Bridging the Gap: an inquiry into the teaching of English in Year 5 to 8 at a British International School

Ceri Seymour

A Research & Development Project

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Abstract

This research, which took place in a British International School, investigates the teaching of English in Years 5-8. The purpose of the research was to help to create favourable preconditions for the development of a bespoke curriculum for Years 5 - 8 through increased professional collaboration between key stage 2 and key stage 3 teachers.

The literature review examines readings from 3 main areas: general arguments about transition, the specifics of teaching English in an international school with a high EAL population and different methods for professional collaboration. It identifies the idea of open systems (Lipscombe et al 2019) as a useful framework for evaluating collaboration.

Data was collected in the form of questionnaires sent to Y7 students as well as English teachers in Y5-8. Cross-phase peer observations were then scheduled. Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only observations of primary teachers by secondary teachers were completed prior to the school campus closing in March 2020. Teachers who had visited lessons provided notes from their observations as well as reflections on the experience.

The research found that students and teachers had quite similar views on the teaching of English in the school but there were notable differences concerning the analysis of texts and the way that non-fiction and speaking activities were viewed. The collaboration between teachers helped to build trust between colleagues and there is an enthusiasm for

more collaboration in the future. Activities identified include more peer observations and an examination of work and planning in the year groups concerned.

This paper provides ideas for future areas of development towards a curriculum for Years 5-8. A greater emphasis on speaking activities (which would be of particular benefit to EAL students) and plans to integrate non-fiction across the whole curriculum could create meaningful links between subjects. In addition, a more aligned system of assessment would tackle a significant concern for students surrounding the transition from primary to secondary school.

Introduction

This research project, Bridging The Gap: an inquiry into the teaching of English in Years 5 to 8 at a British International School, will identify similarities and differences in the teaching of English across the primary and secondary phases at a British International School. Although the phrase ‘bridging the gap’ has been used in different educational contexts, in this project it is intended to refer to the transition gap between primary and secondary school. The project intends to build professional collaboration between the secondary English department and upper key stage 2 teachers in order to be able to make recommendations for the further alignment of English in KS2 and KS3, fitting with the school’s vision to create a bespoke curriculum for Years 5 to 8.

The research will look at the advantages and disadvantages of organising teaching and learning in a cross-phase model. In addition, it will look at how collaborative professional learning strategies may be useful in developing a greater appreciation of the different pedagogical approaches employed across the school. Subject-specific arguments about English will also be presented.

One of the principal driving forces of this project is the Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) at the school (known anonymously throughout this text as BIS). The WSDP states that the school will ‘undertake a learning review in Years 5 to 8’ (see appendix 1). Following on from the WSDP, the research forms part of the school’s focus on ‘researching and exploring; gathering information to inform knowledge’ (see appendix 2) and aligns with the goal for more ‘vertical collaboration and communication to enable an understanding of what is already in place’ (see appendix 2).

As English subject leader in the primary school, a Year 5 teacher and a masters student, the aims of this project fall within my roles as a class teacher, subject leader and postgraduate student. In addition, this project will contribute to the growing body of research papers which are being conducted by staff at the school as part of our Professional Learning Community. This is important because international schools are recognised as serving their own particular and unique demographic which is affected by locality, autonomy and transience (Young 2017). According to Fail (2010) 'the more research carried out in the international school context, the more teachers realise that the situation is complex and there is no easy formula,' (p115). So inquiry into the unique context of any international school is essential if developments are to be made for the benefit of the community it serves.

As an international school, BIS is subject to different parameters to schools that operate within certain national systems. These parameters bring both advantages and complications. Being free of national systems can be liberating but also places enormous responsibility on the school to make good decisions about school development in order to ensure that education is progressive and engaging yet also prepares students effectively for external examinations (Cambridge 2010, Fail 2010). Another point to consider is the 'temptation to combine different curricular, pedagogical and assessment principles,' (Bates 2010 p161). This comes with the warning that having too much autonomy in the curriculum can lead to inconsistency and confusion (Corlu 2014).

Recent years have seen dramatic changes in the demographic of international schools. This can be evidenced by statistics which highlight that globally 80% of places in international schools are now taken by local students. This is in sharp contrast to statistics from 30 years ago when 80% of places were being occupied by expatriate or globally

mobile students (Young 2017, Hayden and Thompson 2010, Hayden 2011). Confidential internal data from the school confirms that, in line with other similar schools, BIS has seen an increase of local students and students who do not have English as a first language.

It should be emphasised that although the overall aim of the school is the development of a Year 5-8 curriculum, the aim of the intervention in this project is to develop professional collaboration between KS2 and KS3 colleagues. An increase in collaboration should make it possible to approach the curriculum review in a more rigorous manner. A detailed examination of the curriculum is beyond the scope of this project.

Literature Review

In order to systematically approach our investigation into the teaching of English at BIS in Years 5-8, the literature review will be organised in the following way:

- **Overall research question**: can collaborative professional learning strategies create the preconditions for the development of an English curriculum for Years 5-8?
- **Sub-questions for literature review**:
    - What are the strengths and weaknesses of a cross-phase model?
    - How is this research affected by the context?
    - What are effective strategies for collaborative professional learning?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of a cross-phase model?

This section of the paper will consider the implications of developing a curriculum which spans the last two years and primary school and the first two years of secondary school.

This part will be organised into the following sub-sections:

- What are the main issues surrounding transition from primary to secondary?
- Why look at Years 5-8 as a specific phase?
- How can historical and international examples help to develop our understanding of this approach?

What are the main issues surrounding transition from primary to secondary?

There is no doubt that transition from primary to secondary school is a complicated time in the school career of all students. Difficulties encompass a range of concerns spanning pastoral, social and academic issues (Goodwyn and Findlay, 2002). It was suggested by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) that the pastoral and social transition between primary and secondary schools had become less stressful than previously. They provided examples of annual activities that happened in schools to prepare students in Year 6 for their further school careers. Meetings between heads of year, sharing information amongst key members of staff and induction days were found to be regular features in transition programmes, (Galton et al 1999). Worryingly, in a more recent study, Galton and McLellan (2018) found that good practice in school transition appears to happen less now than 20 years ago. This echoes other research which suggests that improvements to transition programmes can be made. Van Rens, Haelermans, Groot and Maassen (2018) consider that much information that is shared is still too generic and does not involve the students themselves to a large enough degree.

Another point that is frequently raised regarding transition is that, given the age of the students in these year groups, transition to secondary school also coincides with a transition from childhood to adolescence (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002, Sirsch 2003, Hopwood, Hay and Dyment 2016). This makes it difficult to separate issues of academic performance from personal changes. Several authors (Alexander 2010, Symonds and Galton 2014, Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019) raise the important point that, although transition between schools can occur at different stages in different countries, the same issues still dominate.

If the picture of pastoral transition is not encouraging, academic transition is even further behind. There are persistent concerns surrounding the ‘academic dip’ in Year 7 which Goodwyn and Findlay (2002) suggested ‘has long vexed teachers and parents’ (p2). They found evidence to suggested that ‘40 per cent of pupils do less well in the first year of secondary than in the last year

of primary school' (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002 p23). Evangelou, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish and Sammons (2008) conclude that a focus on curriculum continuity can help to avoid this dip and Galton et al (1999) agree that increased attention to curriculum and pedagogy can help to stop this dip from occurring. Although there is general acknowledgement that more could be done to avoid this dip, few activities are designed to smooth the academic transition. Significantly fewer schools have historically focussed on activities which support the curricular and pedagogic side of transition, for example according to research by Galton et al (1999), 100% of schools had cross-phase head of year meetings in contrast to 30% of schools which had head of subject meetings prior to transfer. Whilst it has been established that this picture has now changed (for the worse) there is no evidence to suggest an increase in activities supporting academic transfer.

A regular theme in research is the idea that primary and secondary schools have different cultures. Primary schools are thought of as being child-centered environments where classes are taught by the same teacher and that subjects are often integrated. Secondary schools are much larger establishments which are based on subjects taught by specialists (Ward, 2000, Findlay 2002, Ferguson and Fraser 1998). An idea to be considered is that, although eager to work towards the same goal, primary and secondary teachers are working within different frames of reference. It is common for secondary teachers to note the poor skills of Y7 on entry, (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Van Rens et al 2018). Ironically, it is a frequent lament of primary teachers that their secondary colleagues lack trust in what has been taught in Year 6 which leads to the repetition of the curriculum in Year 7, (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Schafer 2018). This is important because Evangelou et al (2008) suggest that some key factors in the successful transfer of students between schools are: curriculum interest and continuity; an understanding of what is expected of them; being prepared for the level and style of work, and being challenged to build on what was learned in primary school. This means that without a shared understanding of what is happening in different phases, it is difficult for teachers in upper KS2 and KS3 to

adequately prepare students for the academic transition from primary to secondary school and to avoid issues such as not being challenged or not understanding previous styles of teaching.

Academic issues surrounding transition vary according to subject. An interesting point to be acknowledged at this stage is that some pieces of research suggest that students prefer English in Y7 to Y6, (Galton et al 1999) whilst others conclude the opposite (Evangelou et al 2008). This is in contrast to other subjects such as Maths and Science where attitudes regularly become more negative as students move into secondary (OFSTED 2015, Galton et al 1999). The reason for more positive attitudes towards English is suggested to be the relative differences of this subject between primary and secondary. (Galton et al 1999, Marshall 2013). More negative attitudes were found by Evangelou et al (2008) as a result of students suggesting that they were insufficiently challenged in this subject in Y7.

There is some discussion in the literature about the use of ‘bridging units’ between schools as a means of creating curriculum continuity (Evangelou et al 2008). However, Galton et al (1999) suggest that bridging units should be considered with caution and that, although they can provide limited curriculum continuity, what is more important is that discussions take place between primary and secondary colleagues about pedagogy and assessment (Galton et al, 1999). Galton and McLellan (2018) also noted that bridging units have become less regular which suggests that curriculum continuity has an even lower priority now than previously. It is also important to consider the purpose of moving to secondary school as a chance for a fresh start and to adapt to controlled discontinuities in preparation for other such events which will occur throughout life (Galton, Hargreaves and

Pell, 2003). An idea which Bharara (2019) describes as ‘a window of opportunity to enable adaptation’ (p2).

When questioned about ways to improve this situation, teachers in both phases have pointed to the idea of ‘getting into each other’s schools’ as a way of leading to ‘better understanding and mutual respect,’ (Marshall and Brindley 1998, p27). It is acknowledged that when this does happen effectively, it helps teachers to understand the style of lessons being taught in other phases. (Evangelou et al, 2008). Unfortunately, Galton et al (1999) found that only 20% of schools regularly used cross-phase teaching between primary and secondary as part of their transition programmes.

Why focus specifically on Years 5 to 8?

BIS is able to make decisions based on what is perceived to be the best approach for our students in our unique school environment. A current priority for the school is to investigate the possibility of creating a bespoke curriculum in Years 5-8. Given this goal, it is important to consider this idea presented by White (2004) in reference to school development:

> Interest groups will continue to have their own agendas and no incentive to subject their assumptions to critique. Teachers themselves, if their present frantic busyness continues, will be pressured to keep their eye on specific obligations, with too little time for wider thought about purpose (p174).

This adds importance to the idea that a robust examination of the school's situation is necessary and should take places within a critical examination of research into similar situations. It is also important that teachers are given the time and tools to deeply consider their own teaching beliefs and pedagogical practice in the context of developing an aligned curriculum. Some time has been created at BIS for staff to reflect together within the professional development system, (see appendix 2). This is a positive sign as Lipscombe, Buckley-Walker and McNamara (2019) highlight the importance of support from leadership and policy when working on innovations within a school.

In addition to general arguments about transition, it is important to also discuss reasons why a focus on the Year 5-8 age-range presents an interesting opportunity. As discussed earlier, a key reason for the interest in this group is to build on primary achievements and promote continuity between key stages (Goodwyn and Findlay, 2002). Middle grade students have been described as having unique experience and knowledge which can best be accommodated through a constructivist approach to learning, (Olofson and Garnett 2018). Many other people also suggest that student-centred approaches for this age group can lead to improvements in behaviour, motivation and engagement (Lockwood 2002, Toshalis and Nakkula 2012).

Another point to make in this section is that schools often prioritise entrance and exit years. It is documented that students in Year 8 can view this year of their schooling as relatively unimportant, resulting in a decline in effort (Galton et al, 2003). An advantage of a Year 5-8 curriculum could be to increase the profile of Year 8 within the school. Linked to this idea is the fact that in many schools, key stage 3 is not seen as a priority (OFSTED 2015) and that students are 'increasingly disillusioned' (Galton et al 2003 p5) by school in these year groups. However, because they are still concentrating in class and producing

what is being asked of them, a judgement is made that approaches to these year groups do not require investigation or modification. The development of a specific phase for Years 5 to 8 could be a catalyst in reprioritising many important resources such as specialist teachers and dedicated pedagogies as well as providing opportunities to hear opinions from students about their experiences in these year groups (Galton and McLellan 2018).

How can historical and international examples provide insight into this issue?

Different models of school structure can be examined in the context of this research to provide further insights into the potential advantages and disadvantages of a curriculum for Years 5-8. In the UK, middle schools (which were a popular phase of schooling from the 1970s - 1990s) were specifically designed to be transition schools and therefore avoid some issues surrounding the divide between primary and secondary schools (Hargreaves 1986, Lockwood, 2002). There are several reasons stated for the purpose of middle schools: an increased understanding of the age range 8 -14; the possibility to continue with progressive primary education and the opportunity to create a curriculum which is not focussed on external exams (Lockwood 2002). An issue that remained largely unresolved during the popularity of middle schools was how specialised the teachers should be (Hargreaves 1986). Many advocated the idea of semi-specialist or quasi-specialist teachers who had overall responsibility for a class but who also had a subject specialism (Williamson 1982), an idea that might be interesting to explore within the context of the development of a curriculum for Y5-8 at BIS.

Despite the decline of middle schools (in the UK), all of the stated advantages remain valid in the context of this research project. Indeed, speaking of the development of the National Literacy Strategy to cover Key Stages 2 and 3, Lockwood (2002) suggested that, although middle schools are in decline, they are well-placed to help schools looking to provide this kind of continuity in education across the phases, (Lockwood, 2002).

International examples provide another interesting place to look for information about transition at different ages. America, which regularly includes schools for the middle grades, offers several useful insights into the performance of schools designed for middle years pupils. Holas and Huston (2012) suggest; ‘a robust body of research finds middle school students underperforming elementary school students on achievement, interest in school and perceived self-competence,’ (p333). The literature also acknowledges that classroom environment and quality of teaching as well as differences in schools size are important factors in determining how students feel about moving on from primary education (Holas and Huston 2012, Ward 2000). A study of schools in Western Australia also cited similar findings, reporting that student performance plateaued or declined during their first year in secondary school. This was also coupled with a decline in student attitudes towards school, (Evangelou et al 2008). A similar picture was painted by Ward’s (2000) study of transition at different ages in New Zealand. He concluded that a later transition to secondary education comes with added maturity that made some of the difficulties associated with this move easier to manage. In addition, Ward found no detrimental effect when continuing with a primary school style approach for more years suggesting that, at middle school age, teacher knowledge of pupils is more advantageous than detailed subject knowledge, (Ward 2000). A disadvantage of middle school systems is that they can lead to a double transition, therefore doubling the negative effects of academic dips and pastoral concerns, (Bharara 2019).

The pattern that is established through examinations of historical and international examples can be summarised in this quote from Holas and Huston (2012), ‘The overall message of the results is that school level sometimes matters, but its effect depends on classroom quality and school characteristics,’ (p342). This further emphasises the need for in-depth investigation into the particular situation at BIS in order to be successful in introducing an aligned curriculum for Years 5-8 but also highlights that benefits can be reaped if favourable conditions are created.

To return to the question posed at the start of this section of the literature review, what are the strengths and weaknesses of a cross phase model? We can conclude that the strengths centre around curriculum and pedagogic continuity and the weaknesses involve education becoming more formal earlier as a result of earlier transition to a middle years phase which more closely resembles a secondary school.

How is this research affected by the context?

Having discussed the strengths and weaknesses of a cross-phase model, this section of the literature review will consider how this project relates specifically to the unique school context of BIS. The subject of English will be explored in more detail as well as factors which build the particular demographic of the school such as a high EAL population and a very transient student population.

This section will be organised into the following sub-sections:

- How has English developed as a subject?
- Do teachers in different phases have different perspectives on the subject of English?
- How does the international context of this study create different challenges?

How has English developed as a subject?

The notion of English as a subject is a contested one (Poulson 1998, Goodwyn, Reid and Durrant 2013, Ellis, Fox and Street 2010). This is due to many factors such as the historical evolution of the subject (Poulson 1998), the diversity of teachers (Myhill and Jones, 2013) and the frequent re-defining of English in schools by policy makers, (Marshall 2011).

These arguments are summarised effectively by Goodwyn and Findlay who say:

> The concept of 'literacy', what it is and how it should be taught and assessed, is not a simple matter…for literacy, once conceived unproblematically as an ability to read and write, has been complicated to the extent that the concept itself is in transition,' (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002 p21).

Students require sophisticated levels of metacognition in order to use English independently (Green 2013). Unlike most other subjects, as well as having its own complex curriculum content, English is a skill which must be mastered in order to access learning in other subjects. English has an inter-subject orientation, meaning that it permeates other subjects and the skills of English are required beyond the subject boundary. (White 2004, Findlay 2002).

Even the subject name has experienced various trends and iterations and may be known as English, Literacy, Language Arts, Communications (Marshall 2013), or Language (Poulson 1998). Each title suggests a different interpretation of what the subject might prioritise. It must be noted that many views of the English curriculum are shaped by what is

to be tested. It is well documented in research that teachers' views and priorities have been shaped by the various policy innovations that take place regularly (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Goodwyn and Findlay 2002). Because of this it is important that teachers develop critical reflection strategies in order to separate their own education philosophies from the compulsory innovations that are beyond their control (English, Hargreaves and Hislam 2002). The National Grid for Learning (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002), the 1988 Education Reform Act, the National Curriculum (Poulson 1998), and the Literacy Framework (Brookes 2002, Marshall 2004) are all examples of outside bodies aiming to impact and homogenise the teaching of English in schools across England. The frustrations felt by teachers about not being left alone to do their jobs is also a complaint (Brookes 2002). A difficulty with this type of approach to English is that they atomise the English curriculum (Marshall 2004, Hunt 2002) which 'encourages the view that there is a fixed body of knowledge that, once mastered, will suffice forever,' (Marshall 2004 p71). The reality of learning and teaching English is much more complicated.

Do teachers have different perspectives on the subject of English?

One of the key purposes of this study is to identify if there is a difference in understanding between primary and secondary colleagues about what effective English teaching looks like at BIS. The literature suggests a considerable disparity between English lessons in primary and secondary schools. A useful point to consider is that English only really became a stand-alone subject in primary school with the introduction of the National Curriculum (Poulson 1998). Prior to this, the term ‘language’ was often used, (Poulson 1998). This change in terminology and the increased formalisation meant that it was possible, for the first time, to view the subject of English on a continuum for pupils aged 5 to 16. (Poulson 1998). The idea that ‘language’ was the preferred name gives us an insight into the values attached to this subject, the connotations being that having a command of the language of English and being able to communicate in that language was the priority, (Poulson 1998). This also means that primary schools have historically had a more fluid and adaptive approach to the teaching of English.

An interesting point to raise is the differing role of texts within the primary and secondary curriculum which Goodwyn and Findlay (2002) suggest ‘change markedly between school subjects’ (p31). This difference in the use of texts is something that students should be prepared for before transition (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002).

Creative writing is often the focus in primary schools whereas in secondary settings, teachers more frequently see English teaching as a response to literature (Marshall and Brindley 1998). They go further to suggest that primary and secondary teaching represent two different discourses of English; the former putting an emphasis on spelling, grammar

and fictional writing and the latter prioritising literature and responses to reading. (Marshall and Brindley, 1998). Comments from students about their experiences learning English in primary and secondary schools suggest that these different priorities in different phases reflect their experiences in English lessons, (Marshall and Brindley 1998). A useful example to consider here is the three dimensional view of the English Curriculum consisting of knowledge, skills and understanding, (Marshall and Brindley 1998). Ideally there would be an equal balance of these things across all areas of a school. However, due to the possibility for different interpretations, it can be the case that primary schools are more likely to focus on skills while secondary schools view knowledge and understanding as more important (Marshall and Brindley 1998). This means that the same curriculum can be prioritised in different ways which can lead to different teaching and learning experiences. Myhill and Jones (2013) say that English teachers are a very diverse group and have highly individualised views on what should be taught.

Returning to the argument rehearsed earlier in this literature review, a fairly recent phenomenon in the teaching of English is that fewer children are stating that they enjoy the subject in primary school (Brookes 2002). Indeed evidence has been highlighted that suggests more favourable attitudes to English (in relation to other subjects) after the transition to secondary (Marshall and Brindley 1998). This change in attitudes at primary level is attributed to the expectations and pressures of key stage 2 SATS especially the focus on grammar, spelling and technical aspects of writing (Brookes 2002, Goodwyn and Findlay 2002) and the chance for a fresh start in Year 7 (Marshall and Brindley 1998).

Some of these points are not unique to English. Research into different subjects make some similar claims. Huggins and Knight (1997) present findings about History during transition years, suggesting that some problems at transfer include: poor systems of liaison

between subject heads, a lack of time and a preference for a fresh start approach. They also concluded that the introduction of the National Curriculum appears to have had little impact on the experience of transition. Prendergast, O'Meara, O'Hara, Harbinson and Cantley (2019) also make important points about Mathematics. They describe the transition process as having a lack of continuity, knowledge and communication. Additionally they note increasingly negative attitudes towards the subject. They raise a point also noted by Marshall and Brindley (1998) and Galton et al (2003) that teachers must learn more about what happens in different schools if these barriers are to be overcome.

How does the international context of this study create different challenges?

It has already been suggested that the subject of English has something of a unique status, being both the language of instruction and a subject in its own right. This takes on extra significance in the context of an international school. It is suggested that the primary reason that many parents choose to send their children to international schools is due to the English-medium education. This is the case for both native and non native speakers of English (Hayden 2011). This has significant implications for teaching the subject of English and for preparing students to access the curriculum in other subjects through the English language.

Frequently, the continuum designed by Cummins (2000) which moves children from basic language acquisition skills (BICS) to being able to use complex academic language (CALPS), is used in discussions about EAL students. (Cummins 2000, Vasquez, Hansen and Smith 2013). If, as has previously been noted in this paper, the numbers of EAL students in international schools is on the rise, where does the subject of English fit when helping students to become confident with complex academic language? As noted by Vasquez et al (2013), not all teaching staff feel confident working with English language learners. Goodwyn and Findlay (2002) highlight research which found that in secondary schools literacy competence was frequently expected by teachers who only made token gestures towards developing skills. Indeed, only English teachers saw it as their responsibility to develop literacy skills in their pupils as part of their lessons, (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002). This is in contrast to primary schools which are described as being

interactive and constructing and scaffolding literacy within a range of subject areas. (Goodwyn and Findley 2002).

Within the context of a diverse and multilingual international school, it is worth considering the notion of English as a multilingual subject (Brutt-Griffler and Collins 2010, Homer and Lu 2010). This notion considers the subject of English to be a 'variable and varying set of language practices' (Homer and Lu 2010 p150), the idea being that the language could be interchangeable if the practices were robust enough. Perhaps returning to the pre-National Curriculum idea of 'Language' (Poulson 1998) rather than 'English'. In addition, Martin (2002) suggests that making links between literacy and Modern Foreign Languages in KS2 and KS3 helps to frame literacy as a skill that is not confined to the language of English. This is an idea that could be worth exploring further as the development of the curriculum for Years 5-8 at BIS continues, especially as the best middle years curriculum design models feature increased links between subjects (Holas and Huston 2012).

It has also been suggested that outside of English-speaking education systems, the subject of English has long been a multilingual subject, with students drawing on many different languages and language experiences when in English lessons, (Brutt-Griffler and Collins 2010). This idea of multilingualism shifts the focus from one prescribed way of speaking, reading and writing English to valuing language in all of its diversity. White (2004) extends this point to discuss the possibilities of including world literature within English lessons as a means of extending our world views and appreciation of different cultures, something also discussed by McLean Davis (2013) who advocates the use of literature as a tool for cultural exploration. Although these points are not uniquely related to the international school context, they certainly should be at the forefront of any considerations on the role of

English in a school where students have over 30 different mother tongues and come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.

This section of the literature review set out to explore the question: how is this research affected by the context? Although every subject could argue for its own uniqueness, the evidence presented in this section provides many reasons why English occupies a particular place within the curriculum. Considerations have been made about the different perspectives that are traditionally held by primary and secondary teachers in relation to this subject. It has been argued that, in a school with high numbers of EAL students and pupils from different cultural backgrounds, English takes on additional importance not just as the language of instruction but also as a means to appreciate different cultures and their heritage. It has been suggested that the notion of English as a multi-lingual subject could be the latest iteration of a subject that has been constantly evolving.

What are effective strategies for collaborative professional learning?

Earlier in the literature review, the strengths and weaknesses of the cross phase model were considered and an examination of how the context adds particular nuances to this research project was presented. The idea of collaborative professional learning will now be discussed. In order to carry out an inquiry into the teaching of English in Years 5-8, it is essential for teachers in these year groups to gain a greater understanding of the differences in curriculum and pedagogical approaches across the phases (Marshall and Brindley 1998). One important way to do this is for teachers to observe lessons in other phases. It is important, then, to take some time to consider different strategies for observing lessons in order to make an informed choice when selecting approaches for this project. Due to the vast range of approaches, for the purposes of this project, we will focus on literature about collaborative professional learning strategies which have a more equal balance of power between participants, so whilst approaches such as coaching and mentoring (Lipsombe et al, 2019, Lofthouse and Thomas 2017) are very useful ways to collaborate professionally, an examination of these methods of professional learning are not appropriate for this project.

This part of the literature review has been organised into the following sections:

- How and why are views of professional learning changing?
- What theoretical perspectives of collaborative professional learning are useful in the context of an independent international school?

How and why are views of professional learning changing?

It is widely acknowledged that spending time in meetings or on training courses can be frustrating for teachers as they feel it is a poor use of their time and has little impact on learning and teaching, (Baird and Clark 2018, Keay, Carse and Jess 2019, Fernandez 2002, Olofson & Garnett 2018). This idea of short-term sessions, meetings and conferences is described by Appova and Arbaugh (2018) as 'drive-by PD'. For this reason, over recent years, there have been many developments in thinking around professional development, which has sometimes been re-defined as professional learning (Appova and Arbaugh 2018). This change in terminology also marks a shift in emphasis about who is responsible for the learning (Appova and Arbaugh 2018). Learning is a present continuous verb suggesting something that is happening over the long-term rather than the noun development implying a thing that can be touched or felt. Recently, schools have embraced ideas such as reflection, action research and professional learning communities, (Huang and Bao 2006) as ways to introduce more effective teacher development.

As a result of developments in thinking around professional learning, many schools are re-conceptualising teacher development (Huang and Bao 2006, Keay et al 2019). Schools are recognising the intellectual capital that they have within their own staff and are using this to support collaborative professional learning (Lipscome et al 2019). This also has the effect that the overall intellectual capital of the school can be increased, (Lipscome et al 2019). Another key goal of this type of professional learning is to develop the autonomy of teachers, allowing staff to take ownership of their own learning, (Lloyd and Davis 2018). In addition, according to Keay et al (2019) 'Professional learning has increasingly been

recognised, nationally and internationally, to enhance teachers' feelings of motivation and confidence and their capacity to improve the quality of their teaching and children's learning,' (p126).

A key advantage of collaborative professional learning models such as communities of practice (Schafer 2018) and professional learning communities (Caine and Caine 2010, Schipper 2014) is that they allow multiple people to learn from one another (Lipscombe et al 2019). Another stated advantage of this kind of professional learning is that it is sustainable over the long-term, (Saito 2012). These communities have theoretical foundations in discourses on the social nature of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and often apply concepts about how students learn to also develop teacher learning.

Although there is broad agreement on the development of professional learning as a collaborative pursuit in schools, there is less consensus on how this should be organised. (Fernandez 2002). Something that must be considered when discussing collaborative professional learning are the logistics of when and where this should take place. In a study on collaborative learning in Mathematics, Appova and Arbaugh (2018) found that 'the best way to engage in collaborations was during their contract hours when teachers have direct and uncompromised access to each other,' (p11). Whilst this is ideal, it is often difficult to achieve within a busy school day and has been cited as a reason for the limited success of some initiatives, (Saito 2012). It should also be noted that collaborative professional learning is not something that can be expected to develop quickly. Saito (2012) suggests that it could take between three and ten years to truly embed such things in a school community.

Lesson study is a popular model of professional learning which provides a framework for teachers to collaboratively plan, teach and review lessons. It is worth noting that lesson study is not a ready-made solution and has experienced several iterations during its development in Japan. (Huang and Bao 2006, Saito 2012). Chen and Zhang (2019) state that the ultimate goal of lesson study is 'to promote student learning through curriculum and pedagogy reform,' (p89). The challenges of lesson study must also be considered. An issue with the implementation of lesson study is the time it takes to develop it properly, (Fernandez 2002). Some people have also suggested that lesson study does not represent an innovative approach to sustainable professional learning but is, instead, just a fad. Another critique of lesson study comes from Brown, Taylor and Ponambalum (2016) who suggest that the demands of such focussed collaboration can add unnecessary pressure on already busy teachers. They go further to explain that high levels of trust must have already been developed for such collaboration to be successful.

Returning to the point made earlier that creating enough time to plan, teach and review lessons collaboratively can be a difficult thing to achieve, it should not be underestimated that a reason why these models of professional learning work effectively in some countries is due to the allocation of time for teaching and planning within the school day (Nickerson, Fredenberg and Kinsella-Drunken 2014). For example, in China teachers have around fifteen forty-minute lessons per week compared to 5 hours per day in schools in the USA (Nickerson et al 2013). This clearly gives teachers in China much more time to plan and reflect collaboratively on lessons. It echoes a point made by Saito (2012) that cultural understanding is important when considering a lesson study approach.

An interesting point to consider regarding Professional Learning for teachers is the relative lack of time that teachers spend interacting with peers in their own classroom. For this

reason, low-stakes lessons observation can be seen as a good entry point into gaining deeper insights into both their own practice and that of other teachers in similar positions, (Murphy, Weinhardt and Wyness 2018). Another argument for starting collaborative professional learning with low stakes observation is the fact that cross-phase observation is, in itself, an unusual thing to do, (Rempe-Gillen 2018).

What theoretical perspectives are useful in the context?

In summarising several different models of professional development, Baird and Clark (2018) suggest that successful models of professional learning have many common features: ‘Ideally the structure of a professional learning community is a small group of teachers with a common student outcome or content focus that come together to form a collegial action research-orientated group focussed on improving outcomes for students,’ (p327). They go further to provide a useful checklist for successful models of professional learning communities stating that they must include: ‘shared beliefs, values and mission; shared and supported leadership; supportive conditions; caring and respect amongst members; and collective learning with intentional sustained focus on student needs.’ (Baird and Clark 2018 p327).

Theoretical frameworks established by Guskey, Desimone, Clarke and Hollingsworth and Opfer and Pedder provide various model of analysis for systems of Professional Learning (Boylan, Caldwell, Maxwell and Jordan 2018). However, they suggest that:

> none of the models seem to be able to account for forms of professional development that have grown in popularity, such as collaborative modes of professional development including lesson study or the promotion of professional learning communities (Boylan et al 2018 p134).

So whilst it is important to consider the theory, many current methods do not seem to be appropriate for our context. It is also an important feature of professional learning that

teachers are able to exercise professional experimentation in their own context (Boylan et al 2018).

Perhaps a more useful framework for analysis is the idea of open systems in the context of teacher's professional learning presented by Lipscombe et al (2019) as a way to theorise models of professional learning such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and collaborative teacher teams. They suggest that the effectiveness of professional learning teams can be analysed by inputs, outputs and throughputs. Inputs are factors such as policy and leadership which build effective foundations for collaboration. Throughputs are the ways that team-members work together to achieve their common goal. Common throughputs would be communication and trust between team-members. Outputs are the results that are produced or achieved by collaborative groups. In the context of teaching this could include resources, teacher growth, curriculum development and improved outcomes for students (Lipsombe et al 2019).

This section of the literature review has considered the move away from professional development and towards professional learning (PL). Various approaches to collaborative professional learning were considered and features of successful PL models were presented (Baird and Clark 2018). The concept of open systems for collaboration was introduced and the idea of inputs, outputs and throughputs as ways of analysing the success of collaborative professional learning innovations were discussed (Lipscombe et al 2019).

This literature review has presented sections on three main areas:

- Transition from primary to secondary school
- The specifics of the school context
- Models of professional learning

Next, a methodology identifying key research questions and methods on how to investigate them will be presented.

Methodology

Using the learning from the literature review, a study to investigate the teaching of English in Years 5-8 at BIS was planned. The study was designed answer the overall research question: can collaborative professional learning strategies create the preconditions for the development of a Year 5 to 8 English curriculum? This question will be divided into 3 further sub-questions in order to investigate important aspects of the main research question. These questions are:

- What are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school?
- What did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?
- Was closer collaboration between English teachers developed?

Due to the unforeseen and extended closure of BIS from March 2020 until the end of the academic year because of the Covid-19 global pandemic, it was necessary to adapt the methodology for this project. This section will briefly explain the intentions of the project followed by necessary modifications. The remainder of the methodology will discuss the rationale for each aspect of data collection and provide details for the inclusion (or intended inclusion) of certain tools of data collection.

Planned Project

This project was intended to be completed in several phases - baseline data collection, intervention, and measuring the impact.

It was planned that baseline data would be collected from staff and students in the form of questionnaires. These questionnaires would establish feelings towards the teaching of English in Year 5-8 at BIS and identify attitudes towards the idea of a Y5-8 curriculum as well as school-specific considerations such as the transient student population and high EAL population. These aspects of the research were planned to answer the question: what are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school?

Following this, an intervention was scheduled to take place. The intervention involved cross-phase peer observations between primary and secondary teachers and a collaborative activity of analysing student work and long term plans. These were designed to build collaboration between colleagues and facilitate learning about teaching in different phases.

Semi-structured interviews were planned in order to gain deeper insights into the current picture and the effectiveness of the intervention. These aspects of the project were designed to investigate the question: what did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?

The questionnaires, observations and interviews all contained research methods which would explore the role of collaboration. These were planned in order to respond the the third question: was closer collaboration between English teachers developed? Open systems (Lipscombe et al 2019) was identified as a useful theoretical perspective on collaboration.

Changes

As some of the planned activities could not take place, the project was modified to include what was possible within the limitations of school closures. The following tables show the timeline of data collection and the intervention. It should be noted that although the lessons observations primarily formed part of the intervention, the notes made during these lessons were also used as data to be analysed within the context of the research questions. The tables below show adjustments made following the school closure.

TABLE 1 - TIMELINE OF INTERVENTION AND MODIFICATIONS

Date	Intended Action	Modifications
January 2020	Recruitment and briefing of participants	Completed
February 2020	Peer observations secondary teachers visit primary lessons	Completed
Scheduled for Week Beginning 16th March 2020	Peer observations primary teachers visit secondary lessons	Could not take place. Normal teaching did not resume before the end of the academic year.
Scheduled for April 2020	Collaborative analysis of English long term plans.	This did not take place.
April / May 2020.	Individual interviews to discuss project, success of intervention and next steps.	Staff who participated in observations were ask to complete an email reflection on their experiences.

TABLE 2 - TIMELINE OF DATA COLLECTION AND MODIFICATIONS

Date	Data	Modification
January 2020	Questionnaires for KS2 and KS3 teachers	Completed
February 2020	Questionnaires for Y7 students	Completed
March / April 2020	Peer observation field notes	Observation notes collected from primary lesson observations. Notes from secondary lesson observations did not take place.
April 2020	Collaborative analysis task notes	Activity did not take place.
April / May 2020	Individual interviews with peer observation participants	Email reflection questions

The next section of the methodology will explain why certain methods of data collection were chosen. It will also explore the choice of questions in more detail.

Initial Data Collection Methods

Why use questionnaires?

Questionnaires were used as an initial source of data as it was necessary to gather the views of a number of different parties. This was important in order to investigate the first sub-question: what are pupils' and staff's views of English in the school? Using questionnaires rather than other data collection tools provided potential access to a higher quantity of participants meaning that a broader range of perspectives could be considered (Xerri 2017, Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2018).

Questionnaires were sent to class teachers in Year 5 and 6 and secondary English teachers (see appendix 3) as well as Y7 students (see appendix 4). This helped to provide the range of responses required to investigate the research question in appropriate detail.

Explanation of questions

All participants were asked to rank eight activities which form part of English teaching (reading, writing fiction, writing non-fiction, spelling, grammar, speaking activities, handwriting, discussing texts), (Marshall and Brindley 1998), depending on how often the activity was done in lessons.

The purpose of this question was to identify differences in how English is taught in different parts of the school. This is related to the findings by Marshall and Brindley (1998) and Goodwyn and Findlay (2002) who suggests that English in primary and secondary schools can be seen as two different subjects. Y7 students were asked to rank the activities for both primary and secondary school to see if they perceived differences in English lessons.

Questions for students

The Y7 students were asked the following questions:

- How often does the work you did in primary school help you with the work in Y7?
- Compared to the work you did in English in primary school, do you find the work in Y7: much easier, slightly easier, about the same, slightly harder, much harder?

The purpose of these questions was to gather evidence to compare our school to some findings from the literature (Galton et al 1999, Evangelou et al 2008) which suggested that often students find the work in Y7 easier than Y6 and therefore lose motivation for the subject.

The students were also asked to identify similarities and differences between their lessons in primary and secondary and were asked to provide suggestions and further comments. The purpose of these more open questions was to give the participants chance to share wider feelings about their English lessons. This gave the chance to collect data when it was not possible to predict the range of responses that might be given (Xerri 2017).

Questions for teachers

Teachers were asked a variation of the following question: How much do you know about the way that English is taught in primary / secondary school? This question was prompted by ideas from Evangelou et al (2008) and Galton et al (1999) who suggest that teachers are often not aware of what has gone before or will come after their phase. In addition, teachers were asked to complete a range of statements clarifying the extent to which they know about approaches to teaching English in other phases of the school (such as which texts are used or how English is assessed). These questions were designed to find out what teachers already knew about teaching in other parts of the school before being able to investigate what cross-phase teachers learned from each other.

Teachers were also asked how the high EAL population of the school and the transient nature of the student body changed their teaching. This was inspired by previous research into international schools (Fail 2010) which emphasises the importance of investigating the individual school context.

As with the students, teachers were also given the opportunity to provide further comments to the questions at the end of the questionnaire (Xerri 2017).

Intervention and measuring the impact

Why use peer observations?

For the purpose of this project, it was necessary to collaborate with colleagues in order to develop a better picture about the teaching of English across the school. During the literature review, a range of approaches for collaborative lesson observations were considered (Saito 2012, Nickerson 2014 et al, Rempe-Gillen 2018, Murphy et al 2018, Lipscombe et al 2019). Taking into account the stage of development of the collaborative team, it was decided that cross-phase peer observations would be the best option (Rempe-Gillen 2018). It was also considered that starting with ‘getting into each others classrooms’ (Marshall and Brindley 1998 p127) would be a positive and manageable step.

In this research, lesson observations were used primarily as a form of intervention in order to help teachers to develop their understanding of teaching in different phases and to investigate our research question: what did cross-phase teachers learn from each other? An additional advantage of using peer observations in this research is that third-party

observers were able to provide data in the form of lesson observation notes, (Altricher, Posch and Somekh 1993).

Before the peer observations began, participants were briefed on ethical research (Cohen et al 2018, Flynn and Goldsmith 2016) and were provided with a set of guidelines for research involving human participants (appendix 6). This was to avoid ambiguity in expectations prior to the intervention commencing.

During peer observations, staff were provided with a format to record their observations. This had 4 subheadings - similarities, differences, questions and comments (appendix 10). These sections were chosen as it provided a focus but also allowed teachers to record broader observations and thoughts (Xerri 2017).

Why use interviews?

Intention

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a means of collecting data towards the end of the project in order to measure the impact of the intervention as they allow for both flexibility and rigour (Cohen et al 2018). Having a set of pre-designed questions meant that I would be able to consider exactly what I was aiming to find out from these interviews but could also adjust the questioning to suit the participant (Xerri 2018). I planned to conduct individual interviews as I wanted to make sure that I was gaining the opinions of eight individuals rather than a group consensus and I also wanted to take advantage of the potential to generate a greater depth in responses (Cohen et al 2018). Ultimately, it was decided that interviews were not the appropriate choice of data collection as the full cycle of the intervention had not taken place and there were not extensive variations on what could be discussed. In addition, as staff were not on campus, face to face interviews were impossible.

Modification

The idea of email interviews (James 2016) was explored. Many advantages of this type of data collection method such as allowing time for deeper reflection and offering a more equal balance of power between the researcher and participant (James 2016) fit with the purposes of the research but other aspects such multiple exchanges between the researcher and participant did not seem appropriate due to the unusual context in which the research was taking place. The approach that was eventually selected was to email a complete set of reflection questions to participating teachers to respond to in their own time. This was chosen for practical as well as research-based reasons.

The following questions were planned for the semi-structured interviews (and used for the reflection questions). They were designed to gain insights into the impact of the project and the feelings of the teachers involved towards a curriculum for Years 5-8.

Explanation of interview questions

Each question will be presented in turn along with a brief explanation about why it was chosen.

Was it useful to observe lessons in primary / secondary?

The purpose of this question was to identify if participants found the main intervention to be beneficial.

Did anything surprise you?

This question was designed to give participants the opportunity to share their general thoughts about the experience. I tried to leave this question open to interpretation rather than to lead the question towards certain things that I might have expected to be surprising from the reading, such as the level of English in primary or the teaching methods used. The intention of this question was to remain open-minded and maintain some level of detachment from the research, (Norris 1997).

Did you experience any logistical difficulties in observing?

This question links with the idea presented in the literature review that there are often logistical difficulties in arranging peer observations (especially cross-phase), (Nickerson et

al 2014, Saito 2012, Rempe-Gillen 2018). This is an important thing for us to consider because if there are logistical difficulties that can be resolved, then the school should take note of these if trying to apply aspects of this research to other subjects.

What do you think the next steps in the development of a 5 - 8 curriculum should be?

It is important that if this project is to be successful, the findings from this project can help the school to move forward with the development of a Y5-8 curriculum. For this question teachers were provided with a list of pre-conceived ideas (looking at long term planning, looking at short term planning, team teaching, more observations, teaching in a different year group, looking at work across year groups) as well as space to suggest their own thoughts. They were asked to select any of the above activities which they felt would be beneficial for further collaboration. This question was presented with multiple choice answers as well as space for additional comments so that there were set responses that could be compared but also space to record further thoughts and ideas which were not restricted to those of the individual researcher (Xerri 2018, Cohen et al 2018). This question was designed to collect data related to collaboration methods and attitudes towards future collaboration in order to contribute to the final sub-question: was closer collaboration between English teachers developed?

Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using a qualitative approach. Although some of the data collection methods gave some statistical responses, this data was analysed in conjunction with written responses so the approach can't be described as quantitative or mixed-methods research. This follows Plano Clark and Ivankova (2015) who suggest that research should not be defined as mixed methods research unless it combines both quantitive and qualitative data collection and analysis. In this case, although some statistical data was collected, it was not subjected to rigorous methods of quantitive analysis.

A qualitative approach was preferable for this project for several reasons. Qualitative research is described as being about exploring the world as you find it and is an approach that takes context seriously, (Flick, 2018). This is essential in our case because, as has already been established, each international school operates within its own unique context (Fail 2010). In addition, Cohen et al (2018) discuss the fact that qualitative data uses multiple methods for data collection and that qualitative approaches focus on an issues rather than a hypothesis (Cohen et al 2018).

The data analysis will follow recommendations from Burns (2010) that open-ended questions should be analysed by describing trends, themes or patterns of ideas. This method of data analysis is also recommended by Xerri (2018) and Cohen et al (2018). We will also follow Munn and Drever (2004) in their view that deriving categories from data rather than creating pre-set categories for data analysis will help to avoid imposing

personal bias and interests on the data. This is especially important as this research is aiming to synthesise the views of many parties in order to investigate the teaching of English in Years 5-8. Therefore, it must reflect more than my own personal interests.

Limitations of the project

One limitation of this project, and one that is common in this type of research (Nickerson et al 2013, Rempe-Gillen 2018), was time and timetabling. Staff who were interested in participating in the intervention were unable to do so as it was not possible to schedule a cross-phase partnership which fit with the complex timetabling of the school.

Additionally, this research took place in the unique context of a specific school. The school has a relatively high turnover of both students and staff and therefore this project can only provide a ‘snapshot’ of this school at this particular time. It should also be acknowledged that the response rates for the questionnaires were fairly low (especially from the students). With more responses, the overall trends in the data could have been different.

Another significant limitation of the project is the incomplete nature of the intervention as a result of the sudden school closure. This means that only limited data could be collected.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the commencement of this project a CUREC form was completed in order to consider potential ethical issues before they had the possibility to arise. This form was completed in line with BERA guidelines on ethical research (BERA 2018). This also allowed time to reflect on how any ethical issues might be dealt with. All data that were collected were stored on a secure computer.

A significant ethical consideration in this project was developing a protocol for teachers visiting other teachers' lessons. In order to manage this challenge, a set of procedures based on the principle of Informed Consent (Cohen et al 2018, Flynn and Goldsmith 2016) were developed. Being invited to another teacher's lesson opens the potential for people to discuss the lesson within the wider community and can lead to a certain amount of vulnerability on the part of the teacher being observed. This is something that was noted by Brown et al (2016) when discussing similar interventions. Staff were asked to read information about research involving human participants and were asked adhere to ethical guidelines, (appendix 6).

Prior to participating in any phase of the data collection, participants were briefed on what to expect and informed how their data would be used. At every stage of the project, people had the opportunity to opt-out. Although steps were taken to avoid such problems, it is acknowledged that, as a subject leader conducting subject-specific research, there could have been issues around power relationships and people could have been worried that non-participation would have been viewed negatively.

Student questionnaires were specifically designed to avoid asking questions about differences in the quality of teaching or attitudes towards teachers. This could have led to ethical issues in which the research identified negative attitudes toward colleagues or learning in some parts of the school.

The secondary English faculty leader was contacted for permission to survey the students in Y7 and parents of Y7 had to give consent for their child to participate (appendix 5). This was requested to comply with the school's own approach to ethical data collection. Although general approval for the project had already been granted by the principle in accordance with CUREC approval, professional learning leaders in the school requested that specific permission was given also given from the parents of each student who completed the questionnaire (see appendix 5).

Collaboration

Collaboration was embedded throughout this project. The nature of the intervention required the support and collaboration of colleagues at each stage. Peer observations required mutual trust and support as well as collaborative discussions (Baird and Clark 2018, Murphy et al 2018).

In addition, it was necessary to collaborate with leaders from across the primary and secondary phases of the school in order to organise observation schedules and identify common goals for the project (Nickerson et al 2014). Several meetings took place between myself and the KS3 English leader in order to lay the foundations for peer observations, organise timetables and communicate about expectation for the participants.

I have also been able to discuss the developments of my project at regular intervals with colleagues. This has included various aspects of a mature professional learning community (Lipscombe et al 2019), such as attending meetings with other staff conducting research projects in the school and sharing progress with professional learning leaders. I also participate in a collaborative professional learning group which is focussed on researching and developing the Year 5-8 curriculum and (prior to the school closure) I shared insights from my literature review with the group. The final project will be shared with the principal of the school as well as professional development leaders.

Analysis and discussion

In this section, the inquiry into the teaching of English in Years 5 - 8 at BIS will be continued with the aim of responding to the overall research question: can collaborative professional learning strategies create the preconditions for the development of a Year 5 to 8 English curriculum? The section will be structured in response to the following research sub-questions.

- What are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school?
- What did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?
- Was closer collaboration between English teachers developed?

What are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school?

The first part of this analysis will present data which responds to the first research question: what are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school?

The opinions of staff and students were collected in the form of questionnaires. The eligibility criteria for completing the questionnaires can be seen in the table below. The relatively low rate of responses from students is something to be noted.

TABLE 3 - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND RESPONSE RATE

Group	Y5 and 6 Teachers	Secondary English Teachers	Y7 Students
Eligibility Criteria	Class teacher in Year 5 or 6 during the academic year 2019 - 2020	A teaching timetable that includes English lessons	To have been a Y6 student at BIS and to still be a BIS student in Y7
Number Eligible to Respond	9	11	48
Number of Respondents	6	6	16

All participants were asked was to rank 8 activities based on how common they were in English lessons. This analysis will firstly compare the responses of primary and secondary teachers and will then examine these responses alongside those of the Y7 students.

TABLE 4 - FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH LESSONS - RESPONSES FROM TEACHERS

	Primary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Most Frequent	Discussing Texts	Discussing Texts
	Reading	Reading
	Writing Fiction	Writing Non-Fiction
	Writing Non-Fiction	Writing Fiction
	Speaking	Speaking
	Spelling	Spelling
	Grammar	Grammar
Least Frequent	Handwriting	Handwriting

An initial observation of this table is the overall similarity of the responses from the teachers who completed the survey. Other than a slight difference in the ranking of writing fiction and non-fiction, the activities were put in the same order by teachers in both parts of the school.

Another sign of encouragement is the generally positive feeling toward this curriculum innovation. Teachers were asked to rank their feeling about the development of a Year 5 - 8 curriculum from very positive to very negative. The responses were as follows:

TABLE 5 - FEELINGS TOWARDS A YEAR 5 - 8 CURRICULUM

Feeling	Number of Responses
Very positive	3
Positive	5
Neutral	0
Slightly negative	0
Negative	0
I need more information before I decide	4

Whilst some people understandably want to know more about this innovation (something that this project will contribute to), these data demonstrate an overall positive feeling amongst staff towards this development.

The following table also takes the opinions of the students into account.

TABLE 6 - FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH LESSONS - RESPONSES FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

	Primary Teachers	Y7 Students (views on primary English)	Secondary Teachers	Y7 Students (views on secondary English)
Most Frequent	Discussing Texts	Reading	Discussing Texts	Discussing Texts
	Reading	Writing Fiction	Reading	Reading
	Writing Fiction	Spelling	Writing Non-Fiction	Writing Fiction
	Writing Non-Fiction	Grammar	Writing Fiction	Writing Non-Fiction
	Speaking	Discussing Texts	Speaking	Grammar
	Spelling	Writing Non-fiction	Spelling	Spelling
	Grammar	Handwriting	Grammar	Speaking
Least Frequent	Handwriting	Speaking	Handwriting	Handwriting

When the responses from students and teachers are put next to each other there is evidence to suggest that teachers and students have somewhat different perceptions of the balance of activities in English lessons. This is especially clear to see when comparing the responses from primary teachers and Y7 students (reflecting on their Y6 English lessons). Both teachers and students identify reading as something which happens very frequently but there is a big difference in how primary teachers and Y7 students rank discussing texts. A perspective that could explain this is that now students have experienced secondary lessons for a significant period of time, they have become accustomed to the amount of analysis that happens around texts and, compared to that, they feel that relatively little discussion happened in primary. A theme that came through the data was that, although books are central to lessons, the focus of the work is different between primary and secondary. This idea reflects the literature on the topic (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Goodwyn and Findlay 2002).

One student clearly explains the difference in the use of texts:

> Studying books happens in both schools but secondary is mainly analysing texts, however in primary it was more writing stories.

This emphasises the view that students see analysing texts as a much more frequent activity in secondary school. It highlights the importance of analysing texts in the views of Y7 students and the need to consider how analysing texts would fit within an aligned curriculum. Indeed, Goodwyn and Findlay (2002) suggest that the different uses of texts is something that students should be prepared for before transition.

The views of staff and students have multiple links with the literature on this topic. The ways that teachers perceive the use of texts in school is in contrast to several readings from the literature which suggest English can be viewed as almost different subjects in primary and secondary (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Goodwyn and Findlay, 2002). Student responses link more closely with the literature which suggests that for developing reading in primary schools, 'the emphasis was more on comprehension than response,' (Galton et al 1999 p23). We can also remind ourselves of the point made by Goodwyn and Findlay (2002) that the ways that texts are used in KS2 and KS3 'change markedly' (p31) which is something noted more by students than staff in this piece of research.

Students also perceive that they did more spelling and grammar in primary compared to the teacher perception. The student response links with literature on this topic which suggests that literacy skills are a bigger focus in primary, (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Galton et al 2003, Evangalou et al 2008). These results may equally imply a lack of grammar taught in secondary school or large amounts being taught in primary so we should interpret them with the necessary caution.

Writing fiction is also something that all parties view as a regular activity but there is some difference in how writing non-fiction is viewed (especially when looking at responses from Y7 students and primary teachers). This could provide an interesting point for further reflection. Non-fiction lends itself to more cross-curricular writing than fiction and could form an important part of a more integrated curriculum for Years 5 - 8 with the aim of developing literacy skills across the whole curriculum (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002, Findlay 2002).

There is a difference in the perception of speaking activities between teachers and students, with both primary and secondary teachers ranking the frequency of this activity

higher than students. This could be an important area to look at in the development of a curriculum across Years 5-8, especially when it is acknowledged that speaking is an important step in the development of language amongst EAL students (Cummins 2000). The development of a clear speaking strand could be a powerful feature of a bespoke curriculum for our unique school environment.

Although it is acknowledged that these data represent a limited number of responses from teachers and students in the targeted groups, and that it is relying on the memories of the Y7 students regarding their Y6 English lessons, it gives some clear areas to explore further in relation to our investigation into the teaching of English in Y5 - 8 at BIS.

School Context - EAL and Transient Student Population

Opinions were also collected from teachers regarding some important features related to teaching English at the school: a high EAL population and a transient student body. Teachers were asked the following question and the responses can be seen in this table:

TABLE 7 - DOES THE NUMBER OF EAL STUDENTS CHANGE THE WAY YOU TEACH?

Always	2
Often	2
Sometimes	7
Never	1

These responses paint a mixed picture of how different teachers view provision for the EAL students in our school. The responses must be considered alongside the comments in

order to gain a better insight into how they should interpreted. The teacher who responded with ‘never’ also qualified this response with the following comment: “Good EAL teaching is good teaching. (?)" Although slightly vague, this comment suggests that the teacher doesn’t feel the need to adapt their teaching as they have embedded the skills required to help EAL students into their general teaching. Another teacher provided further details about what this ‘good teaching’ might look like:

> Modelling, providing visuals and providing writing scaffolds have always been part of my practice, all essential for EAL students too - but this is not a change to my teaching in the UK. However, there is more time spent speaking, modelling and discussing vocabulary at (BIS).

This shows that many teachers recognise that their teaching style does not have to change significantly if they already have good strategies in place which are of benefit to EAL students (but also other learners). Spending time speaking was also mentioned and provides further evidence that this should be looked at in more detail when developing a curriculum which provides a strong foundation in English for non-native speakers.

Other responses also support the ideas in the comments above.

> I've always taught in schools with a high proportion of EAL students so my teaching hasn't significantly changed being here.

As well as echoing the sentiments of other staff, this comment raises an important point that high numbers of EAL students are not unique to this school or indeed to international

schools. Although it is one of the characteristics that contribute to the uniqueness of the student body, having a high proportion of EAL students is not in itself unique.

The following comment captures a different viewpoint:

> I feel that this major shift in the school population is the major issue confronting us in KS3 and above.

This comment makes an important point that, although many schools may have had a large EAL population for a significant amount of time, this has not been the case at BIS and represents a change in demographic. Indeed the trend of increasing numbers of EAL students in international schools is something that is documented in the literature (Young 2017). This not only has implications for teaching but also needs to be considered in terms of curriculum development.

Another colleague also provided this helpful insight:

> We are not just looking to 'tweak' what is already there but should be considering what we are teaching in relation to the current (and future) student body.

This is an important thing to take into account and perhaps begins to touch on the idea of English as a multilingual subject (Brutt-Griffler and Collins 2010) which was explored in the literature review.

A final comment which helps to draw out another aspect of this nuanced issue is the following:

> Whilst I don't believe it should dictate our teaching, to not take the English experience of all of our students into account when planning would be negligent.

This provides further evidence for the need to acknowledge the changes in our student population and value the linguistic diversity within our school. It links with ideas presented by Brutt-Griffler and Collins (2010) that, ‘methods within English education must be tested on bilingual students’ (p158). Perhaps it would be a good starting point to return to the point made by one of the respondents that ‘good EAL teaching is good teaching’, to establish in more detail what this means in our school context and to work from there.

Related to our unique school context, teachers were also asked this question:

TABLE 8 - DOES THE TRANSIENT STUDENT POPULATION CREATE ANY DIFFICULTIES?

Yes	10
No	2

These data show that the majority of the teachers do think that transience is an issue within the school.

The following comment also summarises many feelings about how such a transient population might be a stumbling block in developing a curriculum that spans years 5-8.

> Each year, you want to build on the work of the previous year, but with so many new students, it can't work this way and concessions have to be made. With something

> like 30% (I think!) of students being new to BIS in Y7, an over- emphasis on prior learning from BIS primary would leave so many students at a disadvantage - and in many cases these are our EAL learners who may be further behind with their acquisition of English anyway.

This is a very important comment in the context of our exploration into the teaching of English in Years 5-8. How can we create a bespoke curriculum for these year groups but not leave students who join the school part-way through this phase or at unconventional times throughout the year at (further) disadvantage?

Another teacher also made an interesting point:

> It is very difficult to build upon possible existing knowledge or it can become an excuse to not focus on this.

This comment suggests implications for how prior knowledge could be used and relied upon in a Y5-8 curriculum. To what extent is it realistic to expect that students will 'know' things from previous years? It also makes the important point that, because it is difficult to focus on prior learning, there could be an inclination to start with a fresh approach and presume that the students know nothing. This is something that seems to be an increasing trend in transition in general (Galton and McLellan 2018).

Additional student responses to the questionnaires provide further insights into the teaching and learning of English at the school. The following themes were identified: the level of challenge in the work, assessment and grades and writing techniques. Each will be discussed in more detail (see appendix 8 for an example of analysis methods).

The level of challenge in the work

A number of students went into further detail about the level of challenge in the work with many children commenting on the increased expectations in secondary. These ranged from comments such as ‘secondary is more detailed or advanced / harder’ to more detailed insights. The following response provides a detailed summary of many of the points raised by the respondents:

> Texts are harder to understand, with more complex ‘vocaubularies’ (sic). The studies of characters are also more detailed. There is quite a gap in the level of authors and texts.

This is especially interesting because some of the literature suggested that there is not a gap in the level between Years 6 and 7 and that there is even sometimes a dip in what is expected of students at the start of secondary, (Galton et al 1999, Galton et al 2003, Evangelou et al 2008).

Another student made the comment, ‘I think teachers in secondary expect us to know more about writing than we know’. Various students made the point that they are expected to understand technical aspects of grammar such as paragraphs, adjectives, adverbs and nouns and don’t always feel equipped to use these tools in the way that is expected by secondary teachers. This is interesting as several pieces of research have suggested that Y7 students know more about grammar than they are credited with knowing (Galton et al 2003, Marshall 2013). In the context of these comment, the opposite appears to be true. This provides more evidence for the need for teachers to understand more about how English is taught in different areas of the school. If secondary teachers had more

experience of lessons in primary, they would have a better picture of what they could, or should, expect students to know. Similarly, if primary teachers knew more about the content of lessons in secondary, they would have a better idea of how best to prepare the children for what is expected of them.

Another interesting comment (possibly from a parent given the use of language) was provided regarding the level of the work:

> Overall, the way that the teachers present the English curriculum is accessible for the specific year groups. The logical continuity in the programme is evident.

This helps to remind us that there is already a coherent programme in place and that we should be sure that the benefits are acknowledged and evaluated before change is implemented. It is also supported by data from Y7 students. 13 out of 16 respondents described the work in secondary as ‘slightly harder’ than the work in primary thus suggesting a ‘logical continuity’ between phases.

Assessment and Grades

Grades and tests were mentioned by several students - the words ‘tests’ or ‘grades’ appear 6 times in the written responses. One suggestion from a student about how Y6 teachers could have eased the transition to secondary was that they could ‘give us grades’. Another said that ‘more tests’ would have been helpful. This is interesting because it suggests that students see grades and tests as an integral part of life in secondary school and that primary teachers could help them to get used to these grades and tests before they move

schools. This idea that it must be the students who adapt to the culture of the secondary school is one explored by Galton and McLellan (2018) who present recent evidence about school transition suggesting that the main objective of many schools is to help the students to become familiar with and accept the systems in place. An alternative area to investigate is the purpose of grades and tests in the lower part of secondary school. Indeed Lockwood (2002) stated that a clear advantage of middle schools was the possibility to have a phase of eduction without formal examinations. A necessary future point for development is the role and type of assessment within the context of the Y5 - 8 curriculum. This links with the idea presented by Corlu (2014), in the context of comparing international school curriculums, who says that an important issue for schools to resolve is 'what kind of knowledge they believe is of most worth.' It also echoes points made by Evangelou et al (2008) who believe that a consistent approach to assessment across the transition years is essential for a smooth academic transition.

Writing Techniques

A number of responses from students highlight differences in writing techniques. One technique that appears to be used in secondary school is something called a 'how why' paragraph. There were several suggestions that this is something that could be introduced in primary in order to help students with their transition to secondary school. One student provided the following comment:

> I believe that the teachers in Y6 could prepare the students by teaching them how to write a 'what, how, why' paragraph so that the teacher in Y7 will focus more on the writing rather than the actual structure.

Another student also said,

> More about what how why paragraphs, it's a big part of all the work we've done in year 7.

These comments are interesting because they highlight a difference between the teaching style and expectations across the school. This type of paragraph is not something that Y6 teachers are familiar with. Further observations across school could identify other techniques such as 'how / why paragraphs' which could be evaluated for importance and introduced strategically across an aligned curriculum.

The data presented so far has aimed to respond to the first research question: what are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school? From these data, it can be said that the views of teachers across primary and secondary are more closely aligned than the views of teachers and students but the views of the students more closely match literature in this area (Marshall and Brindley 1998, Galton and Findley 2002). Differences were identified in the use of texts, the role of speaking and the balance between writing fiction and non-fiction. Teachers see the transient population as a bigger challenge than the changing linguistic profile of the students. Students feel that the use of grades is a big difference between primary and secondary and, although there are some feelings that there is an increase in the level of challenge of the work, most students found the work in Y7 'slightly harder' than the work in Y6.

The data will now be considered in response to the second research sub-question: what did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?

What did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?

How much do teachers know about teaching in different phases?

Teachers were asked to rate their knowledge of different aspects of the teaching of English in the opposite part of the school. The data is presented in the table below.

TABLE 9 - KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM ACROSS THE SCHOOL.

	Not at all	Somewhat	A Fair Amount
I know how English is assessed	4 primary 1 secondary	1 primary 4 secondary	1 primary 1 Secondary
I know which texts are used	3 primary 1 secondary	3 primary 4 secondary	1 secondary
I know the types of teaching strategies used	6 primary 1 secondary	5 secondary	
I know the content of the English curriculum	4 primary 1 secondary	2 primary 5 secondary	
I can build on the work from primary school	3 secondary	1 secondary	2 secondary

These data demonstrate that there are significant gaps in knowledge about how English is taught in different parts of the school. It supports the need for further collaborative strategies to help develop a curriculum spanning Years 5-8. The data also suggests that secondary teachers feel that they have a relatively better understanding of the primary curriculum than primary teachers have of the secondary curriculum. This can be rationalised in a few different ways. Firstly, these teachers are working with students who have already experienced primary school and join secondary school with these experiences. Perhaps the respondents of the survey have been at the school for a longer

time or have had children who have been through primary school. In addition, as subject specialists, the English Department only have to concern themselves with the teaching of English in primary whereas primary teachers have to know about each subject.

It is worth looking at the final question (which was only asked to secondary teachers) 'I can build on the work from primary school in my lessons'. Three of the respondents selected the answer 'not at all'. These responses require further consideration. Firstly, upon reflection, this question could be perceived as ambiguous - has it been interpreted as meaning that the children have the tools to cope with the work in secondary school English or that teachers have a detailed knowledge of what has been covered in primary? The responses also suggest, perhaps, a limited understanding of the range of things worked on in the subject of English in primary schools. It would be hard not to use some of the skills developed in primary school such as fundamental reading and writing skills. Marshall and Brindley (1998) have some useful thoughts on this subject, suggesting that as students come to understand the new expectations for English (centred around analysing texts) they focus so much energy on this new aspect to the subject that some of the fundamental literacy skills become neglected. The responses to this question could also link with the context of the transient school population. It is hard to build on something done in primary when many of the children in Y7 were not at the school in Y6. However this question has been interpreted, it is important to work on this feeling that the primary curriculum cannot be built on by secondary teachers. The responses link with recent trends in literature on this topic which suggest that secondary teachers often prefer a fresh start (Galton and McLellan, 2018, Bharara 2019) and to presume that the students don't know anything.

The notes made during the cross-phase lesson observations are another important set of data to consider in terms of our second research question: what did cross-phase teachers

learn from each other? The notes were analysed for key themes and the following areas were identified: English subject-specific content, teaching and classroom management strategies, areas for further development (see appendix 11 for an example of analysis).

English Subject-Specific Content

Many similarities were identified in the content of the lessons observed. These included using figurative language, using the senses, annotating an extract, focussing on vocabulary and using a whole class model to scaffold understanding of inference. The following comment was also provided:

> Although the class size was smaller, the activities, questioning and tasks were very similar to a secondary school lesson, especially lower down the school e.g. in Y7 and 8 overall the style felt very similar.

Again, this points to a relatively favourable situation when considering the creation of a Y5-8 curriculum.

Two differences were highlighted in terms of subject-specific content. Firstly one observer suggested that they would have approached the teaching of grammar differently suggesting that they would have made ‘time to look at grammar with model - e.g fronted adverbial, relative clause.’ This links with some comments from students which suggest that they are expected to know certain things about grammar but that they don’t.

A second difference was that there was a 'Real focus in the **meaning** of ambitious language rather than maybe the **effect** or the **writer intention.’** This links very much with

the work of Marshall and Brindley (1998) and the findings from our initial surveys which suggest a bigger focus on comprehension in primary and analysis in secondary.

Teaching and Classroom Management Strategies

A substantial number of observations from the lessons centred around teaching and classroom management strategies. This is perhaps to be expected given previous research into the differences between the primary and secondary classroom (Comber, Galton and Hargreaves 1999). One teacher wrote the following note: ‘Classroom environment quite different - real sense of identify of the class’. Some other points that were also noted were the use of many different monitoring strategies such as timing, countdowns and clapping for attention. In addition, differences were noticed in the use of resources such as mini whiteboards. The different use of space was also noted as something that changed between schools. One observer mentioned the use of the carpet as a space for collaboration between children. This is something noted by Comber et al (1999) as being an important feature of teaching in the primary classroom.

Whilst on the one hand, these differences can be seen as a logical progression between primary and secondary, perhaps in the context of this curriculum development, there would be an opportunity to align some of these aspects more closely. Ward discussed the move from primary to secondary as being a move from self-contained classrooms to subject-centred classes (Ward 2000). The development of this new phase could be a bridge between these two models.

Areas for Further Development

There were several questions and observations in these notes which provide some clear areas for further investigation in relation to developing a curriculum for Year 5-8. One question that was posed was:

> Is there ever any cross over from explicit English lessons to the other curriculum lessons? (seeing as it is a primary class with one main teacher). Does this impact on the focus / planning for English as a discrete subject?

This is a key difference between primary and secondary teaching and requires attention in relation to a 5-8 curriculum. It raises the idea of having semi-specialist teachers in these year groups (Williamson 1982, Hargreaves 1986). In addition this comment relates to findings by Olofson and Garnett (2018), who suggest that a more integrated approach to teaching middle grades can have academic and social benefits for the students.

There were also some comments about how assessment is organised and how the skills that were being taught in the lessons would be assessed. This importance of assessment has already been considered and this comment provides further evidence for the need to establish a coherent (and shared) approach to assessment across these year groups. Indeed, coherent assessment is something discussed by Evangelou et al (2008) as a key feature of effective academic transition.

Reflections on lesson observations

Teachers who had observed lessons were emailed a set of reflection questions to respond to in their own time. This was a modification to the original plan to conduct individual interviews and was done to fit the circumstances related to the closed school campus and unusual working conditions. A number of the reflection questions were designed to collect data which could respond to the second research question: what did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?

The teachers were asked questions (appendix 12) to gain insights into what they learned from cross-phase observations. Each relevant question will be discussed in turn.

Did you find it useful to visit lessons in primary? Why?

The first thing to comment on is that in each of the responses to this question the first word was very positive. The word ‘yes’ appears 3 times and ‘always’ once. On a very basic level, this provides evidence that this intervention had a positive effect.

The following statement also give a good insight into the usefulness of the visits.

> It made me really think about what I expect my y7+ students to already know and what expectations I have of them - whether they are correct or need adapting!

This idea that Y7 teachers don’t have an accurate picture of the level of work covered in primary is something that is mentioned in many pieces of research about transition year groups, (Evangelou et al 2008, Galton et al 1999, Galton and McLellan 2018).

Did anything surprise you?

Each of the comments below show how teachers noticed different types of similarities between the lessons.

> I was probably most surprised by how similar many of the tasks/ activities were to the work going on in KS3 classrooms.

This is interesting because it provides further evidence that, from the perspective of teachers, there are more similarities than differences in types of activities which take place in KS2 and KS3 classrooms.

> How similar they were - in regards the language used and so on.

Although this comment also identifies a similarity, it is interesting that this observer noticed how language was used rather than activities. It suggests an additional level of depth in commonalities between the phases.

> I was surprised with the level of learning, a good surprise!

Another piece of evidence that relates to much research on transition that Y6 students work at a higher level than is sometimes acknowledged upon entry to secondary school (Galton et al 1999, Evangalou et al 2008).

These 3 comments are additional evidence that lessons across the school do not represent 2 different subjects. Marshall and Brindley (1998) suggest that English ‘is in effect a totally

new subject' if you 'focus attention on the demands of the new content rather than the basic skills' (p133). The responses from these teachers suggest that between their own classrooms and the ones they observed this was generally not the case. Indeed there is mention of the similarities between the tasks and activities as well as the language used. This would imply that the similarities in our school extend beyond merely basic skills and also encompass (at least partially) content, pedagogy and subject-specific language.

Did you experience any difficulties when planning to observe the lesson?

The responses to this question show two main things: firstly that, there were no major logistical difficulties in arranging and carrying out these observations (BIS is in the fortunate position of having a primary and secondary school on the same campus); secondly, the comments highlight many of the common barriers to implementing peer lesson observations (especially cross-phase). In the responses from teachers, the following issues were identified as logistical difficulties: emailing back and forth took time away from other tasks; different timetables made it hard to find sessions that worked for all teachers; some teachers arrived slightly late for their observations due to timetabling issues. These are all issues that are well-documented in the literature (Nickerson et al 2014, Saito 2012). In addition some teachers had to make use of time that they had gained from Y11 being on study leave to find a suitable observation slot. Whilst this was a good use of time, it is not something that can be relied upon as a regular source of time for such interventions. If increased collaboration between schools is desired, then it would be useful to have procedures in place to minimise the difficulties caused by timetabling.

In response to the second research question: what did cross-phase teachers learn from each other? It can be said that teachers learned that there are many similarities within lesson such as the use of language and the types of activities. It was also noted that the level of learning was higher than had previously been thought. Teachers also learned that the teaching space is used differently across the schools. It was established during the initial data collection that there were significant gaps in understanding about the teaching of English in different phases. This extended to many areas such as assessment, curriculum and teaching strategies. Unfortunately due to the school closure, it was not possible to engage in further collaborative tasks which could have developed further knowledge of these areas.

Was closer collaboration between English teachers developed?

Data from the questionnaires, lessons observation notes and reflections all provide useful insights into how this project helped to develop professional collaboration as well as ideas about how collaboration can be used to further the goal of creating a bespoke curriculum for Years 5-8.

The following comment written during the initial data collection using questionnaires provides an important perspective regarding increased collaboration between colleagues within the school context.

> Pushing primary assessment criteria up into secondary, or secondary practices down into primary, would mean the process is being led by one or the other, when what you actually want is something genuinely collaborative and for all parties to feel suitably invested.

As well as reinforcing the importance of a collaborative approach to assessment across the school (Evangelou et al 2008), this comment also emphasises the importance of giving teachers the time and space to reflect and collaborate. It shows that even before starting the project, staff recognised that developing collaboration would be an essential factor in developing an English curriculum for Y5-8.

When teachers were asked if they wished to provide further comments during their reflections on the project, two teachers emphasised the point that observing lessons is a good experience and one that should be replicated more often:

> I wish we could observe each other more to make our school cohesive. It was a great experience.

> I really enjoyed it and I think the more primary/secondary cross observations and team teaching that goes on, the better we will know our students' curriculum journeys and the better we will understand what we can do as a whole school to enhance our provision.

These two comments both talk about developing a more ‘cohesive’ approach to ‘whole school’ teaching, both goals of collaborative professional learning and the development of the Y5-8 curriculum.

Also when reflecting on the project, a colleague provided the following comment regarding collaboration between KS2 and KS3 leaders :

> My big comment for why (collaboration) has been lighter in recent years has been (and this is nobody's fault) the lack of someone who is in place as KS2 Coordinator. So this is now a strength which must not be weakened by any internal responsibility changes in the future. Probably a third of the KS3 Coordinator's work could be in this area. Passing over of any student data and information now needs to return to being at subject level as well.

This comment emphasises the importance of having colleagues in role who can work collaboratively. Such collaboration can provide a smoother transition experience on an academic rather than pastoral level. Having continuity within subject during periods of transition is something that was highlighted in the literature review as an important feature

of effective school transfer, (Galton et al 2003, Evangelou et al 2008). It is encouraging to see that it has been recognised as a strength as a result of the collaboration that took place during the project.

Insights into how collaboration can be further developed

Due to the closure of the school campus in March 2020, several collaborative activities which had been planned could not take place. Because of this, opinions were collected on how collaboration could be further developed in the future.

During the reflections on the project, teachers were asked to select activities that they felt would be a good follow-up to the project. This question was designed to measure the appetite for more collaboration in the future. The responses can be seen in the table below.

TABLE 10 - ADDITIONAL COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Participant 1	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Looking at long term plans across year groups	x	x	x	x
Looking at short term plans across year groups		x	x	
Looking at work across year groups			x	
Team teaching		x	x	
Teaching in a different year group		x		
More observations	x	x	x	

The most popular response to this question was ‘looking at long term planning’ This was intended to take place as part of this intervention and the popularity of this answer emphasises the importance of resuming this part of the intervention when school is fully re-open. In addition to this, three respondents said that they felt that ‘more observations’ were important. This links with ideas about collaborative professional learning which suggest that “frequent classroom observation” (Huang and Bao 2006, p279) is important to create an effective collaborative team. It also demonstrates that teachers in this school context are interested in engaging in increased collaboration.

Two of the respondents selected almost all of the possibilities. This highlights the desire for deeper collaboration amongst colleagues and the positive responses to ideas such as team teaching or teaching in a different year group suggest a willingness from some teachers to explore the role of a semi-specialist (Williamson 1982, Hargreaves 1986). An additional comment was provided:

> All of these are important, but I think that the two here (more observations and looking at long term planning) are the essential ones for us when we can return.

This comment shows that this participant is also interested in increased collaboration but has been strategic in selecting the most important responses in the short to medium term (taking into account the unusual context).

Theoretical Frameworks

Although several approaches towards collaborative professional learning were considered during the literature review, it was established that many of the perspectives did not provide a suitable theoretical framework for this project (Baird and Clark 2018). However, the framework of open systems for collaboration (Lipscombe et al 2019) was identified as a useful tool for analysis. A key reason for the selection of this perspective is because Lipscombe et al designed the study in response to calls for research “that theorizes the contexts and practical implications of collaborative teacher teams by examining conditions in situ within specific conditions of the particular context they work in” (Lipscombe et al 2019 p2). This fits very well with a study which focussed on collaboration and highly values the context of the specific school. Lipscombe et al highlight the importance of considering the throughputs (ways that the team members work together to achieve a common goal) of collaborative projects rather than generally focussing on the inputs and outputs of a project.

The following table shows the inputs, outputs and throughputs of this research project. It demonstrates that this system for analysis is a good way to evaluate the different stages of the collaboration process and also shows the importance of inputs and throughputs in creating positive outputs (Lipscombe et al 2019).

TABLE 11 - OPEN SYSTEMS FOR COLLABORATION - REFLECTIONS ON THIS PROJECT

	Defintion	How it looks in the context of this project.
Inputs	Information or resources from the school environment - this include things such as school policy and leadership.	Support from the leadership team Y5-8 curriculum sessions during PL Days Initial discussions, recruitment of participants. Collection of initial data throughout questionnaires
Throughputs	Throughputs are the ways that team-members work together to achieve their common goal.	Collaboration between KS2 and KS3 English leaders Staff communicated and arranged observations. Lesson observations Development of trust and collaboration through observations, discussions and staff PL sessions.
Outputs	Outputs are the things that are produced or achieved by collaborative groups.	Staff completed successful lesson observations and built further trust with colleagues in different parts of the school. Teachers involved helped to formulate ideas for further steps towards developing a curriculum for Years 5 - 8. This paper is an important output of this project.

To take this perspective further, the whole project could be viewed as a throughput in the wider school objective of creating a bespoke curriculum for years 5- 8. With this idea in mind, the following table considers this project as a throughput towards the the development of a curriculum for Year 5-8.

TABLE 12 - HOW THIS PROJECT COULD FIT INTO THE BROADER SCHOOL AIM OF DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR YEARS 5 - 8?

	Defintion	How this could look in the medium to long term
Inputs	Information or resources from the school environment - this includes things such as school policy and leadership.	Sharing the findings from this project with wider staff body. Beginning to build a larger collaborative team which can build on the success of this initial group. Secure the support of leadership in creating additional time for observations and collaboration to take place within the school day. Regular vertical staff meetings involving English faculty and KS2 teachers to be scheduled.
Throughputs	Throughputs are the ways that team-members work together to achieve their common goal.	Additional meetings between KS2 and KS3 teachers and leaders. Opportunities to engage as a faculty in more critical dialogue surrounding this curriculum innovation. This could start with a thorough examination of the recommendations from this project. Further rounds of lesson observations carried out. Teachers participate in other activities such as critical examination of current provision and analysis of curriculum documents. Some teachers to engage in cross phase team teaching.
Outputs	Outputs are the things that are produced or achieved by collaborative groups.	Increased collaboration and trust between more members of staff. More informed decision-making regarding the development of a Y5 - 8 curriculum. Development of a Y5 - 8 curriculum for English with strong foundations in theory, collaboration and research.

The open systems for collaboration presented by Lipscombe et al (2019) provides a highly effective tool for contextualising this project within a theoretical framework. The importance of throughputs was recognised by participants throughout the project in terms of developing collaboration. This framework can be used both to identify inputs, outputs and throughputs of this project and can also help to place this project into a wider context.

In response to the final research question: was closer collaboration between English teachers developed? It can be said that collaboration was developed between KS2 and KS3 teachers. In addition, the collaboration of subject leaders was identified as a strength by participants. There is a recognition from the perspective of teachers that sustained collaboration is necessary in order to realise the goal of creating a bespoke curriculum. Although some collaborative activities did not take place due to the closure of the school campus, there is an enthusiasm to continue with collaborative activities when this is possible. Participants identified important steps, such as more observations and looking at long-term planning. Many staff were also enthusiastic about participating in activities such as team teaching and teaching in a different year group. The views collected during this project reinforce the importance of throughputs (Lipsombe et al 2019). They support the idea that for this curriculum innovation to be successful, it should not be rushed but should take the time to consider many perspectives and to value the throughputs as much as the inputs and outputs.

Having now considered the 3 research questions identified at the start of this analysis and discussion section, conclusions on this project will now be presented.

Conclusion

This conclusion will reintroduce the aims of the project, provide an evaluation of each research question and make recommendations about how this research can be implemented. Finally there will be a response to the overall research question: can collaborative professional learning strategies create the preconditions for the development of a Year 5 to 8 English curriculum?

Project and research aims

This research project entitled ‘Bridging the Gap: an inquiry into the teaching of English in Years 5 to 8 at a British International School’ intended to identify views of students and teachers towards the teaching of English at the school and to build professional collaboration between the secondary English department and upper key stage 2 teachers. The evidence from this project suggest positive progress towards these aims which will be further explained in a final response to each of the research questions.

What are the views of pupils and staff towards English in the school?

The initial data collection, which aimed to respond to the first research question: what are pupils' and staff's views of English in the school? found that there was an overall consensus between teachers about priorities within English lessons but found some differences in the perception of English lessons between students and teachers. This was especially clear in the emphasis placed on speaking activities and writing non-fiction.

Although both parts of the school spend significant time in English lessons reading and discussing texts, deep analysis is much more of a characteristic of secondary school lessons whilst comprehension and creative writing happen more in primary.

There were some questions raised over the role of assessment by both students and teachers. There is a feeling from the students that grades and tests are a big difference between the teaching of English in primary and secondary school and more should be done to prepare them for this. This presents the opportunity for wider discussions about assessment and the role of grades in these year groups.

Related to the school context, teachers found the transient student population to be a bigger issue than an increase in EAL students at the school. It was suggested that this curriculum innovation provides a good opportunity to acknowledge changes in the school population and gives a chance to develop a curriculum which values linguistic diversity. Using world literature could also be a way to celebrate the diversity of the student population.

What did cross-phase teachers learn from each other?

When reflecting on lesson observations, many teachers commented on the overall similarities in the lessons. Links were made between their own lessons at the level of tasks and language. The level of learning was observed to be higher than some participants had expected. Some differences around classroom management and organisation (such as the use of carpet spaces and student groupings) were highlighted. Emphasis being placed

more on the comprehension of texts and the meaning of vocabulary than the author intent was another difference that was noticed.

Was closer collaboration between English teachers developed?

Teachers acknowledged the progress made in collaboration and recognised the need for sustained collaboration in the future. The experience of observing lessons in different phases received a positive response from all parties involved. There was an enthusiasm amongst staff to build on the trust established though this project and to develop further collaboration activities including more observations, team teaching and an analysis of student work and long term plans.

This project fitted well into the concept of open systems for collaboration (Lipscombe et al 2019). It identified different inputs and throughputs such as support from leadership and good levels of collaboration during lesson observations and reflections. These led to positive outputs which align with the aims of this research including increased levels of understanding about the English curriculum in Y5-8. This perspective values the process as well as the outcomes and a number of comments from teachers reinforce the idea that the throughputs are an important aspect of collaborative teams.

Recommendations

An important aim of this project was to make recommendations for the further alignment of English in KS2 and 3. In order to build on the findings from this project, there are several areas that could be worked on.

Firstly there should be full consideration to how non-fiction writing could be integrated to provide opportunities for literacy across the curriculum. In addition, to suit the student population and the high number of EAL students, it would be beneficial to explore the possibility of speaking activities in a central role within the Year 5-8 curriculum. Linked with this idea, it would also be beneficial to create more communication between the English, EAL and MFL departments to develop a more holistic view of 'language' and explore the possibility of English as a multilingual subject.

In order to continue the positive steps that have been taken during this project, it is important to continue to build collaboration between colleagues through further observations and examination of curriculum documents and student work. Facilitating more time to collaborate in vertical groups within the regular school meeting calendar would be a pragmatic way to do this.

Finally it is important to investigate a more aligned system of assessment and grading across the year groups.

Final Comments

In conclusion and to respond to the main aim of the project, it can be said that this inquiry into the teaching of English at BIS has provided important insights into the views of students and teachers toward the subject of English. It has also deepened understanding of how English is taught across these year groups. In addition, trust has been built amongst colleagues and the level of collaboration has increased in comparison to recent years.

To respond to the overall research question, it can be said that the collaborative professional learning strategies employed in this project have helped to create favourable pre-conditions for the development of a Y5-8 curriculum. It is acknowledged that, had the school not closed in March 2020, more collaborative activities would have taken place. It is now important to continue to build on this work to ensure that the findings from this project are fully examined in a wider school context and that the activities that were postponed are completed at the earliest appropriate time.

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Appendix 1 - Whole School Development Plan

Standing Priorities. To provide and continuously improve:	WSDP 2019 – 2021 Measures
High quality teaching and learning	• Establish a clear and shared understanding of what constitutes high quality teaching and learning through engaging with research and teacher reflections. • Use our shared understanding of high quality teaching and learning to inform our processes and systems especially: - establish consistent approaches to ensure teaching and learning is supported to meet the needs of every student, as part of our school-wide professional learning focus. - build on, share and examine the work of the Lesson Study Group on what makes effective learning observation and share findings with all staff. - continue to build on our Professional Learning to share effective practice consistently and comprehensively with all staff. • Embed our Guiding Statements and Learner Profile characteristics in our planning and learning.
High quality support for learning	• Develop a whole school approach to student Social and Emotional Learning including links to Physical Literacy. Including: - PLP group to research best practice and establish developments such as circle time - review student health support structure - expand mental health first aid training for staff • Gauge better student wellbeing and sense of belonging to ensure support is targeted and appropriate • Implement improvements to our student performance data systems and approaches in order to better support student progress. • Strengthen transition practices particularly between primary and secondary phases.
A creative, dynamic and holistic curriculum	• Develop a coherent strategy for students to be active change agents in order to: - enhance learning - improve the school and its environment - foster the Learner Profile characteristics. • Continue to adapt and improve the curriculum to provide effective continuity of learning in our all through school. In particular: - undertake the Year 5 – 8 Learning and Curriculum Review - review curriculum mapping in light of Office 365 changes - develop opportunities to teach and model the Learner Profile characteristics.

Notes from Professional Learning group for Year 5-8 Curriculum Review

To kick start the initial session, [redacted] set out the context for the Year 5-8 Curriculum Review as being intrinsically connected to the '**one school agenda'**, in particular to: the continuity of the learning experience from PS to SS; increased collaboration between PS and SS staff; sharing effective practice and developing a shared understanding of what constitutes high quality T&L; ensuring the transition of vibrant and effective learning.

The review is at a very early stage – the process is envisioned to take around 2 years and so at this stage, we are focused on **researching** and **exploring**; **gathering information** to inform our knowledge and understanding.

Colleagues had the opportunity to talk about what 'curriculum' means to different stake holders: parents, students, our non-teaching friends and to us, the teachers and [redacted] staff. The bigger picture of curriculum was shared: a school curriculum needs to evolve with the [globally] changing needs of society and **our curriculum MUST reflect OUR needs**. We shared the views of a range of current 'curriculum thinkers' whose common message is that **the curriculum needed today needs to be both knowledge rich and skills based** – the two are interchangeable (*see video below for more information about knowledge and skills based curricula*). Examples of 'innovative curricula' from across the globe were explored: colleagues seemed to favour the curricula that

placed emphasis on **academic standards** but were also underpinned by **values** and encouraged the **development of learner skills**. There was a clear preference for **outdoor learning** and for many, the notion of '**service**' and **making links to the community.** These elements were reflected in the 'blue sky' curriculums created by teams. Passionate but respectful conversations were had between colleagues from across the school debating the different methods of learning – for example, why are EYFS and Secondary so different and should they be?

After [redacted] shared the experiences of the **cross-school Maths collaboration**, colleagues could see how c**ommunication across the school benefits curriculum coherence.** There was a short but very productive time spent within vertical teams and it is now clear that this is the next step we need to take in our **reflective and exploratory stage**: **more vertical collaboration and communication to enable an understanding of what is already in place.** From here we can take the first steps to piecing together a coherent and exciting curriculum for [redacted].

Q1 Please order the following activities based on which you do most often in your English lessons at BIS? 1 being the most often and 8 being the least.

Reading

Writing fiction

Writing non fiction

Spelling

Grammar exercises

Speaking activities

Discussing / Writing about texts you are reading

Handwriting

Q2 How do you feel about the prospect of a Y5 to Y8

Q3 I am confident that I know how English is taught in Secondary School?

Q4 Understanding of English in Secondary School

I know how English is assessed in Secondary School

I know what texts are used in English in Secondary School

I know the terminology that is used in Secondary School

I know the types of strategies that are used in Secondary school to teach English

I know the content of the curriculum in Secondary School

Q5 Does the number of EAL students at our school change the way you teach English?

Q6 Does the transient student population of our school create any difficulties when teaching English at BIS?

Do you have any further comments on this question? :

Q7 Do you have any further comments regarding the teaching of English in Years 5 to 8?

Appendix 4 - Questionnaire for Y7 students

Q1 Were you at BIS in Primary School?

Q2 How many years have you been a student at BIS?

Q3 Order the following activities based on which you did most often in English lessons in Primary School? 1 being the most often and 8 being the least.

Reading

Writing fiction

Writing non fiction

Spelling

Grammar exercises

Speaking activities

Discussing / Writing about texts you are reading

Handwriting

Q4 Order the following activities based on which you do most often in English lessons in Secondary School? 1 being the most often and 8 being the least.

Reading

Writing fiction

Writing non fiction

Spelling

Grammar exercises

Speaking activities

Discussing / Writing about texts you are reading

Handwriting

Q5 Compared to the work you did in English in Primary School how do you find the work in Y7?
Q6 How often does the work you did in Primary School help you with the work in Y7?
Q7 What similarities do you notice between English lessons in Primary and Secondary School?
Q8 What differences do you notice between English lessons in Primary and Secondary School?
Q9 Do you have any suggestions about how your Primary School teachers could have prepared you more for the work in English in Secondary School?
Q10 Do you have any further comments about English at BIS in Years 5 to 8?

Appendix 5 - Information page for parents of Y7 students

Research into English in Years 5 to 8

Dear Parents,

Hopefully you recognise my name as one of the Year 6 teachers from last year.

I am currently conducting a piece of research into the subject of English at BSB in Years 5 to 8. The research project aims to identify similarities and differences in English lessons between Primary and Secondary school.

As part of this research, I would like to gain the perspectives of students in Y7 about the subject of English at the end of Primary and start of Secondary school. Therefore, I would like to request your permission in asking your child in Y7 to complete this questionnaire. Due to the comparison between Y6 and Y7 it is only necessary to do this if your child was at [redacted] in Y6. If you would be willing to help, the survey can be found and completed at the following link:

https:r/N7H637J

It should take around 5 - 10 minutes to complete.

As this research project is being used as part of a masters degree, I must inform you that the data collected may be used in an academic paper as well as to help inform developments at [redacted]. Names are not requested at any stage and participants cannot be traced via the link. All responses will remain anonymous throughout the project.

This is completely optional but your help would be greatly appreciated. I believe that gaining the perspective of students is very important in this research.

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

Appendix 6 - Ethical research with human participants.

Peer observations between teachers of English in Years 5 to 8 – an ethical outline

The purpose of these lesson observations is to identify similarities and differences in approaches to teaching English in Y5 – Y8 at (BIS). It is not the aim of this research to judge the skills of the teacher or give any levels or grades. The data collected will be used in the results and analysis section of my final year dissertation for my masters course. I will also be sharing a summary of my findings with my PL 'Supporter' (name).

During this research I will be collecting data made by participants during lesson observations. Once reciprocal peer observations have taken place I would also like to interview participants on their views about the lesson observation process and their views on the 5 – 8 curriculum. These interviews, which are also voluntary, will be transcribed and analysed in line with my research questions.

In compliance with ethical research guidelines, lesson observations should only be discussed as part of planned feedback and should not be discussed with parties not directly involved with the research. All data collected as a result of these observations will be made anonymous at the point of data collection.

Informed Consent – taken from**:** Flynn, L. R. & Goldsmith, R. E. (2016). Protection of human subjects. In Flynn, L. R., & Goldsmith, R. E. *Case studies for ethics in academic research in the social sciences* (pp. 9-18).

- The term informed consent implies that subjects know and understand the risks and benefits of participating in the research.

- They must also understand that their participation is completely voluntary. There must be no coercion even at a subtle level.
- Informed consent also implies comprehension. That is, subjects must be able to understand the risks and rewards of participation in the proposed research.
- Finally, informed consent implies that subjects participate voluntarily, with no coercion or undue influence brought to bear.

I understand how the data collected from my lesson observation will be used and consent to take part in this research.

Signed _____

Appendix 7 – Letter to head teacher

[redacted]

[redacted]

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in school this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by [redacted] In my final research project Bridging the Gap: an inquiry into the teaching of English in Years 5 - 8, I will explore how working with teachers from different phases can create favourable preconditions for developing a more aligned curriculum in Years 5 to 8. My project will relate specifically to English.

The research will take place with staff who teach English in Years 5 to 8. I am exploring how peer observation can help to develop greater understanding of teaching English in year groups where teachers may have less experience and training.

By participating in the research, the school would be contributing to a project that will help us to understand more about the advantages and challenges related to creating a curriculum for Years 5 to 8.

I hope to conduct this research between December 2019 and May 2020. I would use notes written during peer observations, interview and audio-record staff following peer observations and ask students in years 7 to complete questionnaires in order to gather data which will be used to analyse the strengths and potential barriers of the Y5-8 curriculum.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. The University also recognises,

however, that my study is a piece of practitioner research, and that schools already operate with the highest ethical standards. Therefore only your formal consent as headteacher is necessary, and not that of individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, students and other teachers will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants, including students, teachers and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor [redacted] and me, and only used for academic purposes. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

If you are happy for me to proceed with this study, please confirm that using the attached reply form. If you have any concerns or need more information about what is involved, please contact me or my supervisor. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, though: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 8 - Student comments analysis example

What similarities do you notice between English lessons in Primary and Secondary School?

That we read and check the grammar and spelling and paragraphs

We are always incoureged to read and write our own story's

Study books every term and do exercises based on them

Writing stories

On both of them you write a lot

They are a bit harder but more or less the same a bit more tests though.

We read quite a lot

We focus on a book. Then we do activities based on it

The teacher did a lot of talking

In the lessons we do rouughly the same things but in Secondary it is way more detailed and more advanced/harder.

Reading lots of books and answering questions as a class

We usually analyse and write about the techniques used in a book.

We study books

We always study a book.

Themes Identified:

The use of books

Level of challenge

Assessment and homework

Grammar and technical language

Types of writing

Appendix 9 - Teacher comments analysis example

A curriculum that crosses the 'gap' between primary and secondary, or at least greater collaboration and transparency, can only be a good thing. The concept of exactly what we mean by 'curriculum' would be a concern, because it means different things to different people. My biggest worry is Y9 being ignored or left behind. If we have a Y5-Y8 curriculum and a Y10-Y11 GCSE curriculum: where does this leave Y9? I am strongly opposed to including Y9 as an additional GCSE year, so maybe Y5-Y9 or Y6-Y9 might be more appropriate. Finally, for this to be successful, we would need to start from scratch. Pushing primary assessment criteria up into secondary, or secondary practices down into primary, would mean the process is being led by one or the other, when what you actually want is something genuinely collaborative and for all parties to feel suitably invested.

There are concerns as to why it does not stretch to Year 9

Does the number of EAL students at our school change the way you teach English?

Whilst I don't believe it should dictate our teaching, to not take the English experience of all of our students into account when planning would be negligent.

Occasionally, it mainly forces me to think constantly about recapping key terminology or ensuring new students are aware of strategies we use or that they have time to read and catch up with texts we are studying.

Appendix 10 - Lesson observation notes

Please make notes on this form to identify similarities and differences between English lessons in Primary and Secondary. There is also space to record any general observations / questions that you have about the lesson. All data collected should remain anonymous at all stages of research so please do not record the name of the teacher, class or students on this form.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Lesson Focus: Describe an island setting</td></tr>
<tr><td><u>Similarities</u>

Group work
Annotations of an extract
Vocabulary focus
Use of glossary
Explicit challenge made clear to all (although obviously different level of challenge and attainment expected)
Planning stage – paired/group task but most students ended up doing it independently (very similar!)
Timings used ‘5 minutes’ etc
Lots of monitoring of the class, checking on progress, answering questions
Options for tasks provided with different levels of challenge
Ideas of what to include in descriptive writing offered to the students
Independent planning of own writing
Sharing of ideas in different groups</td><td><u>Differences</u>

Smaller class
Interactive board used more – one note
Real focus on the meaning of ambitious language rather than maybe the effect or the writer intention
Classroom environment quite different – real sense of identity of the class, what they have read, their work on the wall etc lots of books displayed that they are reading?
Strategies for coming back together as a class ‘Pencils on the table so I can see you are ready’ Clap and response etc
Vocabulary lists laminated and available for students to utilise – writing toolkits</td></tr>
<tr><td><u>General Observations</u>

Very focussed and on task
Definition of difficult words given before as a glossary
Hands up used
Students very enthusiastic and wanting to be part of the discussion
Everyone included ‘who haven’t I heard from yet?’
12 students – 4 girls, 8 boys
Using student responses as new opportunities for teaching (examples of figurative techniques highlighted for the rest of the class) similar across all lessons and key stages I reckon?!</td><td><u>Questions</u>

How are the glossary words chosen?
The impact of using one note in the lesson – will the notes be available for students later or is One note being used as a presentational/lesson resource only?
Are they in a set seating plan for their English lessons? If yes what is this based on/what is the thinking behind it?
Is there ever any cross over from explicit English lessons to their other curriculum lessons? (seeing as it is a primary class with one main teacher) Does this impact on the focus/planning for English as a discrete subject?</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 11 - Lesson observation analysis

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Similiarites	Work independently Mixed ability class Using figurative language Students put ideas on board Modelling Picture stimulus for descriptive writing Peer editing Using success criteria	Teacher as 'animator' / deliverer Senese as senses not as adjectives Sharing Modelling Rewards for good engagement	Group work Annotating an extract Vocabulary focus Use of glossary Explicit challenge made clear to all Timings uses '5 minutes to do this' Lots of monitoring of the class Options for tasks with different levels of challenge Ideas of what to include in descriptive writing offered to the students. Independent planning of own writing. Sharing of ideas in different groups.	Starter task linked back to previous lesson and plenary looked forward to next part of the book being read. Use of whole class model to scaffold understanding of what inference is
Differences	Learning Challenge vs Learning Objective Timing - countdown, clapping for silence Students would maybe improve first then see model. Time to look at grammar with model - e.g fronted adverbial, relative clause Teacher worked with a group which they liked! Had another board the work with selected group.	Science fiction and fantasy (not at genre studied in secondary) "Magpieing / Stealing sentences Grouping By ability at tables Drawing / illustrating Word prompts (with US spelling).	Smaller class Interactive board used more - OneNote Real focus in the **meaning** of ambitious language rather than maybe the **effect** or the **writer intention** Classroom environment quite different - real sense of identify of the class	Use of OneNote and mini whiteboards (used in secondary but maybe differently) Option to sit with the teachers if you need help or stay where you are to complete if you feel you can Option to go to the carpet to share ideas (again - a similar thing may happen in secondary but not sitting on the carpet.

Appendix 12 - Review of lesson observations - full responses

Q1 Did you find it useful to visit lessons in primary? Why?	Yes, it was really interesting to see the similarities in lessons. It made me really think about what I expect my y7+ students to already know and what expectations I have of them - whether they are correct or need adapting!	Yes, as there is no substitute for seeing real life classroom interactions whether between teacher and students or between the students themselves. It was great to see the style of teaching/ questioning and activities as well as seeing how the students engaged with the learning.	Always as it is good to be in someone else's classroom per se. Then there is the need for continuity across the phases. Different and common practices were noted and we are all able to reflect upon best practice.	Yes, it was useful looking at the use of the teacher's language in giving instructions and English as a subject.

Q2 Did anything surprise you?	I was probably most surprised by how similar many of the tasks/ activities were to the work going on in KS3 classrooms.	How similar they were - in regards the language used and so on. Also how small the class size was, it was great that all students could be chatted to in such depth due to the class size.	There were ability groups and I had forgotten this. Otherwise there was nothing that 'surprised' me.	I was surprised with the level of learning, a good surprise!

Q3 Did you experience any logistical difficulties such as timetable restrictions when planning to observe the lesson?	No. It just took time, emailing to and fro as our school timetables are different, such as lunchtime, etc, to check and answer emails.	We were lucky that for two colleagues this fell just at the time when there were two or three days lull before the Year 11 marking came in from the mock exams. For two other colleagues with not such a focus on Year 11 teaching, I believe, that it was more difficult to find those observation slots.	Not really, although I was a little late due to the different timings of the lessons.	Some- I had to miss the first part of the lesson I was observing as it clashed with the secondary timetable but I did get to observe the majority of the lesson.

Q4 Which of the following do you think it would be useful to do when moving forward with the Y5 - 8 curriculum in English?	**Looking at long term plans across year groups**	**Looking at long term plans across year groups,**	**Looking at long term plans across year groups,** **Looking at short term plans across year groups,** **Team teaching,**	**Looking at long term plans across year groups,** **Looking at short term plans across year groups,** **Looking at work across year groups,**
		More observations	**Teaching in a different year group,**	**Team teaching,**

		All of these are important, but I think that the two here are the essential ones for us when we can return.	**More observations**	**More observations**