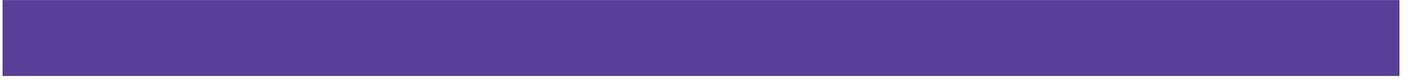


# A Culture for Learning

An investigation into the values and beliefs associated with effective schools



**HayGroup**  
people before strategy

# A Culture for Learning

An investigation into the values and beliefs associated with effective schools

*"I recognised the culture my colleagues described. I admired the culture they said they wanted. I just wish the two weren't so far apart."*

Deputy Head, North-Eastern Secondary School

March 2004

**Hay Group Education**

Russell Hobby

Thank you to Dr Fay Smith for the statistical analysis and the Hay Group education team for ideas, literature reviews and field visits: Donna Gent, Jody Goldsworthy, Jennifer Ibbetson, David Farrell, Jacqueline Stein, Nick Jerome, Sharon Crabtree, Fiona Coope, Matt Walker, Adam Cousins, Debbie Brewin, Kerry Lewis, Frank Hartle and Gareth Cornwall.

For further information or queries, please contact Russell at [russell.hobby@haygroup.com](mailto:russell.hobby@haygroup.com)

© The Hay Group Management Ltd

# Executive Summary

1. Organisational culture is widely regarded as fundamental to a school's ability to generate and sustain improvement. It is the ultimate form of '**capacity**'.
2. This project set out to **define and measure** culture; particularly its relationship to performance. We worked with over 4000 teachers in **134 schools** from a wide range of circumstances.
3. We define culture as the **shared beliefs and values** of a school: what people agree is true and what people agree is right. Culture is a social record of individual learning – lessons about the world and human nature that can guide people in the successful execution of their roles and provide meaning to work. However, such beliefs become entrenched and can persist after changes in the school's environment render them irrelevant or harmful. Culture is therefore both a **resource and a risk**.
4. Culture is transmitted and reinforced through less formal and less conscious modes of communication: the **rites and rituals** of school life. This makes culture change difficult using traditional, top down managerial techniques.
5. We measured culture through the **Culture Sort** tool – asking a representative sample of staff to arrange statements of values and beliefs in order of priority – once for their school as it is now and once for how they would like it to be.
6. This proved to be a powerful, **collaborative technique** for opening up culture to discussion, generating debate, energy and enthusiasm.
7. We also gathered data on school context and effectiveness, and found significant relationships between **culture and performance** in secondary schools. (We measured performance in terms of overall attainment, rates of improvement over three years and, most importantly, value added.)
8. The most successful schools were characterised by cultures which:
  - a. Had the **highest ambitions** for *every* pupil
  - b. Put the **welfare of pupils** ahead of the comfort of staff
  - c. Focused on **capability and learning** (inputs) to improve outcomes
  - d. Held teachers accountable to the whole school; promoted **team work** and learning from each other; reduced professional autonomy
  - e. Were **intolerant of failure** and excuses for underperformance (in staff)
  - f. Valued discipline, reliability and **service delivery**
9. We don't hold this up as a universal model (schools face different demands), or as proven beyond doubt, but we do offer it as a **challenge to school leaders** to critique the health and viability of their own cultures.
10. We have developed a **five step model of culture change** which also uses the notion of '**adaptive capacity**' in culture – a particular set of characteristics which help ensure that assumptions keep pace with changing demands. This includes attitudes to dissent, experimentation and connection with other perspectives.
11. **We'd like to thank the schools and staff who devoted their time to this project.**

# Contents

## Executive Summary

- 1. Introduction** **Page 4**  
*An overview of our aims, the nature of the research and the contents of the report.*
- 2. Defining School Culture** **Page 6**  
*What culture is, how it relates to a school's purpose and how it is created and transmitted; based on a review of the literature and our own studies*
- 3. Measuring School Culture** **Page 16**  
*The principles behind, and design of, the Culture Sort tool; the way it was implemented and the strengths and weaknesses of our research methodology.*
- 4. Results – National Trends** **Page 24**  
*The big picture findings from the Culture Sort, including differences by phase of school and role of respondent; levels of consensus and differences between actual and ideal cultures.*
- 5. Results – Culture and Performance** **Page 31**  
*The link between specific values and beliefs and the success of a school (as measured by attainment, value added and rate of improvement).*
- 6. Results – Interpretation** **Page 42**  
*Our summary of the distinctive characteristics of the culture of successful schools, the way they fit together, the way they relate to the challenges posed of our education system, and the lessons for all schools.*
- 7. Changing School Culture** **Page 49**  
*Practical techniques for changing your school's culture and for building an 'adaptive capacity' that will prevent future cultural crises.*
- 8. Hay Group Education** **Page 63**  
*Background on the work of Hay Group and how you can get hold of the Culture Sort materials.*
- 9. Further Reading** **Page 66**  
*The key writers and thinkers who have inspired this project.*
- Appendices** **Page 67**  
*Tools and materials; additional notes on organisational models.*

# 1. Introduction

## Aims

In the film, *The Usual Suspects*, the narrator says that “The greatest trick the devil pulled was to make us believe that he didn’t exist.” It is similarly easy to forget that culture pervades our approaches to education. We forget that our assumptions and beliefs about the world and about people are just that – beliefs – and not reality itself. We operate according to a shared model that may or may not coincide with the changing world around us.

From November 2003 to January 2004 over 4000 teachers in 134 different schools – primary, secondary and special – took part in a unique experiment. Facilitated by materials and analysis from Hay Group they dug deep into their school’s collective psyche, examining the beliefs and values which guided their work.

Although a valuable and stimulating exercise in its own right, this project had a further aim: each school recorded the resulting description of its culture and returned the results to Hay Group; along with information on their context and performance. Using the data from this large and diverse sample we were able to search for patterns in the data:

*Is there a typical school culture?*

*What sort of culture would teachers like to see?*

*What are the differences by phase, location, context?*

*Do senior leaders share the perceptions and values of their less senior colleagues?*

And, most intriguingly:

*Is there a set of values – a type of culture – associated with successful and improving schools?*

Many commentators and practitioners are convinced of the fundamental importance of school culture for standards of learning and achievement and for the ability of a school to sustain and improve itself. Many have speculated from experience as to what sort of a culture this might be. This study builds on their work and looks for hard evidence in support of a culture for learning. What we’ve learned will confirm some assumptions and confound others.

As you would expect, there are no easy answers. There is no ‘kit’ for the ideal culture – a great deal is subjective and, of course, different schools have different needs. None-the-less, there is significant evidence of a common core of ‘ways of looking at the world’ which distinguish outstanding schools.

## Using this Report

Before we can measure, however, we must define; and culture is a particularly slippery concept. In the next chapter, we try to build a pragmatic definition of culture – what it is, how it expresses itself and how it is transmitted. This definition will be of practical benefit to school leaders as they seek to understand and influence the forces that operate within their school. It will point the way to methods of analysing and changing culture and try to answer the question ‘why is culture important?’

With this definition under our belts, we turn to the task of measurement. In chapter three, we describe the Culture Sort tool used during the project and the way it was applied by schools. This is not just a methodological discussion, but a demonstration of one technique for unlocking culture in a way that involves all staff and that generates curiosity and commitment.

We then offer three chapters on the results themselves:

- The main trends across the whole sample, particularly the differences between ideal and actual cultures.
- The relationship between culture and performance, focusing particularly on the value added definition of performance.
- An analysis and interpretation of the raw findings.

The investigation of performance and culture is limited to secondary schools.

If we know the sort of culture we have and the sort of culture we want, the next step is to bring the two together. As culture is, almost by definition, ‘that which endures’, it is tough to change. It has its own defence mechanisms. Indeed, it can be buried so deep as to disappear from our conscious control while still exerting immense influence on our behaviour. There is no mechanical, technical approach to the profound and long term changes required to shift culture. There is, however, a collaborative, inspirational, discursive *leadership* approach which *can* work. Indeed, Edgar Schein, one of the leading thinkers on organisational culture, suggests that the “Dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make one realise that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin.”

We are not victims of our culture. Whether we realise it or not, it is we who created it, in response to the demands of our environment. Behaviours create beliefs which in turn drive behaviours. Sometimes, however, the environment changes without us noticing and we cease to question those beliefs. Chapter seven describes a practical process which you can apply in your school to affirm, question or change your collective beliefs.

We conclude this report with a brief look at the work of Hay Group and ways in which you can become involved with us on culture change and other projects.

This study was inspired and heavily influenced by the work of a number of thinkers on the topic of culture. In particular: Edgar Schein, Deal and Kennedy, Louise Stoll, David Hopkins, Clive Dimmock and David Hargreaves. References to some of their works can be found at the end in the section on Further Reading.

## 2. Defining School Culture

### A Pragmatic Definition

*Culture, ethos, values, mission, norms, mores, paradigm, feel, atmosphere, character, essence, spirit, soul ...*

We have many words for culture, and as many different definitions for each. We know it exists, we suspect it matters. We feel it sometimes as an intangible force opposing our actions as leaders: blocking change, blinding people to the obvious 'truth', leading initiatives astray. Used loosely the term can mean almost anything and loses utility as a tool for school improvement.

Which is a shame, because school culture is the ultimate ceiling on our ability to transform our school and raise standards. Other initiatives, whether focusing on teaching strategies, leadership development, structure, team work or collaboration, are wasted, doomed to deliver a fraction of their potential, without the right cultural supports.

Viewed more positively, culture can also be the ultimate form of 'capacity' – a reservoir of energy and wisdom to sustain motivation and co-operation, shape relationships and aspirations, and guide effective choices at every level of the school.

Culture has been described, with some justification, as 'the way we do things round here'. This has two deficiencies, though: firstly, it is rare for people to articulate how the way *we* do things differs from the way *others* do things; secondly, behaviour – the visible manifestation of culture – is transient and difficult to interpret. The way we do something could be due to our school's culture, it could also be due to the nature of the stimulus, the requirements of the task, the resources currently available to us, our mood on that day, etc.

Behaviour – including the recurrent norms of behaviour summarised as 'the way we do things' – is a product of culture in contact with the environment.

In presenting our definition of school culture we would like to follow Schein's way of thinking and describe culture as the *shared values and beliefs* within a school. That is:

*The things we agree are true; and*

*The things we agree are right.*

By 'true' we mean assumptions about the way the world – and the people in it – works. 'If I do 'x' then 'y' will follow.' 'People are usually out to get you.' 'Students from that neighbourhood are difficult to teach.' 'Everyone wants to learn.' 'A school cannot develop to its full potential without the right sort of culture.' In effect we build, together, a mental model, a shared theory about cause and effect. And, of course, the most important reality in schools is other people – what they want, how they will behave, what they will respond to, what they are capable of.

It is easy to see how culture can come to have a profound influence on standards and ways of teaching. It will shape the way teachers choose to work with each other and, critically, the way they treat pupils – their language, the way they distribute their attention and respect, how they interpret and respond to setbacks and difficulties.

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy materials, for example, draw upon Askew's (1997) models of effective teaching of numeracy and place "teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning" alongside their knowledge of subject and teaching strategies as one of the defining forces of classroom practice. They describe these beliefs themselves as being built upon the teacher's own experience of being taught, their definition of 'good performance' and their understanding of how pupils learn.

Over time, during the press of daily affairs, our beliefs about the world, our theories, sink beneath our conscious awareness. We don't say we have a theory about someone, we say this is the way they *are*: "Culture ... acts as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed." (Stoll, 1999) Our culture becomes our reality; until one day the discrepancies become so large that reality comes knocking and makes us question our assumptions to see the world in a new light.

Culture also has a moral dimension. It is also the things we agree are right. By 'right' we mean the way things ought to be. 'Everybody deserves an equal opportunity.' 'Teachers should be able to balance commitments at work and home.' 'Nobody should be made to feel small.' 'He shouldn't talk to me that way.' 'Leaders should be respected and obeyed.' These values can be both large, universal ethical concerns about justice, human rights and potential. They can also be smaller, local concerns about status, etiquette, power, relationships. As we shall see later, both are distinctive of successful schools and the grand ethical themes play a critical role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning.

Sometimes it is hard to be sure whether an assumption is a value or belief as the two interact closely. In particular, our beliefs about the way the world works can colour our values. If we believe there are clear and natural limits to particular individual's capabilities, we may have different views about equality of opportunity for example.

### **By Definition: Enduring and Shared**

Culture is what we agree to be right and what we agree to be true. There is, however, a very important word in this definition: 'agree'. Culture is about *shared* values and beliefs. We all have beliefs: some universally shared, some idiosyncratic, some unique; some strongly held, some tentative. Yet a curious phenomenon emerges in stable groups of humans. We come to agree; we start to share values and beliefs. This process is not perfect or stable. There are always mavericks, often powerful sub-cultures, and some groups seem unable to form any common ground at all. Yet culture derives its power as a concept because organisations do develop a shared view of the world, which helps people work together, to gel, and which shapes their behaviour in consistent ways.

The means through which cultures are created and shared is of immense interest. Why does a particular school develop a particular set of assumptions? How are new members inducted (or indoctrinated) into this culture? If we understand these events we have the tools to begin changing culture. We shall take them in reverse order;

that is, assume a culture exists and ask how it is transmitted, before looking at why that particular culture emerged in the first place and why it developed over time.

To be clear, then, we are talking about two separate change processes:

How an individual's values and beliefs change over time to partake of the school culture (a measure of the strength or coherency of the culture).

How the culture itself begins, grows and changes in response to the environment (a measure of the relevance or 'fitness' of the culture).

There are, of course, interactions between the two, as people – with their private beliefs and assumptions – are part of the environment in which culture operates. One could also argue that a 'healthy' culture should be responsive to the world around it *and* capable of propagating quickly to new members or propagating changes to existing members.

A vital lesson is that growth and responsiveness in culture begins at the individual level – with individuals questioning and breaking with tradition through an act of leadership. Thus, too strong a culture, too aggressive a method of propagation, can damage an organisation's ability to learn and respond.

## Transmission

There are some very straightforward reasons why people in a school tend to agree on certain issues:

- We usually choose to join organisations which we sense are in basic accord with our values and beliefs
- We often leave organisations with which we fundamentally disagree

There is a process of natural self-selection going on to create a shared viewpoint. However, we can also change our minds and come to agree with the people we work with over a period of time; and this is the more interesting process. Culture is communicated and this communication occurs at a number of levels, conscious and unconscious, formal and informal. The following diagram gives some examples:

	Formal (organisational)	Informal (individual)
Conscious (rational/planned)	Mission statements Induction programmes	Storytelling Mentoring Unsolicited advice Arguments
Unconscious (irrational/unplanned)	Award ceremonies Trophy collections Rites of passage	Role models Etiquette

It is important to bear in mind that basic values and beliefs are often unquestioned, unanalysed and unspoken. The formal and conscious modes of communication rarely capture and convey the full force of a school's culture. Yet humans have a basic need to exist and operate within a stable, explainable environment – to avoid dissonance, conflicting viewpoints and ambiguity, to share a coherent story about how the world works and why people do what they do. This creates an urgent need to impose our beliefs and values on others and, where wholesale imposition is not possible, to come to some form of compromise. We develop a set of shared beliefs because we both want to and need to. It is the key way in which we can work together, communicate effectively and efficiently and feel secure.

Over the years, therefore, humans have evolved a powerful set of unconscious or semi-conscious methods of communicating culture. In examining them it feels like we are leaving the realm of school improvement and entering the field of anthropology, for we are talking about rituals, myths, heroes, taboos and symbols. It is through these rites and rituals – still present in twenty-first century, post-industrial organisations – that we express and enforce our beliefs and learn the beliefs of others.

In following this line of reasoning, we are drawing heavily on the work of Deal and Kennedy, who view culture as a process of communication. A school's culture could be thought of as a compelling story, shared, guarded and added to throughout time, which draws together the lessons learned about the world, which explains things and guides decisions. This is part of what makes culture so hard to change – it is a self-consistent package, other events are supposed to fit in with the story, not vice versa. If you change one bit, the whole edifice could crumble and we would have to work in a world without obvious meanings and easy answers.

For these reasons, we distinguish between two types of behaviour generated by culture:

**Operational behaviours** – those actions concerned with the tasks of running a school and teaching lessons, which are prompted, prevented or shaped by the underlying values and beliefs; e.g. the way we divide our attention between students in a lesson.

**Reinforcing behaviours** – those actions concerned with communicating and enforcing our values and beliefs; e.g. which members of staff we publicly proclaim as role models, or the rites of passage for a new person joining a school.

The range of reinforcing behaviours is huge, but they can be classified into a number of broad categories:

<b>Rituals</b>	celebrations and ceremonies; rites of passage; shared quirks and mannerisms
<b>Hero Making</b>	role models, hierarchies; public rewards; mentors; (scapegoats)
<b>Storytelling</b>	shared humour; common anecdotes; foundation myths; history, oral and written
<b>Symbolic Display</b>	decoration; artwork; trophies; architecture
<b>Rules</b>	etiquette; formal rules; taboos; tacit permissions

Although these routines are often based in tradition and operate in semi-automatic mode, there is no reason why they cannot be analysed and used consciously to promote or change a particular culture. The reinforcing behaviours are neutral, within reason they can be used to reinforce and communicate any set of values.

In thinking about your less conscious reinforcing behaviours as a school, try posing yourself the following questions and then ask what beliefs or values were communicated through the event:

**Your biggest celebration this year - what did you celebrate?**

**The most respected person in the school - what are they respected for?**

**Please name:**

- The first thing you notice in the school reception area**
- Something that commonly happens in other schools that could never happen in your school**
- The behaviour, in an adult, that is most frowned upon**
- Something that people regularly 'get away with' (things you know are wrong but still do - e.g. late for meetings)**
- Something that people worry about a great deal**

**Complete the following sentence:**

**"We will raise standards of achievement most effectively if we focus on ..."**

## **Creation, Adaptation and Decay**

We now have some idea of how and why we tend to share beliefs as part of working together in a group. We have not said anything, yet, about the content of those beliefs. Yes, we're keen to ensure that everyone agrees with our assumptions, but why do we hold those assumptions in the first place? What can we say about the fitness or relevance of a culture?

This is where the concept of organisational culture begins to acquire a particular resonance for schools. For culture is actually the enduring product of past learning. Schools themselves are engines of the culture of our wider society – a rite of passage and collection of role models in their own right. Schools ought to be especially attuned to the processes involved.

One way to consider culture is as a set of rules which give meaning and order to the world around us: if you do this, then that will happen; if you want *x*, then you'll have to perform *y*. In the absence of cultural direction, we experiment until we find a course of action which works. Repeated success generates a belief in a relationship of cause and effect, a lesson about what works. Over time, the belief itself comes to guide our actions rather than the feedback of results or evidence. During the course of working together, these varied beliefs are patched together into a consistent picture – a rough theory of the world. New evidence is assimilated or ignored unless the weight of repeated discrepancies creates a crisis in our culture<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare this model to Kuhn's theory of paradigm change in the physical sciences. Here 'normal' science progresses conservatively within a fixed paradigm which defines what should be measured and how. Overtime, enough observed discrepancies may accumulate to call the paradigm into question and precipitate a revolution.

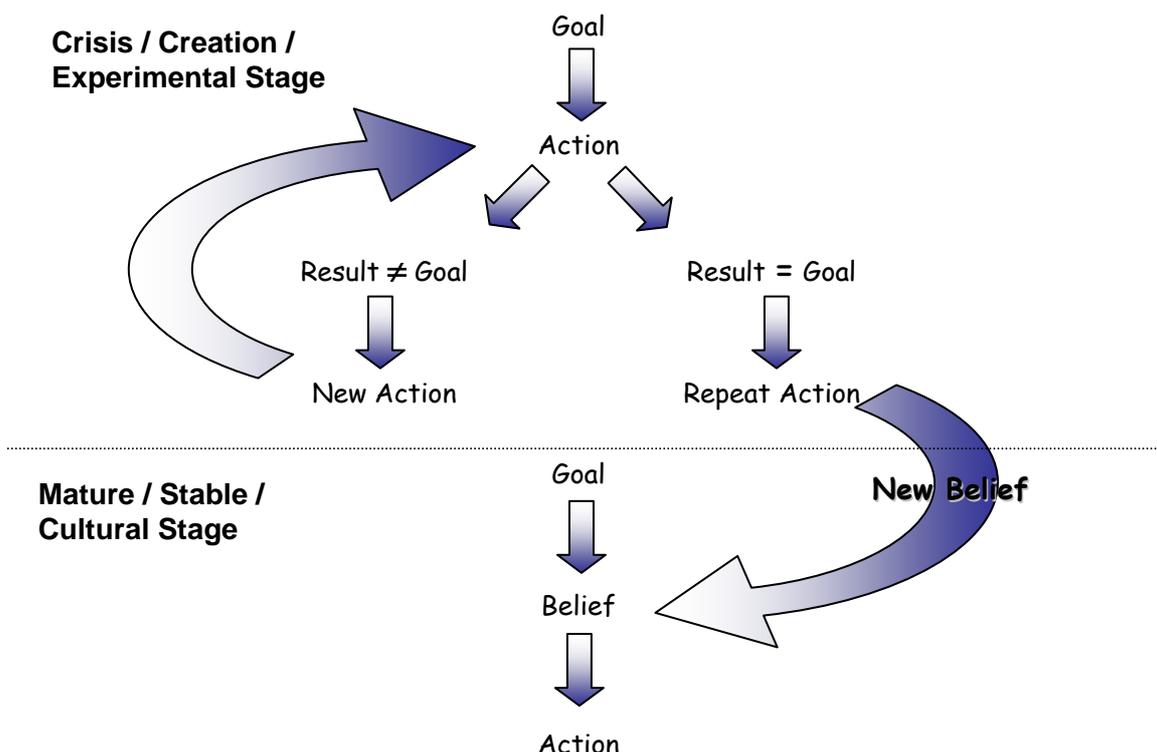
For example, in working with a particular group of students from the estate at the back of the school, we find it very hard to get them motivated and excited about lessons. We try all sorts of tactics and eventually we succeed when we get them out of the classroom and working on a project in the community. Encouraged by the success, we repeat the tactics and find that it continues to work. Eventually, we draw the conclusion or belief that 'formal classroom education is a waste of time for these students.' We will probably elaborate this belief to fit into the bigger picture by making reference to elements of their home backgrounds, peer group pressures, etc.

Thus, to follow Schein's way of thinking, organisational culture is an evolutionary, adaptive response to our environment. And it is often a very effective response, a stored body of beliefs, communicated socially, means that we don't have to refer everything back to first principles or experiment; we don't have to wait for feedback (which can be years in coming in some areas of education) and we don't have to repeat the mistakes of our seniors and forerunners in the organisation.

All this holds true as long as our beliefs continue to correspond to the reality around us. The challenge in schools today is that the environment is changing rapidly – old rules, structures and traditions become less relevant by the day. Yet, because we rarely question, reflect upon or talk about culture, our beliefs – and the operational behaviours they produce – can remain the same when all else changes. Although our culture may once have been 'fit for purpose' and healthy, over time it can become maladapted and hinder our success.

To continue our previous example, over the course of our teaching career the aspirations and needs of the families in the estate at the back of the school may change, demographics and economics may create a completely different make up with different ideas about what a good education consists of. Our assumption that classrooms don't work for those kids may no longer be valid.

The following diagram captures something of this process.



Schein notes two aspects of the adaptive relationship between a school's culture and its mission: the external and internal. Firstly, a school needs a set of values and beliefs which relate its goals as an organisation to the local community, the professional networks and the national policy environment in which it finds itself. It must meet the needs of its students and the hopes of their families. It must reach the targets set by government and utilise the knowledge and methods created by the education system and community. A certain culture will evolve to square all these forces.

However, a school must also develop answers to its internal challenges – how people will work together, resolve arguments and conflicts, assign work, reward each other, accept new members or remove existing members. A critical element of this is establishing the hierarchy and power relationships – who will have authority over whom, under what conditions and with what limits; whose expertise carries weight; who will defer to whom; how different groups of people should relate to each other.

A critical aspect of this and the assignment of tasks is the establishment of formal and enduring roles and organisational structures (departments, reporting relationships, teachers, support assistants, deputy heads, etc.). Thus a large proportion of the design and structure of a school (both formal and informal) is founded not on an ongoing, rational analysis of tasks and needs but on once accurate but now unquestioned assumptions about human nature and its implications for working as an effective and harmonious group. Why do we have subjects? Classes? Year groups? Why do teachers have the accountabilities and responsibilities they do? What's the purpose of the role of the deputy head? Why are those particular people members of the senior leadership team?

This again explains why structural solutions can have such disappointing results. If they run counter to the culture of the school they will be tacitly reshaped to fit the underlying reality.

## **Leadership: The Custodians of Culture**

Although we have described culture as a social force, culture creation and change begins solely with the individual. A school cannot change its mind or ask questions; a school doesn't have a mind! Cultures are created by individuals questioning the world around them, developing new, experimental strategies for coping with it and persuading others of the validity of these strategies. Over time, these strategies develop into 'lessons learned,' into models of the world and, eventually, into deep rooted cultural assumptions.

This *is* leadership.

If we think of management as operating through a formal, hands-on process of monitoring, rewards and sanctions, we can think of leadership as operating through an informal, light touch process of generating and sharing values and beliefs.

This positions leadership in a particular light. The senior leader becomes the senior sceptic, the school's chief heretic; in charge of questioning every assumption, tracking the changing environment and generating compelling, internally consistent stories about the way things work.

Ronald Heifetz captures this in his essay on adaptive challenges:

*Mobilising people to meet adaptive challenges ... is at the heart of leadership practice ... leadership generates new cultural norms that enable people to meet on ongoing stream of adaptive challenges in a world that will likely pose an ongoing set of adaptive realities and pressures. (Heifetz, 2002)*

What are the conditions that make the exercise of such leadership possible? We need to ensure both that individuals are able to question their assumptions and that the organisation does not suppress dissent and choke off their enquiry.

Such conditions include:

A healthy disrespect for received authority (as opposed to authority from experience or insight) and a habit of open debate and testing of concepts (in themselves cultural characteristics).

Active engagement with the world outside the organisation and wider perspectives on alternative models.

An enduring sense of mission and role as an organisation which is independent of local trends and current fads. This can create a foundation for the culture upon which other beliefs can be built without creating a sense of disruption and lack of purpose.

Reduced hierarchy. This is not arguing for the absence of a management hierarchy - there will always be a need for a chain of accountability - but that the hierarchy should not be associated with large gulfs of status and respect.

Basic skills in creative problem solving - generating a wider pool of ideas, learning from other contexts, setting success criteria, selecting, testing and rejecting concepts.

## **Beyond Definition to Action**

This attempt to define culture is not intended as an intellectual exercise. It is a critical first task in attempting to change it. We now know what we need to act upon and what some of the challenges may be.

As a leader in school you may face a number of cultural problems:

- You may feel that the values and beliefs which guide your school are no longer suited to the challenges you face. That the decisions made and the norms of behaviour are no longer effective.
- You may have encountered repeated resistance to what you believed were sensible and necessary changes but are uncertain as to the source of this resistance and how to overcome it.
- You may have a nagging doubt that your school is not reaching its full potential: are there better ways of doing things?

- Existing relationships may be full of conflict; communication is poor; authority is in doubt and there are vocal disagreements about the way forward.
- Your school may not have a clear sense of identity; people respond very differently to similar situations and are pulling in opposite directions. There is a sense of apathy and disconnection.
- Or, finally, you may value your existing culture as something precious and wish to protect it in the face of encroachments and challenge, such as high staff turnover or a merger with another school.

The chapter on changing culture will deal with these issues more fully, but a number of early steps are clear:

**Task One:** create a crisis of faith to look with new eyes at the world around you and generate some tentative theories.

**Task Two:** compare these lessons to those implicit in both your aspirations for the school and in your current behaviours and activities.

**Task Three:** create a consensus in terms of aspirations that not only addresses the gaps but also builds on current strengths.

**Task Four:** analyse the modes through which culture is communicated – formal and informal, conscious and unconscious – and adapt them to your new direction.

**Task Five:** finally, create *cultural capacity* – a particular way of working in school which balances the need to create a strong shared identity with the need to constantly adapt and grow.

This 'cultural capacity' is a means of avoiding future crises and painful culture change programmes. It comprises a set of specific, tangible practices in school. Our ideas for these are explained in detail in chapter seven. You can think of the first four steps as palliative medicine and the last as preventative.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that two conditions are required for these tasks to be successful:

Firstly, leadership; the school is not a collective mind, new beliefs are generated inside individual's heads and must be communicated, argued for, defended and elaborated, often in the face of resistance.

Secondly, collaboration; values and beliefs are only weakly communicated by the formal, conscious managerial mechanisms in the school; hence the limited impact of mission statements, values workshops and direct instructions. The informal and unconscious means of communication are slow, often operated voluntarily and, in the early days, will reinforce the old rather than new culture. Additionally, these beliefs are defended aggressively. They are part of a self-supporting tapestry that must be completely unpicked and put back together again. Everyone owns this story and must be involved in its change – undergoing the same crisis of faith, questioning assumptions openly and, together, buying into the new lessons.

Culture management and culture change are a prime accountability of leaders. It is the single most important area you can focus on in your school and one of the most powerful forces driving the behaviours which determine how you help children learn and how staff work together. We have tried to define culture in a way which not only gets to the heart of many pressing challenges in schools but which also means you can do something about it.

Culture creation is about managed learning and if the resources to do this don't exist in our schools then they exist nowhere in our society. Above all, like learning, culture change demands courage; courage to both express and permit dissent, to abandon old certainties for the unknown.

We now turn to the evidence. What sort of values and beliefs do we find in schools? To the extent that schools face unique and varied challenges, their cultures ought to be different. To the extent that they face common problems, some cultural norms ought to be shared. Clearly, schools do face a common environment in terms of the needs of young people, our wider society and economy and national education policy. We may therefore be able to produce some benchmarks or proposals to help with task one above and enable schools to challenge their current cultures. Any national themes would, of course be combined with an individual sense of identity and character, suited to the particular ambitions of and demands upon each school.

In chapter three we present our method for unearthing shared values and beliefs, a powerful, collaborative approach which can be replicated in your own school. In chapters four, five and six we show the data generated by this method.

### 3. Measuring School Culture

#### Grasping the Intangible

In planning a project aimed at measuring and comparing school culture we faced a number of challenges:

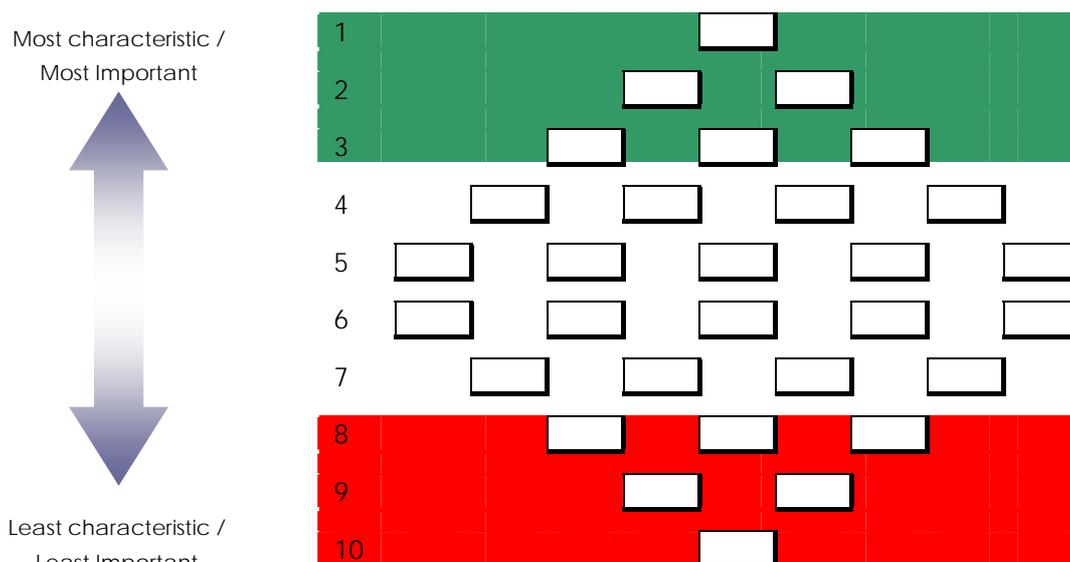
We wanted to measure things inside people’s heads – values and beliefs, not espoused values, mission statements or observed behaviours. Initial, surface statements or observations about what a school stood for might not be accurate.

Culture exists in the minds of all staff, not just the senior management team. Additionally, we wanted to design a tool that would be the first step to changing culture. It was essential, therefore, that any process be open and collaborative – action research by the school itself, not an analysis by outsiders.

We also wanted to compare between schools – results would need to be in a common language and readily translatable from one school to another.

We produced the Culture Sort exercise to address these challenges. This is a variation of a tool Hay Group have used to assess corporate cultures for many years, but specifically modified for the educational context and for collaborative, rather than individual use. (This exercise would correspond to task two in the culture change process outlined earlier.)

The Culture Sort is a variation on the card sort facilitation technique. We offered participants 30 statements about possible values and beliefs in their school. Participants were asked to work in groups to sort these statements in order of priority, using a diamond shape as a guide:



The rank of a card is given by its row. It can be seen that although many statements can be put at a medium priority, relatively few cards are either of very high or very low priority. We are particularly interested in the top three rows (six most characteristic or important cards) and fairly interested in the bottom three rows. The remaining cards form a less differentiated mass. The top rows are those parts of culture for which other values would be sacrificed.

Participants were asked to perform this exercise twice:

Once for their school's actual culture – the cards at the top are the ones they judged in their experience to be most characteristic of their school; and

Once for their school's ideal culture – the cards at the top are the values and beliefs they judged in their experience to be most important or valuable for their school.

Groups were formed of between three and ten participants, enough for active debate and, where possible, containing people in similar roles. For example, a group of teachers, a group of subject leaders, senior leaders, support staff, etc.

Groups were actively instructed by the session facilitator (someone from the school itself) to make decisions by debate and consensus forming – to argue the meaning of various statements and to draw on the experience of the people in the group itself rather than make assumptions about universal experiences in the school. They had to form their own decision making process. As guidance, if they ran short of time or found it hard to decide, it was suggested they focused on the top and bottom three rows first. The placement of cards within a row (e.g. from left to right) was not important.

The outputs of this exercise were:

- A sketch of the perceived values and beliefs shared within the school
- A sketch of staff's aspirations, ideals and needs in terms of values and beliefs
- The gap between the two
- The level of consensus between different groups on both the actual and ideal culture
- Variations in perception by role and status within the school

For a two hour exercise this is a rich amount of data, and was returned to us in a consistent format and language across all participating schools.

There were, however, two other key advantages to this approach.

Firstly, the diamond pattern and sorting exercise forced sacrifices and prioritisation. Only one card could go at the top, only two in the next row, and so on. Placing the cards often felt quite 'painful' for participants. As we'll see below, none of the statements were phrased in a negative light, all appeared as legitimate ways of looking at the world. This meant a lot of soul searching and reflection on the part of participants.

Our aim was to get below espoused values and 'nice to haves' to the unquestioned assumptions that guided behaviour. According to our previous analysis, culture is the yardstick against which other things are measured, the last thing to be sacrificed. Our thinking was that, when absolutely forced to choose between two desirable alternatives, what survived was culture.

The second advantage was the discursive nature of the approach. We've suggested that culture is closely linked to communication and is a form of story about the organisation. As part of the exercise, participants were encouraged to explain their views, to defend positions by anecdote and example. This begins the process of questioning assumptions, essential for changing the culture and it also aroused considerable passions. As one headteacher reported after the exercise:

*"We found this a very useful and helpful exercise that provoked a deep professional discussion. My leadership team almost came to blows!"*

In another school:

*"What a great experience we have had completing this research."*

## The Deck of Cards

The Culture Sort exercise uses a card deck of 30 prepared statements. The statements attempt to capture a range of the values and beliefs which *might* characterise a school. They were chosen from the unlimited number of possible cultural characteristics as potentially relevant to school improvement.

This list was generated by a review of leading academic research. For example, David Hopkins suggests certain values that foster school improvement. They include:

- Attention is heavily focused on enhancing pupils' learning
  - The school's vision and values include all members of the community
  - External pressures for change are used to create opportunities to pursue internal priorities
  - Collaboration is encouraged
  - Monitoring and evaluation are shared by all staff
- (Hopkins et al, 1994)

Similarly, Louise Stoll and Dean Fink have identified a number of 'norms' of improving schools, which include shared goals, responsibility for success, collegiality, risk taking, mutual respect and celebration (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

David Hargreaves describes two dimensions along which to consider school cultures: the instrumental (covering control and delivery of tasks) and the expressive (covering cohesion and relationships). High/low control and cohesion create a matrix of possible cultures:

	Low Control	High Control
Low Cohesion	"Anomic" or "Survivalist"	"Formal" or "Traditional"
High Cohesion	"Welfarist"	"Hothouse"

(Hargreaves, 1999)

David suggests that an effective school will have an appropriate or "optimum" balance of control and cohesion but may also move around within the quadrants over time. (The results we present later are highly relevant to this model – see page 43).

Clive Dimmock extends the analysis of organisational cultures using a model of wider social or national cultures. Again, the use of several continuums of practice (in this case nine) proves helpful – a nation or organisation can be ranked along the continuum between the extremes and the dimensions can be put together in various combinations. In this case the dimensions include process versus outcome oriented, person versus task oriented, formal versus informal, etc.

The dimensions of national culture can be used to describe organisational cultures but Dimmock also discusses them to demonstrate that the analysis of organisational cultures can only take place with reference to the wider national cultures in which the organisations exist and which supply much of the original cultural material. This view has been particularly helpful for distinguishing between eastern and western approaches to work.

Certain common themes emerge in all these frameworks:

- The use of 'dimensions' of culture, along which schools can be placed in a sliding scale rather than an all or nothing position. The combination of different dimensions produces some helpful cultural types.
- A distinction between an orientation towards inputs (and process) versus outputs (or results).
- The need to square task delivery with personal fulfilment and relationships.
- The degree of connection to the outside world.
- The role of power and hierarchy, and attitudes to each.
- A sense of problem solving 'style' embedded within the culture (activist/fatalistic, formal/informal, pragmatic/ideological).

In our own work with schools, we also discovered what we believed to be a number of vital 'turning points' associated with high performing schools, including, among others, attitudes to innovation, the importance and style of hierarchy, willingness to make sacrifices, position on social justice and beliefs about what different groups of children can achieve.

From this review we synthesised 15 categories of culture and, in each category, provided two statements at opposite ends of the continuum. These statements are shown in the table below.

The statements reflect our own interpretation of the characteristics rather than that of other authors, and hence may differ from their intentions. Additionally, they attempt to provide some concrete, practical evidence of a value, rather than a precise formal definition. For this reason, certain statements contain a range of nuances, shades of meaning or alternative definitions which may make the underlying concept harder to pin down but easier to relate to one's work.

The statements were tested on a number of schools for intelligibility and a basic level of common interpretation before being used in the project.

Although the pairs of statements are technically opposites of each other, care has been taken to present each in the most positive light possible – to prevent espoused values or politically correct prioritisation and to encourage more heated debate. However, we expected that, on the basis of the review of the literature on school culture, that values on the right hand side (the even numbers) ought to be more associated with school improvement (i.e. a set of values and beliefs suited to that environment) than those on the left.

A key function of the current study is to test these hypotheses: are successful and/or improving schools more likely to prioritise the even numbered cards? Are the statements actually opposites in practice? We were surprised at the answer.

<b>Pole A (odd numbers)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Pole B (even numbers)</b>
Measuring and monitoring targets and test results	<b>Results</b>	Raising capability – Helping people learn – Laying foundations for later success
Respecting authority – Providing direction	<b>Hierarchy</b>	Taking initiative and responsibility – Participation at every level – Healthy dissent
The school comes first – No-one is bigger than the school – Doing what is expected of you	<b>Respect</b>	People come first – Everyone can make a contribution and deserves control over their own destiny
Respecting professional autonomy – Creating a space to call your own – Perfecting your patch	<b>Connection</b>	Working together – Learning from each other – Sharing resources and ideas – Investing in others
Recognising personal circumstances – Making allowances – Toleration – It's the effort that counts	<b>Accountability</b>	Keeping promises – Confronting poor performance – Taking ownership
Embedding – Evaluating – Measured reform and taking stock	<b>Innovation</b>	Experimenting – Trying new things – Looking to the next big idea
Preventing mistakes – Making sure nobody and nothing slips through – Planning for all eventualities	<b>Reliability</b>	Taking calculated risks for worthwhile goals – Try it and see
Single minded dedication – Relentless pace	<b>Seriousness</b>	Warmth – Humour – Repartee – Feet on the ground
Setting achievable goals and realistic expectations – Incremental improvements	<b>Ambition</b>	A hunger for improvement – High hopes and expectations
Investing time with those who can achieve the most	<b>Perfectibility</b>	Focusing on the value added – Holding hope for every child – Every gain a victory
Dignity – Reserve – Respecting privacy – Keeping a lid on it – Self control	<b>Openness</b>	Admitting mistakes – Providing challenging feedback – Letting people know how you feel
Promoting excellence – Pushing the boundaries of achievement – World class	<b>Social Justice</b>	Creating opportunities for everyone – Widening horizons – Fighting injustice
Creating a pleasant and collegial working environment	<b>Service</b>	Making sacrifices to put pupils first
Mastering your subject – Gaining expertise – Sharing knowledge	<b>Lifelong Learning</b>	Admitting you don't know – Listening to dissent – Curiosity and humility
Keeping up with initiatives – Doing what's required – Following policy	<b>Independence</b>	Anticipating initiatives – Making them work for us – Picking and choosing

## Using the Culture Sort - A Nationwide Debate

In October we wrote to a sample of two thousand schools<sup>2</sup> inviting them to take part. Five hundred expressed an interest – school culture is a very hot topic – and, in the end, one hundred and thirty-four were able to find the time complete the exercise at the end of the autumn term and beginning of the spring. A large number of participants scheduled the card sort session for their professional development day at the start of the new term. Others used an extended staff meeting.

The process was managed entirely by the school itself, using instructions and materials prepared by us. They were clear that they needed a representative sample of staff and that the exercise was not to be performed by senior leaders alone!

The sessions we observed during the piloting phase were lively indeed. A typical scenario has thirty or forty teachers, sat around tables in the school hall in groups of five or six. The volume of conversation is high and the level of concentration intense – it is not until they've finished sorting that people start to wander the room and look at other group's results.

Typically, the thirty cards will be spread out on the table (it's important to find a room free from draughts). Some groups sort them first into high, medium and low before placing them on the diamond grid. A common strategy is for one member of the group to read out the statement on the card and for the rest to debate its positioning. Sometimes people initially interpret the words in different ways and need to refer to concrete examples to agree a common ground.

Groups usually take around twenty to thirty minutes for the actual grid and are a little quicker on the ideal. When they've sorted the cards, they note the card number and position on a paper version of the diamond grid so the results can be collected in and returned to Hay Group.

The fact that people were arranged into groups of similar status, and the sense of privacy created by the volume of noise and activity, meant that groups appeared to be relatively open and honest in their placing of cards – they are sometimes surprised at how bold they've been when they come to review their grid. Although senior leaders in school take part in the exercise, it is difficult for them to exert influence: they are just one of the groups.

In our facilitation notes<sup>3</sup>, we provided a number of suggestions for concluding the exercise in a way that enabled people to share findings and draw conclusions for action in the school – to create a sense of feedback and closure. This section of the exercise was not technically part of the research itself, and didn't affect the data returned to us, but was often very important to the participants themselves. The facilitators sometimes reported that people stayed long after the scheduled finished time to continue the discussion. These topics matter deeply to teachers and support staff and are part of the sense of identity and meaning they derive from belonging to a particular school. It is also rare to have the opportunity to discuss them in a non-hierarchical setting.

---

<sup>2</sup> Although selection within phase was entirely random (by computer) we did bias the number of schools in each phase heavily in favour of secondary and special schools because we were very interested in secondary level performance and expected a lower response rate. In the end, the response rate was high from all groups and so our selection contains many secondaries. Most analyses are conducted separately for each phase, however.

<sup>3</sup> To obtain a copy of the facilitation guide and materials, please see the section on Hay Group, page 64

After the exercise was complete, an administrator in the school typed the results into a pre-prepared Excel spreadsheet, together with some basic facts about the school (phase, status, size, performance, etc.). This spreadsheet was then emailed to Hay Group for analysis.

## Potential Flaws

Measurement is part of the process of change. The way we choose to measure something, and who is involved in the measurement, will affect the final outcomes. The card sort exercise is a very old technique, applied with a few new twists. We regard the process itself as a success, one capable of energising a whole school and of surprising senior leaders, but are there any downsides to the process chosen?

Quite clearly this was not a perfect, clinical exercise. We can point to a number of areas in which the results must be treated with caution:

The exercise was self administered. We had no control (other than advice) over the selection of participants, the timing, the context, the tone of the introduction, the level of monitoring, etc. We believe that the vast majority of the sessions were conducted in line with suggested best practice, but there is no absolute guarantee.

We provided statements for the ranking process. Based on experience and a review of the literature, we suggested values and beliefs that we considered of importance to a school. We may have missed key values and we certainly weren't able to include values unique to particular schools – we sacrificed local colour for a common framework.

The participants in the exercise were randomly nominated but ultimately self selecting. This may bias the wider applicability of any findings but, as we shall see when we analyse the composition of the sample in the next chapter, we actually had a pretty diverse group. The sample may be biased towards more confident and collaborative schools, with a greater level of curiosity about themselves (and, not least, time to schedule the exercise itself during a busy period).

Most critically, the card statements contained a range of nuances and examples that we *believed* belonged in a single cluster – different ways of stating the same belief. It is possible that had certain examples been separated, people might have given a card a different priority; that our clustering was wrong. People responded well to the statements during the testing and piloting phase – none appeared ambiguous to them in practical terms. However, it may be useful to explore the statements in a follow up study, particular those which differentiate schools, or to try out alternative schemes.

Finally, it was a discursive technique. There is room for the larger ego, the more eloquent speaker and more confident individual to dominate a group. In practice, we did not observe this with any frequency, but it remains a possibility.

We encourage people to interpret our findings in the light of these reservations. It is important to bear in mind, however, the size and diversity of the sample. Over 4000 staff, at every level, in 134 schools, of every phase, size and status, in and out of challenging circumstances, in every part of the country.

## 4. Results - National Trends

### The Participants

The sample of schools participating in the study was broadly reflective of the range of schools across the country in terms of size, phase, community, location and performance. In addition, a huge number of teachers and support staff – several thousands – were involved.

The sample had a large number of secondary schools and a relatively high proportion of special schools (reflecting biases in the initial invitation). However, for most analyses, we consider the different phases separately.

A large proportion of the total staff, covering a range of roles, participated from each school. Most (nearly 90%) of the forms were completed without errors.

General characteristics:

- 134 schools
- 725 groups of teachers, averaging three or four groups per school (the average in secondary schools was six groups per school).
- 28% of groups described themselves as main grade teachers, 19% as middle leaders and 8% as senior leaders. 17% of groups were composed of support and administrative staff. (The remainder did not provide a clear description.)
- 62% of participating schools were secondary, 25% were special (including pupil referral units) and 13% were primary or middle.
- School types included community, voluntary aided/controlled, foundation and specialist.
- 49% of schools were based in an urban location, 19% in a rural and 32% in mixed.
- The average percentage of free school meals was 19% although the figures ranged from 0% to 90%.
- In terms of performance, our sample performed slightly better than the national average at key stages one, two and three but slightly worse than average at key stage four.
- 12% of the 725 completed card sorts contained an error (either missing a card or duplicating card numbers).

The diagrams below show the top six actual cards (most characteristic) and top six ideal cards (most wanted) of all participating schools. We supply the card number after each statement for reference (see Appendix A).

We have created these grids by calculating the *average* row in which each card was placed in each school (itself the average where each group in each school placed the card). Thus, for example, if group a puts a card on row one and group b puts the card on row three, then its average position is two. The decision to present the top six is largely arbitrary for purposes of clarity.

## Actual Culture – All Schools

Measuring and  
monitoring targets  
and test results (1)

Raising Capability –  
Helping People Learn  
– Laying foundations  
for later success (2)

Focusing on the  
value added –  
Holding hope for  
every child – Every  
gain a victory (20)

Working together –  
Learning from each  
other – Sharing  
resources and ideas  
(8)

Setting achievable  
goals and realistic  
expectations –  
Incremental  
improvements (17)

Warmth – Humour  
– Repartee – Feet  
on the ground (16)

The least characteristic cards were Investing time with those who can achieve the most (19) and Preventing mistakes (13)

## Ideal Culture – All Schools

Working together –  
Learning from each  
other – Sharing  
resources and ideas  
(8)

Raising Capability –  
Helping People Learn  
– Laying foundations  
for later success (2)

Creating a pleasant  
and collegial working  
environment (25)

A hunger for  
improvement –  
High hopes and  
expectations (18)

Focusing on the  
value added –  
Holding hope for  
every child – Every  
gain a victory (20)

Creating  
opportunities for  
everyone –  
Widening horizons  
– Fighting injustice  
(24)

The least important cards were Single minded dedication (15) and Investing time with those who can achieve the most (19)

## Gaps: Actual and Ideal<sup>4</sup>

The biggest gaps between ideal and actual culture were:

Want to see far less of:

- Measuring and monitoring (1)
- Single minded dedication (15)
- Keeping up with initiatives (29)
- Sacrifices to put pupils first (26)
- The school comes first (5)
- Experimenting (12)

Want to see more of:

- People come first (6)
- Promoting excellence (23)
- Admitting mistakes (22)
- Opportunities for everyone (24)
- Pleasant and collegial environment (25)
- Keeping promises (10)

Not all of these cards feature on the top six lists for either actual or ideal. The notable exception is **Measuring and Monitoring (1)**, which was universally low on ideal (eighth from bottom) and high on actual. We shall see later, however, that the cards **Promoting Excellence (23)** and **Sacrifices (26)** have an important relation to school performance.

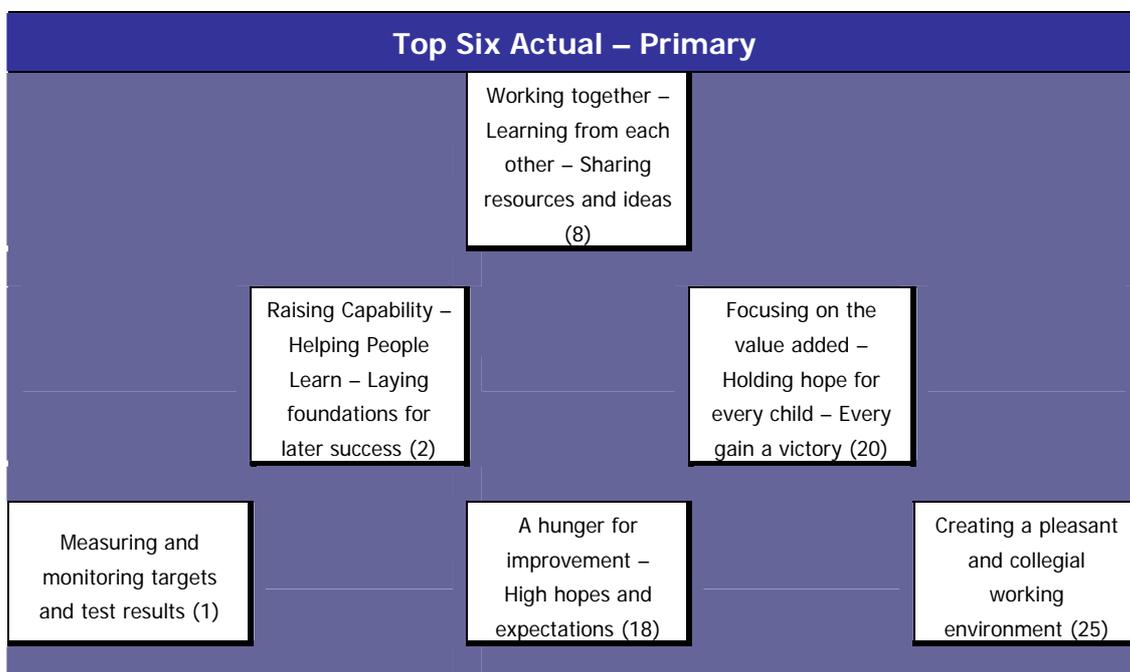
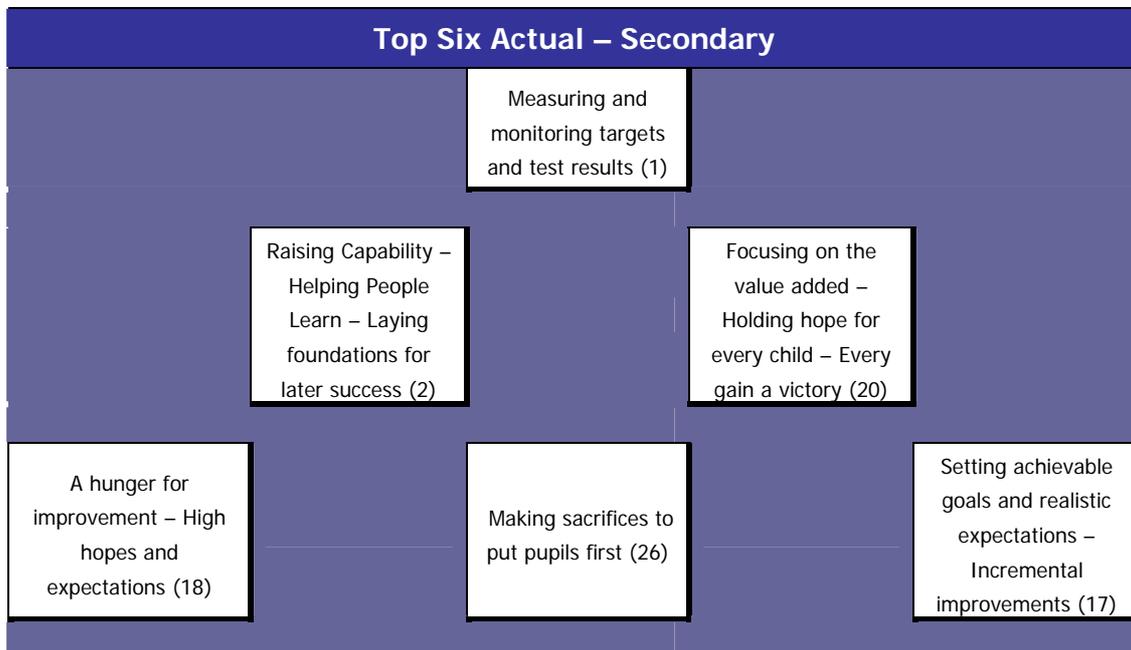
In general the differences were far clearer on the cards teachers wanted to see less of, where the cards **Measuring (1)**, **Single minded dedication (15)**, **Sacrifices (26)** and **Keeping up with initiatives (29)** stood out as deeply unattractive to staff.

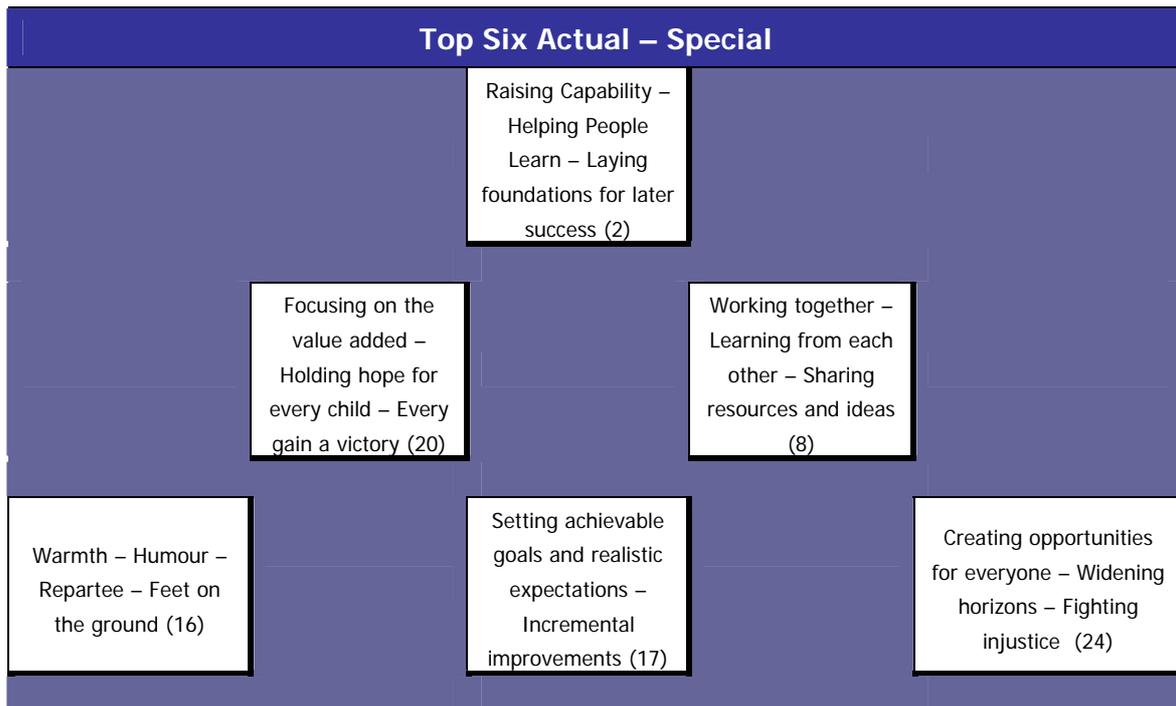
---

<sup>4</sup> In the text we'll refer to each statement in a shortened, summary format and provide the card number afterwards (see Appendix A for reference)

## Differences by Phase

We can break the national picture down by phase of school: secondary, primary and special:





We can see significant differences between the primary and secondary phases for actual culture, both inside and outside the top six.

Cards which are significantly more characteristic of secondary schools include:

- Measuring and monitoring (1)
- Making sacrifices (26)
- Achievable goals (17)
- Investing time with those who can achieve the most (19)
- Respecting professional autonomy (7)
- Mastering your subject (27)

Cards which are significantly more characteristic of primary schools include:

- Raising capability (2)
- Working together (8)
- Taking initiative (4)
- Admitting you don't know (28)
- Keeping promises (10)

Card 24 – Fighting injustice – was more characteristic of secondary schools, which also didn't have Measuring (1) in their top six.

Primary and secondary phases were also distinguished by their degree of consensus. Primary schools generated significantly more agreement on the placing of cards on both the actual and ideal exercises than secondary schools.

## Differences by Role

We asked each group to describe its main role (e.g. teachers, support, middle leaders, etc.) We found significant differences between the views of groups who described themselves as members of the senior leadership team and other staff.

Senior leaders were significantly more likely to describe their school using cards:

- Anticipating initiatives (30)
- Warmth and humour (16)
- Opportunities for everyone (24)
- Admitting you don't know (28)

Other staff were significantly more likely to describe their school using cards:

- Keeping up with initiatives (29)
- Measuring and monitoring (1)
- Experimenting (12)
- Dignity and reserve (21)

It is interesting to note the disparity of opinions on Measuring (1) and the fact that cards 30 and 29 describe almost opposing views of attitudes to innovation and initiatives. The polarity of views on 'Anticipating' as opposed to 'Keeping up with' initiatives and policies is statistically significant.

Senior leaders not only diverge from their colleagues on actual perceptions, they have very different ideals too. Senior leaders found the following cards both important/valuable and significantly more so than other staff:

- High hopes and expectations (18)
- Focus on value added (20)
- Promoting excellence (23)
- Measuring and monitoring (1)

Other staff found the following cards important/valuable and significantly more so than senior leaders:

- Making allowances (9)
- Pleasant and collegial environment (25)
- People come first (6)
- Mastering your subject (27)

The differences in perceptions of culture according to seniority are far more extensive than those created by phase or performance. This raises interesting challenges for steering a direction for the school. Senior leaders not only want a very different culture, they perceive an actually different culture in the school.

Both groups of staff agreed on the importance of cards Raising capability (2) and Working together (8). Both groups agreed on the unimportance of Putting the school first (5), Respecting autonomy (7), Single minded dedication (15) and Investing in those who can achieve the most (19).

These difference will increase in importance when we consider the relationship between culture and performance in the next chapter. Making allowances (9), High hopes and expectations (18), Focus on value added (20) and Promoting excellence (23) are particularly significant for this debate. In general, senior leaders seem to value cards which are positively associated with high value adding schools. Other staff value some performance related cards (Working together (8), for example) but are also focused on one which is harmful (Making allowances (9)).

## 5. Results – Culture and Performance

### Caveats

At the heart of this study lies the million dollar question: Is there a particular culture associated with more successful schools? To use our definition of culture presented earlier, is there a set of values and beliefs particularly appropriate to understanding and solving the common challenges that schools face?

To reiterate an earlier point: to the extent that schools are seeking to adapt to common trends in their environment (e.g. trends to the knowledge economy, government policy on accountability and measurement, changes in social values) certain common 'lessons' ought to become encoded as values and beliefs in their culture. To the extent that each school deals with a unique local community, they will be right to draw different lessons from their experience.

We must therefore take real caution in using these findings. Firstly, we cannot hope to set a benchmark for the whole of a school's culture – merely point to certain themes that ought to be taken into consideration. Secondly, there is no single right answer for every school.

We present these findings as a guide and challenge to your own analysis of your needs and the appropriate response.

We did not collect performance data from special schools and the sample size for primary schools was too small to provide confidence in any patterns. Therefore, the following analysis focuses solely on the secondary phase.

### Measures of Performance

We examined the performance of schools from three angles:

- Overall attainment in Key Stage results (taking percentage of free school meals into account)
- Rate of improvement in Key Stage results (compared to the national average rate of improvement) over three years
- Value Added

In addition, we were able to *combine* attainment and improvement as a measure and look at schools in four possible quadrants following Stoll and Fink's scheme (Stoll and Fink, 1996): high attainment/high improvement, high attainment/low improvement, low attainment/high improvement, low attainment/low improvement. We depart slightly from their categorisation as the low improvement dimension includes both schools who are actually declining (as in their matrix) and schools improving at a slower rate than other schools around them (relative decline).

	Low Improvement	High Improvement
High Attainment	"Cruising"	"Moving"
Low Attainment	"Sinking"	Improving

(Stoll, 1999)

The variety of performance data makes for a complicated picture but, intriguingly, there were cards which distinguished higher from lower performers according to every single measure of performance.

We are particularly concerned with the top three rows – the six cards in this position define the critical values and beliefs of the school. However, cards in other positions may also differ significantly between schools (e.g. cards that were strongly rejected as 'uncharacteristic'). Schools in different categories might also have similar cards in the top six or just outside the top six. Consequently, we've presented three views of the data:

- The top six cards for schools in various classes of performance (including a composite of all the successful schools)
- Cards with statistically significant differences in position between schools (using the value added measure)
- Cards which particularly or uniquely distinguish schools in certain classes (e.g. coasting schools)

To be clear, then, we are using the following priorities in making our judgements about relationships between culture and performance:

- Cards which appear in the top sixes of the successful schools, and which are statistically significant. These are of the greatest importance
- Cards which appear in the top sixes of successful schools (they may not differentiate statistically but they are still part of the culture). These are of interest.
- Cards which are not in the top sixes but which are still statistically significant or, perhaps, highly *uncharacteristic*. These supply 'supporting' evidence.

As well as the bare statistics, we have also tried to interpret some meaning into the placements – the relationship of one card to another, for example, and whether we can read a broader pattern or theme into all the placements. This interpretation is necessarily subjective but, we hope, not unreasonable.

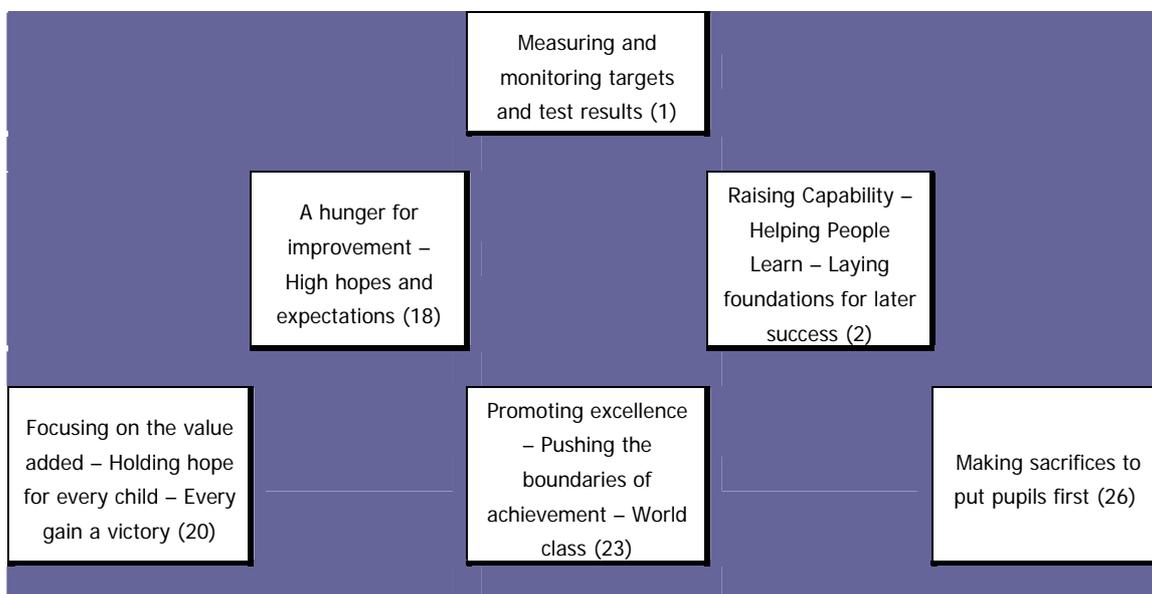
One final important note: the fact that a school didn't rate a card as highly characteristic does not mean it rated it as highly uncharacteristic! It could easily be placed around the middle of diamond – something normal and unremarkable. In fact, some of the defining characteristics of the under-performing schools are not absent from the high performing schools, merely not a defining characteristic of their culture – present but not of great interest or concern.

## 'Top Sixes'

Cards of particular interest – which distinguish one group from another – are highlighted in red. See below for explanations. We calculated the 'top six' by taking the average row position of each card for each category of schools. These are for the actual cultures.

## High Value Added

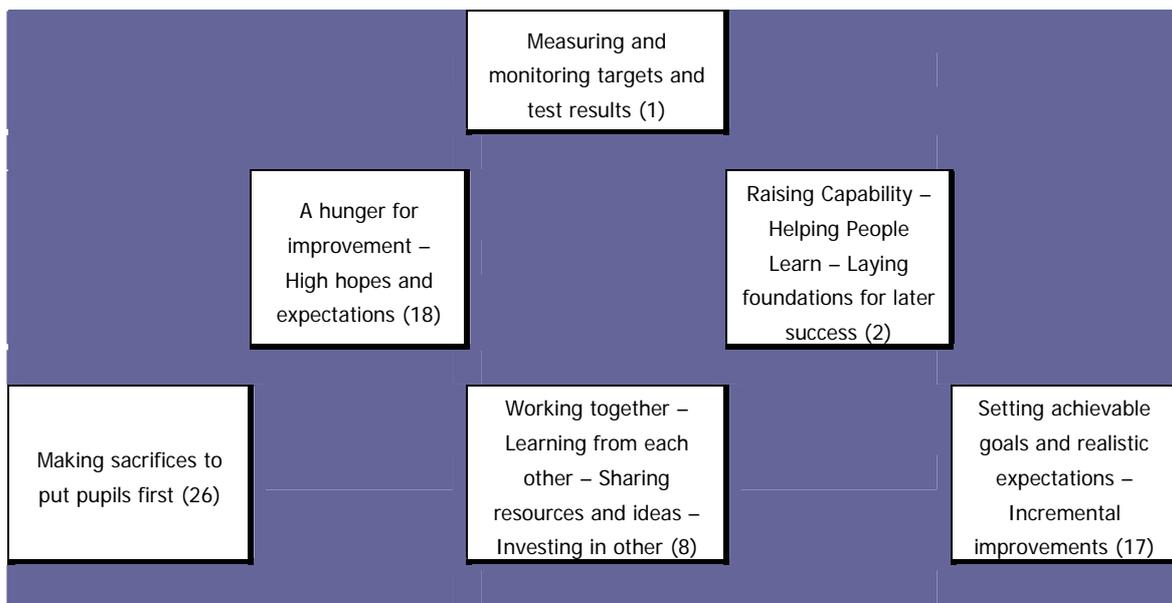
Schools were split into four quadrants based on their value added scores (20 schools in each quadrant). The overall range and distribution of the group's value added scores broadly reflected that nationally. Below, we show the top six cards of the top quadrant of schools for value added.



## 'Moving' and High Attaining Schools

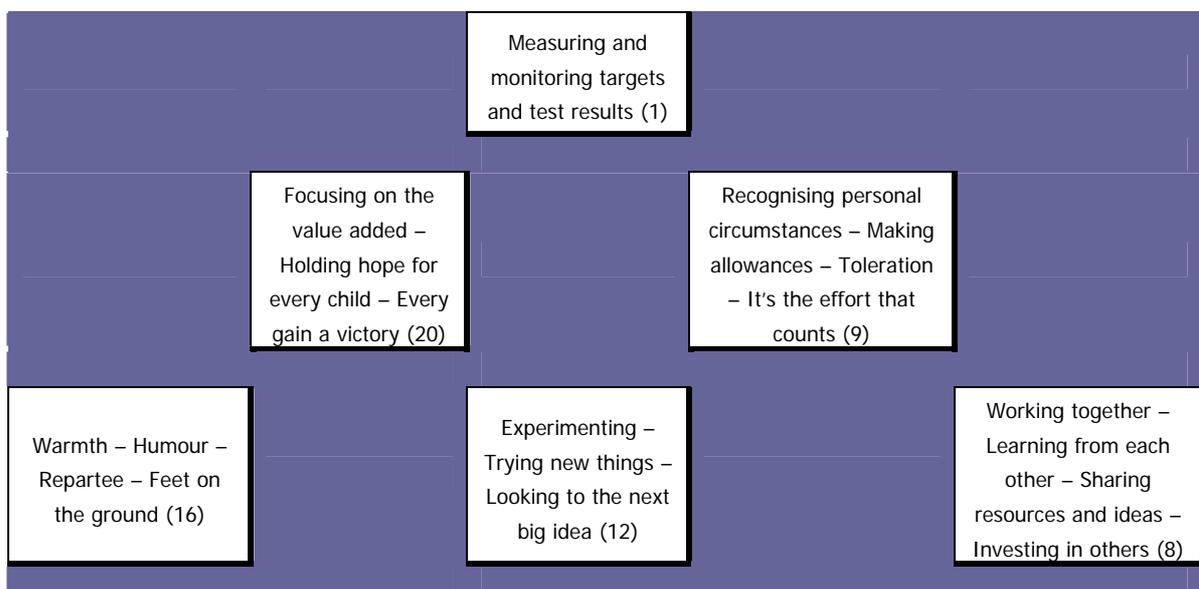
'Movers' are those schools with both a high level of overall attainment and higher rates of improvement than the norm (34 schools in this sample). High attainment covers all schools with above average results, regardless of the rate of improvement (40 schools here).

The top sixes each of these categories were identical (and very similar to that of the high value added):



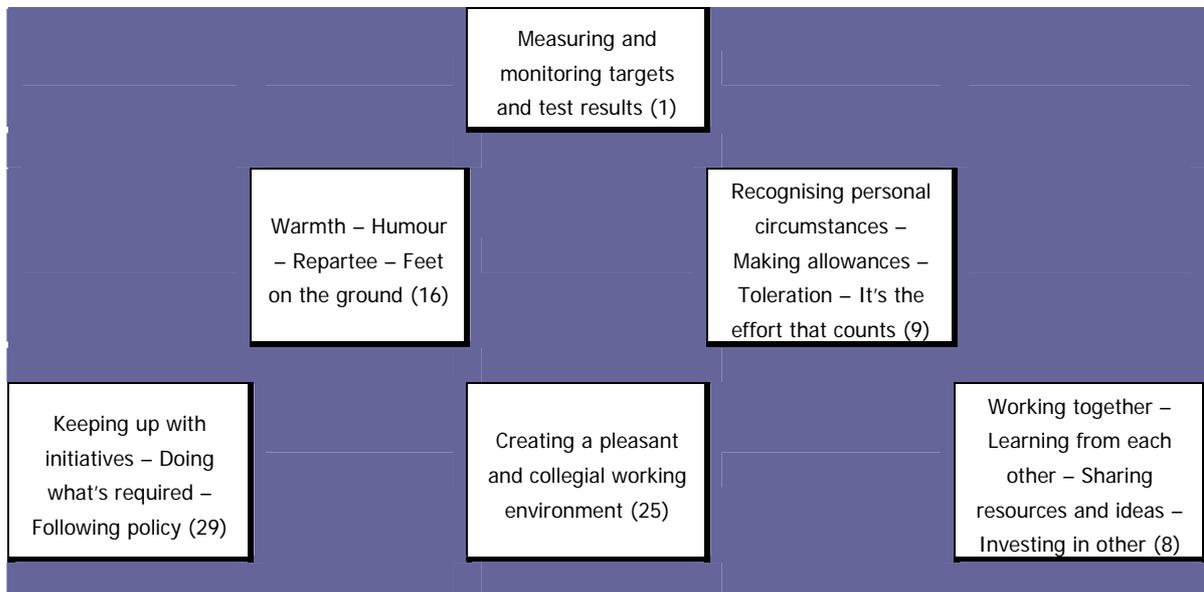
## 'Sinking' Schools

For the purpose of this analysis, 'sinking' schools are those with both low attainment and lower rates of improvement (in some cases, declines in improvement) than the norm (13 schools here). As the following top six shows, they share some cards in common with previous pyramids but some interesting absences and additions:



## Low Value Added

Finally, here are the typical top six cards for schools in the bottom quartile for value added measurements.



## Patterns in the Data

We can spot a number of patterns in these top sixes:

- Measuring and monitoring targets and results are a way of life in every school, but it is tempered by an interest in capability and learning (inputs rather than outputs) in the more successful schools.
- High ambition is a feature in the top six according to every measure of successful schools and doesn't appear in the top six for the less successful.
- An allowance for mistakes, a focus on effort rather than success, distinguishes the less successful schools and is not present in the top six for the more successful.
- Warmth and humour are seen as a key characteristic of less successful schools (low value added, low attainment and low rate of improvement) but are only averagely characteristic of the more successful.
- A willingness to put pupils first is distinctive of more successful schools. It is not absent from the culture of less successful schools but is not the defining feature that it is in the top performers.
- Achievable goals and expectations are common to most schools *except* those in the 'sinking' performance category – who perhaps feel the demands for change placed upon them are unrealistic. Note, however, the somewhat paradoxical pairing of this card with the high ambitions of card 18 in the more successful schools. Is there a division between short term steps and long term aspirations? Or a belief that high ambitions are reasonable?
- Working together and sharing learning is a value common to schools in most categories. It doesn't appear in the top six for high value added, but is only just outside it.
- Contrary to expectations, there is no relationship between the selection of odd or even cards and school performance. Nor, in most cases, did schools who rated one end of a pair as highly characteristic rate the other end as highly uncharacteristic (see the placement of cards one and two, for example).

## Composites

Using these conclusions we have prepared two 'composite' top sixes, drawing on the common ground within the successful schools and the common ground within the less successful schools. There is no statistical basis for these composites – they are just our summaries of the observed themes.

## Successful Schools Composite Culture

Measuring and monitoring targets and test results (1)

A hunger for improvement – High hopes and expectations (18)

Raising Capability – Helping People Learn – Laying foundations for later success (2)

Making sacrifices to put pupils first (26)

Promoting excellence – Pushing the boundaries of achievement – World class (23)

Working together – Learning from each other – Sharing resources and ideas – Investing in other (8)

OR

Focusing on the value added – Holding hope for every child – Every gain a victory (20)

## Less Successful Schools Composite Culture

Measuring and monitoring targets and test results (1)

Focusing on the value added –  
Holding hope for every child –  
Every gain a victory (20)

Recognising personal circumstances –  
Making allowances –  
Toleration – It's the effort that counts (9)

?<sup>5</sup>

Warmth – Humour  
– Repartee – Feet on the ground (16)

Working together –  
Learning from each other – Sharing resources and ideas  
– Investing in others (8)

---

<sup>5</sup> There is no clear candidate for this position. Perhaps 25, 12 or 29?

## Statistical Significance

The following cards were statistically significant<sup>6</sup> in distinguishing high value adding secondary schools from low valued adding secondary schools. The sample size was 82 schools.

More characteristic of high value added:

- High hopes and expectations (18)
- Promoting excellence (23)
- Respecting authority (3)
- School comes first (5)
- Single minded dedication (15)

More characteristic of low value added:

- Making allowances (9)
- Respecting autonomy (7)
- Warmth and humour (16)
- Admitting mistakes (22)
- People come first (6)

As well as being statistically significant across the entire sample, Promoting excellence (23) and High hopes (18) appear in the top six for high value added, lending weight to their importance. Making allowances (9) and Warmth and humour (16) appear in the top six for low value added; again, lending weight to their importance as a decisive factor.

Respecting authority (3), Putting the school first (5) and Single minded dedication (15) were all rated as 'middling' cards, although significantly higher for the top quartile schools. Respecting autonomy (7) and Admitting mistakes (22) were all rated as middling but significantly *lower* for top quartile schools.

It is difficult to know how much attention to focus on these middling cards, but it is interesting that higher value adding schools do *not* value Respecting autonomy (7) when we add this to the fact that they *do* value working together.

Single minded dedication (15) is statistically significant in distinguishing between both high and low value added *and* high and low attainment. In general it is an average card in successful schools and a low card in less successful schools. Pace is not the be-all-and-end-all, but neither should things be slack. See the section below on Interpretation for a discussion of underlying themes in cards like 5, 15, 18, 26 and 23, which all have a similar feel to them.

---

<sup>6</sup> One-way ANOVA (whole sample = 82) and t-tests (top and bottom quartiles only, thus 41 schools) were used. A post-hoc Bonferroni test on cards 23 and 9 also found differences between top and middle quartiles. A minimum significance level of  $P < 0.05$  was accepted in all tests. We have chosen not to present a full statistical analysis in this report, but are happy to discuss these topics with any enquirers.

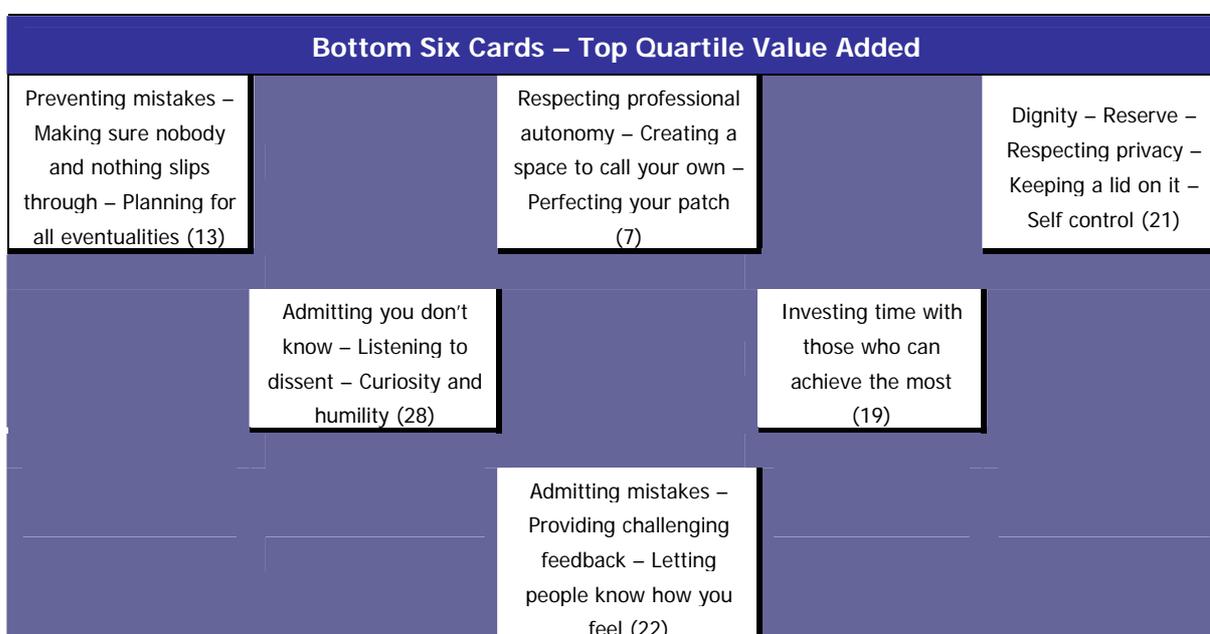
## Uncharacteristic Cards

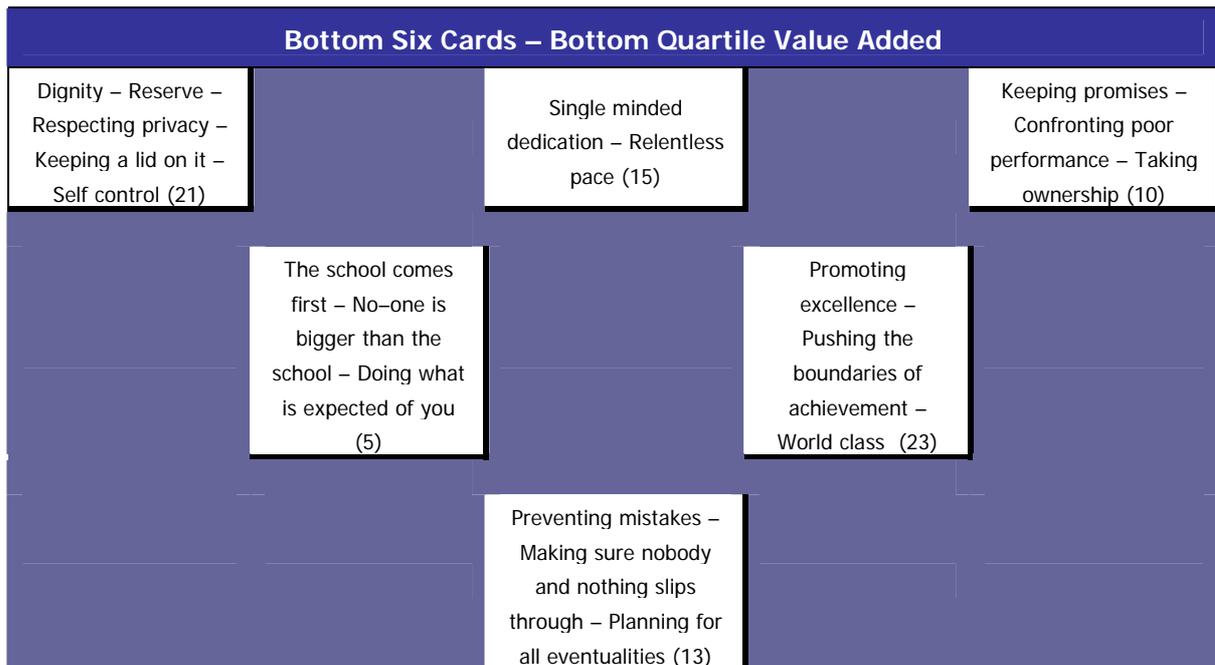
The least characteristic card by a long way for bottom quartile value adding schools was Preventing mistakes (13). This can be compared to their relatively high placing for Making allowances (9). Both these cards were statistically significant in distinguishing between high and low value adding schools. Preventing mistakes was not highly placed for top quartile schools either, but nothing like as low.

The next *least* characteristic cards for bottom quartile schools were Putting the school first (5), Single minded dedication (15) and Promoting excellence (23). By contrast the least characteristic cards in the top quartile were Admitting mistakes (22), Admitting you don't know (28) and Investing in those who achieve the most (19).

The placings reinforce some of the messages of the more characteristic cards.

For illustration, below we summarise the 'bottom six' actual cards for the top and bottom quartiles of value added:





### Cards Distinguishing Particular Circumstances

As well as the patterns in common across various definitions of success, there are certain card placements which are unique to particular categories.

Schools with high levels of value added are also distinguished by:

- Focus on value added (20)
- Promoting excellence (23)

The prioritisation of Focus on value added as a belief/value for schools which are also objectively high in value added is particularly interesting. It is worth noting that schools weren't aware that value added was a significant variable during the exercise and that the card sorts were completed before the recent (January 2004) public controversy over value added ranking raised the profile of this measure.

Schools in the 'sinking' category are also distinguished by:

- Experimenting (12)
- Focus on value added (20)
- The absence of Setting achievable goals (17) from the top six

Schools in the 'cruising' category are also distinguished by:

- Keeping up with initiatives (29)
- Making allowances (9)

Schools in challenging circumstances which have demonstrated an above average rate of improvement ('improving' category) retain:

- Warmth and humour (16) as highly characteristic and also add
- Pleasant and collegial environment (25)

This distinguishes 'improvers' from other successful schools, perhaps indicating a need for a strong focus on staff morale during their stage of development.

## 6. Results - Interpretation

### A Culture for Learning?

This is our interpretation of the messages within the data – an attempt to find patterns and a wider meaning. It goes beyond the raw data and is presented as a challenge to discussion rather than an inflexible benchmark.

For the purposes of our analysis we want to draw a distinction between defining features – the characteristics which stand above all others as the essence of the school – and trends within the middle ranks of the diamond grid (for example, cards which may be of middling importance in successful schools and low in others).

Like all schools, successful schools<sup>7</sup> are defined by cultures which focus on **Measuring** (1) outputs but they temper this by an interest in learning, in getting the inputs right (2). They also value **working together** (8) and learning from each other.

This much is common ground among many schools. Where are successful schools different?

- They have a **Hunger for improvement** (18) and a desire to be **World class** (23). They are ambitious for *all* students. They perceive (and expect) that staff are ready to make personal **Sacrifices** (26) to put pupils first.
- They do not believe in **Making allowances** (9) for good effort without results and they are significantly less **Tolerant of mistakes** (13) than other schools. Although they are not without a sense of **Warmth and humour**, staff comfort is not a defining feature of their ethos.
- They are more likely to take **Value added** (20) seriously as a key measure of success (linked to their interest in helping people learn).

These defining characteristics are also backed up by the placing of related cards:

The card, **Single minded dedication** (15), for example, does not appear in their top six but is placed far higher in successful schools compared to the less successful: distraction and losing the pace are totally off limits. People were also more likely to say that the School came first (5). A sense of **Professional autonomy** (7) and independence – that teachers stood alone as arbiters of success – had much less of a role in their culture than in less successful schools. (This card, seven, was intended as the opposite of card eight.)

Of some concern, however, for long term sustainability, people were far less comfortable at **Admitting to mistakes** in the more successful schools.

---

<sup>7</sup> Our definition of successful is primarily based on schools with above average value added. However, we have also looked at the rate of improvement over the last three years and the overall level of attainment (adjusted for percentage of free school meals). There are other measures of success, but for practical reasons we have confined ourselves to these. See pages 30-31 for a fuller discussion.

We gained the impression of a disciplined, goal-oriented culture with a strong sense of mission and a strong sense of who the school is run for – that staff are secondary to pupils in terms of welfare. They are not unpleasant or humourless environments but being a ‘nice’ place to work is not their *raison d’être*. Above all they are ambitious. They believe they can equal the best in the world; that they can make radical changes and improvements. This is not an elitist ambition however – they do not focus their efforts on those with the highest potential, but upon everyone: holding hope for every child.

This is the opposite of the aptly named ‘producer culture’, characteristic of the less successful schools, where institutions may sometimes be run, however unconsciously, for the benefit of staff rather than students.

They hold high professional standards in the pursuit of ambitions and are less willing to make allowances or excuses for underperformance. One can imagine them tending towards high stress ‘hothouse’ environments. The fear of admitting to mistakes is one indication of this.

This hard edged picture is tempered in two ways. Firstly, they follow a collaborative model: teachers are not islands. They support each other and learn from each other. Secondly, targets are not of value whatever the cost. They believe in building the capability to learn in students, laying foundations for later life, adding value to every student, not pursuing academic success to the exclusion of all others.

These ethical dimensions: of ambition for all and a focus on the capabilities required for lifelong learning are as critical components of the successful schools as their organisational practices.

‘Equity and excellence’, to borrow a phrase from the government, are not just aspirations but can produce a tangible difference in results by changing our assumptions about both capability and the proper division of attention.

Compare these findings to David Hargreaves’ cultural dimensions of instrumentality and social cohesion (pages 17-18) and we see that the cultures of the more successful schools tend, if anything, to the ‘hothouse’ environment and those of the more troubled schools to the ‘survivalist’. David describes the hothouse school as:

*... Rather frenetic. All are under pressure to participate actively in the full range of school life. The motto is join in, enjoy yourself, and be a success. Expectations of work, personal development and team spirit are high. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed and want pupils to be the same. It is a culture that is not overtly coercive or tyrannical, but teachers and students easily become anxious that they are not pulling their weight or doing as well as they should.*

He suggests, however, that the hothouse extreme may not be a desirable or sustainable school culture. Rather, we are looking for an optimum balance of control and cohesion. It is interesting, therefore, to note the strong moral purpose, the long term goals and the collaborative atmosphere. And to stress, again, that humour and collegiality are not absent from the more successful schools – just not their reason for being.

There is definitely a risk, however, of successful schools verging on hothouse cultures. This throws down a challenge to policy makers: how sustainable is the ethos being

stimulated in schools by the current wave of educational reforms? We should also bear in mind the results in chapter four which suggest that some of the aspects of successful school cultures conflicted with the ideals and aspirations of the majority of teachers.

Where the reforms have produced a change in culture – and there is a link between policy and culture (see below) – they have produced real results. Where people are going through the motions, or actively subverting policy, there has been less success. This suggests that an active goal of policy should be not merely to tinker with structures and incentives but to propose new organisational values and beliefs – in a similar fashion to the role of leadership in culture described on page 11. This may, however, demand a different set of policy instruments. Michael Fullan, for example, suggests that reform needs to move from ensuring compliance to capturing the intrinsic commitment of the profession. This study suggests, however, that even structural reforms can impact on culture – both by creating new challenges and sending messages about what is valued.

### **Professionalism and Service Orientation**

This picture of the ‘successful’ school seems almost the antithesis of the traditional ‘professional’<sup>8</sup> culture. Such a culture, typical of professional practices such as lawyers, doctors, consultants (and some traditional models of the school) could be characterised by low individual accountability and high individual autonomy; a sense of active intellectual debate but also self-policing of standards; relaxed attitudes to under-performing ‘veterans’; a sense of noble isolation and independence; slow change and the veneration of tradition.

Rather, the successful schools in this study feel very dynamic and service-oriented – accountable, flexible, eager to collaborate and intrude on each other’s territory, customer- or stake-holder oriented.

Interestingly, separate research by Hay Group has discovered very distinct approaches to successful leadership in service-delivery as opposed to professionally oriented cultures.

All roles are built from a combination of requirements for knowledge/expertise, problem solving and accountability for outcomes<sup>9</sup>. Although linked, the relative amounts of these three ingredients can vary, significantly affecting the ‘shape’ of the job. In particular, the ratio of problem solving (or creativity) to accountability distinguishes professional leadership from service delivery leadership roles. It is clear that the level of accountability has increased while the level of creativity has been constrained in schools in recent years, with a marked impact on school culture.

---

<sup>8</sup> Professionalism is a value-laden term. We are using the term here in a very specific way. There is a difference between the ‘professional’ organisational model and ‘professionalism’ in the sense of dedication, trustworthiness, self-motivation.

<sup>9</sup> For a fuller discussion and self evaluation tools, see chapter four of *The School Recruitment Handbook* (Hobby et al, 2004)

In a study of 400 leaders, the McClelland Centre, Hay Group's US research division, identified the characteristics of leadership in professional versus service delivery roles. Some of these are described below:

	'Professional' Leadership	'Service Delivery' Leadership
	High Creativity / Modest Accountability	Modest Creativity / High Accountability
Flavour of Accountabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formulation of policy</li> <li>▪ Provision of advice and support</li> <li>▪ Networking and connecting others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operational responsibility for measurable results</li> <li>▪ Line management</li> </ul>
Distinguishing Characteristics	Integrity, Coaching, Creative Thinking, Long Term Perspective, Deep Interpersonal and Political Skills	Flexibility, Inspirational/Visionary Leadership, High Self Belief, Entrepreneurial, Goal-setting, Risk-taking
Shared Characteristics	Drive for Improvement, Tailored Influencing Tactics, Interpersonal Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity, Analytical and Conceptual Thinking, Information Gathering, Basic Self Confidence	
Changes from emergent to established leadership	As roles grow focus is on whole organisation policies and politics, strategic vision and more complex influencing strategies	As roles grow: so does time frame, repertoire of leadership styles, engagement with external environment; integrity becomes key at highest levels

It appears that different forms of organisational culture could require different types of leadership. We are focusing here on leadership's transactional face, its day-to-day operation within a prevailing culture, not its transformational role in creating and challenging culture. This is sometimes expressed as the difference between 'management' and 'leadership'. It is a point to be aware of in initiating culture change - your managers may need additional training and support to thrive within the new culture (you may need support yourself).

Another way to think about the relationship between management and culture is that the different styles presented above provide different role models and rituals, and express different assumptions about the relationships between staff. Imagine, for example, two departmental meetings: one run by a manager with the defining characteristics of professional leadership and the other with service delivery leadership. What would be discussed at each? Who would be involved in the discussion? How would the discussion be managed? What sort of contributions would be rewarded?

## Reading Between the Lines: A Theory about People

In our earlier definition of culture we described it as an adaptive response to the environment. Values and beliefs represent the encoded lessons of experience, wrapped up and passed through the 'generations' as ways of dealing with internal and external challenges. By such a definition the values and beliefs of successful schools ought to represent successful lessons, accurate and adaptive responses to the environment. So what could these findings tell us about such lessons and the environment schools face?

Firstly, the emphasis is unsurprisingly on the human environment – lessons about how people might be expected to behave and what they are capable of. The critical elements of school culture concern:

- Beliefs about student capability
- Beliefs about the mechanics of education – or an implicit model about the way education happens in the real world
- Beliefs about the correct way to work together as a teaching staff to meet these problems
- A certain value set around social justice in relation to the role of the school

The successful schools believe that human capability is open ended. That we can be surprised by what people could achieve given the right opportunity. That, as a school, they can become world class and can certainly always get better. They are not stuck with a fixed resource of unmotivated students, incapable of learning beyond certain limits. These schools are ambitious.

They believe that education works best through increasing people's ability to learn rather than rote transmission of knowledge or teaching to the test. By worrying about the inputs – about how people learn – the outputs follow. There is a sense of clear *process* involved in these schools – from high standards of teaching to improving learning capability to success in SATs and other targets. This is the implicit theory behind these schools.

The appropriate way to work together is not to position the individual teacher as the font of all knowledge and the sole arbiter of success. Teachers are part of a team and accountable to the wider school for achieving certain standards and for learning from each other. The individual, autonomous professional is not seen as a viable organisational model.

Schools have a vital moral purpose. The school exists first and foremost for the students and it exists for *every* student – to provide opportunity for all and invest in everyone to their full potential.

Despite the hunger for success and the high ambition, attention should not be divided according to prior ability but given, as far as possible, to all. Success can be measured, therefore, by how much value the school adds, not by overall attainment.

This is not an attempt to level to the lowest common denominator and create an easy life – exactly the opposite. This mission is not a light one. It demands a great deal of commitment, dedication and sacrifice.

A view on individual capability; a theory of education; a theory of organisation and an ethical stance. Together, these elements of culture represent a view of the role of a school and how it can fulfil that role. Joined with a clear moral purpose, these beliefs have generated the energy required to achieve high standards and high levels of improvement.

### **Changes in Policy, the Economy and Society**

As well as an adaptation to some enduring truths about human nature, we can also see some responses to the modern age – both economic change and educational policy. We can only imagine how different the results might have been had we conducted this exercise twenty years ago.

We can clearly see the effect of the changing policy environment on culture. The cultures in successful schools appear to be adapting to increased accountability for institutions and individuals, the efforts to promote collaboration, and the impact of service-oriented public sector reforms (introducing notions of stakeholders, responsiveness and local choice).

In terms of economic trends, a focus on learning rather than specific skills reflects the growing importance of knowledge work and the instability of careers and working patterns. We find it harder to know exactly what future we are supposed to be preparing our students for!

## Lessons and Theories Embedded in the Cultures of Successful Schools

This is our summary of the working models used in successful schools. Some of the suggestions involve a considerable reading between the lines of the data, but none are without some basis in the evidence.

Some of the values may seem unexceptional in the sense that few would disagree (openly at least). But do your *actual* practices reflect such values? Other theories and values are perhaps more controversial and more uncomfortable to digest.

- The role of a school is to provide opportunities for all
- Teaching can be improved through sharing best practice and working together
- High expectations and ambitions are both appropriate and can produce real gains
- Achievement in test results is an 'output' of the education system. The ability to learn is an 'input'. The two are connected and success in the outputs follows on an investment in the inputs. The two must be considered together
- The function of a school extends beyond academic and exam success to preparing the foundations for a student's broader life
- Attention should be divided equally, not on the basis of ability to succeed
- Students' potential may often surprise us
- Teaching quality will rise when teachers are held accountable for their performance and standards are 'owned' by the school not the individual
- The comfort of staff is secondary to the needs of students. Schools are service-based organisations
- Ambition is not the same as elitism
- We cannot be sure what environment (careers, social and economic trends) we are preparing our students for
- Well intentioned failures are not acceptable over the long term

## 7. Changing School Culture

### Thinking Traps

By this point we know what we mean by culture and how it connects to our school's effectiveness. We have tools for bringing it into the open and are even able to compare ourselves to other schools. So how do we act upon this knowledge to develop the culture of our school? This surely must be the most daunting task a leader can face. If culture is the foundation of the way a school approaches the world, other facts and events are *made* to fit the culture. It takes something pretty dramatic to question the foundations themselves.

Yet culture is no more than a set of shared values and beliefs. Individuals can and do change their beliefs. The challenge arises in changing and acting on new beliefs when other people are defending and acting upon the old beliefs! Culture change is like getting everyone to change their minds at exactly the same moment.

In this sense, a school with a persistently inappropriate, or ill-adapted, culture is somewhat like a depressed individual. In most cases, as individuals, we alter our beliefs (albeit reluctantly) to fit reality and the evidence of our senses. Some individuals, however, fall into persistent ruts of thought, thinking traps, which continuously bias their perception of a situation regardless of the available evidence ('I'm not an important person, no-one is interested in my views, no-one will pay any attention if I speak up'). In schools, such persistent cultural biases often emerge as protective routines in the face of threat, hostility and scrutiny: reasons not to feel guilty, reasons not to take responsibility, reasons not to take risks. They create short term comfort at the expense of long term damage. Take, for example the importance of humour in the card sorts of schools in more troubled circumstances. Humour can be an important defensive and protective mechanism.

We must be extremely cautious about pursuing this analogy. A school is not a person; a culture is not a mind. Yet writers in the cognitive behavioural school of psychology, such as Andrew Schatte, have developed techniques for questioning assumptions and developing healthy belief systems which may have a social application<sup>10</sup>.

The way we deal with our culture is itself a cultural phenomenon. As an organisation, we hold certain assumptions about the nature of our beliefs, the way such knowledge can be tested and validated, the role of dissent and the value of change. Certain cultural traits are not only more suited to the current demands of our environment but are also more flexible. They combine a strong identity (i.e. they propagate well) with a healthy view of reality (they fit their environment and change to fit their changing environment). In fact, we can propose a typology of school cultures:

---

<sup>10</sup> See page 64 for a programme incorporating Schatte and Reivich's work on resilience.

	Strong	Weak
Well Adapted	<p><b>Adaptable:</b> reflective, protective of dissent</p> <p>Perceived success, strong sense of pride in the way things are done here</p>	<p>Assumptions reflect appropriate ways of dealing with environment but are not shared and are open to challenge. Pockets of success.</p>
Ill Adapted	<p>Blind to the needs of today; aggressively resistant to dissent</p>	<p>Little discernable identity or culture. Decisions are not guided by appropriate shared principles.</p>

Such adaptable cultures can also consciously be built through a series of leadership and organisational practices. We are calling this cultural *adaptive capacity*. By creating these practices in school it should be possible to obviate the need for culture change programmes and crises of faith. However, this culture itself must be built, often out of a sense of crisis, and other current values must be questioned and amended. Accordingly, we propose four scenarios of culture change, each requiring different tactics. They are presented in roughly ascending order of challenge:

**Scenario One:** You possess a healthy culture which you value. You wish to protect it against the encroachment of other norms.

**Scenario Two:** You are creating an entirely new institution on a 'green field' site. You need to establish a culture from scratch.

**Scenario Three:** You regard your current culture as unsuited to your current challenges. You wish to understand the values and beliefs which might move you forward and establish them in your school.

**Scenario Four:** You wish to avoid regular cultural crises – periods of equilibrium where assumptions gradually lose touch with reality punctuated by frenzies of soul searching and painful change. You wish to embed a *capacity* for continual culture change in your school.

The appropriate approach to culture change will vary depending on which of the scenarios we find ourselves in. In what follows, we will focus on the third and fourth scenarios. In defending an existing, healthy culture, or creating a brand new one, our focus should be on the modes of communication and propagation – the rites and rituals of school life – rather than breaking old patterns of thought. However, particularly in scenario one, it is always valuable to take a step back and make sure that we're right and they're wrong.

### Scenario Three: Culture Change

In chapter two we proposed five key tasks associated with intentionally changing a school's culture. In this section we present a practical programme for achieving the first four. The next section details task five – building an adaptive capacity into the ongoing culture.

In essence the strategy involves: challenging your ideals and aspirations; examining the gaps between your current culture and your ideals; and developing an action plan to leverage your strengths or close the gaps using the informal/unconscious modes of communication.

The Culture Sort exercise used during the research project (and described in depth in chapter three) is a useful tool for clarifying both ideals and current perceptions of culture. It is, however, insufficient to change culture by itself.

The interpretation of the values of successful schools in chapter six (and summarised on page 48) is a useful means of challenging your own and your staff's aspirations and is, hence, a vital supplement to any culture measurement activity.

We also propose some general principles to be applied throughout the project:

- The project requires the full and enthusiastic backing of the headteacher and the senior leadership team.
- The project should be collaborative and involve staff at every level in open discussion.
- You cannot take culture piecemeal and tinker with one piece and expect to leave the rest unchanged. Your culture is an internally consistent explanation of how you, your staff, your students, your school and your society works.
- Paradoxically, in the light of the above, you cannot change everything immediately. You will need to choose your areas of action quite tactically, slotting each piece into the existing picture.
- You cannot rely solely on the formal and conscious means of communication. Simply stating your desired culture in a mission statement will not achieve it when other forces such as role models and communal celebrations are sending different messages. You will need to develop new levers for change.

### *Task One: A Crisis of Faith*

The aim of this stage is to call into doubt your current assumptions by looking clearly at the internal and external challenges your school faces.

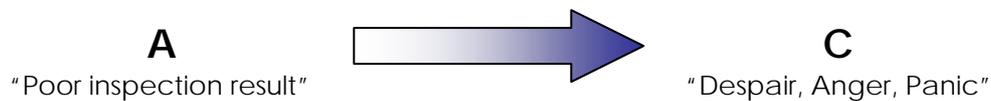
Working as a whole staff or in separate discussion groups, you can perform any or all of the following exercises (or create your own in similar mode):

1. Construct a process flowchart or diagram of your 'theory of education' which explains:
  - a. how people learn,
  - b. how teaching affects the way people learn,
  - c. how the organisation of the school affects the way people teach,
  - d. how your local community affects the organisation of your school.
2. Debate the following questions:
  - a. How have the role of the school, expectations of students and parents, and government policy on education changed over the last five/ten/twenty years?
  - b. What are the three biggest changes in the local community and/or economy over the last five years? What will happen to these trends over the next five years?
  - c. What might a school look like in thirty years time? What is the range of possibilities? What's the best case? Worst case? What is driving these changes?
3. Conduct the culture quiz on page 9.
4. Perform a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) on your school. Strengths and weaknesses are internal features; for example well motivated staff, cramped accommodation, etc. Opportunities and threats are part of the environment around your school; for example, declining rolls, new director of education, etc. This works best as a brainstorm – either ask people to think through each category in turn or provide random ideas to be sorted later. The results can be displayed on a simple square grid.
5. Take an area of practice important to the school (say a particular teaching strategy, the behaviour management policy, the performance management system, the pastoral system, a particular role, etc.) What assumptions about the way people behave and are motivated would have to be true for this to be a sensible way of doing things? Do you actually believe they are true?
6. Read the chapter on Interpretation in this report and the summary of the beliefs and values of successful schools on page 48. Do you agree with each point? If not, why not? Do you think you run your school according to each point? Try to build a similar list of lessons about how to approach education in the modern age. This could incorporate some of the points provided, add more of specific interest to you or even flatly contradict it.

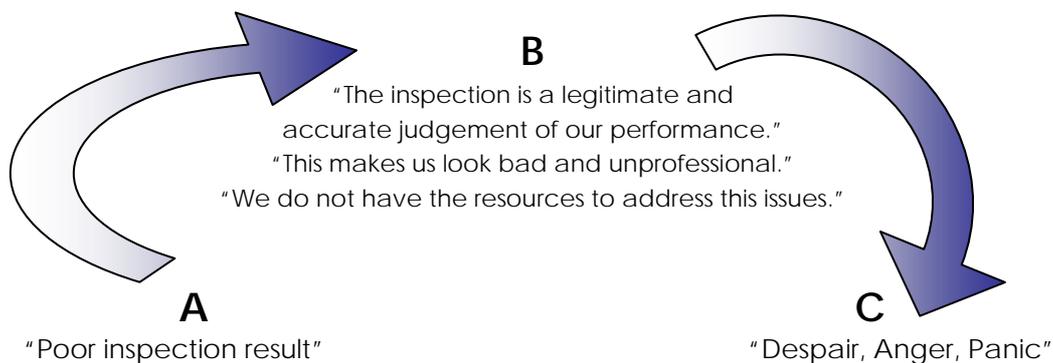
7. Take a specific, concrete event during which many people in the school became angry or upset (focus on a professional issue, like an inspection, rather than personal issue, such as a bereavement). Describe the trigger event and describe the emotions that followed on either side of a white board or flipchart. What beliefs or assumptions must have been operating to make *those* emotions follow *that* event? What other beliefs might replace them to produce a different reaction?

The aim of this exercise is to reveal a hidden step in the chain of cause and effect between event and reaction. People often regard this as moving from A to B when, in fact it is moving from A to C. Step B in the chain is the assumptions that would need to be true to make that reaction a valid response. These assumptions exist in the culture not in the event itself. An example is shown below.

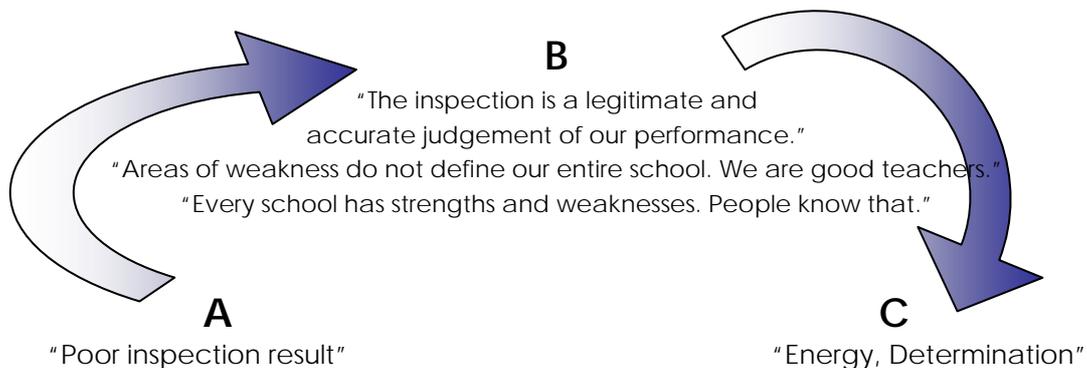
This is not the full picture:



Culture intervenes between events and responses:



Change the culture, change the response:



The aim of these facilitation techniques (from which you should choose only those that are appropriate to your needs) is twofold: to raise an awareness that cultural assumptions shape our response to events; and to question the ongoing validity of these assumptions: do they help or hinder us from doing our job? This is a reflective, discursive exercise rather than one which generates action. But if you identify any new lessons or outmoded beliefs, you may wish to make note of them for use in subsequent stages.

### **Task Two:** *Analyse your Culture*

Use the Culture Sort or a similar technique to generate a view among your whole staff on both the values and beliefs your school *ought* to hold and the ones which it *actually* embodies in practice.

You can obtain the Culture Sort materials from Hay Group (see page 64) or you can use brainstorming and clustering techniques to start from scratch. Other techniques for discovering culture could include interviews with staff members (particularly long-serving teachers) or seeking an external perspective.

Try to generate a view of the top three to six attributes which characterise where you want to be and where you are now. You may also like to compare these to the content of formal documents such as your school development plan, mission statement, philosophy, etc.

### **Task Three:** *Challenge your Aspirations*

In our view, the real job of culture changes begins with the ideal rather than the actual culture. Why is this? Where we want to be, what we regard as valuable and important is a more powerful driver of change than just an analysis of where we are now, our strengths and weakness. Strengths and weaknesses in relation to what? Other schools, government policy, a nagging sense of guilt, the need to be perfect in every respect?

Pioneering work on sustainable behaviour change by Richard Boyatzis suggests that we change ourselves most effectively when we clarify our own aspirations – get excited and inspired by them again – before worrying about strengths and weaknesses. And that we should spend as much time working on those strengths as thinking about the gaps.

In respect of culture, however, you also need to address two key questions:

How much do we agree on our direction?

How far do our aspirations reflect the real challenges we face?

A high level of disagreement about the ideal culture may often reflect disagreement of the nature of the challenges faced and so the two could be resolved together. Use the ideas generated during task one to compare the *ideal* picture against the reality you face. Does this generally reflect the best way to complete your tasks as a school? Or are they a means of making your life easier?

If you fundamentally disagree about the relative priority of a particular card or statement, pose the question of each party: 'What assumptions about human nature, organisation and our society would have to be true to make this important / unimportant?' These assumptions may be more capable of testing by appeal to evidence or common sense.

With a consensus on the key characteristics of an ideal culture, which reflects the challenges your school will face internally and externally over the coming years, the next step is to perform a gap analysis.

The Culture Sort technique makes this fairly straightforward. Take each of the top six *ideal* cards and discover their ranking (i.e. their row number) on the *actual* grid for each group that has taken part. Calculate the range of scores (or even the standard deviation if you're feeling flash) and the average score for each card. Cards with low numbers are current strengths; card with high numbers are current gaps. Beware cards in either category, however, which have a wide range of scores among different groups – experience may differ in different parts of the school. You will need to dig deeper to uncover the truth here.

To start with, choose at most two strengths and one gap upon which to act. Don't focus solely on weaknesses.

#### **Task Four: The Action Plan**

This stage is suited to a whole staff activity on an INSET day or series of extended staff meetings. Ideally people should work in mixed groups of four to eight participants. Start with a strength, then a gap, then finish on a strength.

1. Conduct the culture quiz from page 9 if you have not already done so. The best approach is to ask each question of the room at large and ask people to note their answers privately on some scrap paper. At the end, go round the room and ask people to call out their answers in rapid fire mode, without too much elaboration. In discussion afterwards ask people to vote on the three most powerful modes in which culture is communicated. Ask each group to describe a particularly potent example of each and record these on a flip chart for later use.
2. Taking the first point on which you want to plan (a current strength), write the statement representing the value or belief on a whiteboard and ask each group to come up with a concrete example of a time that exemplifies the school at its best on this point and a time that exemplifies the school at its weakest. To be useful, the examples must be specific rather than generic, narrative rather than summary, detailed rather than vague; where possible names, dates, actions and verbatim conversations should be provided. For example:

*When I arrived at the school in 2001, John and Mary invited me to observe their lessons. I was struck by the fact that they, experienced members of staff, took an active interest in my opinions even though I was an NQT and both changed their practice as a result of suggestions I made about rounding off the lessons.*

3. Facilitate a general discussion on the potential insights from these examples and the general barriers to, and opportunities for, taking action in this area.
4. Now ask each group to propose *three* strategies which draw on the lessons from the examples and which address any barriers. Each strategy should refer to the modes of communication identified in step one (refer them to the list on the white board) as the means through which they will be affected. This rule can be adhered to loosely rather than strictly, however. The strategies should include:
  - a. One that can be done in school tomorrow with relative ease – a quick win;
  - b. One that can be implemented over a term or year but will have a dramatic and powerful impact;
  - c. One idea that is ‘off-the-wall’, radical, humorous, imaginative or outrageous.
5. In other words – the ‘easy’, the ‘hard’ and the ‘crazy’. Summarise the proposals on a flip chart and have them written up afterwards. If you like you can have people vote on their favourites in each category, but this is not essential.
6. Repeat for each area of action. Depending on time and energy levels you may wish to take each area in separate sessions.

As well as engaging people in the need for change, this process also takes advantage of their diverse viewpoints and creativity. It is important to emphasise in the setup, however, that they are providing proposals for action, not instructions or demands. It is the task and responsibility of the headteacher and senior leadership team to review proposals for practicality and fit, choose the best and schedule their implementation. Bear in mind, though, that neglecting to put at least one of them into effect will incur a large cost in goodwill and enthusiasm.

As with all action-planning processes, follow through on any commitment, monitor and report on progress regularly and, above all, evaluate effectiveness before either abandoning or moving on to the next project.

## Scenario Four: Cultural *Capacity*

Here are nine activities for building an adaptive capacity into your culture. Some of these are cultural characteristics in their own right and will require embedding using the principles outlined in scenario three. Although you can pick and choose to a limited degree to suit your needs and style, they are inter-related and mutually supportive. They are:

- Laboratories of the Future
- Revered Mavericks
- Dealing with Dissent
- Conscious Culture
- Ritual Reviews
- Wider Horizons
- Expression of Wisdom
- All Fools' Day
- Personal Leadership

### ***Laboratories of the Future***

A vital element of adaptive capacity in culture is the ability to question our assumptions. Our values and beliefs need to decline in status from holy writ to working principles. Yet, at the same time, we cannot practically stop and question each move we make, going back to first principles each time. We need a wide area of stability in school. In order to put our assumptions into perspective and create pockets of enquiry, we recommend creating laboratory conditions in certain parts of the school. These need to be tightly circumscribed and can be defined by time (e.g. Friday afternoons), function (e.g. English department), geography (e.g. sixth form block), policy (e.g. CPD activities), etc.

In a laboratory we form theories or hypotheses about the way the world works, design experiments to test them and use the evidence to confirm or deny our hypotheses. And this is exactly what should occur in our cultural laboratory. They can take hot issues and pet projects but it is equally valid to focus on areas of schooling taken for granted. The lab could be run by the same people each time, but it may also help to ensure that every member of staff has the opportunity to participate. The basic process is:

1. Take a behaviour, practice or way of working that is of importance in school (e.g. the way lessons are started, setting and streaming procedures, the organisation of lunch, the way staff meetings are run): what theory or mental model justifies this practice?
2. Design an experiment which could prove this theory *wrong*. If the theory is cast into doubt, what alternative assumptions could be made that might better explain the facts?
3. Test the new assumptions
4. Elaborate the new theories: what else might be called into question?

*For example, a group examines the timing of the school day. The fact that all students start and finish at the same time seems to be based on assumptions about: the preferred working practices of staff members, the need for reliable cover of lessons, the requirement of every student to be in school every day in order to work effectively, the lifestyle and other commitments of their families and the fact that it is an efficient mode of organisation. Two tests are designed which enquire into the preferences of local families and teaching staff. It is discovered that many families are organising expensive childcare in the morning because they travel to work earlier than the school starts. Many teachers would prefer more flexible working hours to fit with family and leisure commitments. It is also suggested that school starting times clash with the local rush hour. The group now needs to proceed to build and test a different model of local lifestyles and create some new organisational processes to fit them ...*

Although the lab may have beneficial effects in renewing practice, the results are less important than the process. It is a means of reminding us that the map is not the territory, our models of the world are not the reality itself. It is therefore vital that, although it may move around in function, personnel, focus, etc., the lab is a permanent feature of the school and not a special event. It should also have a high profile: the results and processes should be communicated, discussed and sponsored by senior leaders.

### ***Revered Mavericks***

How many heretics does your school have? Before you answer 'too many!' look at the second question: how are they treated? Although culture is a collective phenomenon, the process of culture change is individual – it begins with a single person questioning assumptions and raising awkward questions. Although we could all do a little bit more of this, there is no doubt that some people are uniquely suited to the task and relish the role. They are a valuable resource – they should be recruited, rewarded, retained and respected. Ronald Heifetz recommends “embracing ... people actively opposed to the direction and manifestations of change” and Michael Fullan favours “listening to the resistance.” Mavericks are your protection against cultural obsolescence and the engines of new values and beliefs. Additionally, their existence provides valuable role models to others.

Naturally, you don't want an entire school of mavericks and you want to manage their input carefully. Many of the difficulties of using mavericks centre on role design. They often respond well in creative, developmental, policy-type roles rather than strict operational accountabilities. Yet giving them 'emeritus' style positions or roving briefs, with complete freedom of action and few accountabilities, can send the wrong messages to other staff.

### ***Dealing with Dissent***

It may be helpful to examine how you personally and collectively deal with dissenting opinions – not mild debate over policy but heated conflicts over strategy, direction or values. This involves walking a fine line between blind acceptance (rather than reasoned defence) and reacting with anger and hostility.

When was the last time someone disagreed with you in school over something very dear to your heart? How did you react during the moment itself? In the days and weeks afterward?

How do other people in school resolve their disagreements?

Can an argument with the headteacher, even one on which the member of staff backs down, result in lost opportunities or loss of status?

We can adapt the 'DAWA' model of reactions to loss or negative feedback to institutional attitudes to dissent:

**Denial** – contrary opinions are met with blank contradiction without reference to the evidence

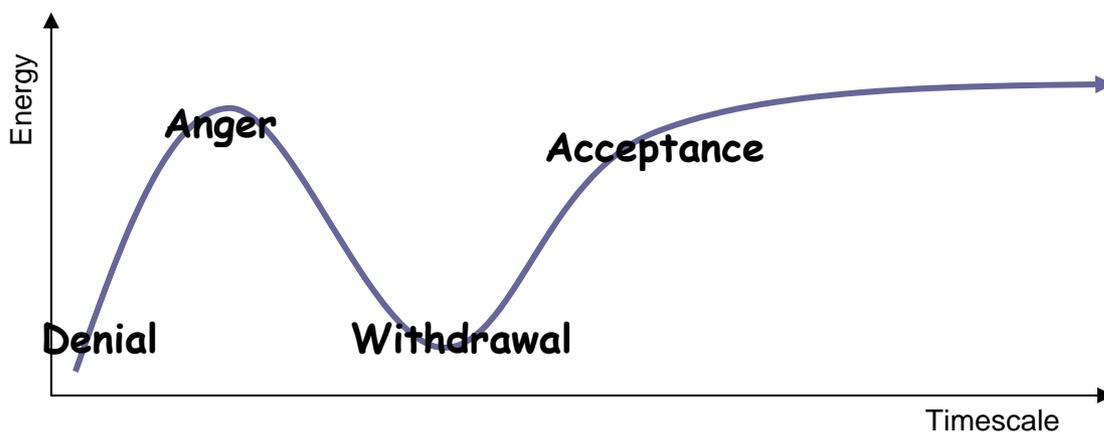
**Anger** – disagreement over professional matters develops into personal hostility and loss of status

**Withdrawal** – confrontation is not overt, but is not addressed either, using two sub modes:

**Slick Acceptance** – feedback is openly welcomed, with almost excessive enthusiasm but never sinks deep enough to change behaviour

**Ostracism** – the idea or the person is neglected or marginalised

**Acceptance** – ideas are actively and enthusiastically engaged with, critiqued, amended and referred to evidence.



Where does your school stand on this scale? In fact, the quiet one, withdrawal in either of its forms, is the most dangerous because it is less obviously pathological but still harmful. Often meetings and discussions will go through a cycle of these phases, which is perfectly natural and healthy. But do you find your discussions become 'stuck' at any point?

A helpful model for moving through the cycle is Roger Schwartz's facilitation technique of 'inquiry and advocacy'. We shouldn't pretend we don't have an opinion (in fact we state it openly, with reference to the evidence upon which we based it) and we don't assume that the other person is either an idiot or misguided (in fact we assume they have access to data which we have not seen and upon which they have created a rational argument). Using these simple principles we can handle dissent in a much more productive fashion: 'My attitude towards this is  $x$  because of  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$ . However, I think you must have some information about this topic that I have not seen. Can you explain your reasoning?'

The courage to publicly disagree needs to be rewarded and continually reinforced.

### ***Conscious Culture***

Your whole school needs to understand what culture is, what it is composed of and why it matters. You need to become self-conscious about culture and aware that it is guiding your actions. This will help you to use culture rather than be used by it and will create a language for discussing it.

Tools such as the Culture Sort can initiate this process, but it will need to be revisited regularly – new people will need to be inducted in this in the same way they are introduced to your styles of teaching. It should be on the agenda of meetings, in the school development plan, and a consideration in all major decisions.

### ***Ritual Reviews***

The rites and rituals of daily life in school are part of your basic toolkit. They must be strong enough to sustain an identity and set of shared values but not so strong as to stifle dissent and free thinking. Of particular concern in respect of adaptive capacity are the rights of passage associated with joining a school or with joining a particular group within the school (such as the senior leadership team). Are they designed to celebrate and welcome and communicate wisdom or to break down existing habits and make people feel 'lucky' to be a member? A useful clue can be whether there are certain classic mistakes which are expected and watched for rather than advised against.

Use the suggestions on page 8 to conduct a thorough inventory of the key celebrations and rituals in your school. Actively list the major role models and what they represent. You may wish to perform this exercise openly to get access to the minor rituals of departmental meetings and staffroom interplay which are not easily noticed.

Target a small number of your most powerful organisational rites to monitor, manage and enhance. Consider participants, symbolism, roles within the event, key messages conveyed. You may want to create new rituals and role models if the existing ones are weak or inappropriate.

How are role models created? Anyone who is explicitly praised, rewarded or given trappings of status (from titles to seating arrangements) is a potential role model. The best role models are also reflective – able to articulate how they do things and why a particular course of action was best.

- Who do people defer to?
- Who are people advised to seek out for advice on a particular topic?
- Who comes into most frequent contact with new recruits and more junior staff?
- If you were posed the question 'what does it take to do well round here and get on?' who would you turn to as a living example? Would other people give the same answer?

It is important to conduct these reviews on a regular, if infrequent basis.

### ***Wider Horizons***

We can only really question assumptions and models on the basis of contrary experience. So a very straightforward technique to create the resource for culture change is to build within the institution a more diverse set of experiences. It is important, when doing so, to build a culture of respecting outside experience rather than rejecting ideas as 'not invented here' or expecting new recruits to unlearn their 'bad habits' and do it your way.

Some possibilities include:

- Examine the backgrounds from which you recruit people. Actively target recruits from unusual backgrounds: age, type of school, region, nationality, phase, commercial experience, other public sector experience.
- Encourage secondments and exchanges with other schools and other forms of organisation; particularly the longer forms of secondment rather than just brief study visits.
- Seek guest speakers who aren't the usual suspects of educationalists and consultants.
- Build partnerships and joint ventures with other schools and, again, non-educational institutions.
- Investigate other bodies of theoretical and professional knowledge which are less commonly associated with education than psychology: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, economics, sports coaching, business administration, etc. What theories of human nature and capability are implicit in their way of working? How might they challenge your own?

### ***Expression of Wisdom***

Culture serves a valuable purpose, otherwise it would not be so pervasive. Your school cannot be full of experiments, mavericks and self-doubt. It needs a body of shared 'wisdom' to help people make the right choices.

It can help to be very explicit about this, to take care about the language used in expressing wisdom and to create some formal categories.

What lessons have you learned in your school? About teaching, about learning, about people, about the world around you. How often do you take stock of this body of knowledge and celebrate its acquisition? What are the limits of these lessons – the constraints and circumstances under which they hold true? Where are the big unknowns?

Capture these lessons in writing, in anecdotes, in children's artwork, etc.

When expressing these lessons, think carefully about the language used. Is it authoritative, certain, eternal? Or tentative, subjunctive: 'In *my* experience, *x*, *y* and *z* *might* work in *certain* circumstances.'

Finally, be clear when something is a hypothesis, to be tested against evidence, a valid and proven belief, an untestable value or an unquestioned, possibly outdated assumption. Explicitly position and move elements of culture through this cycle.

### ***All Fools' Day***

Different positions in the hierarchy create different perspectives. More junior people have less invested in terms of reputation and status in the current structures of power and in past decisions. Try putting someone else in charge for a while. Perhaps not for a whole day, perhaps within tightly constrained limits (on a particular project, say) but look beyond the usual suspects. Job swaps can be a minor form of this – get the head of English to run a science department meeting; ask a student to teach a lesson to staff; ask NQTs to design new schemes of work; persuade the headteacher to be the caretaker for the day; encourage a new teacher to plan and chair a staff meeting.

Regularly inverting the hierarchy and spending time in other people's shoes can create a more robust culture. You need to be clear, however, to spell out the level of authority and accountability associated with the temporary position to both the recipient and their colleagues. This is particularly important for those unaccustomed to leadership.

### ***Personal Leadership***

When all else is taken into account, culture is ultimately the responsibility of the headteacher, perhaps their most important responsibility. As Schein indicates, culture is leadership. "Leadership is originally the source of the beliefs and values that get a group moving in dealing with its internal and external problems. If what a leader proposes works and continues to work, what was once only the leader's assumption gradually comes to be a shared assumption." It is the product of strategic decisions about the role of an organisation, the needs of its stakeholders and the best way to reconcile the two in a given environment. Culture is a codification, an imprint of these decisions that can endure long after the original decision maker has moved on.

It is always a duty of senior leaders in school to ask difficult questions of themselves. To be clear about changes in the environment, policy and the needs of students and to continually question whether existing practices retain their rationale.

It is equally important to be clear when elements of culture, hard-fought values and beliefs, are sensible guides and do make sense of the world. These should be defended, celebrated and communicated.

## 8. Hay Group Education

### People and Work

Hay Group was founded in 1943 to understand and improve the relationship between people and work. We believe that the right balance of individual capability and motivation, with organisational structure, culture and leadership is the key to success. Six decades of work in the public and private sector, with clients as diverse as IBM and the Solidarity movement in Poland; with a number of key human resource concepts under our belt – from job evaluation, to competencies, to emotional intelligence – have reinforced this belief.

Hay Group Education has worked with schools in the UK since 1997, first with the design of the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers, then the research for the DfES into effective teaching. More recently, the Transforming Learning initiative – an on-line system for gathering pupil feedback – has been used by over 1500 schools.

We are interested in how the human aspects of the school system combine to create the right environment for learning: the climate in the classroom, the behaviours and motivation of students and teachers, leadership, organisation structure, culture and strategy.

We base our interventions on solid research and work with schools' leadership teams to strengthen their internal capacity.

If you would like to find out more about our work, you could visit our website:

**[www.transforminglearning.co.uk](http://www.transforminglearning.co.uk)**

Or call us on 020 7856 7526

In the realm of culture change, we have a number of offerings, from materials to INSETs to major developmental programmes. A selection is provided below.

## Culture Change Services

Here is a selection of our programmes and consultancy services on culture change and related issues. We also work with schools on leadership development, team effectiveness, organisational design, etc.

These descriptions are outlines only – we are able to adapt timings, agendas and content to suit your needs.

### ***Culture Sort Materials***

A 'self help' kit which includes facilitator's guide (including a guide to action planning), session outlines, card deck and other materials; analysis of results by Hay Group (via email) together with key recommendations. £95 + VAT.

### ***An Introduction to Culture Change***

A one day session with a Hay Group consultant, including a facilitated culture sort, immediate analysis and debate plus action planning. Suitable for whole staff INSETs or senior teams.

### ***Support for Culture Transformation***

Three one-day sessions with a Hay Group consultant, conducted over the course of one or two terms, covering the five culture change tasks (see page 13) and facilitating a school's own enquiry, experimentation and activity. Using a combination of whole school meetings and senior team facilitation.

### ***The Resilient School***

A two day programme building on the work of Andrew Schatte in resilience. How do values and beliefs shape our behaviour and performance? How do individuals change their values and beliefs? How do we create an environment which supports this change? Suitable for whole staff sessions or smaller groups.

It should be emphasised that Hay Group cannot change your culture. We can only help *you* change it by offering concepts, facilitating debate and providing a wider perspective.

To book one of these programmes, please call us on 020 7856 7526.

Alternatively, use the fax back enquiry form on the next page.

# Order & Enquiry Form

## Culture for Learning

Name	
Job Title	
School	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	

Tick as appropriate:

- Please send me a copy of the **Culture Sort Materials**. I understand you will invoice my school for £95 + VAT.

I need ..... decks of cards (one for each participating group).

- Please **call me** to discuss culture change programmes

---

**Please fax to:**

---

020 7856 7102

## 9. Further Reading

Burke, W. and Litwin, G. (1992) *A Causal Model of Organisational Performance and Change* in *Journal of Management* Vol. 18, No. 3, 523-545

Deal, T. E. and Kennedy, A. A. (1982) *Corporate Cultures: the rites and rituals of corporate life*, Cambridge Mass: Perseus Publishing

Dimmock, C. (2000) *Designing the Learning-Centred School: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* London Falmer Press

Dimmock, C. *Developing Comparative and International Educational Leadership and Management: A cross cultural model* in *School Leadership & Management*, Vol 20, no 2, pp143-60

Hargreaves, D. *Helping Practitioners Explore their School's Culture* in Prosser, J. (ed) (1999) *School Culture*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing

Heifetz, R. (2002) *Encyclopaedia of Leadership Entry* in Demos, *The Adaptive State: Strategies for personalising the public realm.*

Hobby, R. Crabtree, S. and Ibbetson, J. (2004) *The School Recruitment Handbook*, London: RoutledgeFalmer

Hopkins, D. (2001) *School Improvement for Real*, London: RoutledgeFalmer

Hopkins, D. Ainscow, M. and West, M. (1994) *School Improvement in an era of change*, London: Cassell

Reivich, K. and Schatte, A. (2002) *The Resilience Factor*, New York: Broadway Books

Schein, E. (1997) *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, Jossey Bass Wiley

Schwartz, R. (2002) *The Skilled Facilitator: a comprehensive resource for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers and coaches*, Jossey Bass Wiley

Stoll, L. and Fink, D. (1996) *Changing our Schools: linking school effectiveness and school improvement*, Buckingham: Open University Press

Stoll, L. *School Culture and Improvement* in Prosser, J. (ed.) (1999) *School Culture*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

## Appendix A: The Thirty Statements

- 1 Measuring and monitoring targets and test results
- 2 Raising capability – Helping people learn – Laying foundations for later success
- 3 Respecting authority – Providing direction
- 4 Taking initiative and responsibility – Participation at every level – Healthy dissent
- 5 The school comes first – No-one is bigger than the school – Doing what is expected of you
- 6 People come first – Everyone can make a contribution and deserves control over their own destiny
- 7 Respecting professional autonomy – Creating a space to call your own – Perfecting your patch
- 8 Working together – Learning from each other – Sharing resources and ideas – Investing in others
- 9 Recognising personal circumstances – Making allowances – Toleration – It's the effort that counts
- 10 Keeping promises – Confronting poor performance – Taking ownership
- 11 Embedding – Evaluating – Measured reform and taking stock
- 12 Experimenting – Trying new things – Looking to the next big idea
- 13 Preventing mistakes – Making sure nobody and nothing slips through – Planning for all eventualities
- 14 Taking calculated risks for worthwhile goals – Try it and see
- 15 Single minded dedication – Relentless pace
- 16 Warmth – Humour – Repartee – Feet on the ground
- 17 Setting achievable goals and realistic expectations – Incremental improvements
- 18 A hunger for improvement – High hopes and expectations
- 19 Investing time with those who can achieve the most
- 20 Focusing on the value added – Holding hope for every child – Every gain a victory
- 21 Dignity – Reserve – Respecting privacy – Keeping a lid on it – Self control
- 22 Admitting mistakes – Providing challenging feedback – Letting people know how you feel
- 23 Promoting excellence – Pushing the boundaries of achievement – World class
- 24 Creating opportunities for everyone – Widening horizons – Fighting injustice
- 25 Creating a pleasant and collegial working environment
- 26 Making sacrifices to put pupils first
- 27 Mastering your subject – Gaining expertise – Sharing knowledge
- 28 Admitting you don't know – Listening to dissent – Curiosity and humility
- 29 Keeping up with initiatives – Doing what's required – Following policy
- 30 Anticipating initiatives – Making them work for us – Picking and choosing

# Appendix B: An Example of the Grid

## Participant Record Sheet #1 – Actual Culture

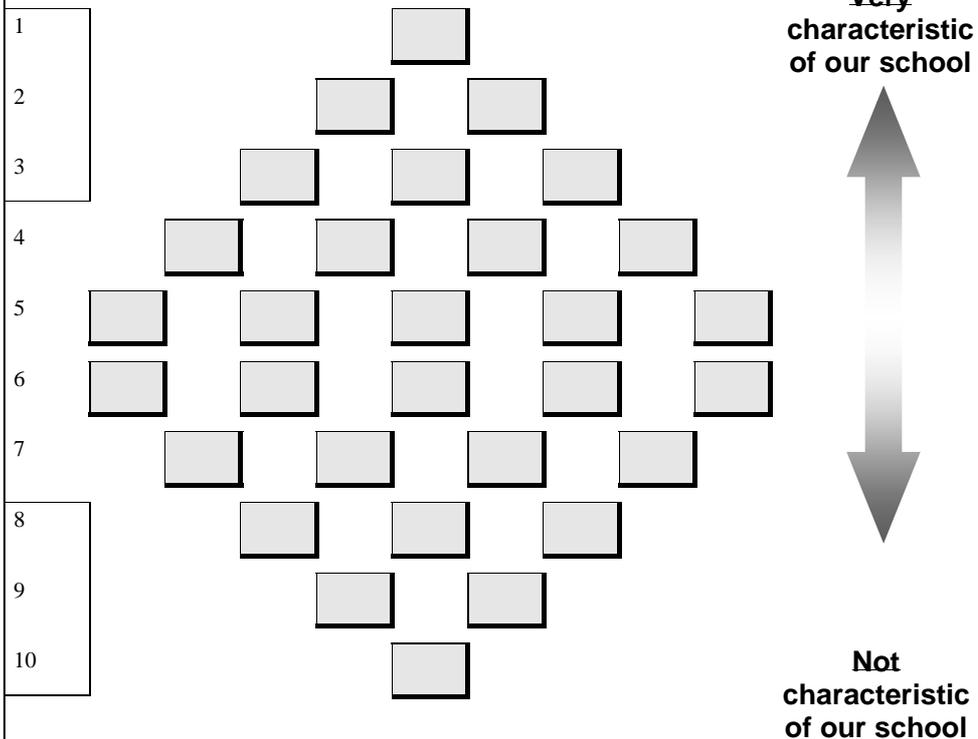
Arrange the thirty cards on a table top, following the pattern drawn below. You will need to discuss and negotiate their meaning and their placement as a group.

Try to describe your school's culture *now*, rather than how you would like it to be. If you can't agree, capture the experience of the majority of people in *your group*.

When you are done, to provide a permanent record, write each card's number in the appropriate place on the grid below.

It is vital that you follow the pattern in placing your cards. You can only have one card on the top row, two on the next, and so on. This may require you to make some hard choices and prioritise.

Name of Group:



## Appendix C: Climate and Culture

Climate and culture are often used interchangeably, but are actually quite distinct concepts. The distinction adopted by Burke and Litwin (1992) is helpful:

*Climate is defined in terms of perceptions that individuals have of how their local work unit is managed and how effectively they and their day-to-day colleagues work together on the job ... Climate is much more in the foreground of organisational member's perceptions, whereas culture is more background and defined by beliefs and values.*

That is, climate is a short term, transactional product of management practices (particularly leadership styles). Culture is a long term, transformational feature of any institution. In this light culture helps to create climate, while culture itself is shaped by the external environment and leadership.

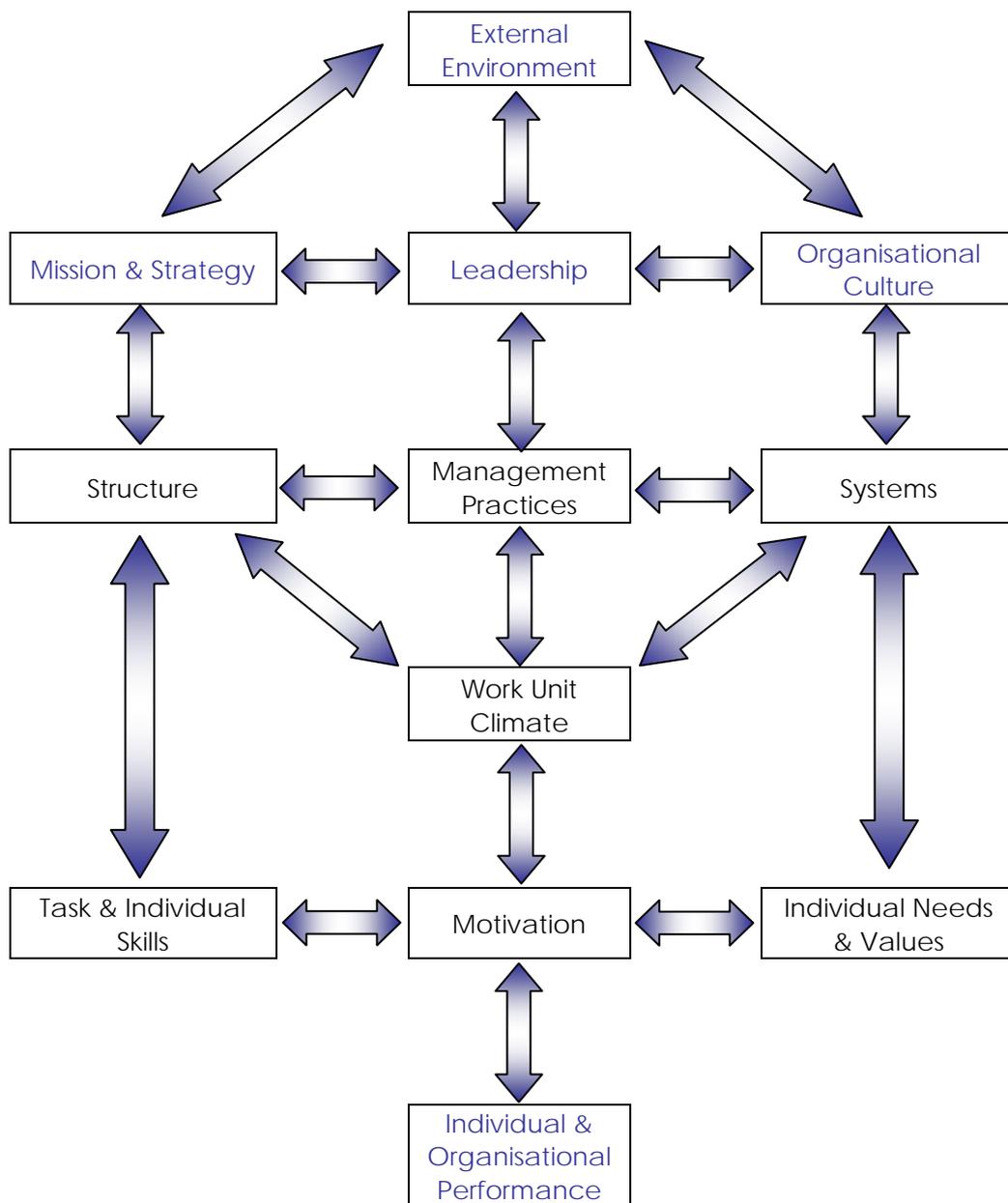
Thinking about the organisation of a school in terms of transactional and transformational components is a powerful aid to change. Transactional features are part of the day-to-day business of getting the job done. They can be tinkered with, in isolation if need be, without upsetting the overall balance. They include structure, tasks, skills and systems. Transformational features are part of the foundation of the organisation – they are hard to change but also cause correspondingly large changes in performance. “Change can be arranged or may come about through the application of uncontrolled outside forces, but it will involve substantial upheaval in all transaction-level systems and will take time.” Transformational features include mission and strategy, culture and leadership.

Climate and culture are thus part of a larger system, which Burke and Litwin describe as a “causal model” of organisational change. This is sketched out on the next page. Transformational features are highlighted in blue.

The distinction between climate and culture is important because climate is a well established concept within the education system: a key part, for example, of the *Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers*<sup>11</sup>, in which over 10,000 headteachers have taken part. Attempts to change school climate through different styles of leadership will be influenced, perhaps unconsciously, by the larger culture of the school. However, leadership itself stands distinct from both. It faces in two directions: shaping the daily transactions of school life, through management practices, but also with privileged access to the deeper assumptions which underpin the school's culture.

The long term goal of Hay Group's educational research is to ‘flesh out’ this causal model for schools. It has particular relevance to education reform because of the importance of personal capability and motivation in the model. It is clear that motivation underpins both successful learning and successful teaching.

The central strand of the model – from leadership through climate to performance has been well mapped. In future projects our attention will turn, in particular, to structure, strategy and the relationship between the school and the external environment.



From Burke and Litwin, *Journal of Management*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1992. (Some arrows connecting the components have been omitted to simplify the graphic.)

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=ldev-advanced-index>

**Hay Group UK**  
**email: [education@haygroup.com](mailto:education@haygroup.com)**  
**web: [www.haygroup.co.uk](http://www.haygroup.co.uk)**

Hay Group Education  
33 Grosvenor Place  
London  
SW1X 7HG  
Tel: 020 7856 7000  
Fax: 020 7856 7100