teachers did not see that the purpose was to promote curriculum continuity they tended to see the Units as a finite piece of work, including the pupils' efforts in the primary school, and therefore did not associate what was undertaken with what was to follow subsequently. As one pupil interviewed by Galton et al. (2003) responded in relation to a science bridging unit, 'Once we'd finished it the teacher put on his white coat and we did the Bunsen burner'.

There was also another interesting result which reflects on the continuity versus discontinuity issue and supports the view of transfer as a status passage. One mathematics teacher reported to Galton et al. (2003) that she completed the bridging unit during the first three weeks of the new autumn term. At that point the pupils needed new mathematics books and she gave these out with instructions to her Year 7 set to cover them with paper and write on the front, 'Year 7, Set 2 Maths Book'. She recounted that immediately she spoke these words the class cheered loudly. The implication here is fairly clear. The pupils had associated the work done in the Bridging Unit with work they did in the primary school. It was only when they received their Year 7 maths book that their new status was confirmed and the cheers may have been ones of either relief at finally emerging from their primary school status, or anticipation at the new challenges which they assumed they would face now that they were going to do 'Year 7 work'

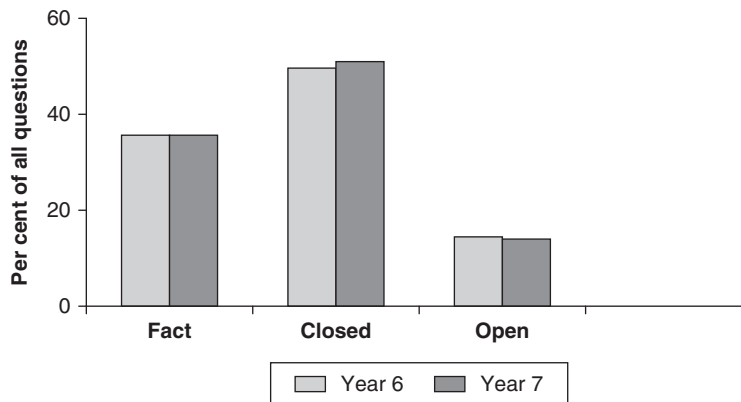
### Sharing pedagogy across transfer

Schools have also attempted to become more aware of each other's teaching approaches. In the 1970s there were the occasional attempts by secondary teachers to visit primary schools and to observe lessons. By the new millennium these visits had become something of a regular occurrence and, moreover, some of these exchanges were two-way so that primary teachers were also able to come and see what was taking place in Year 7 classes. These reciprocal visits have been well received by teachers who during interview often spoke of the interesting things that were going on in the primary school compared to the rather restricted approaches used at Year 7 and Year 8. However, the research based on observation seems to challenge these claims. In Figure 2.1 the overall teacher-pupil interactions recorded during the Oracle Replication (Hargreaves and Galton, 2002) are shown. In the Oracle approach interactions are divided into different types of questions, different types of statements, silent interactions (mainly when teachers are listening to pupils report or explain or read) and periods where there are no interactions because teachers are housekeeping (giving out books) or monitoring what is happening. As the figure shows, the patterns are almost identical in both the Year 6 and the Year 7 classes. Classroom talk is dominated by teachers making statements.

Figure 2.2 shows a breakdown of class questions. In the Oracle observation schedule these can be either to do with seeking facts, obtaining a single



**Figure 2.1** Percentage of interactions; pre and post transfer

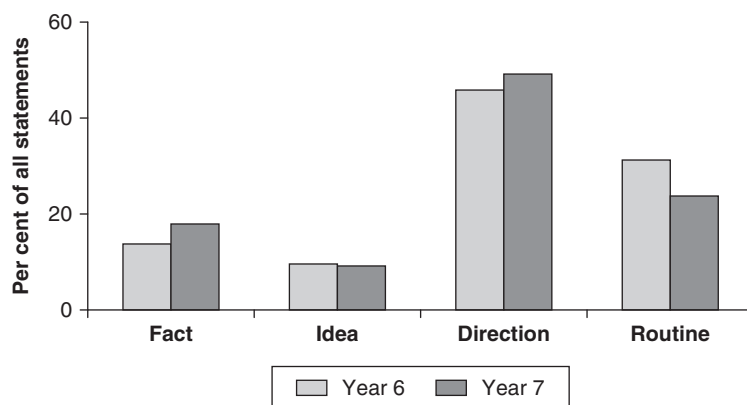


**Figure 2.2** Percentage of questions before and after transfer

answer (closed), or more challenging in that they allow for possible alternative answers (open). These latter so called challenging questions were intended to be a central feature in New Labour's push for 'interactive whole-class teaching'. At both primary and secondary level the proportions of the different type of questions are the same, with open questions constituting the smallest percentage overall at around 5 per cent of the total number.

In Figure 2.3, where the proportions of statements used are analysed, there are some minor variations (in the order of 5 per cent) between Year 6 and Year 7. Secondary teachers make more factual statements and give more directions overall while primary teachers appear to be concerned more often with routine. This is fairly easily explained in terms of the classroom situation where a primary teacher will have what has been called 'periods of evaporated time' when the class or a group of children in a class switch from one curriculum area to another. These switches often require pupils to change

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**Figure 2.3** Percentage of statements before and after transfer

places or move in and out of groups and teachers to collect in old and hand out new books or to return homework. In relation to making statements of ideas, again associated with problem solving, exploration and higher order thinking, Year 6 and Year 7 classes show both the lowest percentage and also equal amounts of activity. Overall, therefore, despite the claims of teachers who visit each other's classroom that there are major differences in the ways that pupils are taught, the patterns of interaction suggest that the classroom pedagogy in both Year 6 and Year 7 classes is remarkably similar.

How then to account for the fact that the perceptions of teachers differ from this research evidence? Two factors provide possible explanations. The first of these concerns the period in the year when these exchange visits tended to take place. Typically, when teachers were questioned about timing they said that the visits took place in June and July. This was because it was convenient for the secondary teachers since they had more free time, having 'got rid of Year 11 classes', while the primary teachers were concerned that the visits should not take place until after they 'had finished with the SATS'. But, as has been seen in the account of the use of Bridging Units, the period after the National Curriculum tests is just the time when teachers in primary schools are likely to engage in more creative problem-solving activities. Thus what the secondary teachers see on these visits is not typical of what takes place during the rest of the year when, as other studies have shown, there is a considerable amount of coaching and direct instruction (Alexander, 2004; Smith et al., 2004).

A second factor which may explain the discrepancy is that the visits of teachers tend to be largely unstructured. It may be, for example, that when the teachers see pupils in the primary school sitting in the groups they make the assumption that they are cooperating whereas the research evidence (Kutnick et al., 2002) suggests that often this may not be the case. Indeed more recent studies have suggested that there has been a reversal in trends in primary schools towards even more direct teaching. Commenting on a series of studies stretching from 1976 to 2005 Galton (2007) has shown that while

the amount of questioning in primary classes has risen the actual proportion between open and closed questions has remained at the ratio of 80 to 20 per cent in favour of the closed type. Looking at the pattern of statements, those concerned with facts remained roughly the same at around 15 per cent between 1976 and when they were again observed in 1996. By 2005 however they had doubled to around 30 per cent. Statements of ideas had hardly changed nor had directions with the latter category accounting for roughly around 50 per cent of all teacher statement interactions. The increase in statements of facts had come about by the corresponding fall in the number of routine statements. In another study by Webb and Vulliamy (2006) 18 out of the 45 classrooms visited now had desks or tables arranged in rows. While therefore the patterns of questioning seemed to have remained stable in primary classes the shift to whole-class pedagogy seems to have promoted a dominance of teaching as transmission. A similar conclusion was reached by Smith et al. (2004) whose analysis suggests that teacher questioning is now conducted at a rapid pace using predictable sequences of teacher-led recitation. Smith and colleagues conclude from analysis of the data that much of the teaching in the primary classroom, like that in the first year of the secondary school, was interrogative and directive in nature.

Thus the wheel appears to have come full circle in that the changes mandated by governments have promoted a high degree of continuity in the pedagogy used by teachers in primary Year 6 and secondary Year 7. However, whereas the starting point of those concerned in the 1970s was to make secondary teaching more like primary teaching (albeit as we have seen primary teaching was not as exciting as was often claimed) legislators have now succeeded in making primary teaching much more like typical secondary teaching with the consequences that the dips in attainment, attitude and motivation continue because pupils expect things to be more interesting and varied, when they move to the secondary school and quickly find out that things are not so different. One pupil when interviewed towards the end of the first term after transfer reported that in mathematics, 'It's the same here [*as at primary school*] but more complex ... We just do bigger numbers'.

## Becoming a professional pupil

Another area affecting transfer concerns the pupils' capacity to develop as *independent learners*. On Induction Day many headteachers will often develop this theme in their opening address but from what follows during the remainder of the day it would seem that a more accurate description of what the school requires is for pupils to become *independent managers*. There are usually constant references about bringing the right books and equipment on a particular day, of not leaving all the weekend homework to the Sunday evening, of having the correct dinner money and of finding the shortest routes around the school so that one arrives on time for lessons. Little is said about the kinds of adjustments that pupils will need to make in learning how to operate independently

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of teachers and in building up meta-cognitive understanding of the strategies which are best used in different subjects to develop their knowledge and skills. Some researchers have described this process as 'learning to be a professional pupil' (Lahelma and Gordon, 1997). At secondary schools pupils must learn to cope with different teachers, all of whom may have different standards and different requirements. They must not only learn how to manage a complex timetable, but also learn various strategic shortcuts for solving problems in science or mathematics, for interpreting emotional responses in literature and art and for making judgements about the validity of the evidence in history and the social sciences. In this sense they must learn to think as scientists, writers, historians and artists and in so doing must come to understand the nature of the disciplines in which they are engaged, although the standardized approach of the various strategies with their three-part lesson format may have restricted the nature of these intellectual demands.

Some schools have approached this problem by developing a *post-induction* programme. These were conceived initially by secondary schools whose intake came from a large number of feeder primary schools, some of whom, because they supplied only a few potential entrants, did not participate in the summer Induction Day, nor were visited by the transfer school staff. Post-induction was therefore seen as an additional settling in period. In some schools, however, the process has been taken further and extends over the first term with the aim of giving the new students the skills they require to cope with different subjects and different teaching approaches. These post-induction arrangements are generally organized around form tutors. Initially they will consist of orientation activities designed to familiarize the new pupils with the school. In one school, for example, pupils were presented with a virtual image of the school layout on the computer and were asked to find and plot the shortest way from, say, their form room to the science lab or to the dining area without infringing the one-way traffic system. Other sessions concerned trust exercises and identification of learning styles but there was also work in study skills and strategies to help thinking such as using concept maps.

One of the main problems associated with this kind of activity however is that the skills that pupils acquire are not always integrated into subject lessons so there is little transfer of learning. In the example given earlier, the Mathematics and Science departments opted out of the scheme on the grounds of pressure to cover the Key Stage 3 curriculum. In one session the observer saw children use various techniques to help them summarize paragraphs so that when they were sent to find sources from the library or from the Internet they did not copy the extracts but selected the important points from the material. In the exercise that was observed they were given a passage and then asked to present the salient points in a one-minute presentation to the remainder of the form group. However, from interviews with these pupils it emerged that they were never asked to do a similar exercise in History, English or in any other subject area during the course of the following week. There was therefore very little transfer of learning and pupils tended to see the activity as another attempt to provide a gentle introduction into secondary education rather than

**Table 2.1** Five Transfer Bridges (1997–present)

<b>Transfer Bridges</b>	<b>Practice 1977</b>	<b>Practice in 1997</b>	<b>Practice now</b>
<b>1. Administrative</b> (designed to smooth the process of transfer)	Occasional meetings of headteachers Transfer of pupil records, Pre-transfer tests	Headteachers meet regularly Fewer records exchanged Visits to Y6 classes by Y7 coordinator & Senco)	As in 1997 but with computerized data transfer Some subject specialists now also visit primary feeders
<b>2. Social/User Friendly</b> (measures to ease pupils' anxieties)	Brief visit to transfer school followed by parent evening	Summer Induction days Several parents evening Use of transfer school facilities (ICT, PE, drama)	As in 1997 but more pupil exchanges Buddy schemes R-mail exchange More reliance on pupil voice
<b>3. Curriculum</b> (seeking to maintain continuity and progression)	No activity	Bridging Units (QCA) Summer School (gifted in Art/drama; less able in maths and literacy)	More use of locally constructed Bridging Units Fewer summer school Using Y7 as a motivating year (more active curriculum etc.)
<b>4. Teaching and Learning</b>	No activity	Little activity	More two-way teacher exchanges involving peer observation sometimes structured
<b>5. Managing Learning</b> (helping pupils become 'professional learners')	No activity	Little activity	Some post-induction programmes but mostly excluding core subjects

as a key element in the way they were expected to learn over the course of their time at the school.

## Recent transfer initiatives

Table 2.1 summarizes the main changes observed during the last 10 years using what has become known as the *five bridges of transfer*. It can be seen that in the administrative sphere there is greater use of computers for data transfer and packages such as SIMS (School Information Management System) are now more widely available. In the social awareness area there is increasing use of email and the Internet to link primary and secondary pupils so that before transfer it is possible for those in primary school to quiz their peers in the secondary school concerning their anxieties. Some schools organize pupil exchanges so that when the Year 7 coordinator goes to a primary school he or she takes Year 7 pupils with her to answer the Year 6 pupils' questions. Some schools have adopted a buddying system whereby on arrival at the secondary school the new Year 7 pupils is allocated a particular individual who will help

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and support him during the year. More often these buddies are taken from Year 9 whereas, since one of the main complaints of Year 7 pupils is that they resent reverting after transfer to the most junior status, the use of the current Year 7 in relation to the Year 6 intake would at least give them a certain degree of responsibility for which they appear to yearn. If this kind of system was developed then the buddying system could go right through the school so that new Year 7 pupils retained their buddy in Year 8 and Year 9.

Perhaps the biggest change has been in the use of Bridging Units as a means of improving curriculum continuity. There is little evidence that the Units that replaced the QCA's units as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy have been taken up by a large number of schools. Instead the preference seems to be for schools to develop their own Units. This has several advantages compared to the weaknesses of the QCA Units which were discussed earlier in the chapter. First, such Units are more likely to provide a meaningful context so that the pupils can study recognizable topics with which they are familiar and which hopefully are of interest to them. Investigating the canals in a Midland town, the characteristics of a coastal region in a school on the Norfolk/Suffolk border, solving a murder mystery entitled, *Who Killed the Chef?* based on a famous city hotel which had been the subject of a TV programme are all such examples. In the latter case pupils in the primary school used microscopes to identify materials found at the murder scene in order to deduce from the evidence the most likely guilty person. On coming to the secondary school they were introduced to the idea of chromatography and on then retesting various samples were able to arrive at a new suspect. It is noticeable that in all of these examples schools have tended to use an integrated approach which combines some work in science with different forms of writing and some mathematics calculations. This has the advantage that pupils do not have to do too many units thus making them feel, as in the earlier example, that they are still doing primary school work. Such an approach will only work however, if there is active cooperation between the various departments within the secondary school and it is not just part of an induction programme handled by the form tutors.

Whatever decision is taken about the form or the number of bridging units, the second and perhaps most important advantage of having a locally produced product is that it improves the quality of the communication between primary and secondary teachers. A decision to develop one's own units means that there will be discussions not only around the actual curriculum content but also the pedagogy to be used in order to deliver the materials. For example, in one particular school pyramid where not all children attending the secondary school did the Bridging Unit, those producing it decided to include group activity. This solved the problem of what to do about pupils who had not taken part at primary level since within the groups children who had done the earlier part of the unit could tutor those that hadn't. A further advantage stems from the finding that because teachers are involved in the planning and have ownership of the Units there tends to be fewer problems concerning commitment. The primary teachers no longer resent having to do the Units after the national tests because they can incorporate activities which they would have done in the post-SAT period



and secondary teachers can plan the work so that they are not simply one-off topics but can extend into future existing work, thus giving a degree of control over curriculum back to teachers.

As Table 2.2 shows, apart from work on peer observation there has been little additional activity in respect of teaching and learning or in developing the idea of helping children to become professional pupils. In the current context, with the continued emphasis on performance, there is surely a need to introduce an element of discontinuity so pupils can discover that being in the secondary school presents different kinds of intellectual challenges to those experienced in the Year 6 primary class. A number of schools have begun to address this problem given the decision of the Government to allow more experimentation at the Key Stage 3 stage. Whereas the recommendation has been to shorten the stage into Year 7 and 8 so that the preparation for GCSE can begin in Year 9 other more adventurous schools have sought to confine the Key Stage 3 work to Years 8 and 9 while devising a Year 7 programme which is specifically designed to re-engage pupils in learning. For example, one school has divided their faculties in the lower secondary school into various specialist areas such as Sports Science, Performing Arts, Design and Technology. Throughout Year 7 the emphasis is on practical activities with the core subjects, Mathematics and English, integrated in part into this work. More concentrated direct instruction in these subjects and also in science then takes place in Year 8 and 9 during preparation for the end of stage National Tests. This school argues that there has been an observable change in children's motivation as a result of this shift of emphasis in the make-up of the curriculum and its associated pedagogy which contrasts sharply with the children's experience in their final year at primary school.

The push elsewhere to reduce Key Stage 3 to Years 7 and 8 and to begin GCSE in Year 9 seems to emerge from the finding in Galton et al. (2003) that Year 8 pupils saw this a 'fallow year'. However, the strong evidence which has emerged as to the pressure that children (as well as teachers) feel under by the need to do well in the National Tests would suggest that to condense the Key Stage 3 stage in this way would only add to these pressures and do little to reduce the dips in attainment or to improve motivation and attitude. Pupils come to secondary school excited by the possibilities and demotivated by the experiences of their final year at primary school. Creating some discontinuity in the way that the curriculum is organized and taught in Year 7 so that it really does represent 'a fresh start' would seem the more appropriate option.

Other schools have adopted a different approach. In some, a small team of teachers work together to redesign their approach to the curriculum so that the emphasis is on 'learning to learn' rather than on 'learning to perform'. There are reduced amount of direct teaching and increased use in the amounts of cooperative and collaborative group work of which more will be said in the next chapter. The principles behind assessment for learning are used to provide feedback and to set targets. The teachers from the primary feeder schools are invited into these lessons in order to comment and evaluate changes in their former pupils' learning patterns. Again this arrangement is designed to promote a degree of discontinuity in the existing system.

## Dealing with the attainment dip

Some schools have sought to deal with the problem of those children who come to secondary school having already failed to perform satisfactorily in the Key Stage 2 National Tests. These are among the pupils whose academic performance dips during the first year after transfer. In one case special classes of no more than 20 pupils were created for all children who failed to score Level 4 in English and mathematics. This was done partly by employing an extra teacher but also increasing the numbers in the other Year 7 classes. Typically, this gave rise to four classes of 20 and four classes of 32 pupils. Pupils in the reduced class size were taught in a special area with the mornings devoted entirely to literacy and numeracy but integrated into other humanities work. This increase in time had consequences for the number of periods in the other subjects; most were reduced by half compared to the other Year 7 classes. For example French received only one period a week and Science two compared to the normal two and four sessions respectively. Initially, for the pupils in the reduced size Year 7 classes an experienced primary trained teacher was employed to act as the group leader. She developed an integrated form of curriculum which was delivered mainly through practical activity using a cooperative approach based on group and pair work. Other teachers received training in this approach in the summer term prior to the start of the programme.

In the two years in which an evaluation was carried out by staff from the local University, over 95 per cent of pupils gained at least one level and nearly 40 per cent at least two during their time in Year 7. More importantly these pupils, when they joined their peers in Year 8 in normal-sized classes were able to compete with them for places in higher sets in both French and Science (two subjects where they had received less teaching). But the main change in the children appeared to be the attribution that they gave for failure and success in their learning. Whereas on coming to these reduced classes children explained their presence largely in terms of their lack of ability, 'I didn't do very well in primary school. I wasn't good at maths, I only got a Level 2'.

At the end of Year 7 when asked how they would cope in the bigger classes when they went to Year 8 they replied, 'We're going to have to work harder'. This final response represents quite a remarkable change in attribution to that elicited previously. Whereas at the beginning of Year 7 pupils thought that failure to do well in primary school was due to a lack of ability on their part, by the end of the year avoiding future failure now depended on one's own efforts rather than some innate intellectual trait. This positive change in self-image also caused these pupils to re-evaluate the reasons why they did badly at primary school. Whereas, initially, they had seen their failure as largely of their own making, now these pupils had something to say about the quality of the teaching arguing that, 'Teachers didn't explain things in the same way that they did in Year 7. If you didn't understand something then they'd explain it and if you still didn't understand it explain it again in another way until you understood'.

There has subsequently, however, been a disappointing sequel to this success story. In the following year after the evaluation the mathematics

department pressed for the reintroduction of separate subject teaching in these smaller classes. The motive for this change was a positive one; they wanted to place some of these pupils who had caught up into the higher Year 8 sets and felt that for this to work successfully the Year 7 syllabus should have been fully covered. But the result of this decision, in some respects, has appeared to be counter-productive in that the number of incidents of serious misbehaviour has increased (with some pupils being excluded) and teachers have reported that pupils appear less motivated now that some of the practical activities have had to be replaced by drill and practice exercises from the text book when preparing pupils for the end of Year 7 examination which is used to construct the Year 8 sets. Using the Year 7 text also posed some problems for certain teachers whose specialisms were in humanities and arts.

## Listening to the pupil voice

Perhaps the key lesson to emerge from the earlier example is that as well as taking research evidence into account when reviewing transfer arrangements it is equally important to find ways of listening to the pupils' authentic voices about their initial encounters in the secondary school. Creating opportunities for pupils to express their views about the way that their school functions has become almost a prescribed feature of the recent government initiative on *personalized learning* (DfES, 2004b) but as Rudduck and Flutter (2004) argue, much of what currently takes place can be branded as 'tokenism' and rarely engages with issues of teaching and learning. It is of course somewhat easier for a trained outsider to engage in conversation with pupils about their classroom experiences, since both sides have little to lose from the encounter. With a teacher from the same school there can be feelings of betrayal when listening to students talking critically about a colleague, while pupils are never quite sure whether their criticisms will be taken seriously or whether there may be a price to pay in future for expressing such views. It is also difficult to break away from the typical question-and-answer sequences which characterizes so much classroom discourse and to allow genuine dialogic debate. However, discussions about the transfer process can overcome some of these problems by seeking the assistance of the primary staff who taught some of the pupils previously and asking them to conduct interviews.

When pupils were interviewed in a recent, as yet unpublished study of three transfer schools in an East Midland's town, it was clear that by the end of the first half of the Autumn Term they had formed very clear ideas about subjects that they liked and disliked. Art for girls and then PE for boys got the most positive mentions then History. It is noticeable that in most cases what the pupils emphasized was taking part in activities rather than engaging in what they termed, 'desk work'. They particularly disliked the amount of writing (mainly note taking) required:

I used to hate Art at primary but here it's unbelievable. You've got so much information, lots of equipment and so much that you can do.

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I like athletics, sprinting, hurdles and things. I now go to a real gym on a Friday night, go on the treadmills and stuff.

History is fun. We make things like modern roundhouse out of straw and I tried it at home also.

Note also that in two of these examples there appears to be a shift in motivation towards more intrinsic levels, in that things pupils did at school they continued with at home in their leisure time. This is a very different situation from the negative responses usually received to the following question on the motivation questionnaire: 'Is there anything you do at school that interests you sufficiently to continue to do it at home?'

The least liked subjects were mathematics (the highest number of negative mentions) followed by science and then languages:

We write more in maths than we do in English. She writes on the board and then says, 'Here you go, open your books and do questions 1, 2 and 3'. So we just write.

We hardly do any practical. If we do it then it don't last long and then we have to write up the experiment from the board.

We couldn't understand our teacher's French then we had a supply and couldn't understand her English so we just copy from the book.

Here, the emphasis is on the lack of activity and the large amount of writing which also replicates the Year 6 curriculum which they experienced in the previous year.

Perhaps the greatest current initial concerns are to do with bullying. Here is an amalgam of what children have said to us during recent interviews:

The older years act as if you're really tiny.

Year 8 pick on you because they're older.

They push your sandwich into your mouth.

In the lunch queue I just stood by my cousin who's Year 9 and these two girls were mouthing off at me.

When you're in the dinner line they push you out of the way.

It's like we're ghosts. They ignore us and act as if we're not there.

There's little kid who's chubby. People go up and ask him for a pencil and if he says no, they just take it.

The majority of the comments concern dinner periods. Partly because of this many schools have tried to cut down on dinner times recognizing the period as a potential source of trouble. But there is another point of view in that Year 7 pupils also speak positively about school dinners at secondary level because, with its self-service cafeteria style arrangements it is perceived as something adult. Rushing pupils through lunch time in order to avoid bullying can therefore be counter-productive. What is needed is ways of dealing with the bullying problem directly.

Teachers are also perceived to be a problem. Many teachers are viewed as 'stressy'. Among the comments were the following:

They get mad when someone speaks when they are speaking then take it out on the rest of the class.

Good teachers explain things and don't accuse you of not listening. You can have a laugh.

They listen to your reasons when you're late and don't pick on the whole class when just one or two are fooling about.

Some teachers are nice to you and when you get stuck take time to help you. Basically you can be a friend with that kind of teacher and at the same time do the work.

It's weird sometimes because if another teacher comes into the class they act a lot different to when the other teacher isn't there. They're really jolly and nice. When the other teacher goes out they're back to shut up and shouting like normal.

Here again, the two issues which most concern pupils are what they perceive to be the unfairness of being made to suffer because of one or two individuals and the positive things which come from these interviews are that the teachers who explain and listen to explanations are the ones who earn the pupils' respect. Perhaps the last comment here is of a pupil who said, 'I think teachers need a set of rules as well as kids'.

A constant complaint concerns supply cover. Although many secondary schools, as a result of the National Workforce Agreement (DfES, 2003) have now introduced cover teachers as full members of staff there are still problems in that teachers are not always able to carry on with the work that the pupils have been doing with their normal teacher (Galton and MacBeath, 2008). These comments collected during recent interviews make the point fairly forcibly:

Supply teachers have to cover for all sorts of lessons so if you're stuck they maybe can't help because they don't know about that particular subject.

Sometimes they can't control the class so they get another teacher. I think they kind of exaggerate the story so the teacher thinks we're worse than we have been. That way they don't look so hopeless but we get told off more for it.

Basically the substitute doesn't teach. Most of the work set is written out of books. Like they tell us to do a page and write out the questions and answer them. Then people start misbehaving because they're bored and that leads to further trouble.

Despite these above concerns most students remain optimistic that things will get better once they leave Year 7:

In Year 8 the teachers will trust you more.

We hopefully get fewer supply teachers.

We'll get to use computers more.

We'll not be the youngest and I can look forward to seeing how some of my friends in Year 5 have changed.

We will mix up classes so I can make a fresh start with new teachers.

I will avoid some of the teachers I didn't get on with this year.

I'm going to be nice to the new Year 7 because we've gone through it already.

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While for the future cohort of Year 7 pupils the current ones have some valuable advice to offer:

Don't cry in front of people or they'll take the mick.

Don't worry all the big people won't bully you. Come here and settle in. It's just like your old school but bigger so don't be scared.

Keep yourself to yourself and don't go round telling kids you don't like that, you don't like, just shut up.

Don't say personal stuff out in class, you'll get laughed at.

Don't get cheeky to older pupils or they'll have a go at you.

One pupil ended the interview on this positive note: 'Respect the teachers, respect your friends and be proud of yourself. Respect, like react to people how you'd want them to react to you'. The last point seems to demonstrate that pupils remain optimistic, despite the difficulties associated with the move from primary school and the disappointments over some aspects of their classroom experience, particularly in the core subjects. There is a sense that that things will get better, that, over time, they can forge decent relationships with teachers and with other pupils (provided one takes certain precautions and doesn't seek the limelight). This is a matter which we will return to in Chapter 5. It would seem important, therefore, to build on this optimism. One of the regular complaints pupils make with regard to pedagogy is that there is too much whole-class instruction and insufficient opportunities to take an active part in lessons. Even in science where there are often experiments to be undertaken, these usually occupy only a relatively short amount of lesson time, after which it is back to drawing the diagram in the books and writing out the experiment as it is set out on the board. Thus in the next and following chapter we examine the evidence that working in groups has both academic as well as social benefits. There, evidence will be presented which shows that with careful preparation working in groups not only appeals to pupils but helps foster better attitudes towards both school, in general, and learning, in particular. In later chapters we will then look at what is required to change this current teaching culture in order to promote more cooperative ways of working.



### Questions for discussion

1. Which of the two theories; 'transfer as person environment-fit' or 'transfer as a status passage' best explains the current attitudes and motivation of pupils entering Year 7?
2. What might you say to the argument that since results at GCSE are improving a slight hiatus in progress at transfer is of little consequence?
3. If you were in charge of transfer, what changes might you consider making to your current arrangements? Use the Five Transfer Bridges model presented in Box 2.1 to review the situation.

## Box 2.1 The Five Transfer Bridges model

What some schools are doing	What we do now	What we may need to change or add
<p><b>1. Administrative</b> (designed to smooth the process of transfer):  <i>Meetings of senior staff, Heads of Year, Subject coordinators, SENCOs etc.</i>  <i>Transfer of attainment data and pupil records</i>  <i>Communication with parents</i></p>		
<p><b>2. Social</b> (measures to ease pupils' anxieties):  <i>Induction days and open evenings</i>  <i>Use of secondary ICT, drama and sports facilities by primary schools</i>  <i>Support for pupils 'at risk'</i>  <i>Buddy schemes (Y7 with Y6)</i></p>		
<p><b>3. Curriculum</b> (maintaining continuity and progression):  <i>Secondary staff observing and teaching lessons in primary schools</i>  <i>Video conferencing lessons</i>  <i>Bridging Units</i>  <i>Summer schools</i></p>		
<p><b>4. Pedagogy</b> (helping Y7 teachers build on previous effective practice):  <i>Joint programmes of teacher exchanges</i>  <i>Joint training days</i>  <i>Structured peer observation</i></p>		
<p><b>5. Managing Learning</b>            (Helping pupils become 'professional learners'):  <i>Extended induction programmes involving study skills, identifying preferred learning styles, thinking strategies etc.</i></p>		