

**VISION, ETHOS AND VALUES IN TWO BIRMINGHAM SCHOOLS:  
PURPOSE, ARTICULATION AND REALISATION**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

In the changing landscape of education, and in light of a renewed focus on values within education policy, clear aspirations and a positive environment are increasingly important for those leading, and working in, schools. This study explored the purpose, articulation, and realisation of vision, ethos and values in two Birmingham schools. The research focused on: why vision, ethos and values were important; how they were expressed and communicated, both internally and externally; and, how they were embedded within daily norms and practices. In addition, the study aimed to explore what factors might act as barriers and enablers in the realisation of school vision.

A case study design was adopted and three distinct methods of data collection employed; analysis of documentary data from each school; an online staff questionnaire; and, semi-structured interviews with staff. Findings showed that vision, ethos and values united the schools' communities around shared goals and helped foster positive relationships at all levels. In expressing and communicating vision, staff in the schools indicated a preference for the use of digital channels over more traditional ones, and a degree of discrepancy was found between the representations of vision in official documents, and those which were articulated by staff. Collaboration between the Headteacher, senior leaders, values-leads and wider staff was found to be essential in the effective realisation of vision, as was the integration of the language of values within daily practice. The conclusions offer useful insights for those in schools to consider adopting when establishing, promoting and embedding vision, ethos and values.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter sets out the purpose and aims of the study presented in this thesis. The educational and political contexts within which the study was grounded are addressed, before the specific research questions that the study sought to answer are stated.

### 1.1 Context of the Study

#### *1.1.1 Vision, Ethos and Values in Schools*

A positive and meaningful vision is a key foundation for any good school, and is often associated with ‘values, ethos, culture generation and maintenance, and mission’ (Bischoff and Gibson, 2012: p.4). Setting them apart from more business-oriented organisations, schools are traditionally associated with ‘community’ and are concerned with the ‘ethos’ and ‘spirit’ of how they operate (Torrington and Weightman, 1993: p.44). Vision often overlaps with other key aspects of schools, such as mission statements, ethos or culture, and the values that underpin daily activities; consequently, definitions of the terms ‘vision, ‘ethos’ and ‘values’ can vary and are often used interchangeably (e.g. Solvason, 2005). The relationship between vision, ethos and values is complex and therefore requires further exploration prior to any empirical investigation.

The vision of any organisation can mistakenly be seen as merely an ideal, an aspiration, or a dream – derived from someone’s ‘blue-sky’ thoughts with little grounding in reality; in fact, vision is deep-rooted in the history of the organisation, in its journey, and in the people who are, or have been, part of that journey (Deal and Peterson, 2016). Vision is described as the

‘existential anchor or compass’ that prevents a group of people from wandering without direction or purpose (*ibid.*: p.68); for schools this compass is imperative.

The vision, along with many other aspects of a school as an organisation, is identified by Smith (1995) as playing a key role in upholding the ethos of the school. Adding to the complexity of establishing clear definitions, the language alone used to describe ‘ethos’ can include school atmosphere, climate, feel, and culture (Reid *et al.*, 1987 and *The Elton Report*, 1989, cited in Smith, 1995). Presenting a more abstract concept, ‘ethos’ encompasses the ‘feeling’ or ‘ambience’ of a school and its ‘character’; ethos is often linked to culture in that the ethos of a school is *created by* the culture (Solvason, 2005: p.85).

Considering ethos as a product of culture, Playfoot *et al.* (1989) define culture as a ‘product of history, the buildings, and patterns of interaction’; they see ‘how people relate to one another’ as the most important feature of a school and remind us of the ‘subjective interpersonal dimension’ of schools (p.38, quoted in Smith, 1995: p.6). In other words, the culture of a school is predominantly concerned with, and dependent on, its people, both those in the present day and those who are part of its history. A school’s history, and physical make-up, form a framework by which its culture is bound and shaped as it evolves with the school and the people who are living it (Smith, 1995).

Dalin (1993: p.97) describes school culture as a ‘complex phenomenon’ and identifies some key characteristics, such as ‘standards’, ‘values’ and ‘written and unwritten rules’, as factors that contribute to culture. The values that underpin the school culture are lived by those who make up the school community – the pupils, the staff and those leading the school (*ibid.*: p.8). Bridging culture and ethos with values, Glover and Coleman (2005: p.266) provide a definition

that aligns ethos with the ‘values and principles underpinning policy and practice’, and culture with the incorporation of these into a school environment conducive to educating young people.

It is often the case that aspects of school culture are so minor, or habitual, that they may not come to light when the culture is examined, particularly for those who are part of that culture; the cultural norms of a school are sometimes ‘known without being understood’ (Torrington and Weightman, 1993: p.45). Behavioural norms adopted by staff and pupils may be as small as smiling as they pass each other and expressing gratitude towards each other, but these behaviours nevertheless contribute to upholding a positive ethos on a daily basis (*ibid.*). Whilst the conceptual complexities, and the often-implicit nature of vision, ethos and values, present a challenge for empirical study, there is a clear need to enhance understandings of how these terms are conceived and enacted given that they play such a key role within schools (see McLaughlin, 2005).

Conveying the long-term aspirations, beliefs and priorities they have for their pupils to the external world is important for school leaders. Expressions of vision and ethos can take many forms, for example, a school prospectus, mission statement, or declaration by the Headteacher (see Smith, 1995; Torrington and Weightman, 1993; Donnelly, 2000). Likely to be aspirational in nature, these formal, written expressions of ethos often underestimate the complexities of realising the values and beliefs that they state as priorities in everyday practice (Donnelly, 2000). The relationship between these formal expressions of ethos - what official documents say about the culture of the school - and the genuine culture that manifests within the daily experiences, norms and practices of staff and pupils, formed a key interest of this study.

### *1.1.2 The Changing State of Education*

A clear vision provides a school with the direction and order needed to succeed (Bell and Harrison, 1995). This sense of direction becomes increasingly important when one considers the changing state of education today. Education often sees competing and conflicting political agendas impose changes that impact on priorities, resources, structures and governance of schools. To illustrate the environment within which schools operate, education in England has continuously been the subject of political concern, debates, reforms and radical interventions imposed by government (Ball, 2013). The 1980s, 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century saw a major uprooting of education structures, governance, provision and culture; termed by Gunter as the ‘modernisation of the education system in England’ (2011: p.1).

Education reforms in the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a number of changes implemented in schools. These changes included, but were not limited to: a shift from a public education system to a largely ‘privatised’ one; a growth in parental choice and access to school performance data; the introduction of the national curriculum; the move towards independent governance of schools; the diminishment of local authority control; and, the introduction of national standards of testing and inspection (see Gunter and McGinity, 2014; Leo, Galloway and Hearne, 2010; West, 2014; Ball, 2013).

This relentless culture of change in education undoubtedly creates a challenging environment in which schools are expected to operate successfully. The changing demands on schools to meet new or revised government objectives and targets are in addition to the pressures placed on them to meet the needs of pupils, support and develop their staff, and satisfy the requirements of parents. The implications of this for education are a cause for concern;

navigating an ever-changing environment where external expectations fluctuate presents considerable challenge for schools. The changing landscape of education, increasing conflicts and growing demands placed on schools highlight the need for schools to adopt a clear vision which provides direction and motivates staff; yet, the conditions that place so much importance on a clear vision so too make the already onerous task of effectively implementing that vision all the more difficult to achieve.

### ***1.1.3 Renewed Focus on Values in Education Policy***

As indicated in the definitions explored above, values are an inherent part of vision and ethos in schools, as well as of education as a whole. In 1996, the National Forum for Values in Education and the Community was established by the Conservative Government and tasked with identifying a set of core values that society agreed were conducive to the civic good (Arthur, 2005). By 2000, the Labour Government incorporated values within the new National Curriculum; in 2001, the government emphasised the aim of education as to cultivate in young people values that would guide their conduct and choices as they became citizens beyond school life (*ibid.*). Such changes at government level are highly influential on the day-to-day practices within schools as the government is seen to set the moral agenda in education (*ibid.*). Pertinent to the context of this study, the school is perceived to be the dominant place, outside of the family, where values are developed in young people and importantly, positive school ethos plays a fundamental role in the promotion of such values (*ibid.*; see also McLaughlin, 2005; Jubilee Centre, 2017).

The importance of values in schools has received increased attention in recent years and has been emphasised through policy changes, a focus on British Values/Fundamental British

Values, and amendments to school inspection criteria; this emphasis occurred alongside a general resurgence of an interest in character education. The appointment of Nicky Morgan as Secretary of State for Education in 2014 saw character education become a priority of the Department for Education (DfE) through which character-building activities were integrated throughout the school curriculum (Morgan, 2014). New initiatives, as part of a £5million pledge by the DfE to support various character development programmes, included drafting in rugby coaches to teach the sport's core values to school pupils across the UK; such programmes emphasised the need for values to become integral to education (DfE, 2015). The DfE highlighted the role of schools in developing the whole child: 'education should prepare children for adult life, giving them the skills and character traits needed to succeed academically, have a fulfilling career, and make a positive contribution to British society' (DfE, 2016: p.20).

Recognition and support for values provision enhanced this renewed focus with the introduction, by the DfE, of national awards for schools that demonstrate best practice; in addition, an Advisory Committee on Character was established, under Damian Hinds as Secretary of State for Education in 2019, to develop recommendations for supporting schools in this area. Importantly, in January 2019, school inspectorate Ofsted introduced a duty on schools to develop character and values in their pupils, including this within their *Framework for Inspection of Schools* under 'Personal Development' (Ofsted, 2019). Given this renewed emphasis on values in education policy, a good understanding of how values contribute to the vision and ethos of schools is increasingly important to academics, policymakers, school leaders and teachers.

With this, the identification of ‘core values’, those values which are prioritised, has become more prominent in schools and something which school governors and leaders actively develop as part of a school’s ethos. The risk, however, is that this new priority has become a ‘tick-box’ exercise and therefore lacks the depth of thought and understanding required to identify meaningful values that are shared by the whole-school community, embedded within practice and helpful in supporting the school to achieve its aspirations.

## **1.2 Aims of the Research**

This research sought to further understand the place and purpose of vision, ethos and values in schools, and in particular, the ways in which schools firstly, articulate and express their vision, and secondly, realise this vision through daily practices. Due attention needs to be given to how schools can effectively establish, promote and integrate their own vision, ethos and values, in order to contribute positively to building a thriving school community within which staff and pupils can flourish.

The study sought to capture the views of staff, in two particular schools in Birmingham, in order to examine the ways in which vision was articulated and communicated, both internally and externally, and how it was integrated into the daily activities of staff and pupils. The relationship between formal, written expressions, and genuine experiences of staff, with regards to vision, ethos and values was a key point of interest, as well as what factors may hinder or support schools’ efforts to effectively realise their vision. It was hoped that a qualitative investigation would give staff the opportunity to articulate their understanding and awareness of their school’s vision, ethos and values, express where they feel that vision comes from, and shed light on what they see to be its fundamental role within the school.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The research questions that this study sought to answer are as follows:

- 1. Why are vision, ethos and values important in schools?**
- 2. How do schools go about articulating and communicating their vision, ethos and values internally and externally?**
- 3. What are the main ways in which schools ensure their vision, ethos and values are realised on a day-to-day basis and what factors might act as barriers and enablers in this?**

### **1.4 Outline of the Thesis**

This opening chapter has introduced the context within which the present study was grounded; the importance and complexity of vision, ethos and values in schools. With the intentions of the study identified, and the specific research questions in mind, the structure of the thesis is set out below.

The background literature presented in Chapter 2 is considered thematically to address the key areas pertaining to the study; first, the complexities of schools as organisations are explored in order to establish the key areas of focus for an examination of school vision. Given the lack of clarity around the terms ‘vision’, ‘ethos’ and ‘values’ already addressed, definitions from the field are discussed further. Vision, ethos and values are then considered in relation to the following: their role in effective schools; the contribution of school members to their establishment and implementation; how they might be expressed and communicated; how they

might be realised in the day-to-day running of a school; and, what challenges schools face in their efforts to successfully implement them.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter describes the research design and methodology adopted in the study, including methods of data collection and analysis, and the limitations of the research. The empirical findings are presented, by method, in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter and illustrated through participants' comments during interviews. The 5<sup>th</sup> chapter considers these findings in light of the literature reviewed at the outset of the study. Discussion and interpretation of findings is presented thematically, considering, in turn, the purpose, articulation, and realisation of vision, ethos and values in schools. In the concluding 6<sup>th</sup> chapter the themes are brought together to illuminate the key findings relating to the research questions the study set out to examine.

## **2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the literature concerning vision, ethos and values in schools. The review draws on studies of organisations more broadly, as well as those that further understanding of schools specifically. The chapter is presented in nine sections in order to clearly address the key themes that became evident during literature searches. The significant insights from the literature within each theme are brought together in the closing paragraph of each section, with a final summary section to close.

The review begins by exploring how one might view schools as organisations, something which is key to developing an understanding of how things work within schools, and in understanding the perspectives of staff. The semantic and practical challenges of defining the terms ‘vision’, ‘ethos’ and ‘values’ are then set out along with some conceptual clarifications offered by those in the field. The review goes on to explore the role of vision, ethos and values in effective schools and considers how a clear approach to their implementation might help schools to achieve their goals. The contribution of different members of a school to establishing and implementing the school’s aspirations and culture is considered to ascertain who might be able to offer valuable insight into the subject.

Understanding the articulation and communication of vision, ethos and values was key to this study and so a review of the literature regarding how schools can go about doing this is presented, with some attention given to why this is important. A consideration of how the vision is realised and effectively embedded within day-to-day activities follows. The final

theme addresses the challenges that school leaders and members may face in their endeavour to successfully integrate vision, ethos and values into the daily running of the school.

## **2.2 Schools as Organisations**

When seeking to enhance understanding of vision, ethos and values in schools, knowledge of the way schools work and how they function as organisations is important; this understanding is key to ensuring the most relevant aspects of schools are considered as part of empirical studies.

To illustrate the complex nature of schools as organisations, the different factors at play in developing the ethos of a school cover a number of aspects, such as: the needs of pupils; the curriculum; resource management; school development and improvement plans; communication within and beyond the school; training and development of staff; and, administration (Smith, 1995). The intricacies involved in managing a school, in responding to its multifaceted needs and responsibilities, require consideration of an entire eco-system of ‘social, intellectual and emotional activities’ that contribute to educating young people (Playfoot *et al.*, 1989, quoted in Smith, 1995: viii). Any investigation, therefore, of school vision, ethos or values should take as much of a whole-school perspective as possible, encompassing numerous aspects, in order to contribute soundly to new understandings.

It is crucial for schools, despite their multifaceted nature, to operate coherently as a whole, through employing consistent and accepted approaches; a school’s ethos ought to foster collaboration among its staff and unite the school community to a common end (Smith, 1995). Ethos and the quality of ‘wholeness’ interact closely with one another; a positive ethos can be seen to create and maintain wholeness, and wholeness can be seen to contribute greatly to

developing a positive ethos (see Mortimore *et al.*, 1989, cited in Smith, 1995; Torrington and Weightman, 1993).

The prioritisation of collaboration can be seen in the way a school operates as an organisation; schools can operate under *hierarchy* or *collegiality* as Smith (1995: pp.1-4) sets out, drawing on the work of Bell (1989). A hierarchical structure means staff are often directed, controlled and commanded by those in charge, whereas, a collegial approach will encourage fruitful participation and collaboration between staff. (*ibid.*) Shared commitment to the vision of a school is important and so the collegiality structure, or at least elements of it, can be seen as conducive to the effective realisation of vision. Central to collegiality are ‘involvement, cooperation, participation, delegation and effective communication’ and these approaches combined will go far in facilitating and enabling a school to achieve its goals (Bell, 1989: p.128, quoted in Smith, 1995: p.4).

In addition to collegiality, relationships are vital to any school; the atmosphere of a school is ‘essentially concerned with the quality of relationships between pupils, between pupils and teachers, between teachers and between the head and teachers’ (Hoyle, 1986: p.3, quoted in Bell and Harrison, 1995: p.3). Considering a school’s approach to decision-making, Smith (1995) places schools on a results-relationships continuum; those that focus on results emphasise outcomes in their decision-making, whilst those at the relationships end take a more collegial approach, involving staff in decisions and considering the needs and feelings of people. The person-focused nature of the school ethos, combined with the importance of collaboration in both forming and realising the vision, lends itself to the relationships end of the spectrum (*ibid.*).

Considering the school as an organisation, Bush notes that a balance needs to be maintained between 'leadership' and 'management', where leadership is concerned with 'values and purpose' and management is concerned with the 'technical aspects' of running a school (Bush, 1998: p.328). This balance is summarised by Bolman and Deal: 'The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the brilliant flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides' (1991: pp.xiii-xiv, quoted in Bush, 1998: p.329). The forward-looking, ambitious nature of a vision motivates and drives change, but the day-to-day, functional needs of a school must still be met through efficient management. Staff at all levels ought to contribute to this management, and to do so effectively, they need to understand how day-to-day activities and operations feed into the school's long-term goals (ILEA's Improving Primary Schools, 1985, cited in Smith, 1995).

Dalin (1993: p.6) sees 'values, norms and goals' as a key dimension in the make-up of a school as an organisation; constituting values, ethos (norms), and vision (goals), it is important, within the context of the present study, to see this dimension as interacting with, and shaping, other key dimensions of the school. The external environment is another important dimension; Dalin (1993) highlights the mutual benefits a school can gain from a positive relationship with parents and the community, compared to schools that stay closed off from the external environment and protect themselves against it. A school's openness to building a positive rapport with the local community, with parents, education authorities, and local businesses is a key factor in its overall effectiveness as an organisation. A school's relationship with parents can be of great value, but will often be the most fragile, particularly where pupils come from lower socio-economic families (*ibid.*).

To summarise, in viewing schools as organisations, it is clear that explorations of vision, ethos and values ought to consider the place of collegiality within the school, the quality of relationships among all members of the school community, the leadership of the school and the school's engagement with its local community and parents. It is important to note that for the various dimensions of the school to operate in harmony, Dalin (1993) asserts that a school must establish a good understanding of itself; it must establish its long-term goals, be aware of where its strengths and weaknesses lie, and put in place effective policies. Without this understanding, the school would not be able to navigate the complexities presented by its own and the external environment.

## **2.3 Defining Vision, Ethos and Values**

Further to those introduced in Section 1.1.1, definitions of 'vision', 'ethos' and 'values' in schools vary considerably, as does the language used to describe the characteristics of schools that constitute them. When seeking further understanding one must therefore begin with an exploration of these varying definitions and settle on their own viewpoint of what is meant by each term.

### ***2.3.1 Vision***

In their understanding of vision, Deal and Peterson draw on the work of Clark (1972: p.178) in which he uses the term 'organisational saga' to describe the 'collective understanding' of an organisational purpose; this purpose, or vision, encourages people to 'give loyalty to the organisation and take pride and identity from it'. Recognising the importance of the realisation of such a 'saga', Clark notes that:

*A saga begins as strong purpose, introduced by a man (or small group) with a mission, and is fulfilled as it is embodied in organisational practices and the values of dominant organisational cadres, usually takes decades to develop.*

Clark (1972: p.178)

For Clark, the realisation of an organisational saga has the power to transform ‘a formal place into a beloved institution’ and a place that provokes passion and commitment in those who find themselves part of it (*ibid.*). For a school, assuming all members of the school community are working towards the same end – the education and shaping of their pupils – creating the kind of school that staff feel passionately about, and are dedicated to, is fundamental.

Considering the importance of vision in schools, Leithwood *et al.* (2006) emphasise the shared goals that derive from vision and term this ‘setting direction’; this creation of shared vision is necessary for the motivation of staff, increasing or maintaining achievements of staff and stimulating successful work across the school. Senge (1990) highlights the impact a shared vision can have when it becomes more than just an ideal, referring to it as a ‘force in people’s hearts, a force of impressive power’ (p.206, quoted in Tope, 1999: p.132).

Highlighting the aspirational nature of vision, Conger and Kanungo (1987: p.640) define vision as an ‘idealised goal that the leader wants the organisation to achieve in the future’ and assert that this is key in motivating and challenging staff in a school. Similarly, Holmes (1993) sees vision as a representation of the kind of school that the leader and those invested in the school aspire to create. In summing up what constitutes school vision, he asserts:

*...vision includes the aspirations you have for the present and future pupils in the school, the quality of teaching and learning which you think is attainable and the values which should influence everything which happens in the school.*

Holmes (1993: p.16)

The term vision, and attempts to define it, often appears alongside related phrases such as ‘core mission’ and ‘effective culture and climate’ in education and educational leadership literature (Holmes, 1993: p.17). The role of vision in educational leadership, for example, is widely recognised, despite the lack of clarity around its definition; notwithstanding the challenges it poses for scholars, Bush (2011) asserts that vision must form part of any attempt to define leadership in education.

For the purposes of the present study, the definition offered by Holmes (1993) which incorporates long-term aspirations and pays attention to both the academic and non-academic aims of schools was adopted to inform the researcher. Despite the lack of clarity around definitions of vision, its accepted significance calls for greater empirical evidence to address this gap and further enhance understanding of its place in schools.

### **2.3.2 *Ethos***

The term ‘ethos’ also receives considerable attention in the literature and is identified, alongside vision, as a necessary part of any exploration of education and schooling (McLaughlin, 2005; Holmes, 1993). Bridging vision and ethos, Smith (1995) sees vision as a key contributing factor to the ethos of a school. Despite the ambiguity surrounding definitions of ethos, its importance in education is broadly recognised; as with vision, the need for, and

value of, further clarity and understanding around the notion of ethos is acknowledged (McLaughlin, 2005).

Donnelly (2000) notes the discrepancy between the prominence of ethos in academic studies of organisations and the lack of conceptual debate or satisfactory theory about the term; the resistance of 'ethos' to clear definition makes it a difficult notion to study empirically. Donnelly highlights support for her stance in the work of Breen and Donaldson (1995: p.54, quoted in Donnelly, 2000: p.134) who refer to ethos as being 'perceived by many to be an area of vagueness, partial articulation and sketchy implementation'. That said, it is important to note that the ethos of a school is unique to that school – although schools often share some fundamental characteristics or approaches, it is widely accepted that their ethos can differ significantly (Sarason, 1974; Arfwedson and Lundman, 1983; Little, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989, cited in Dalin, 1993). In order to understand the ethos of individual schools, the understanding of ethos as a broader concept needs some further consideration.

There is overlap throughout the literature between the terms 'ethos' and 'culture' when discussing similar aspects of schools. Torrington and Weightman (1993) see ethos as concerned with the children in a school, as opposed to the culture among adults, and define this as 'a more self-conscious expression of specific types of objective in relation to behaviour and values' (*ibid.*: p.45). Despite the differences between culture and ethos, the relationship between the two is emphasised by Donnelly (2000), who sees them as closely related given their concern with the behaviour, norms and attitudes of people. Donnelly distinguishes ethos as referring to 'the formal and informal expressions of school members...[that]...tend to reflect the prevailing cultural norms, assumptions and beliefs'; for Donnelly ethos offers the opportunity to look more specifically at aspects of the school culture (2000: p.136).

For some scholars, the line between ethos and culture is only blurred by the language used to discuss them and most of the time people are talking about the same thing. Ethos can be described as the ‘feel’ of a school, a notion which generated interest during an inquiry into discipline in schools published in *The Elton Report* (1989). The inquiry noted the differences in the ‘feel’ or ‘atmosphere’ of schools and suggested that these differences could often be felt just through speaking with teachers from the school (*ibid*: p.88). Rather than any other variables, it was concluded that ‘what went on in the schools themselves’ created such differences in atmosphere (*ibid.*).

In exploring ethos in two case study schools, Donnelly makes an important distinction between two perspectives on ethos and describes this as positivist vs. anti-positivist views (2000: p.135). A positivist views ethos in isolation to the organisation and its members; rather than being the product of an organisation’s history, people and culture, the ethos is prescriptive in nature and sets out the organisational aims. Within this definition, ethos can be described as an authoritative articulation of the standards and expectations of those who run an organisation – or, in other words, a formal expression of ‘how it should be’. The anti-positivist view sees ethos as integral to the organisation and as deriving from the interactions and relationships of those within it. For those who interpret ethos in this way, the views, attitudes and beliefs of an organisation’s community are a vital part of any understanding or empirical study of ethos (*ibid.*).

For the purposes of the study presented here, ethos was seen to overlap with culture; this overlap stems from how ethos is manifested in daily school life through behavioural norms and attitudes, and how staff may view ethos through the lens of culture given that ‘culture’ is a

more refined, tangible term. The anti-positivist view of ethos defined by Donnelly (2000) formed the working definition with staff perspectives seen as central to gaining greater understanding of ethos in schools.

### **2.3.3 Values**

The place of values was the third central aspect in this study and the political changes which have led to a renewed focus on values in schools were discussed in Section 1.1.3. Values play a key role in the establishment and realisation of vision in schools and the values that a school identifies as central to its vision ought to underpin its daily activities (Holmes, 1993). Deal and Kennedy (1983, cited in Smith, 1995) emphasise the importance of identifying shared values and embedding those within policies and practices, so that what goes on throughout the school augments the shared values of the school for pupils and staff.

The values upheld by a school community are seen as the fundamental principles that guide behaviour and decisions within a school – they shape what is seen as right or wrong, good or bad (Trethowan, 1991, quoted in Bell and Harrison, 1995: p.3). Such guiding principles will be present in all schools, whether implicitly assumed or explicitly identified and promoted (*ibid.*). In pursuing excellence, the values that represent what the school is striving for – often called ‘end values’- are the values that a school should seek to embed (Burns, 1978, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

School values are often seen as ‘central’ to school leadership; Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) draw on the work of Greenfield (1986) who places the understanding and promotion of values at the heart of a leader’s role, whilst emphasising the ability to resolve conflicts that

may arise around the identification of values. Further, for school leaders, the fundamental values of ‘honesty, responsibility’ and ‘fairness’ form the foundation upon which they build trust with their school community and gain commitment from staff (*ibid.*, 1993: p.150).

For the purposes of the present study, the interest lay in the values identified by schools as the primary, or core, values that underpin ethos, and help staff to achieve the school’s long-term vision. In exploring the varying definitions and conceptual clarifications concerning ‘vision’, ‘ethos’ and ‘values’, it is evident that, though intricate differences exist between them, they can be viewed as integrated with one another. Discussions of vision, the prevailing component that sets the path for, and shapes, the others, ought to encompass, therefore, ethos and values.

#### **2.4 Vision, Ethos and Values in Effective Schools**

In exploring definitions of vision, ethos and values, the role they play in the effectiveness of schools is evident throughout the literature, and as Holmes (1993) notes, this mirrors views of vision, ethos and values in organisations more widely. In defining vision, Holmes asserts it is inseparable from school effectiveness and claims that ‘all successful schools are built around a clear sense of vision and purpose’ (1993: p.15).

*The Elton Report* concluded that schools that create a ‘positive atmosphere’, which is cultivated through ‘a sense of community and shared values’, are found to be the most successful (1989: pp.12-13; see also Smith, 1995). Offering a succinct formula for a ‘good’ school, Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) *Ten Good Schools* report called for schools to ‘see themselves as places designed for learning’ and suggested that any good school is built on ‘an acceptance of shared values’ (1977: p.36). In a fairly simplistic view of effective schools, Torrington and

Weightman (1993: p.54) emphasise that successful schools will have at their core ‘a few central ideals’ which are supported by the school community and implemented through daily practices.

The *Ten Good Schools* report concluded that a culture that allows a school to grow enables it to succeed (1977). Whilst emphasising the leader as pivotal in effective schools, the report attributed school success to the ‘imagination and vision’ of the Headteacher and acknowledged that to be realised effectively the Headteacher’s vision needed to be ‘tempered by realism’ (*ibid.*: p.36). Making a similar point, Smith (1995: p.30) asserts that the leadership of a school has ‘a profound effect on the ethos and culture of the school’. He acknowledges that the ‘more positive everyone who works in the school feels about what they are doing, the easier it will be for those who manage the school to think ahead and absorb changes...’ (*ibid.*: p.34). A positive atmosphere encourages positivity among the workforce, which in turn creates flexibility for the leadership team to look forward and plan how they will successfully achieve shared objectives (*ibid.*).

Mortimore *et al.* (1988, cited in Smith, 1995: p. 26) identify a number of key characteristics that a leadership team ought to maintain in order to create a positive atmosphere and achieve success. Among these are: a strong leader; the involvement of the deputy in decision-making; a feeling of ownership among staff over decisions directly impacting their roles; effective teaching which presents intellectual challenge; an environment that values hard work; effective dialogue within and across the school; an environment where praise for good work is favoured over criticism; and, good provision for extracurricular activities (*ibid.*). Such characteristics align with the recognised outcomes associated with a clear vision, positive ethos and core values in a school.

Where a school has a positive ethos and a clear vision, there will be more excitement and enthusiasm among its staff about new approaches or knowledge that can help it progress even further (Smith, 1995). This enthusiasm among staff, and openness to new approaches, lends itself to the nature of education, where school leaders are faced with conflicting demands and changing priorities. The ability, therefore, to adapt to new circumstances and implement change is crucial in successful schools; Bell and Harrison (1995) note that vision provides the sense of direction necessary for schools to be amenable to change.

In summary, the precise ways in which a clear vision and positive ethos, underpinned by shared values, contribute to the overall effectiveness of a school vary between motivating staff, guiding leaders, uniting the school community and embracing change. The conclusion that vision is necessary for schools to succeed is evident and importantly, as Holmes (1993) emphasises, shared aspirations and values, and the embodiment of these within daily practices, cannot be assumed but must be deliberate formulated and articulated in order to be effective.

## **2.5 Contribution to Vision, Ethos and Values in Schools**

For the purposes of this study, it was important to explore who contributes to establishing the vision, creating the ethos and identifying what values are prioritised by the school, as well as who plays a part in realising these. The complex and multi-faceted nature of schools as organisations discussed earlier means that identifying the contribution of different members of the school community can be challenging.

A clear school vision looks to a brighter horizon for all involved and responsibility falls to the leader for setting the path for achieving that vision (Owens and Valesky, 2015; Holmes, 1993).

In the daily grind of school life, where staff are under pressure to meet attainment targets, maintain standards and be role-models to young people, a leader's vision should provide a 'rallying cry for the daily work to be done' (Owens and Valesky, 2015: p.14). A leader's enthusiasm for the vision of the school is a core component of what is termed 'educative leadership' which 'communicates a sense of excitement, originality and freshness' and which exceeds the minimal requirements of day-to-day functionalities (Duignan and Macpherson, 1992: pp.4-5, quoted in Bell and Harrison, 1995: p.1). The role of the leader, then, is seen as pivotal in the implementation of vision, ethos and values in schools and this is not surprising when one considers the active role a Headteacher plays in day-to-day school life.

A model where the vision, ethos and values of a school are solely dependent on one key figure is not ideal, and so the contribution of other members of the school community is key. The presence of leaders at all levels throughout a school is often seen as important, though the question of who leads within a school can be disputed; the Headteacher is not necessarily the sole leader (West *et al.*, 2000). A leader's ability to share their role, and indeed the competence and capacity of their deputies or senior staff, are crucial in leading a school successfully. The Committee of *The Elton Report* were left convinced that in the range of schools they visited 'the attitudes and motivation of their Headteachers and staff were decisive influences on their atmosphere' (1989: p.89). Though Bell and Harrison (1995) recognise that vision has become a fundamental aspect of the role of a Headteacher, they too acknowledge the inclusion of senior managers in this.

With the 'wholeness' of a school in mind, one of the problems that can result from the responsibility for vision being attributed to the leadership team is the potential for divide. Wallace and Hall (1994, cited in West *et al.*, 2000) warn of two camps existing within schools

– the leaders, and the followers. Reinforcing this idea of a divide, West *et al.* (2000) recognise that this can lead to the isolation or separation of the senior management team. Such division is detrimental to the successful cultivation of a positive ethos, which requires all staff and pupils to feel valued as part of the school community (*The Elton Report*, 1989).

When establishing vision the approach to the involvement of staff is an important consideration; as Smith (1995) asserts, the involvement of all staff should be facilitated through a collaborative approach. The literature shows that where staff can take ownership of change they demonstrate greater enthusiasm than when change is inflicted upon them (Bush, 2011). Wang, Gurr and Drysdale (2014) draw on a case study, where stakeholders praised the Headteacher for including them in the formation of the school's vision and selection of values, to highlight the need to involve and collaborate with all stakeholders, from staff to parents. In order to be effective, a vision must gain support from the school community and be implemented in a way that 'secures commitment' from staff and stakeholders (Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993: p.147). If staff are to embrace new aspirations, renewed expectations, or explicit core values then their involvement in these changes from inception is essential.

To summarise, the leader, by virtue of their role and responsibilities, is naturally a significant player in setting and driving school vision, yet it seems the efforts of a Headteacher alone in this would be insufficient. The contribution to vision, ethos and values is perhaps best summarised by Holmes (1993) who distinguishes between those who ought to, and expect to, be participants in this, and those who ought to be the drivers; the leader is ultimately responsible for driving the vision, but crucial to them succeeding in this is the involvement of the wider school community.

## **2.6 Articulation and Communication of Vision, Ethos and Values**

### ***2.6.1 Expression and Articulation***

Having discussed at length the importance of establishing vision, creating a positive ethos and identifying core values, it is important to turn attention to the ways in which these are translated from ideas, or hopes, to the lived reality of staff and pupils. This brings the focus first to the articulation and communication of vision, ethos and values.

When exploring the literature regarding the expression of vision it is apparent that the leader, predominantly, should be concerned with the way that they articulate the vision of the school. Aside from the wider purpose of providing an expression of the vision, Owens and Valesky (2015) note more specifically that leaders should be able to draw on a motivating articulation of their vision as and when it is needed. Starratt (1986, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993: p.153) highlights the need for vision to permeate the day-to-day activities of a school and suggests that this is achieved when ‘the leader articulates the vision in such compelling ways that it becomes the shared vision of the leader’s colleagues’ so much so that it ‘illuminates their ordinary activities with dramatic significance’. Given the influence of the leader in setting and driving the vision already highlighted, their effectiveness in fulfilling their role in this is largely dependent on how they articulate their aspirations to others.

A consideration of articulation necessitates an examination of the language used to express the vision of a school. Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) highlight the popularity of metaphorical and symbolic language and note that the use of such language plays an important role in setting the tone of the school and expressing the purpose of daily practices; positive

metaphors associated with a school include, for example, 'family' or 'community' and a negative metaphor might be 'factory' (pp.149-150). The impact of metaphorical language means that the choice of metaphor, the gaining of support from the school community on that choice, and the representation of the school values within the metaphor, are all crucial factors for leaders to consider when selecting language to express their vision (*ibid.*).

Expressions of vision and ethos can take a number of forms and may be as formal as a declaration by the Headteacher, or as informal as passing comments made about the way things are done in the school (Torrington and Weightman, 1993). The initial starting point in efforts to consciously develop or integrate culture is often some form of official statement or policy; it is not unusual to find that where such formal statements do not exist a school will be somewhat detached from its culture (*ibid.*). In contrast, Schein places less emphasis on formal statements as a way of articulating organisational culture and asserts that often such statements will only present a 'small, publicly relevant segment of the culture' (1985: p.242). Similarly, Holmes (1993: p.25) claims that such statements of vision merely 'present a baseline commitment to good practice and common sense' and are not unique or inspiring.

A school's written materials usually form the basis of its communication to the external world and so how the vision, ethos and values are articulated here is important; the school prospectus is traditionally the dominant form of a school's written communication. Often seen as a piece of 'publicity material', the school prospectus presents what the school is all about; it provides readers with an impression of the school and should illustrate the quality of education that the school strives to achieve (Stott and Parr, 1991: p.98, quoted in Smith, 1995: p.150). Similar to a marketing tool, the prospectus is something that needs careful consideration and planning so that it portrays the school in as positive a light as possible and should be a product of a team

effort by teachers, governors and parents (Smith, 1995). The prospectus will include a written statement about the aims, ethos and values that the school upholds and often covers approaches to discipline and behaviour, provision for extra-curricular initiatives and uniform policy for pupils, among other things (*ibid.*).

Donnelly (2000: p.135) terms the ethos that is set out in school documents the ‘official ethos’ and focuses her examination of two case study schools on how far this formal, documented ethos, is consistent with the more informal ethos that can be seen in the attitudes, conduct and interactions of school staff. Concluding that the documented ethos of a school is often far removed from what actually goes on in the school from day-to-day, Donnelly distinguishes between three dimensions of ethos; namely, ‘aspirational ethos’, ‘ethos of outward attachment’, and ‘ethos of inward attachment’ (2000: p.151). These are described as follows: aspirational ethos is that which is articulated through formal documents and is seen as the most artificial representation of what goes on in a school; ethos of outward attachment is apparent in a school’s physical setting, operational approach and how members of the school community behave; and, ethos of inward attachment is the most genuine representation of what goes on and can be found in the attitudes, beliefs and thoughts of individuals who are part of the school (*ibid.*). The articulation of vision, ethos and values, then, may be considerably departed from the reality of everyday school life.

In summary, the anti-positivist interpretation of ethos, which sees ethos as emerging from interactions, offers ‘insight into the lived reality and outward expression and support of the ethos’ (Donnelly, 2000: p.150). This is therefore important in seeking to understand the relationship between the content of a documented ethos, and the ethos that is realised through the daily practices of those in the school. The significance placed on written expressions of

vision, ethos and values sits at odds with the negative view that these offer only a fleeting representation of the aims and culture of a school. The language, and formats, through which a school chooses to express its vision and ethos provide an opportunity to close the gap between the aspirational ethos, and ethos in its most genuine form.

### ***2.6.2 Communication***

The importance of articulating vision, ethos and values has been highlighted in Section 2.6.1, but this articulation becomes redundant if the school does not effectively communicate and promote it within, and beyond, its community. The basic aspects of communication – which Rowland and Birkett highlight as the ‘sharing of information, attitudes and beliefs’ (1992, cited in Smith, 1995: pp.136-137) – bear significant relevance to the communication of vision, ethos and values within a school.

Effective communication of different types of information within schools can be seen to facilitate vision. For example: short-term information facilitates the daily functioning of a school; medium-term information transforms longer term matters into realistic goals that staff feel they can achieve; long-term information relates most closely to the vision of the school and encompasses the aspirational aims and cultural expectations of the school (Smith, 1995). The long-term information forms the foundation upon which the school operates, this information is operationalised through the transfer of medium-term strategies, goals and outcomes that the school works towards achieving and both are made possible through the effective day-to-day sharing of short-term information. Smith (1995) warns that without the effective communication of long-term goals a school can become the sum of multiple

individuals or groups working in isolation towards unrelated goals with no shared practices, culture or agenda.

Establishing and maintaining effective communication in a school is dependent on the staff as much as the leader; the staff need to be aware and accepting of their own role in facilitating good communication and this buy-in can be difficult to obtain across a whole-school community (Bell, 1989 and Beare *et al.*, 1989, cited in Smith, 1995). Communication can also occur in a much more implicit way. Smith (1995: p.139) speaks of the information that is 'inferred' by colleagues in a school, as well as by visitors; subjective interpretations can be made about the school from the ways in which people are dressed, the way people interact and communicate with each other, mannerisms and use of tone in conversations. Highlighting the importance of reflection and evaluation regarding communication, Smith (1995) suggests that assumptions can be made about the school environment where the message inferred is not always the message intended. Stressing the importance of promoting the vision or message of the school, Smith (1995) encourages schools to celebrate their success at building a positive school ethos and asserts that schools should use the full range of communication channels and marketing tools available to them to promote this success.

The communication of vision, ethos and values is evidently vital in ensuring that they permeate as many aspects of everyday school life as possible and the conviction and enthusiasm with which they are communicated helps in this endeavour. Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) go so far as to say that the vision should be reflected in all exchanges between teachers and students – demonstrated through dialogue and behaviour. Bridging how vision and purpose are communicated, and how they can be realised, Vaill describes the daily reiteration of vision and purpose, through words and actions, as 'purposing' (1986: p.91, quoted in Beare, Caldwell

and Milikan, 1993). This daily enactment of vision, which is directed by the leadership team, clarifies and reaffirms a shared understanding among staff of why they do what they do (*ibid.*).

To summarise, in efforts to realise their vision, ethos and values as far as possible in day-to-day practices, schools should utilise as many effective communicative tools available to them as possible and staff at all levels need to be involved, and invested, in this for it to be effective. The intricacies of schools, and the importance of everyday communication for their general functionality, mean that communication pertaining specifically to vision, ethos and values would benefit from regular evaluation to ensure those messages are filtering through to staff, pupils, and stakeholders across the school.

## **2.7 Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values in Daily School Life**

The alignment of daily practices and actions with the climate, culture, ethos and values of the school is key to the realisation of vision; the school climate, culture, ethos and values – as well its character – enable staff within the school to integrate the vision into school life (Bell and Harrison, 1995).

Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) emphasise the positive impact that embedding the language of vision within ordinary school activities can have; to illustrate this they use an example of where the importance of developing self-esteem is emphasised in the vision. The expressions of such a vision on a daily basis by the Headteacher may include praising pupils and staff for small and great achievements and ensuring their own presence at initiatives that those pupils lacking self-esteem participate in. The Headteacher's presence enhances the profile of the activities that are taking place to help develop self-esteem and indicates they are

valued; further, the recognition of staff using language that encourages self-esteem in their interactions with pupils and colleagues means that this language will begin to thrive within the school community (*ibid.*). The significance of values language is emphasised as being pivotal in cultivating a positive school ethos (Jubilee Centre, 2017); constant reinforcement and embedding of the language of the vision creates a school climate in which the vision and values can become an achievable reality.

Where the leader is heavily influential in the vision, ethos and values of the school, their role in the realisation of the vision, ethos and values is equally important. As defined by Bush and Glover (2003), good school leadership thrives when there is a clear vision, which is realised through the day-to-day running of the school. An effective Headteacher will have a vision, which they enthusiastically and convincingly communicate and portray to their staff, who in turn share belief in that vision and strive to achieve it through their daily work; this type of leadership falls under ‘cultural leadership’ (Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

This role of the leader in embedding the vision and values of the school is further emphasised by the ‘transformational leadership’ approach, which holds central the people of an organisation – their relationships, how they feel, their attitudes and what they value – and endeavours to impact positively on them and consequently on the culture of the school (West *et al.*, 2000). Leaders who adopt a transformational style, as opposed to a greater focus on operations, will seek to establish a culture, embed that culture and continually enhance it to benefit the school (*ibid.*). Transformational leadership is conducive to the leader fulfilling their role in cultivating a positive ethos.

There are a number of ways in which leaders can develop accepted norms which illustrate the culture of the school, these include: displaying short phrases that represent the values of the school community throughout the school; celebrating stories of those within the history of the school or the local community who exemplify the shared beliefs and values; establishing practices that enable those who are part of the school to understand and experience the values and which celebrate and recognise staff and pupils who exhibit the values (Deal, 1987, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). To achieve full embodiment of the vision by all of the school community, though, collaboration among school members is essential, and the role of leading will stretch further than solely the Headteacher (Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

Many of the examples offered appear to be relatively simple mechanisms for embedding school culture within the daily practices of staff and pupils, and reminding those within the school of the shared values, vision and beliefs that they are collectively striving towards. It is important to note, however, that constant reiteration of vision, ethos and values is no small task. Through a study of the realisation of vision in academy schools, Gibson (2015) found that the values that underpinned the vision and ethos of the schools were important enablers; leaders of the schools referred to the operational importance of values in helping to achieve the vision. This contribution of values is reiterated by school inspectorate Ofsted in *The Education Inspection Framework* where it states that school vision will be ‘realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice’ (Ofsted, 2019: p.11).

The physical set up or environment of a school can also impact upon the realisation of its vision, ethos and values; Schein (1985: pp.237-242) identifies ‘space, buildings and facades’ as one of five ways through which vision can be realised in practice. Donnelly (2000) also notes the role of the physical environment of a school in fostering its ethos. In observing the culture of

case study schools, Torrington and Weightman (1993: p.49) describe an example of a school where the physical layout facilitated a sense of calm and of collaboration; a number of elements of the physical make-up of the school created an ‘atmosphere of wholeness’. The physical constraints of a school can also contribute to creating a negative atmosphere or feeling, for example, factors such as reliance on temporary classrooms, absence of good quality spaces or having to operate across multiple sites (Smith, 1995).

The literature makes evident the contribution of the whole-school community to the realisation of its vision, ethos and values, as well as relevance of multiple aspects of the school as an organisation. This reiterates the need to encompass as many aspects of a school as possible in any empirical investigation and to garner the perspectives of staff across different levels of the school. Though some of the methods through which schools can realise their vision may appear, at first glance, to be simple, the aim to embody vision in all practices, attitudes and behaviours should not be underestimated.

## **2.8 Challenges Presented by Vision, Ethos and Values in Schools**

The task of creating and maintaining a positive ethos within a school poses a great challenge; it requires hard work, dedication and input from all those involved including teachers, pupils and parents (Smith, 1995). The multifaceted nature of the task is so great that in order to turn around a school with a negative atmosphere, an overhaul of leadership, management and all policies is often required (*ibid.*).

Given the emphasis in the literature on collegiality, collaboration and unity, it follows that where members of the school community do not endorse the cultural norms of the school, this

poses a challenge. Schools often experience conflicting points of view, values and beliefs among individuals; the approach of the leadership team is essential in establishing a school environment that can satisfy and appease the beliefs and values of all who work and learn there (Smith, 1995). Dalin (1993: p.8) asserts that many see a conflict between the cultural values of young people and the norms accepted by teachers, or adults; this leads to an imbalance of values, norms and behaviours and to what has been termed a ‘divided school’. It can be argued that regardless of the overall vision and values of the school, ultimately it is not these values that govern or influence the way the school community behaves, rather, it is the values of the community itself – the young people and the teachers as individuals and as collectives – that guide behaviour (*ibid.*).

To see effective leadership as crucial for a school to be successful in maintaining a clear vision and creating a positive ethos is a popular standpoint, but this is largely reliant on the quality and competency of the leaders themselves. Where this competency is missing, the vision and how it is articulated can become a problem, as Bolam *et al.*’s research indicated (1993, cited in Bush, 2011). In studying a small number of schools in England and Wales, they found that the majority of Headteachers, but not all, could talk vaguely about their vision – but not in any sophisticated way – and the visions themselves ranged from being un-polished to well-refined. They also found little relation between the schools as unique institutions and their visions; they felt the visions they explored were ‘neither surprising nor striking nor controversial’ (*ibid.*: p.8).

As well as leader competency, Bush (2011) points to the prescriptive nature of the British schooling system for restricting leaders in developing innovative visions for their schools. In addition to curriculum changes from the government, Bottery (2007) notes that a school

leader's approach to satisfying school inspectorate Ofsted can impact the vision they set for the school; where leaders are over-reliant on Ofsted reports and requirements for provision, the vision can become secondary to this (see also Hoyle and Wallace, 2005, cited in Bush 2011). The environment school leaders face, which is shaped by changing priorities and external demands, requires them to be 'nimble'; they need to be able to swiftly adapt to change and reflect on the vision of the school in order for the school, its staff and its pupils to move forward successfully (Owens and Valesky, 2015: p.14).

Emphasising the challenge involved in embedding vision, ethos and values, Bush points to Fullan's pessimistic view of vision in leadership in which he highlights how ambitious the aim of establishing, achieving and maintaining a vision is for institutions, something which he says is, more often than not, unachievable (1992, cited in Bush, 2011: p.7). Fullan suggests that the vision of a leader can be detrimental to the success of a school; he warns that a vision can become 'blinding' and that where a leader with a clear vision creates an effective school, that school is likely to regress in the event that there is a change in leadership (*ibid.*). The underlying critical resilience of an effective vision and positive ethos, underpinned by shared values, can be weak and can pose a real problem for those schools who benefit from an ambitious and competent leader with a successful approach to vision.

Further to these challenges faced by schools, the empirical evidence base relevant to vision, ethos and values in schools is questionable; a gap that the present study aims to address. Whilst much of the positive evidence surrounding vision draws on its 'potential' for developing effective schools, Bush highlights that studies exploring how effective a clear vision is do vary in their conclusions (2011: p.8). The difficulty in seeking to measure how far shared commitment among a community to particular values or beliefs actually exists lies within the

intangible nature of ethos and culture; one must therefore focus on those aspects which can be observed, experienced or articulated by staff (see Deal, 1987 and Sathe, 1985, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

The challenges presented in the literature regarding the realisation of vision, ethos and values cover a number of different aspects of schools, including: potential over-reliance on the leader to drive the vision; disparity among staff in terms of buy-in to the wider goals of the school; the changing landscape of education and conflicting external demands; and, the general scope and difficulty of successfully embedding vision and values in all practices, across all staff and for all pupils. Some of the positive factors of vision, ethos and values discussed earlier, and the dedication and commitment of staff, may go some way to migrating some of these barriers.

## **2.9 Summary**

The review of the literature highlights the key areas that ought to shape an empirical investigation into the vision, ethos and values of schools and sheds light on some of the more nuanced aspects of schools which may feature in such a study. Whilst emphasising the significance of vision in motivating, guiding and shaping approaches, practices and aspirations in schools, the review also brings to light the complexities involved and the challenge posed by attempting to draw solid empirical conclusions that may be generalisable to all schools. The person-focused nature of schools, and the influence of people in shaping and cultivating culture, places ‘people’ at the centre of any endeavour to enhance understanding of the topic.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Approach

The aims of the research were exploratory in nature, intending to ascertain what was happening regarding vision, ethos and values in two particular schools in Birmingham, rather than to test a pre-determined hypothesis. For this reason, an in-depth qualitative approach was considered to be the most valuable in seeking to address the research questions set out earlier:

*Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them.*

Anderson (1998: p.119)

With Anderson's definition of qualitative research in mind, the primary aim of the study was to obtain new knowledge and understanding about a particular situation or phenomenon, namely vision in schools, with the view to establish, through open inquiry, a descriptive account of vision, ethos and values in everyday practice. The goal to understand the state of play, to do so through listening to people's views, and to pay attention to feelings, ideas and thoughts place the research in the paradigm of interpretivism (Thomas, 2013).

In seeking to answer the research questions, a case study design was adopted; where the aim of a research study is to describe a particular phenomenon or to determine what goes on in a specific setting, the case study design offers a suitable framework (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). For the present study, the researcher was keen to explore what went on in

the everyday setting of a school in relation to the purpose, articulation and realisation of its vision, ethos and values.

*A case study is a holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyse or evaluate a specific phenomenon or instance.*

Anderson (1998: p.152)

Given the complex nature of schools as organisations, the varying contexts within which schools operate, and the ‘people factor’ (i.e. the contribution of the ‘people’ within a school to its vision, ethos and values), it was felt that the research would benefit from examining in depth what was happening in a small number of schools; as Thomas (2013: p.150) notes, case study research ‘involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases’. Anderson (1998) highlights the dynamicity of education as a subject of research and identifies the characteristics of a case study design, such as flexibility and adaptability, that make it a strong candidate for researchers designing studies in education; the case study is interested in current circumstances and if those circumstances change, as they often do in education, the case study design will seek to understand why.

As well as offering the opportunity to explore each case in depth, the case study design is said to particularly lend itself to studies which are exploratory in nature – this exploratory nature is something identified by Gerring (2007: p.39) as a ‘natural advantage’ of case study research. Additionally, the case study design is valuable when answering questions which ask why and how in relation to a phenomenon under study (Yin, 2009, cited in Day Ashley, 2012). The individual case study schools in this instance formed the ‘case’ making them also therefore the subject of the research (Thomas, 2013: p.151). The purpose, articulation and realisation of the

vision, ethos and values in the schools were the object of the research. Within the case study design, Robson (2002: pp.181-2) distinguishes between different types of case study research, one of which, applicable here, is the study of ‘organisations and institutions’ as cases.

It was important in developing the research design to consider the two dimensions identified by Hedges (2012). Hedges distinguishes between research designs in two ways; namely, a) whether variables are manipulated as part of the research design, or the researcher is merely interested in observing what is the case and b) whether the research investigates one single entity or case, or involves multiple cases (Hedges, 2012: p.25). Falling into the type of research that is interested only in observing, with no place for manipulation, case study research aims to explore its subject ‘in action’ (Adelman *et al.*, 1980, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: p.289). In expanding on his second dimension of research design, Hedges recognises that case study research can fit within both distinctions as it often may examine a single case, but can also draw on more than one (2012: p.25). As much as an in-depth investigation into one case alone can provide rich data, the addition of a comparative case within a multiple case design offers an advantage (Campbell, 1975, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The present research was therefore designed as a comparative case study, with the intention of examining two selected cases to compare and contrast. The advantages discussed above of case study research are highlighted by Donnelly (2000) as she adopted this approach when conducting a qualitative case study to investigate ethos in two schools in Northern Ireland; Donnelly emphasises the suitability of the qualitative, in-depth nature and flexibility offered by such a design.

## **3.2 Methods**

In considering the data collection for this study, the case study design enabled a range of methods to be employed; case study research provides a high degree of flexibility so that a researcher can utilise multiple data collection tools such as making observations, asking questions and examining written material (Bassey, 1999, cited in Day Ashley, 2012). To illustrate the breadth of data sources available within a case study design, Anderson (1998: p.155) identifies seven sources for data collection: ‘documentation, file data, interviews, site visits, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts’.

The research explored data collected through the use of three distinct methods. Firstly, documentary data was collected, including each case study school’s external communication materials pertaining to their vision, ethos and values, for example their website, newsletters and promotional materials. These were examined by the researcher to obtain some contextual information and to explore how each school expressed its vision in writing, both internally and externally. Secondly, an online questionnaire was circulated to staff in each case study school to garner their views on the importance of vision, ethos and values in schools and to determine what staff perceived the vision, ethos and values of the school to be. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff in each case study school which aimed to explore, in depth, the school’s approach to developing, articulating and implementing its vision, ethos and values on a day-to-day basis and staff perceptions of this. Each of the methods for data collection are discussed in detail below.

### ***3.2.1 Documentary Data***

In case study research, a simple source of data is documentation as it is often readily available to the researcher from the outset of the study (Anderson, 1998). Documentation may take many forms, including former studies, newspaper articles, meeting minutes, correspondence, memos, and promotional materials (*ibid.*). Due to their prevalence in the literature on vision, ethos and values, the following types of documentation were identified as valuable in exploring such themes within the case study schools:

- Website
- Newsletters
- Prospectuses
- Displays
- Letters
- Promotional materials

Upon the agreement of the Headteacher from each case study school to participate in the study, the researcher began to explore any pre-existing data that was available via the schools' websites; this aided the researcher in gaining a feel for each school and in beginning to build a picture of what the schools portrayed as their vision to the outside world, as well as what values each school identified as key to this vision. Flick (2009, cited in Spencer *et al.*, 2014) warns of some of the difficulties presented by documentary data, and in particular, documentary data from the Internet; Internet content is often edited, moved or deleted entirely without warning and so Spencer *et al.* (2014) emphasise the importance of storing data for analysis as soon as it is collected. Given the sometimes-temporary nature of website material, any content deemed relevant on each school's website was copied over to a Microsoft Word document and saved

securely to ensure it was available for the length of the study and remained a true representation of the website content at the time of data collection.

Another challenge that Flick identifies as particular to documentary data is that such data will have originally been written to serve a specific purpose and tailored to the requirements of a given audience; such documents therefore do not represent ‘reality’ and should be treated as ‘communicative devices’ above all else (2009, quoted in Spencer *et al.*, 2014: p.342). This perceived limitation of documentary data became an advantage, in this study, as the primary purpose of collecting it was to ascertain how the case study schools articulated, promoted and communicated their vision, ethos and values both within and beyond the school community. The content of the website, prospectus, newsletters and displays were interesting to the researcher because of their communicative purpose, rather than as a means to establish a reality. The documentary data gathered for the purposes of this study are presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Documentary Data Collected Across the Two Case Study Schools**

<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Case Study School A</b>	<b>Case Study School B</b>
Website Content	‘About’ Section	‘About’ Section
	Principal’s Welcome	Letter from Principal
	School Values	School Values
Promotional Materials or Publications	Prospectus	Prospectus
	June and July Newsletters	June and July Newsletters
Teaching Materials	Pupil Planner	

In addition to examining specific documents, the researcher utilised visits to each school and made detailed notes to document observations about the ethos and ‘feel’, or atmosphere, and the visibility of the core values. As part of the data collection visits, the researcher was shown around each school by either the Headteacher or the lead contact for the study. As well as offering an opportunity for the researcher to see how the vision and values were embodied or articulated within the school grounds, this also enabled the researcher to ask further questions about the ways in which each school used visual representations of its vision and values. This additional data generated through the nature of the fieldwork falls under one of Anderson’s sources of data available within case study designs, namely ‘site visitations’ (1998: p.156).

### *3.2.2 Online Questionnaire*

An online questionnaire<sup>1</sup> was used to collect data pertaining to how staff at different levels of seniority within each school viewed the importance of vision, ethos and values and to see the extent to which staff could pick out their school’s core values from a pre-determined list. It was intended that the questionnaire would offer a ‘snapshot’ of the level of awareness, and value held, among staff of the vision, ethos and values of the school. The questionnaire data was gathered in order to supplement data from in-depth interviews with staff, and also to cast a wide net in terms of the range of staff represented in the study.

The questionnaire was an online, closed questionnaire administered through the online questionnaire platform Survey Gizmo. The lead contact within each case study school was asked to circulate the questionnaire to all staff, with follow up requests to circulate it made at multiple times throughout participation in the study. It was felt that asking a contact within

<sup>1</sup> For the Online Questionnaire, and accompanying Participant Information Sheet and Consent see Appendix 1

each school to circulate the questionnaire inviting staff to respond on a voluntary basis would yield a higher response rate than if the request were to come from the researcher directly. The questionnaire was created online with the assumption made by the researcher that participants would be using computers regularly as part of their job, therefore increasing the speed and efficiency with which participants would be able to easily complete the questionnaire. In addition, this removed the requirement for data entry by the researcher which can be time consuming and increase the risk of human error through entering data twice; these are some of the advantages of online questionnaires identified by Tymms (2012).

When developing the questionnaire the time constraints that many staff in schools face were considered and so closed questions were employed, with some requesting responses on a Likert Scale. The Likert Scale asks for a response to a statement based on a three-, five- or seven-point scale of opinion or agreement (Anderson, 1998). Questions which included a Likert Scale concerned: the importance of vision, values and ethos in schools; the degree of success participants felt their school had achieved in communicating its vision and values; and the extent to which the vision, ethos and values were perceived to be integrated into the daily activities of the school. The value of Likert Scales for 'gathering opinions and attitudes' offered an important advantage in addressing these key areas (*ibid.*: p.175).

The questionnaire also included some demographic questions to provide sufficient information to be able to analyse responses by different cohorts of staff. Information such as gender, age, ethnicity, title of role and length of time in that role were requested from participants.

### *3.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews<sup>2</sup> were used as the final instrument for data collection due to the in-depth, highly qualitative nature of the data they generate; as Mears asserts, interviews intend to ‘learn what another person knows about a topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced, what he or she thinks and feels about it, and what significance or meaning it might have’ (2012: p.170).

The key advantages to using interviews as a primary source of data collection were considered to be particularly relevant to this study and it was envisioned that this method of data collection would yield the most substantial, in-depth data, above others. Among other strengths, interviews tend to: engage participants more successfully, especially when conducted face-to-face, and therefore guarantee response rates more so than a questionnaire might; and, enable the interviewer to ask the interviewee for clarifications and enquire further about particular areas of interest as the interview unfolds (Anderson, 1998).

Semi-structured interviews, whilst maintaining the interviewer’s flexibility to clarify certain points and follow up on areas of interest as they arise, offer sufficient structure to ensure the key themes pertaining to the research questions are covered during the conversation (Thomas, 2013). Whilst this flexibility was important, the interviews needed to be conducted within a short time frame of around 15 minutes to ensure that staff were able to spare the time in their teaching day to participate and so some level of structure was necessary. A semi-structured interview was therefore deemed the most appropriate in this instance.

<sup>2</sup> For the Interview Schedule and accompanying Participant Information Sheet and Consent see Appendix 2.

In developing the interview schedule, to ensure all aspects of schools relevant to vision, ethos and values were covered, the *Character Education: Evaluation Handbook for Schools* produced by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham was used (see Harrison, Arthur and Burn, 2016). The complex and multi-dimensional nature of school vision, ethos and values meant that the interview schedule needed to cover multiple aspects of the day-to-day activities of a school. The Handbook provides a framework by which schools can evaluate their character and values education provision and includes a section dedicated to considering the role of school ethos, in particular. This section was useful for structuring the interview schedule around the different factors that contribute to vision, ethos and values in schools.

When developing the interview schedule it was important to recognise the advantages of open-ended questions for obtaining rich, qualitative data in an exploratory study. Open questions allow the interviewee to speak freely about the proposed topic with limited direction from the interviewer, often resulting in a much more engaged interview on the whole (Anderson, 1998). Such questions are also useful in uncovering the extent of participants' knowledge relating to the subject, something which was of particular interest in this study (*ibid.*). The interview schedule therefore consisted of largely 'what' and 'how' questions, as well as questions framed 'can you tell me about...'. Tuckman notes that questions that are direct or too specific can lead to a participant becoming 'cautious or guarded' and therefore less willing to give open and honest responses (1972, quoted in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: p.417).

The interview schedule covered the following themes:

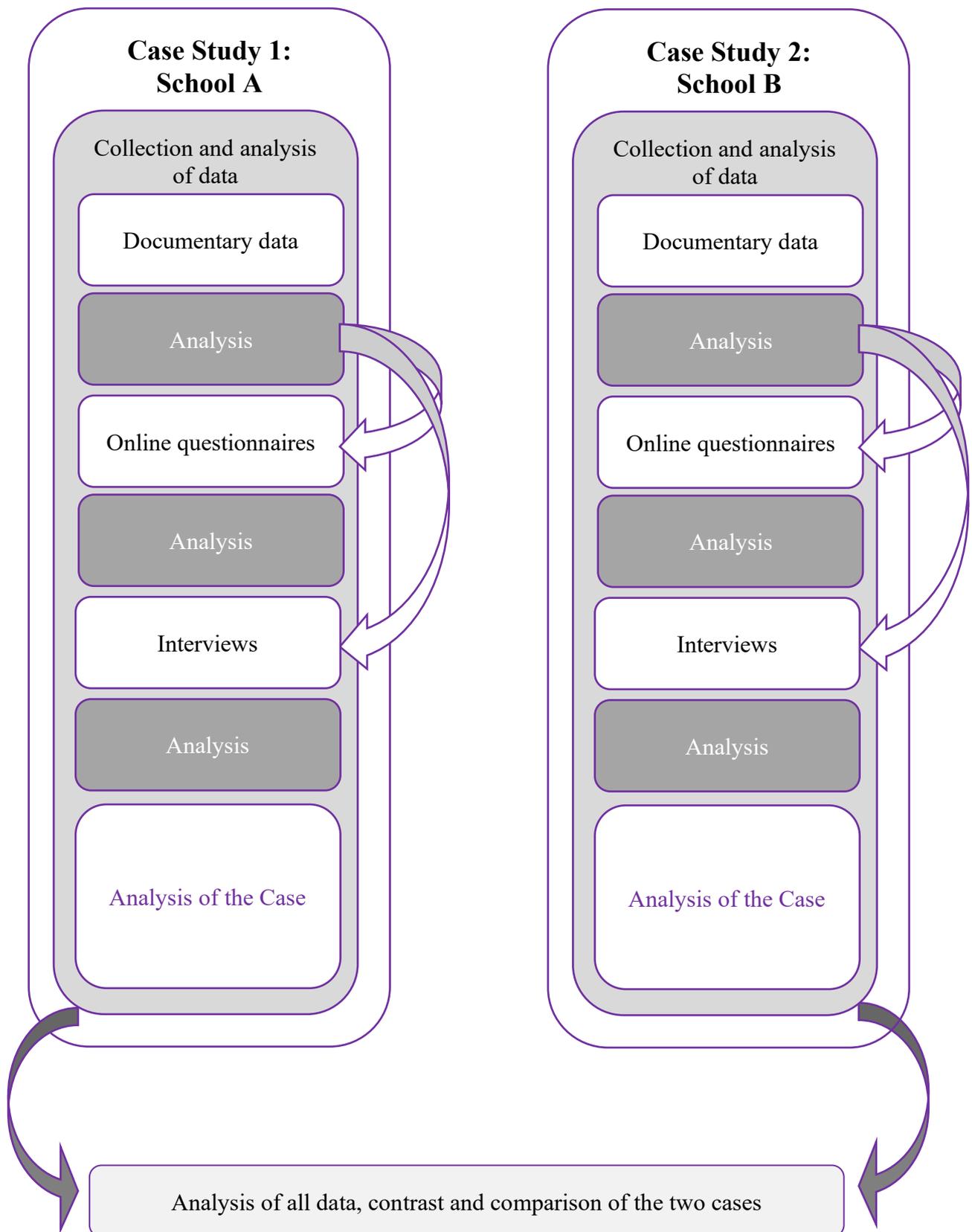
- What is the vision of the school?

- What is the fundamental role of the vision, ethos and values of the school?
- How does the school communicate its vision?
- How does the school integrate its vision into the daily activities of staff and pupils?

Interviews were audio-recorded, with the informed consent of participants, and were conducted face-to-face on site at the case study schools during pre-arranged visits by the researcher. Audio recordings were stored securely and transcribed to provide a full record of the interview for analysis. An initial group of interviews were transcribed by the researcher in order for them to become familiar with the data. Given the length of audio recorded (221.48 minutes in total) and the length of time taken to transcribe each interview, a transcription company was sought to assist with the transcription process. To increase familiarity with the transcripts that were outsourced the researcher read through all transcripts thoroughly and ensured consistency of formatting in preparation for analysis.

It was considered that the three methods of data collection would, when combined, provide a substantial bank of rich, qualitative data from which in-depth knowledge and understanding about vision, ethos and values in the two case study schools could derive. Each phase of the research informed the next; for example, observations from the documentary analysis were used to inform the online questionnaire and insights from the online questionnaire shaped the semi-structured interviews. This approach utilised the sequential element of an explanatory sequential case study design, which is conducted in multiple phases allowing insights from the early phases to shape the latter phases of a study (see Lalor *et al.*, 2013). The overall structure of the study is illustrated by Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: Structure of the Case Study Design**



### 3.3 The Case Study Schools

A number of schools, located within the West Midlands for convenience regarding data collection, were initially contacted and asked to take part in the study utilising government databases available online. Though one school was successfully recruited through this approach, response rates were low. The second school was known to the researcher and when approached about the study the Headteacher accepted the invitation to form the second case study school<sup>3</sup>.

For the purposes of confidentiality, each school was anonymised, before being assigned a pseudonym by the researcher during analysis. School A is hereafter referred to as Linden School and School B as Allenswood School. The two schools were quite different in many respects, though both were situated within Birmingham. Linden School was a secondary school and Allenswood a primary. In case study research, variation between cases can be seen to add a valuable dimension, particularly when the aims of the research are exploratory and when studying areas that are under-researched (Day Ashley, 2012). Table 3.2 illustrates some of the key characteristics of the two case study schools.

**Table 3.2: Characteristics of the Two Case Study Schools**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Linden School</b>	<b>Allenswood School</b>
<b>Type</b>	Academy, Non-faith	Academy, Non-faith
<b>Age Range</b>	Secondary (ages 11 – 18)	Primary (ages 3 – 11)
<b>Gender</b>	Mixed	Mixed

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3 for the Information Sheet provided to schools.

<b>Location</b>	Birmingham	Birmingham
<b>Ofsted Rating</b>	Outstanding, 2008	Outstanding, 2017
<b>Admission Policy</b>	Non-selective	Non-selective

### 3.4 Questionnaire and Interview Participants

During the study, a lead contact was identified at each school to act as the point of liaison with the researcher. In order to recruit as many participants to the questionnaire as possible, the questionnaire was made available to all staff across the school and in different roles (e.g. from senior leadership to teaching assistants). The lead contact was asked to circulate the questionnaire via email and was subsequently asked to send reminders in an attempt to gather further responses. Questionnaire responses across both case study schools can be seen in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Questionnaire Responses Across the Two Case Study Schools**

		<b>Linden School</b>	<b>Allenswood School</b>
<b>Total Participants</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Level within School</b>	Senior Leadership	7	1
	Teaching	6	3

Although a good response rate was received at Linden School, the participation at Allenswood School was low. As the questionnaire was not the main source of data for this study this was not deemed to be an issue and the responses that were received were still analysed.

Interview participants were selected by the lead contact for the study within each school. Each contact was informed of the types of participants that would be most useful to the study (e.g. participants representing a range of roles, levels of responsibility, and length of service at the school). The researcher was conscious not to add to the existing time constraints and pressures on the schools and their staff and so enabled each school to select participants in a way which suited them. An overview of interview participants can be found in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: Characteristics of Interview Participants Across the Two Case Study Schools**

		<b>Linden School</b>	<b>Allenswood School</b>
<b>Total Participants</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total Audio</b>		<b>141.42 minutes</b>	<b>80.06 minutes</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	4	3
	Female	7	6
<b>Role</b>	Head/ Senior Leadership Team	5	3
	Teaching Staff	6	6
<b>Time At School</b>	Less than 2 years	3	1
	More than 2, less than 5 years	2	2
	More than 5, less than 10 years	4	3
	More than 10 years	2	3

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Analysis of data has been likened to ‘walking through a maze’, which can make the process of analysis feel undirected or repetitive (Anderson, 1998: p.157). One of the advantages of case study research is that the data analysis begins during the data collection phase, mitigating this challenge to some degree; during the data collection, the researcher gets to know their cases, identifies emerging patterns, formulates new questions which help shape the course of the study and seeks clarification when needed (*ibid.*). Given the use of a variety of data collection methods, the data required multiple, as well as combined, analyses in order to provide full insights into the research questions.

#### ***3.5.1 Documentary Data***

The documentary data were read thoroughly and any references to the vision, ethos and values of the school were highlighted. The purpose of the analysis was to pull out the use of vision words and values. Documents were imported into NVIVO so that word frequency searches could be conducted and word clouds created to represent the language used within individual materials, as well as across the documents from each school. When conducting word frequency searches all insignificant words such as conjunctions and prepositions were removed from analysis; the researcher also removed the name of each school from the data as this was not thought to offer meaningful data for analysis. Materials were compared and contrasted to establish the congruency of language across different communicative outlets.

The documentary data were examined ahead of, during, and following the collection of data in each case study school. The purpose of revisiting this data throughout the study was to contrast

and compare the content of interviews with staff in each school to the ways in which the vision, ethos and values were presented in the aforementioned communicative tools; this helped to discover to what degree the formal vision of the school was recognised by staff and realised within the day-to-day running of the school.

### ***3.5.2 Questionnaire Data***

Data gathered through the online questionnaire were downloaded from Survey Gizmo and exported into a Microsoft Excel file. The researcher examined data from individual questions and used ‘descriptive statistics’, which include frequencies, percentages and means, to understand and interpret the responses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: p.622). Analysis through descriptive statistics can aid in the visual presentation of data through graphs, charts or tables, presenting data in a way that highlights the key patterns (*ibid.*).

The questions in which participants were asked to indicate using a Likert Scale their level of agreement with statements about vision, ethos and values, were used to garner their perspectives relating to this aspect of the school. Of particular interest in the questionnaire was where participants were asked to identify the core values promoted by their school. The frequency of responses for individual values were compared and contrasted across cohorts of senior leadership and teaching staff to gauge any differences in understanding and awareness of vision and values among staff in the schools.

### ***3.5.3 Interview Data***

The qualitative nature of the interview data meant that interpretation by the researcher could not be avoided; the process of analysis can be described as an ‘interaction between the researcher and the decontextualised data’ and so through the process analysis is amalgamated with interpretation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: p.427). An important part of analysing qualitative data, as recognised by Miles and Huberman (1994), is coding; coding of responses helps to ensure the researcher is not overwhelmed by the amount of data available to them (cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

Kerlinger (1970) defines coding in qualitative research as the ‘translation of question responses and participant information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis’ (p.428, quoted in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The amount of interview data was extensive and so initially a thorough read-through of all transcripts was beneficial to enable the researcher to digest the information, become familiar with the data and begin to map out potential themes that emerged on first reading. On second reading of the transcripts, the researcher manually highlighted key words and phrases and began to assign themes, or codes, to highlighted sections. This preliminary coding aided in the transfer of the analysis to a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) programme, NVIVO.

The use of a CAQDAS programme can be particularly valuable when extensive qualitative datasets need to be analysed (Gibbs, 2012). The NVIVO project for this study made the data manageable in several ways: the data could be separated and organised by theme; sub-themes could be created to further examine patterns; all data within sub-themes could be aggregated under a ‘parent’ code; and, assignment of data to themes and sub-themes could be revised and

revisited throughout the analysis process. Following the initial readings of the transcripts, the files were imported into NVIVO and each transcript was sub-divided into ‘nodes’ defined by the themes identified to that point. The key themes that were immediately evident are presented in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Themes Identified in the Analysis of Interview Data**

<b>Analysis Themes</b>
Barriers / Challenges
<b>Buy-In</b>
Articulation and Communication
<b>Enablers</b>
Evaluation
Integrating the Vision
<b>Leadership</b>
Recruitment
Role / Impact of Vision
Training and CPD
Values
Vision

The interview schedule, and the nature of questions and prompts included, encouraged participants to discuss the key themes identified above at some length; those themes highlighted in bold, however, emerged during analysis of responses and were absent from any prompts within the interview schedule. Discussions about the purpose, communication and articulation, and realisation of the vision, ethos and values, for example, were incorporated

within the interview questions so to seek views relevant to the research questions of the study. The role of leadership within that was a theme that was prominent within the literature and later came to light during data analysis.

As the analysis progressed, each theme was further examined and sub-themes identified to help filter the data into more manageable sources of information for interpretation. For example, data within the theme 'Integrating the Vision' were further analysed for references to successful integration of the vision, challenges of integrating the vision and methods for integrating the vision. As many methods were evident within this final sub-theme, those methods were identified and data further separated to group references to individual methods together. This thematic analysis of qualitative data is described by Spencer *et al.*, (2014: p.271) as that which:

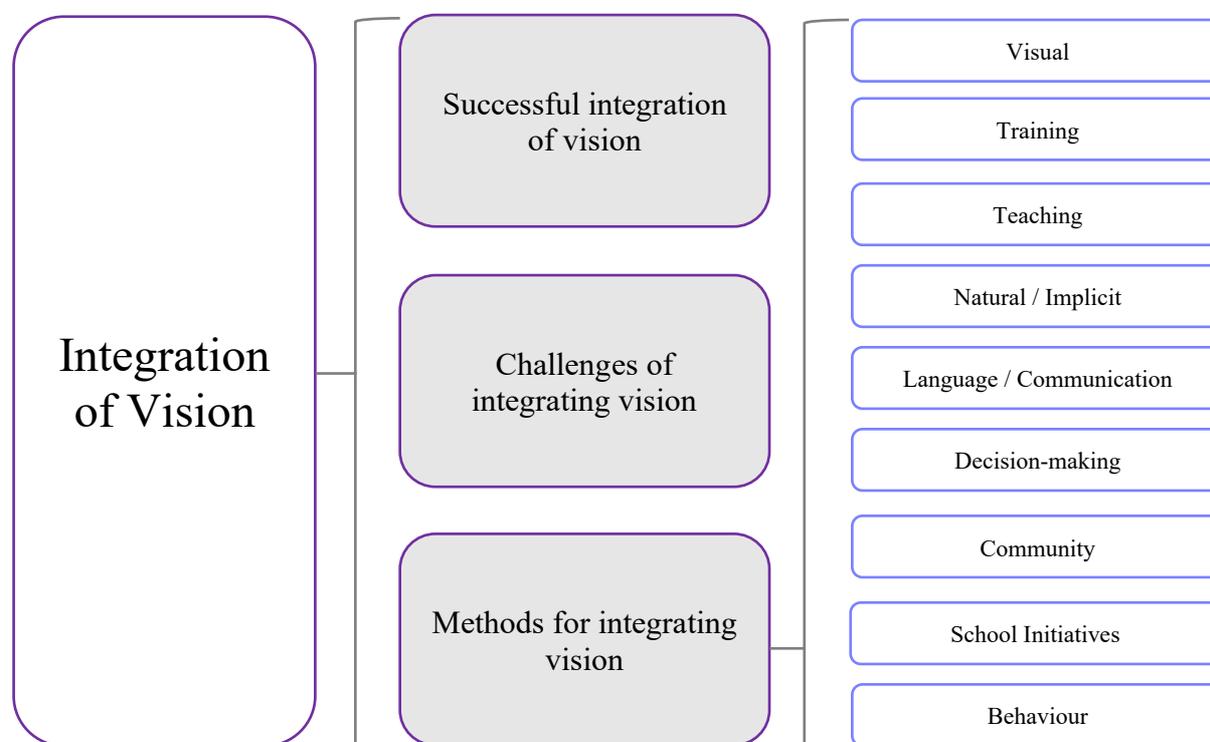
*involves discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data. Working systematically through texts the researcher identifies topics that are progressively integrated into higher-order key themes, the importance of which lies in their ability to address the overall research question.*

(citing Boyzatis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012)

The hierarchy of themes and sub-themes is illustrated in Figure 3.24.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of all analysis themes for interview data see Appendix 4.

**Figure 3.2: Example of Hierarchy of Analysis Themes in NVIVO**



The insights gained from analysis of each sub-set of data were then viewed in combination, compared and contrasted, to create a holistic view of the purpose, articulation, communication and realisation of vision, ethos and values in each case study school. This enabled conclusions to be drawn to address the research questions the study sought to answer.

### **3.6 Limitations of the Research**

The case study design offers multiple advantages which have already been discussed; there are, however, several limitations associated with case study research which must also be given due consideration. Gerring (2007) highlights the following: case study findings are limited to only

one case or a small set of cases so generalisability is weak; the methods by which cases are selected are susceptible to bias; the high degree of flexibility offered by the design; and, findings are subjective.

In considering generalisability, Gerring (2007) also notes that social science research is often interested in subjects, or cases, that are non-generalisable in nature; schools, and their vision, ethos and values, are particularly complex in nature and therefore the demand for generalisable conclusions can be seen to be reduced. Gerring asserts that to examine in-depth an individual case can offer more insight and understanding than ‘fleeting knowledge’ of a large number of cases (2007: p.1). Similarly, Thomas (2016: p.69) notes that the value of case study research lies in the ‘exemplary knowledge’ it offers, and that a focus on generalisability, or indeed a lack of, can dampen the ‘curiosity and interpretation that should be at the heart of inquiry’.

Some see the flexibility offered by case study research as encouraging researchers to do as they please. Hakim (2000: p.59) highlights the approach to a case study design as vital to what is deemed ‘probably the most flexible’ research design available. The present study played to the strengths of the flexibility offered by case study research; it utilised multiple methods of data collection, and shaped each phase of the research in light of findings from the previous phase.

Notwithstanding its limitations for generalisability and potential for subjectivity, the case study design was beneficial in seeking to answer the exploratory research questions of this study. The aim of the study was to enhance knowledge and understanding of vision, ethos and values in schools and it was hoped that drawing case-specific conclusions from an in-depth dataset

would provide sufficient insight to aid schools in effectively establishing, articulating and realising their vision.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The research was considered by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee and given full approval. All participation in the study was completely voluntary and agreement was sought from the Headteacher of each case study school at the outset. Questionnaire and interview participants were made fully aware of the purpose of the study, how their data would be used and their right to withdraw through comprehensive Participant Information Sheets<sup>5</sup>. Online questionnaire participants were asked to confirm their understanding and consent prior to submitting their responses and interview participants were asked to read and sign a Consent Form<sup>6</sup> ahead of the interview commencing.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendices 1a and 2a for Participant Information Sheets.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendices 1b and 2b for Consent Forms.

## **4. PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the data gathered across the two case study schools which sought to address the following research questions:

- 1. Why are vision, ethos and values important in schools?**
- 2. How do schools go about articulating and communicating their vision, ethos and values internally and externally?**
- 3. What are the main ways in which schools ensure their vision, ethos and values are realised on a day-to-day basis and what factors might act as barriers and enablers in this?**

Data were collected using three methods: analysis of documentary data; an online questionnaire; and, in-depth semi-structured interviews with staff in each school. Each method and subsequent analysis sought to shed light on different aspects of the vision, ethos and values in the case study schools and so the findings are presented by method. The chapter is therefore divided into three sections; each section presents findings thematically.

### **4.2 Findings from Analysis of Documentary Data**

Documents that were considered likely to contain some statement of each school's vision, ethos and values were obtained at the outset of the study: these included, website content,

prospectuses, newsletters, pupil planners, as well as observations of the school grounds and displays<sup>7</sup>.

The language of the documents was examined to ascertain what the aspirational vision of each school was and how this was expressed, what the documented ethos of each school was, and which values they formally identified as their core values. Further, the consistency of the language was examined across the range of documents.

#### ***4.2.1 Documented Vision, Ethos and Values of Each Case Study School***

The documented vision and aims of each of the case study schools, as stated on their website under ‘About Us’, are shown in Table 4.1. Both schools termed their aspirational vision their ‘Mission Statement’. Table 4.1 also includes the values of each school.

**Table 4.1: Documented Vision, Ethos and Values of the Two Case Study Schools**

	<b>Linden School</b>	<b>Allenswood School</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	Linden is a centre of excellence; we have the very highest aspirations across the whole range of curricular and extra-curricular work.  Outstanding academic performance is underpinned by exemplary care	Working in partnership with parents and carers, staff and governors will aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a safe, secure orderly and accessible learning environment.</li> <li>• Deliver exciting, purposeful learning and teaching opportunities both</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> A comprehensive list of documents can be found in Table 3.1, Section 3.2.1.

	<p>and guidance; our ethos is fundamental in ensuring that everyone works together and is supported and challenged appropriately to achieve their very best. We pride ourselves in being a happy and safe school rooted in the local community.</p>	<p>inside, outside and beyond the classroom, through a vibrant curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set clear and consistent expectations for behaviour, centred around mutual respect.</li> <li>• Develop independence and self respect amongst our children.</li> <li>• Create a bright, stimulating, interactive place to learn.</li> <li>• Develop positive links and communication between home, governors and the wider community to support children`s learning.</li> <li>• Provide an inclusive environment in which all children can succeed.</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Source: Website/About Us/Our Mission Statement</i></p>	<p><i>Source: Website/About Us/Our Ethos</i></p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Aims</p>	<p><b>Our Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linden aims to prepare each pupil to get the very best out of their lives.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Our aim for every child is that they should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make good progress.</li> <li>• Enjoy learning.</li> <li>• Develop lively enquiring minds.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linden aims to make a suitable environment and create an atmosphere for achievement.</li> <li>• Linden aims to enable pupils to find enjoyment in learning through doing.</li> <li>• Linden aims to teach community spirit and our place in the global world.</li> <li>• Linden aims to ensure each individual is valued equally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to work with others as part of a team.</li> <li>• Embrace new technology, alongside traditional skills.</li> <li>• Show care and respect for the environment and contribute to the community.</li> </ul>
	<i>Source: Website/About Us</i>	<i>Source: Website/About Us/Our Ethos</i>
Values	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Courage</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Determination</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Equality</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Excellence</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Friendship</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inspiration</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Respect</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Determination</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Friendship</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Honesty</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Perseverance</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Respect</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Responsibility</b></p>
	<i>Source: Website/About Us/Linden Values</i>	<i>Source: Website/About Us/Our Values</i>

#### ***4.2.2 Articulation of Vision, Ethos and Values in Documentation***

In examining how the two case study schools stated their vision, ethos and values, the mechanisms they used to do this were examined. Both schools set out their vision through a Mission Statement presented on their website; Linden School also explicitly included this Mission Statement on the back cover of its prospectus. Accompanying the Mission Statement of both schools was a set of 'Aims'; Linden School also stated its core 'Beliefs'.

A welcome letter from the Principal of each school provided another medium through which the aspirations and key priorities were outlined. The Mission Statement and the Principal's Welcome were the most substantial expressions of the schools' aspirations for their pupils, ideal environment for pupils' learning and development, and standards and expectations. Though the prospectus did include the aims and mission for Linden School, this was not prominent and the focus of the document was attainment, uniform and academic provision.

Both schools stated their values on a separate webpage along with an introduction to the purpose of those values, how those values were integrated into school life, and the role staff played in building those values in pupils. Allenswood School highlighted how such values were recognised and celebrated in pupils. Table 4.2 highlights the key phrases used by each school in introducing its values.

**Table 4.2: Introduction to Values by Each Case Study School**

	<b>Linden School</b>	<b>Allenswood School</b>
Purpose of Values	<p>Develop well-rounded individuals</p> <p>Help pupils to go beyond academic achievement and discover their potential in every aspect of life</p> <p>hope to foster [these values] in our young people</p>	<p>nurture pupils</p> <p>prepare pupils so they are ready to flourish in tomorrow's society</p>
Integration of Values into School Life	<p>Our students are encouraged to build these values in a number of ways</p> <p>Inside and outside of the classroom</p> <p>Form time activities</p> <p>Learning for Life and Tutorial</p> <p>Worship programmes</p>	<p>Our core school values are now embedded into all that we do</p> <p>Each half-term, we focus explicitly on one of our school values</p> <p>Assemblies are themed around our values</p> <p>They are taught and discussed in other areas of our curriculum</p>

	Use of modern day issues and dilemmas	
Role of Staff in Developing Values in Pupils	Students work with their form tutors to record their progress towards developing these values in their planners	Staff are passionate about role-modelling each value and are proactive in their approach when delivering our values
Recognition of Values		‘Values Postcards’ are sent home  Celebration assemblies recognise pupils who have made a real effort to show our values

The schools used branding to display their values, as well as physical displays throughout the school grounds; the values were observed to be more prominent throughout the grounds at Allenswood School. Linden School emphasised its values through its newsletter which included the values as part of the design template. Linden School also included its values within pupils’ planners, with a dedicated section defining the values and a ‘Progress Record’ for pupils to reflect on their own development of the values during Form-Time (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Inclusion of Values in Pupil Planner at Linden School**

### Inspiration

**Inspiration is:**

- a source of motivation to achieve or try something new
- having a brilliant idea
- a creative influence
- finding something which allows you to do something special

Intuition

Creativity

Ability to positively influence others

Source of encouragement

Inspiration

### Friendship

**Friendship is:**

- wanting the best for someone and for them to succeed
- being honest and truthful to yourself and others
- being dependable
- sharing common interests and goals
- being understanding and non-judgemental

Treating other people equally

Mutual respect

Putting other people first

Empathy and compassion

Friendship

### Progress record

*Friendship*

Date	Activity	Evidence

*Excellence*

Date	Activity	Evidence

### 4.2.3 Congruency of Language

The language used in the documentary data was examined both in its entirety and within individual documents, to offer an overview, as well as a direct comparison, between different communicative tools. Word clouds representing findings of word frequency analyses can be seen in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

Figure 4.2: Word Cloud Representing Most Frequent Words in Linden School

Documentary Data





The word frequency data across all documents from each school revealed that the word ‘values’, and the individual Linden values of ‘determination’, ‘excellence’, ‘courage’, ‘inspiration’, ‘friendship’, ‘equality’ and ‘respect’, appeared in the top 50 most frequent words across all documents from Linden School (the Linden School pupil planner was not included in NVIVO analysis as this was provided in hard copy only). In contrast, the data showed that for Allenswood School only the word ‘values’ appeared in the top 50 most frequent words; none of the core values of the school appeared.

The Mission Statement page and the Principal’s Welcome for each school were compared to ascertain the degree of congruency in the language across the two. Word frequency searches showed that there was a degree of overlap, particularly of key words relating to vision and ethos: 41% of Linden School’s Mission Statement page and 22% of the Principal’s Welcome page constituted words used in both; 34% of Allenswood School’s Mission Statement page and 21% of the Principal’s Welcome constituted overlapping terms. The repeating words that appeared in both pages and that occurred more than once in both the Mission Statement and Principal’s Welcome are listed in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Repeating Words with a Frequency Higher than One**

<b>Linden School</b>	<b>Allenswood School</b>
Achieve	Aim
Community	Children
Every	Community
Learning	Develop
Place	Environment

Potential	Learning
School	Positive
Students	

In comparing the language of the Mission Statement to that of the Principal’s Welcome it was observed that the value of ‘respect’ was the 6<sup>th</sup> most frequent word in the Mission Statement of Allenswood School, but did not appear in the Principal’s Welcome. The word ‘staff’ was 11<sup>th</sup> most frequent in Allenswood School’s Mission Statement, and the role of staff was highlighted as part of the ‘Our Values’ page, but no mention of ‘staff’, or ‘teachers’ was included within the Principal’s Welcome. The word ‘values’ did not appear within the Mission Statement or Principal’s Welcome for either school.

Though the language of vision and ethos was present in each school’s prospectus, there was no mention of values specifically, or of the values that each school identified as core. Neither prospectus included the term ‘values’ and only two of the core values of Linden School appeared in its prospectus; none of the core values promoted by Allenswood School were present.

#### ***4.2.4 Observations from Visits to Case Study Schools***

During the study, the researcher visited each school twice and observed how the vision, ethos and core values were manifested in the physical environment of the school. Though Allenswood School was found to place more emphasis on displaying the core values throughout the school grounds, Linden School also drew on this approach. Figure 4.4 shows how the values were incorporated into the school grounds.

**Figure 4.4: Displays of Core Values within the Grounds of Each Case Study School**

**Linden School**



**Allenswood School**



### **4.3 Findings from Analysis of Online Questionnaire Data**

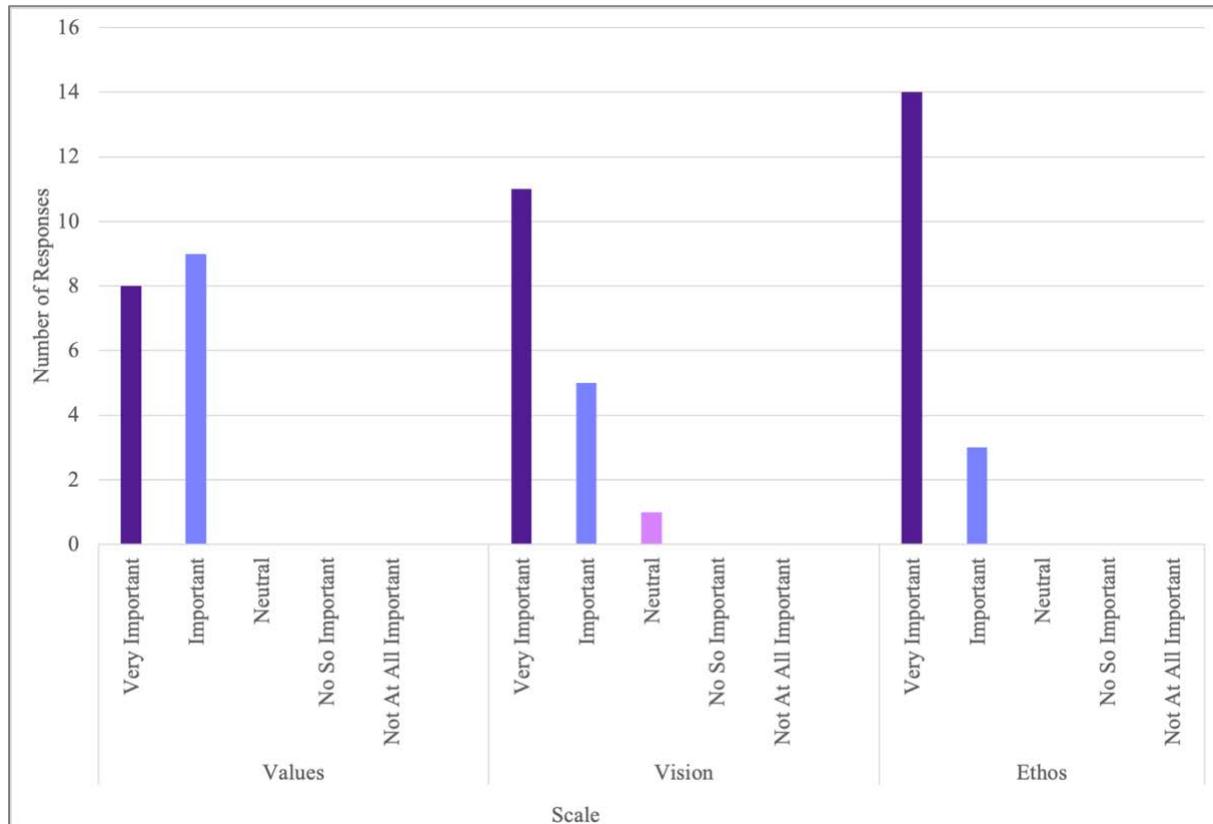
The online questionnaire explored the perspectives of staff at different levels of seniority regarding the role, and importance, of vision, ethos and values in schools. The questionnaire also sought to ascertain the level of awareness among staff of the values their school identified as core to its vision, and their school's approach to communicating, promoting and implementing its vision and values. Across the two case study schools, a total of 17 questionnaire responses were analysed; 13 of these were from Linden School (7 senior leaders and 6 teachers) and 4 from Allenswood School (1 senior leader and 3 teachers)<sup>8</sup>.

#### ***4.3.1 Staff Perspectives on the Importance of Vision, Ethos and Values***

Participants were asked to select from a 5-point scale (from 'very important' to 'not at all important') how important they felt that vision, ethos and values were for schools. Findings showed agreement among staff, across all roles, that these were either 'very important' or 'important', with only one participant selecting 'neutral' in relation to vision. The results, for all cohorts, can be seen in Chart 4.1. The chart shows that 'ethos' generated the highest number of 'very important' responses, above vision and values. The higher level of agreement that ethos is 'very important' was consistent across both schools with only three participants seeing it as 'important' throughout the whole cohort.

<sup>8</sup> An overview of questionnaire participants can be found in Table 3.3, Section 3.4.

**Chart 4.1: A Chart to Show Perspectives of Staff Across the Two Case Study Schools on the Importance of Vision, Ethos and Values**

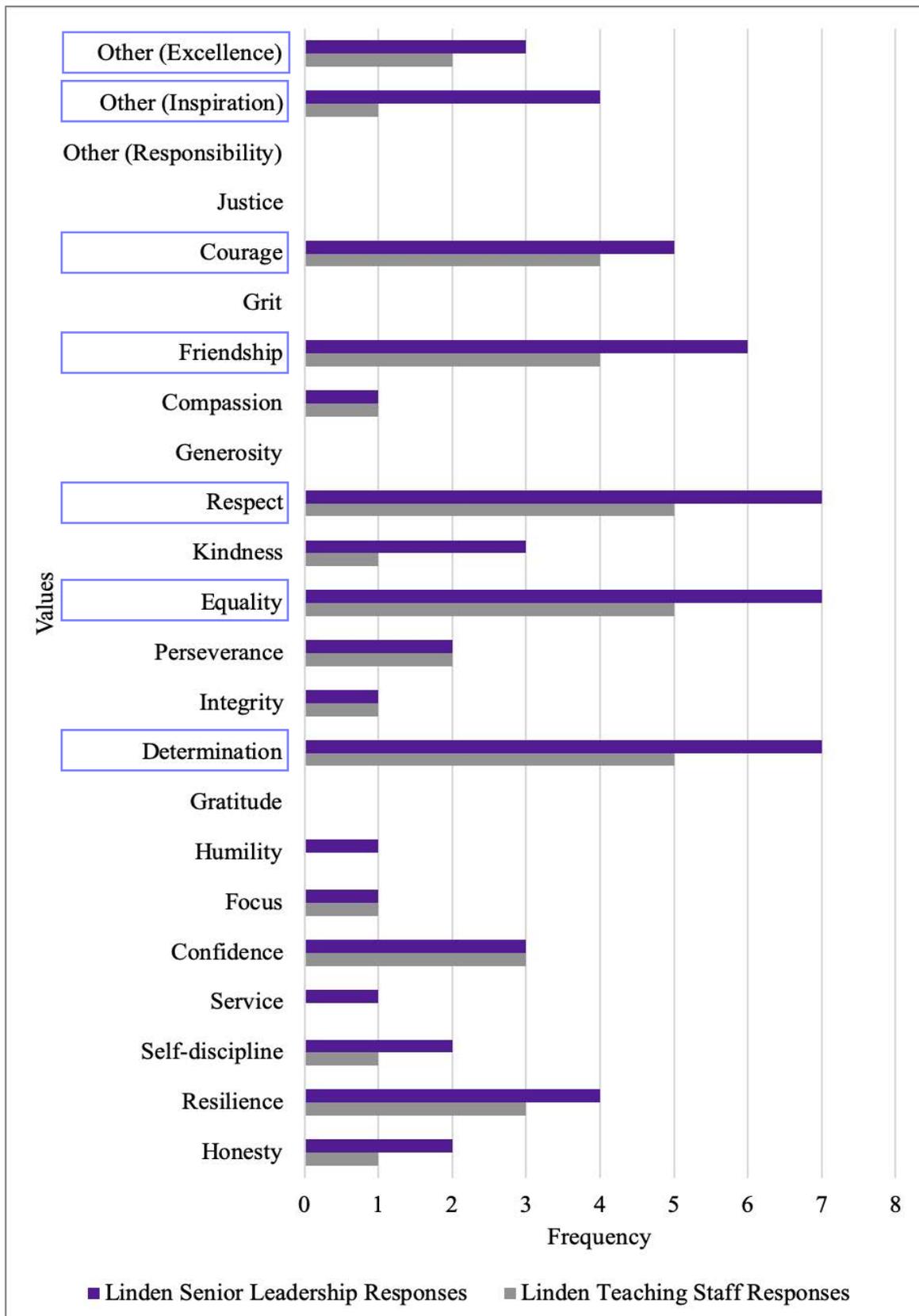


### 4.3.2 Identification of Core Values

Participants were asked to select, from a prescribed list, their school’s core values. The pre-determined list included some, but not all, of the values that each school identified in its official documents as its core values as well as additional ones; where values did not appear in the list participants were able to write in additional values. Linden School, with a higher number of questionnaire participants (n=13) and a more representative sample of staff in both senior leadership (n=7) and teaching roles (n=6), provided results which could be analysed for differences between the values identified by senior leaders and teachers. Allenswood School provided fewer questionnaire participants (n=4), with only one senior leader; results are

therefore presented from the whole cohort for Allenswood School. Chart 4.2 shows the variation between senior leaders and teaching staff in Linden School.

**Chart 4.2: Identification of Core Values by Senior Leadership and Teaching Staff in Linden School**

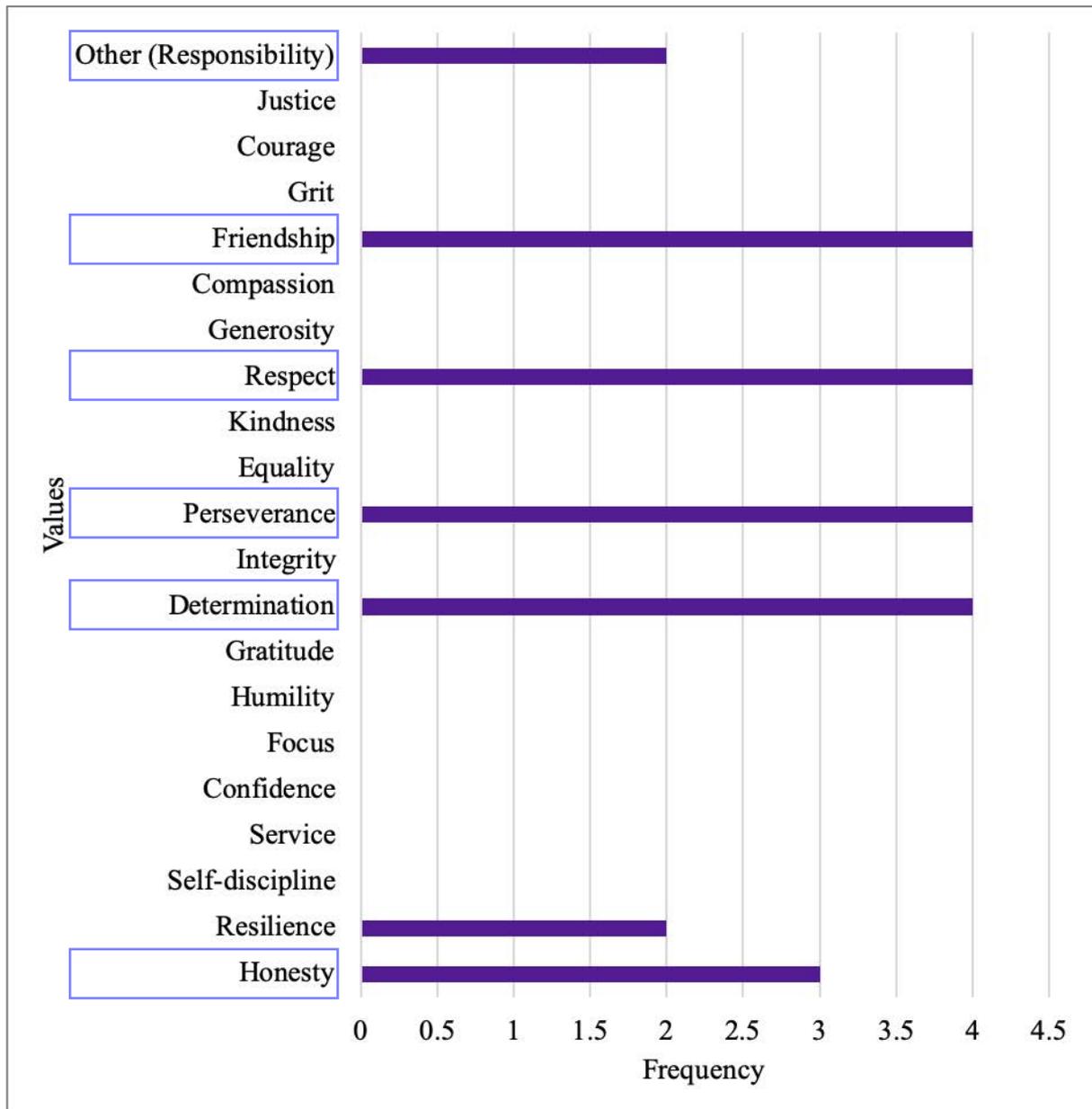


The values that Linden School identified in its official documents are indicated in the Y-axis of Chart 4.2. Of those, the two with the lowest frequency were those that did not appear in the pre-determined list but were written into responses by participants; these were ‘inspiration’ (n=5) and ‘excellence’ (n=5). Three of the core values were successfully identified by all senior leadership participants (‘determination’, ‘equality’ and ‘respect’); none of the core values were selected by all of the teaching staff and none received the highest possible frequency of selection. Overall, senior leadership participants were more successful in selecting the core values.

Despite the awareness among staff of what the School’s values were, many values that did not feature in the School’s official documents as ‘core values’ were also selected across both groups. There were two values which were picked out by both cohorts in addition to the core values for which the frequency of selection was higher than for two of the core values; these were ‘resilience’ (n=7) and ‘confidence’ (n=6). The additional values of ‘perseverance’ (n=3), ‘kindness’ (n=4), ‘honesty’ (n=3), ‘self-discipline’ (n=3), ‘focus’ (n=2), ‘integrity’ (n=2), ‘compassion’ (n=2) were identified across both senior leadership and teaching cohorts, and the values of ‘service’ and ‘humility’ were identified by senior leadership participants.

Staff in Allenswood School demonstrated overall success in identifying the School’s core values. Responses from Allenswood School participants can be seen in Chart 4.3.

**Chart 4.3: Identification of Core Values by All Participants in Allenswood School**



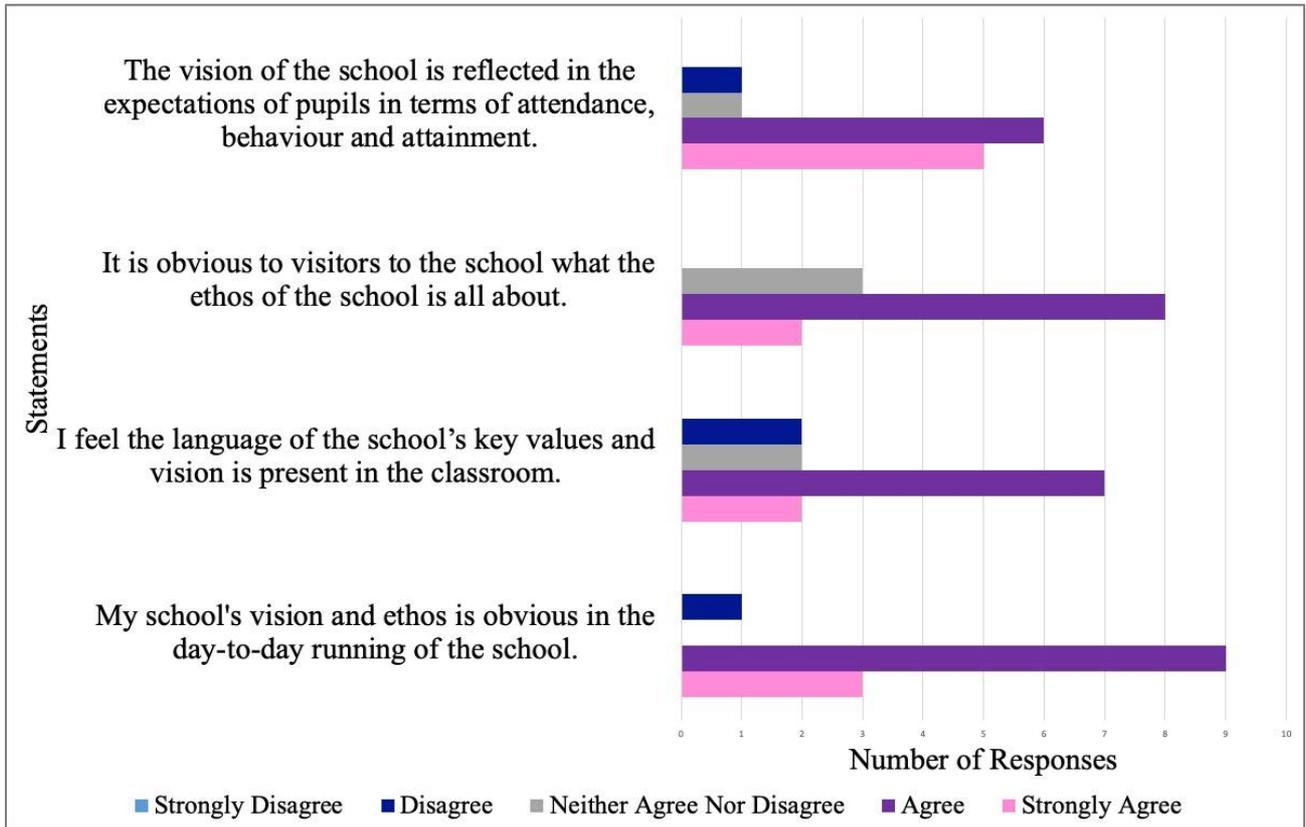
Only the teaching staff identified ‘responsibility’, one of Allenswood School’s core values which was not provided on the prescribed list, successfully; the senior leader did not identify this value. Four of the values of Allenswood School were successfully selected by all respondents; ‘determination’ (n=4), ‘perseverance’ (n=4), ‘respect’ (n=4) and ‘friendship’ (n=4). There were far fewer additional values selected by participants in comparison to Linden

School; the only value selected that was not a core value of Allenswood School was ‘resilience’ (n=2) and this was selected by both senior leadership and teaching staff.

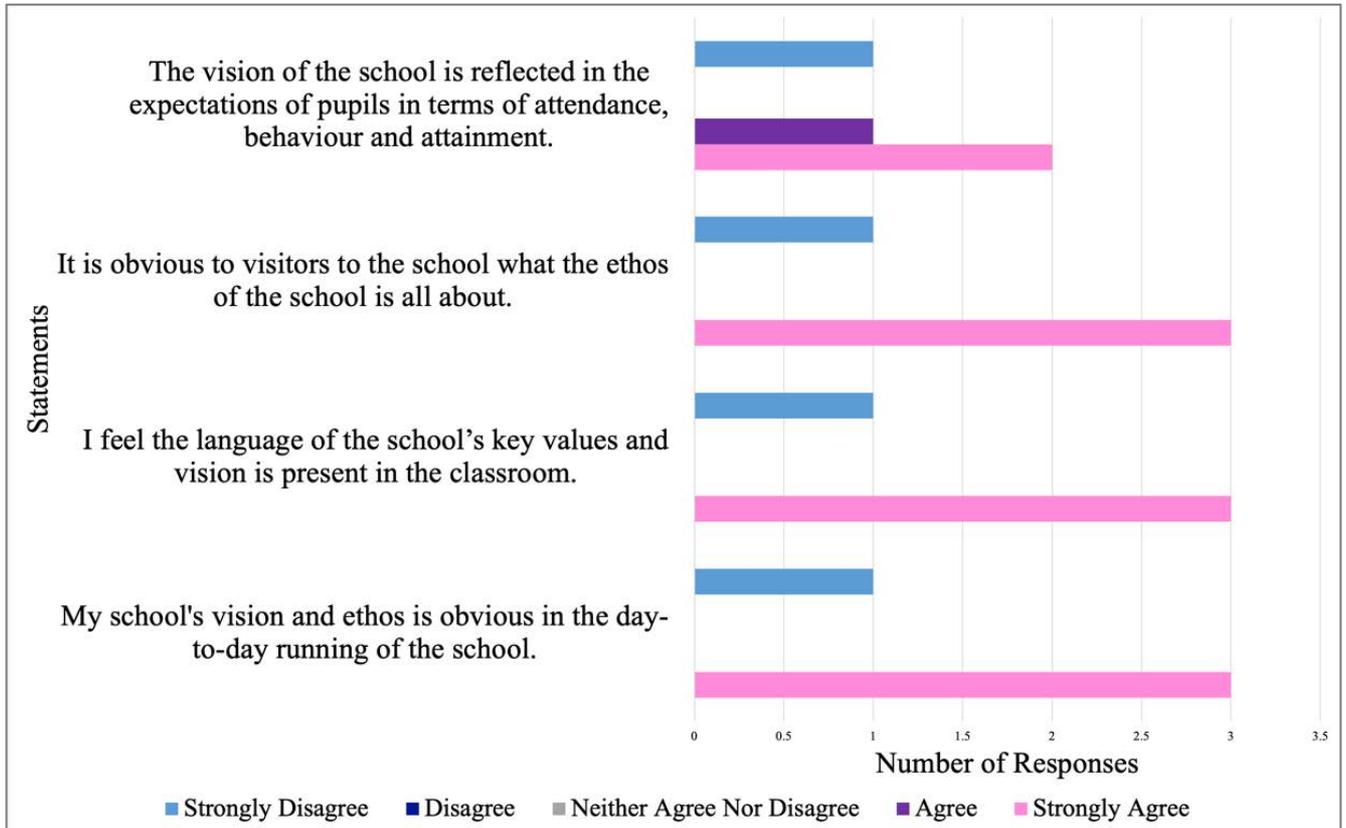
#### ***4.3.3 Staff Perspectives on the Presence of Vision, Ethos and Values within the Schools***

Questionnaire participants were presented with statements which addressed: the presence of the vision, ethos and values in the day-to-day running of the school; the use of language pertaining to the values and vision in the classrooms; the experience of visitors to the school; and, the degree to which the vision, ethos and values were reflected in the expectations of pupils in terms of attendance, behaviour and attainment. Participants were asked to select from a 5-point scale how far they agreed that these statements were true for their school. The results are presented in Charts 4.4 and 4.5.

**Chart 4.4: Level of Agreement Among Staff in Response to Statements About the Presence of Vision, Ethos and Values in Linden School**



**Chart 4.5: Level of Agreement Among Staff in Response to Statements About the Presence of Vision, Ethos and Values in Allenswood School**



As Charts 4.4 and 4.5 show, though some participants indicated disagreement with the statements, the frequency of positive agreement with the statements was consistently greater than disagreement. The statement which generated the least agreement across both schools was that regarding the presence of the language of values and vision in the classroom (n=12); the highest level of agreement was regarding vision and ethos being obvious in the day-to-day running of the school (n=15).

These findings indicate that staff in both schools generally perceived that the vision, ethos and values were well integrated into daily activities, surroundings, classrooms and expectations of pupils. Reinforcing this positive perspective, when asked how successful they felt their school was in letting people know what its vision and key values were, 94% of participants across both schools responded either 'very successful' or 'successful'.

#### ***4.3.4 Staff Perspectives on Incorporating the Vision, Ethos and Values into their Role***

Participants were asked to indicate how far they agreed that they 'try to incorporate the school's key values into their role'. Responses across all cohorts are presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Level of Agreement Among Staff in Response to the Statement ‘I try to Incorporate the School’s Key Values into my Role’**

	<b>Linden School</b>			<b>Allenswood School</b>		
	Senior Leadership	Teaching	All	Senior Leadership	Teaching	All
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	6	1	7	0	2	2
<b>Agree</b>	1	3	4	1	0	1
<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	0	2	2	0	0	0
<b>Disagree</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1

As Table 4.4 shows, ‘strongly agree’ was the most frequent response among senior leaders in Linden School (n=6); responses were more varied among teaching staff at Linden School but overall agreement was strong. For Allenswood School the majority of teaching staff strongly agreed, but one participant indicated strong disagreement. On the whole, across both schools, staff agreed that they did try to incorporate the values of the school into their professional role.

#### ***4.3.5 Methods for Expressing Vision, Ethos and Values***

Participants were asked to select from a pre-determined list the methods through which their school expressed its vision, ethos and values and the most frequently selected methods are presented in Table 4.5. The question separated audiences by stakeholders, staff and students.

**Table 4.5: Most Frequently Selected Methods for Articulating Vision, Ethos and Values to Stakeholders, Staff and Students Across the Two Case Study Schools**

To Stakeholders	To Staff	To Students
Website (n=17) School Displays (n=17)	Policies (n=15)	Assemblies (n=17)
Newsletter (n=15)	Training (n=14)	School Displays (n=16)
Prospectus (n=14)	Staff Briefings (n=13)	Newsletter (n=13) *Form Time (n=13)
Parents' Evening (n=11)	Staff Induction (n=12)	*Induction (Year 7) (n=12)
Social Media (n=10)	Recruitment Process (n=7)	Policies (n=8)
Community Initiatives (n=7)		
<i>*methods only included in Linden School questionnaire as only applicable at secondary schools</i>		

The most frequently selected methods differed depending on the audience with official documents forming a focus of the expression to stakeholders, where ‘website’, ‘newsletter’ and ‘prospectus’ were the top three methods. For staff, official documents, ‘policies’, were the most frequently used, but were followed by face-to-face interaction, with ‘training’, ‘staff briefings’ and ‘staff induction’ highlighted. It should be noted that ‘community initiatives’ was most frequently identified by senior leaders in Linden School; only one participant selected this method for Allenswood School. The use of ‘school displays’ and ‘newsletters’ was

popular across both schools in relation to both stakeholders and students. The findings indicate the range of methods available to schools to express their vision, ethos and values to different members of their community within and beyond the school.

#### **4.4 Findings from Analysis of Interview Data**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 members of staff across the two schools; 11 participants were interviewed at Linden School (the Headteacher, 4 senior leaders and 6 teachers) and 9 at Allenswood School (the Headteacher, 2 senior leaders and 6 teachers)<sup>9</sup>. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVIVO; data were separated and organised by theme, and further divided into sub-themes, to enable effective interpretation of the data pertinent to the research questions. Findings are presented thematically and are accompanied by key comments from participants to illustrate the findings through participants' voices.

The overarching themes presented consider firstly, the language participants' used to describe the vision and ethos of their school; what did staff consider to be key to the vision of the school and how did they articulate this? The second theme presents findings relating to the establishment of vision, ethos and values; who was involved in setting, driving and implementing the vision according to staff? The impact of the vision of each school is then considered; what did staff feel the school's focus on vision or values had helped it to achieve and how? The final two themes present participants' views on the ways in which their school articulated, communicated and effectively realised its vision, ethos and values, as well as what challenges they identified as barriers to the school's efforts.

<sup>9</sup> An overview of interview participants can be found in Table 3.4, Section 3.4.

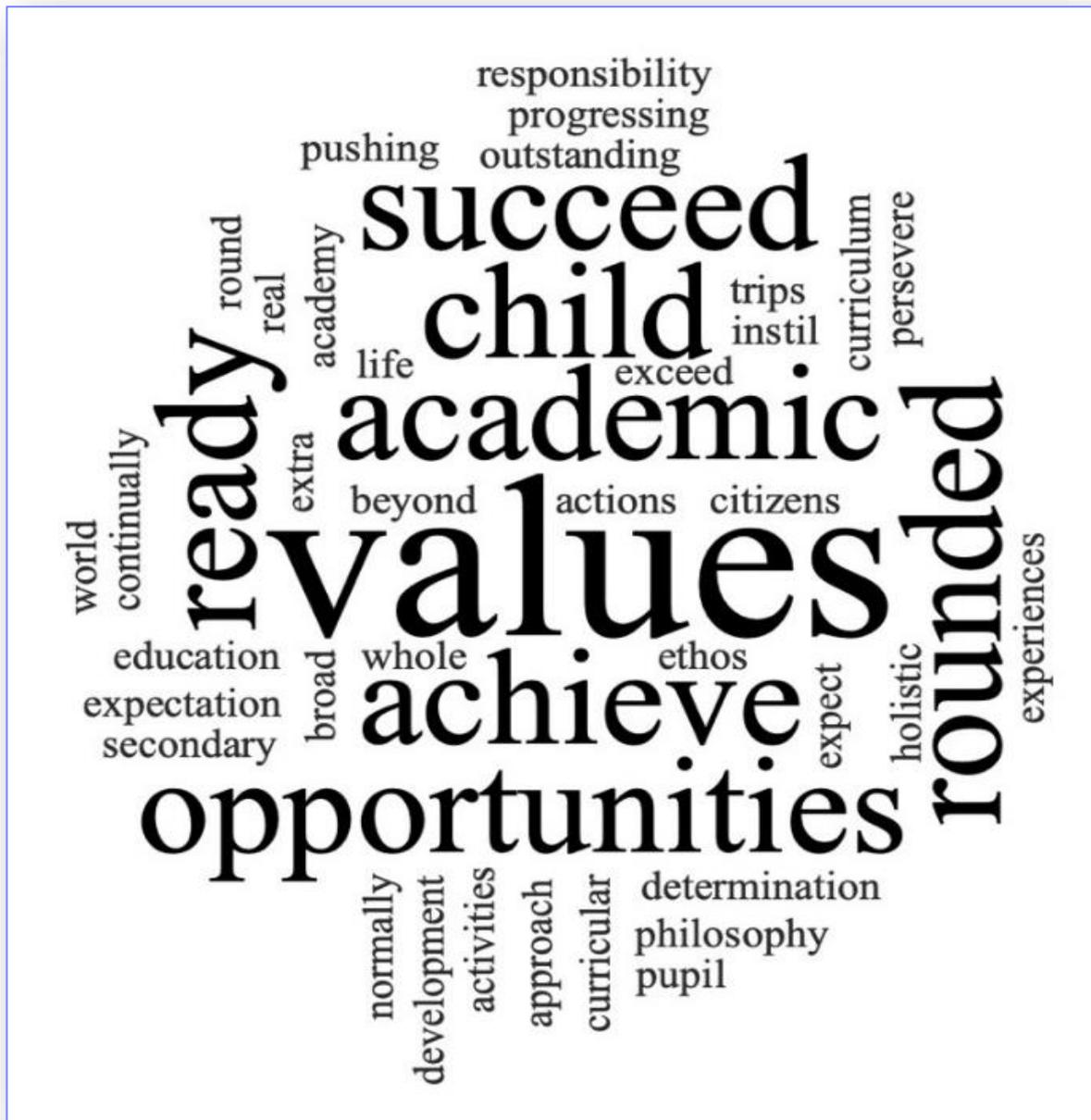
#### ***4.4.1 The Language of Vision***

The majority of interview participants were able to articulate clearly what they perceived to be the vision of the school they worked for; a small number of participants from each school commented that summarising the vision was difficult. The descriptions of vision across both schools presented two key areas of focus: the academic and non-academic aspirations of the school for their pupils. For Linden School, a third focus, the community, was also evident. The values of each school featured within descriptions of vision without prompt from the interviewer.

On examining the language used to describe the vision of each school by its staff, some key words and phrases appeared frequently. In order to best represent the language used by staff throughout interviews, all words and phrases relating to ‘vision’ were coded within NVIVO and a word cloud produced to provide a visual overview of vision for each school (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6).



Figure 4.6: Language used by Staff to Describe the Vision of Allenswood School



#### *4.4.1.1 Academic Aspirations*

Interviews with staff at Linden School included more frequent references to academic aspirations. The Headteacher, three senior leadership staff and six teaching staff spoke about the academic attainment of pupils, compared to Allenswood School where the Headteacher, one member of senior leadership and three teaching staff referred to this.

Linden School staff highlighted the ‘teaching and learning’ provision of the School, describing it as ‘high-quality’ and ‘the best’; the quality of excellence was common when staff referred to the educational provision of the School. Staff often commented on the aim of the School to prepare pupils for their careers and for life beyond school:

*Hopefully, they can leave with the results and exam grades that are going to get them to the next stage of their career and their lives, in whatever direction they want to go.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 3

Descriptions of academic aspirations by Allenswood School staff tended to focus more explicitly on equality and making sure that all children achieved and progressed academically. There was also more emphasis on the surrounding area of the School; as the children came from largely disadvantaged backgrounds, the role of the School in helping them to succeed was highlighted:

*We’re saying the rule book is thrown out here, you can come here and you can work hard and you can achieve.*

Allenswood School, Senior Leader, Participant 14

#### 4.4.1.2 Non-Academic Aspirations

Staff from both schools focused heavily on the non-academic aspirations the schools had for their pupils with 75% of all participants discussing this to some degree. For Linden School the non-academic vision was centred on sufficiently preparing pupils for the world they would be entering beyond school life and ensuring they developed into good citizens. Staff spoke about the ‘wellbeing’ of pupils, their ‘individual needs’, and the responsibility of the School to ‘nurture them’ in order to produce well-rounded young people:

*We aim to create well-rounded individuals that are ready for the next stage of their lives. Confident, believe in themselves and just ready for the next stage.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

Staff at Allenswood School spoke about the opportunities that they could provide pupils with that would not ordinarily be available to them. There was emphasis on the contribution pupils would make to society and the role of the School in making sure they grew up to be ‘worthwhile in society’ and ‘great citizens’. The development of the ‘whole child’ and a more ‘holistic approach’ to education was discussed by one of the senior leaders and preparing pupils for secondary school was mentioned by a teacher and the Headteacher. One teacher summarised the non-academic aspirations of the School as:

*...being able to create that well-rounded pupil, not just focusing on the curriculum side but making sure that they’re good people and that they leave the school being good people.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 15

#### 4.4.1.3 Community

The community formed a key theme in descriptions of the vision for Linden School staff, and in particular, for the Headteacher; this theme was not prevalent in Allenswood School interviews. The term ‘community’ was the second most frequent word in descriptions of vision for Linden School. In total, 54 references within Linden School interviews were coded under ‘community’ as they described some aspect of the School’s role within, contribution to, or partnership with its local community. The School’s community vision was largely attributed to the Headteacher with one senior leader recognising that the School’s links with the community did not exist prior to the Headteacher joining the School:

*I think we were almost operating as a school just where we taught the children and there was nothing really to do with the community.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 2

Another senior leader commented on the community relationship as a particular strength of the Headteacher. Discussions of community focused on: the sharing of information with local businesses and groups, parents, and community members; community events taking place at the School; pupils contributing to community discussions and projects; and, the importance of the pupils seeing beyond the School and understanding their place within that community. The Headteacher demonstrated a sense of ownership over the community vision for the School:

*I think part, certainly, of my belief, and certainly the governors, [is] that we are a community school. This school belongs to the community. Not everybody agrees with that in terms of community but it's something we've said from the first day I started.*

Linden School, Headteacher

The community theme was prevalent in discussions with the Headteacher, senior leaders and teaching staff. One teacher saw the 'character' of the School as shaped by the surrounding community:

*Yeah, it seems it's very much a community school. It serves a specific community and derives a lot of its character from that community and aims to celebrate the local community as well as promote it.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 11

#### *4.4.1.4 Values in Vision*

The extent to which staff spoke about the core values of their school as forming part of its vision was quite minimal, with only 13 references coded across all interviews as 'values in vision', however, the references did offer some insight into where staff saw the values as playing a part in the vision of the school. For Linden School, one senior leader linked the values to the School's reputation commenting that the two were 'aligned'. Teachers spoke about the values as qualities that the staff wanted the pupils to observe in others and to show themselves, and referred to the values as being 'instilled in the students'. Highlighting the place of values in the aims of the School, one teacher stated 'promoting positive values within the school and beyond' when describing vision.

For Allenswood School, the link between vision and values was more evident; one teacher described the integration of the core values into daily school life as the vision itself, and another remarked that the values ‘kind of shape the vision’. As well as discussing the values as being instilled in pupils, similar to Linden School, Allenswood School staff spoke about the values as helping to develop the whole child, and one teacher recognised that the focus on values had made a ‘massive difference’ at the School. The values helped the School to articulate its non-academic aim to develop well-rounded individuals.

#### ***4.4.2 Establishing the Vision, Ethos and Values***

It was important as part of the wider study to gain some understanding of how the vision, ethos and values of each school came about and who contributed to this process. Staff in both schools noted that the core values, though they had been made more explicit, were not new to the School:

*I think really the values, in terms of the language of the values, it's a new thing, but I don't think they're new values to the school.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

*I would say we've always had some sort of values, value provision at this school.*

Allenswood School, Headteacher

The Headteacher of Allenswood School emphasised that the academic needs of the pupils had to come first in the beginning, and the values provision and focus on opportunity followed:

*The priority was the academic standards and always is and then on top of that we've added layer upon layer of intervention support, meeting the specific needs of individual children...*

Allenswood School, Headteacher

The Headteacher's role in establishing and driving the vision and ethos was evident among staff and the Headteachers themselves:

*When I came to Linden, I remember being asked what my values were [...] I talked about unitas - unity and community. I talked about veritas - virtue, honesty. And I talked about caritas - it's about love for your neighbour. I think embodied in those personal values of mine...*

Linden School, Headteacher

Both schools had a designated values-lead who was identified as playing a key role in the establishment of the values programme, as well as in its continuing implementation; this was evident in interviews where other staff highlighted the role the values-lead played. Discussions with Allenswood School staff about the origins of its core values shed light on how the values-lead had involved staff and pupils in the identification of the core values:

*So, [I did a] sheet of paper, over 50 values, and the kids had to choose the six values that they believe were important to them at Allenswood, and the staff had to do the same, got those back, collated all the data and the six core values which we have now*

*were the ones which we decided were the most important.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 16

The Headteacher praised this approach:

*I think the way in which James involved the whole school community together, initially, to talk about it, what we wanted, to bring everyone together, to agree communally what was right and to celebrate it.*

Allenswood School, Headteacher

The approach to identifying the core values was different for Linden School where the values were thought to have come about ‘almost automatically’; the values linked closely to a project around the Olympics:

*We did a lot of stuff around the Olympic and Paralympic values then, which then we adopted as our school values later on.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

#### ***4.4.3 Impact of Vision, Ethos and Values***

Interview participants across both schools discussed a range of positive outcomes associated with vision, ethos and values. The positive impact was said to benefit a range of stakeholders including pupils, staff, leadership, community, parents and the school as a whole. These included: providing shared goals and uniting the school community; fostering positive relationships; guiding decision-making and setting standards and expectations. The core values

in particular were identified as providing a mechanism through which the schools could articulate their vision and through which pupils could be praised for achievements beyond their academic studies.

#### *4.4.3.1 Shared Goals and a United School Community*

The vision was identified by a senior leader at Allenswood School as providing ‘direction’ and by a teacher at Linden School as creating a ‘harmonious society’. More than one participant, across both schools, asserted that having a clear vision meant that all members of the school were ‘singing off the same hymn sheet’. The role of vision in uniting the school community, both staff and pupils, around one shared goal was prevalent throughout:

*I came here as a student, second year placement, I think it was very clear then, after being in two other schools [...] that this one stood out as having a clear drive, a clear focus [...] When you’ve got everyone working towards that, it makes it easier.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 20

A senior leader at Allenswood School considered what the School might lack if it did not have that vision: ‘you’ve got to have vision to know where to go in terms of leading staff, also for children, what’s our big end goal?’.

The values were often referred to explicitly within discussions about vision and participants highlighted different benefits of having those core values:

*I think there's more of a collective staff unit here and a collective student unit a student voice and [...] I think because the school has those values its almost common ground [...] I think that sort of collective aim that collective value sort of unites everybody.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 9

Vision for Linden School was thought to provide 'consistency across the board', and the values in particular were seen to be an important factor in giving the School an 'identity'.

#### *4.4.3.2 Fostering Positive Relationships*

Participants from both schools highlighted the role that vision and values played in fostering positive relationships; this included relationships between staff, between pupils, between staff and pupils, and between the school and parents, as well the local community.

Allenswood School participants emphasised the impact on relationships internally, with no mention of parents or the community. The Headteacher felt that pupil relationships, and behaviour in general, had been enhanced through the explicit focus on values:

*The whole respect thing which is linked into manners and the way you interact in the corridor and shaking hands and eye contact and holding open doors. All the things you want as a school [...] Support for each other, kids supporting each other, noticeable.*

Allenswood School, Headteacher

A teacher at Allenswood School said that the pupils had become ‘a lot kinder, more manners around school, a lot more respectful, a lot more determined to complete activities’ since the introduction of the core values.

For Allenswood School extra-curricular activities, and in particular competitive sporting activities, were thought to provide a key opportunity for pupils to develop the values outside of the classroom. Though the School had not explicitly focused on this as part of its values provision, staff had observed the values to be prominent in pupils and to have led to changes in behaviour. Similarly, the additional interactions between staff and pupils encouraged through extra-curricular activities focused around the values were seen to provide opportunities to ‘build that mutual respect’ at Linden School.

For Linden School, improved links with parents were attributed by one participant to the explicit focus on values. Participants also commented that conveying a clear vision to the local community, in terms of what the School stood for, was important. Although this was presented positively, the participant noted that the value the School placed on non-academic aspirations for pupils could cause conflict with the community:

*Yeah, I would say that it's clearer now what we would say we stand for, as a school and I think that's quite important for the community, but also challenging for the community to understand that actually, for us, academic excellence is only one part of our role.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

A senior leader from Linden School likened the School community to a ‘family’:

*I think what's unique about Linden is that there's a real [...] kind of sense of one individuality for the pupils. [...] And really a sense of kind of family [...] [we] very often talk about being part of the Linden family both as you know members of staff and also pupils.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 5

#### *4.4.3.3 Guiding Decision-Making and Setting Standards and Expectations*

A senior leader at Linden School noted the role of the core values in decision-making; the values provided a point of reference to guide decisions that impacted on pupils:

*I think it really is in everything. In terms of decision-making we, as a leadership team, often return to the values of the school in making decisions.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

Decision-making was not linked explicitly to the values or vision in discussions with Allenswood School staff. For Linden School, in particular, the vision and values were linked to setting standards and expectations of both staff and pupils:

*I think it really is about the expectations that the students expect to be challenged that they expect to be taught well that they expect to be treated with respect...*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 8

*You want excellence in teaching and that's very much what the school drives forward. I think they're very, very closely linked between what the student expectations are and, actually, the teachers. And the teachers of themselves, I'd say.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 10

This impact was not as prominent in Allenswood School interviews but the following comment by a member of the teaching staff suggested that standards and expectations linked to the vision were key to the School's success:

*I think if our school didn't have a vision in this area; it would have a massive impact on attainment levels. I think the way that we run the school, always constantly pushing, making the kids work hard, helps our school stand out from others in this area.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 20

#### *4.4.3.4 Values as a Mechanism for Articulating the Vision*

It was evident in both schools that the values provided a mechanism through which the vision could be articulated. The values were thought to provide a language for both staff and pupils to speak about the non-academic aspirations that they worked towards.

A teacher from Allenswood School emphasised this by considering the School prior to its focus on values:

*Some of the staff thought that we had a vision and we had values, some of the staff had no idea what we were talking about [...] but now if you were to ask anybody, they would*

*all know exactly what we're talking about and they'd be able to talk about the ethos.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 16

A senior leader at Allenswood School focused on the impact of values language on pupils, observing that the language had become 'embedded' and that pupils demonstrated an understanding of the values, in addition to changes in their actions and behaviour:

*Then they start picking up that language, so we'll get children coming to me, "Miss Price, so-and-so is not being respectful."*

*I can see that sort of positive examples now from the children that we use that language and then see the value of that language as well and how they act and change because of it.*

Allenswood School, Senior Leader, Participant 14

The Headteacher of Linden School noted that the values provided the School with 'some very concrete, key messages that embody' the vision of the School. A teacher highlighted this:

*I think the Linden Values are a really nice way of trying to promote the idea that being at school is not just about doing well in classes and doing well in lessons. It's a way of articulating the vision, I suppose.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 11

For this teacher, though vision and values were important for schools, the 'specific words' used by staff were not thought to matter to a great extent. In contrast, a teacher from Linden School

noted that the values made the language of the vision more explicit, and one referred to this as ‘labelling’.

The discussions around the language of values, and the understanding pupils had gained from this values-led approach, indicated the contribution of the values to creating a positive ethos within the schools; this was manifested in interactions between pupils, and between staff and pupils, and the respectful, safe and happy learning environment. A senior leader at Linden School observed that the values had become ‘part of the fabric’ of the School.

#### *4.4.3.5 Recognition of Non-Academic Achievements*

A positive outcome of the values provision was the celebration and recognition of pupils for their development of the core values. Seeing the values as ‘something to be celebrated’ was important to staff in both schools and one teacher at Allenswood School noted:

*We put emphasis on friendship, honesty, resilience, perseverance and always pick them up when they have done something [...] I think they’re very aware of those things that we praise them for.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 17

Staff in Linden School, both senior leaders and teachers, emphasised the opportunity that the values provided for those pupils who may not achieve as highly academically to be recognised for their non-academic development:

*The values themselves, I think, are a really useful way of being able to recognise what*

*students are and what they do, over and above the recognition they get for their academic achievements.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 11

#### ***4.4.4 Articulation and Communication of Vision, Ethos and Values***

Various methods of communicating the vision, ethos and values to staff and pupils internally, as well as to external stakeholders, were evident. Some communicative methods were embedded within daily practices, and others were explicit activities designed to promote particular ideas and expectations.

Recognition of the importance of communicating the aims and aspirations of the school was prominent:

*But it's quite remarkable how many times you can actually mention those [values] when you're talking to people and students. Really important.*

Linden School, Headteacher

##### ***4.4.4.1 Internal Communication***

Participants from both schools discussed communication through their relationships with pupils, particularly around recognising pupils when they displayed the values in their behaviour, and through the use of values language in their interactions with pupils. These were both recognised as positive outcomes, as well as key methods for communicating and instilling values in pupils:

*If I see a child doing something, say in the corridor and it shows responsibility, I'll pick it up.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 15

*If we're talking about the work that the students do, we use the language of the values in terms of taking pride in their work...*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

A teacher from Linden School noted the importance of clarity in the language used:

*I think sometimes words around vision and values can be...woolly and I think here they are quite focused. I think that is really useful.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 11

Participants from both schools identified assemblies as a significant means through which vision and values were communicated to pupils; being as they were highlighted by 7 participants, all at various levels of responsibility, within each school - 14 participants out of the 20. A senior leader from Linden School emphasised the importance of maintaining a 'consistent vocabulary' when planning assemblies.

Visual aids were a key communicative tool for both schools, but were more heavily weighted in Allenswood School. Linden School staff acknowledged that the values were 'emblazoned across the School', and that they were 'quite visible', with one teacher adding the use of

‘display materials’. For Allenswood School the values were described by more than one participant as being ‘everywhere’:

*In terms of those words, they are all around the school. We have the trees in our classrooms and they’re on the floor and they’re in the hall and they’re everywhere.*

Allenswood School, Senior Leader, Participant 14

The teacher leading on the values provision for Allenswood School stated that ‘it’s literally plastered everywhere that you look’. The Headteacher of Allenswood stressed the importance of the visual aids in providing a ‘common reference point’.

Classroom teaching provided a method through which each school communicated the values, however, the messages around this approach were fairly mixed. For Linden School, one senior leader acknowledged that not all staff incorporated the values into their teaching but highlighted that those who do, ‘do it well’. Another senior leader recognised that ‘some staff are better than others’ in this area. A teacher from Linden School stated ‘we don’t explicitly have them in lessons as maybe other schools do’.

For Allenswood School, the focus on values in classroom teaching came mostly from the Headteacher and the values-lead. The Headteacher asserted that the values were ‘in lessons’ explicitly and the teacher stated that ‘teachers always refer to them in lessons whenever possible’. Other participants tended to speak about the values in teaching when prompted by the interviewer.

Participants at Linden School identified some special initiatives as key in communicating the vision and values, for example, a ‘peer mentoring’ programme, a ‘Learning for Life’ programme, and a ‘Tutorial Worship’ calendar which allowed reflection during Form-Time; these were in addition to pupils’ planners. One teacher asserted that the values were communicated internally through the Linden Values programme itself:

*Internally to students and staff, I’d say through the Linden value programme. That’s kind of fundamental to it.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 10

#### *4.4.4.2 External Communication*

The significance placed on external communication, as well as the methods adopted, varied between the two schools. The narrative around external communication with stakeholders for Linden School was much more positive.

Linden School had recently reviewed its newsletter which it distributed via email to parents and members of the local community each half term. Identified by senior leaders as a key external communicative tool, the newsletter was thought to make the aspirations and aims of the School ‘quite clear’. With the School’s strong community links, one senior leader acknowledged that the newsletter was ‘circulated more widely within the community’ as key members were known to share it with their own networks. The newsletter was only mentioned by one participant at Allenswood School in regard to its values branding.

The website was significant for external communication at Linden School, targeting parents more specifically:

*Now, the website is brilliant. It's got all the information on there for parents.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 3

Social media played an important role, with one senior leader stating 'the vision is then put across through those channels' and commenting that more recently the social media channels had been used as a 'marketing' tool. Another senior leader echoed this:

*Through our social media, when we tweet or when we post on Facebook, we often use the values as part of that [...] We use the language quite a lot in the way that we communicate.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

Only two Allenswood School participants identified the website or social media when speaking about external communication without prompt, and just one participant suggested this was a strength of the School's communication with stakeholders.

Regarding communication with parents, both schools adopted various methods. Parents' evenings, induction meetings, assemblies, drop-in days and workshops were highlighted across both schools for providing opportunities for face-to-face communication of the values to parents:

*When we do presentations to parents, open evenings and things like that, the values of the school are made clear to them through things like displays around the school.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

The visual displays of the values were seen as significant when parents visited the schools. For Linden School, the website, social media and newsletter were mentioned explicitly, as well as pupils' planners which parents were believed to see. The transition of primary pupils into the School was utilised to communicate aspirations and expectations from the outset. Allenswood School staff highlighted the role of a Parent Governor, and feedback to parents regarding pupils' development of the values:

*We try and use those words in Pupil of the Week, in letters home, so parents can see; actually that's where my child has achieved this because they've shown perseverance or friendship...*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 20

When asked how the schools communicated their vision or values to the community, many participants tended to focus on parents as part of that community. For Linden School, one teacher explicitly spoke about community members:

*Externally, I'd say it's linked into this community spirit which... The Linden values aren't necessarily explicitly told to the community but the expectations of the school are linked in, kind of subliminally, I think.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 10

There were some negative views raised in both schools relating to external communication. In Linden School, one teacher suggested that a school they had worked in previously had been ‘more constant’ in its communication with external stakeholders and for them, the approach of Linden School was seen as a ‘step back’. The Headteacher at Allenswood School recognised that there was ‘more to be done’ with its external communication and one teacher observed that:

*From people on the outside, unless they’re coming in, I wouldn’t say that they’d see it as much, but certainly around school, visitors and stuff...*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 15

Further, one teacher suggested that there was a reluctance from the leadership to invite parents in to specifically discuss the vision, ethos and values of the School, and equally to send correspondence out.

#### *4.4.4.3 Challenges of Articulation and Communication*

Challenges identified by Allenswood School were solely linked to the surrounding area. When asked about communicating with the outside world the Headteacher responded that ‘not much works’:

*We operate in a bubble here, rightly or wrongly, it’s a very challenging environment...We’ve attempted to engage with the local community, it’s been very challenging.*

Allenswood School, Headteacher

Linden School staff identified additional challenges which applied to internal communication. These included the number of communicative methods available, particularly through technology, and the School being equipped to choose the ‘right kind of vehicle’ through which to communicate, both internally and externally. In addition, one senior leader recognised that too much communication can be damaging to the overall message as audiences become ‘bombarded’.

A senior leader at Linden School commented that though those in leadership roles were aware of the work that went into the values programme and decision-making, it was not clear to what extent members of staff ‘on the ground’ shared this awareness.

There was a general sense at Linden School that communication could be improved when staff were given the opportunity to reflect on this and the Headteacher acknowledged the difference between producing ‘fine words...for documents to achieve things’ and actually incorporating the vision and values into communications.

#### ***4.4.5 Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values***

The realisation of long-term aims and aspirations was viewed as important in each school and staff demonstrated an awareness of how the vision and values were embedded within daily practices. Participants commented on the significance of integration and a conscious, ongoing effort to ensure the vision and values were realised:

*It's about actually, you can sing and dance and you can have pictures and words but if they're not referred to, if they're not in their language, they're never going to be embedded.*

Allenswood School, Senior Leader, Participant 14

*...the first assembly of the year is not enough it needs to be a consistent sort of promotion.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 9

#### *4.4.5.1 Methods for the Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values*

The methods of communicating the vision, ethos and values internally featured heavily in discussions regarding how each school ensured that these were realised in day-to-day activities. The role of the language of vision and values was emphasised by staff as key to embedding this within daily practices; this included incorporating this language into teaching, into praise and recognition of pupils, and into school initiatives such as assemblies and bespoke programmes.

In addition to permeating interactions with, and praise of, pupils, the values appeared to underpin both schools' approaches to behaviour more widely, in terms of behaviour management, as well as expectations. Participants spoke about addressing bad behaviour when it did occur through the underlying values, for example, of 'respect' and 'equality', and unpicking why pupils had misbehaved or asking how they could have drawn on particular values to resolve an issue differently.

Though participants focused on more explicit methods for integrating the vision and values, some distinguished between the explicit and implicit and suggested that often it would come naturally:

*A lot of it probably comes out naturally without standing and referring to them. It comes out naturally in practice.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 3

Role-modelling the values was identified as key to realisation for Allenswood School; this theme was more prominent at Allenswood School but was mentioned by a Linden School teacher:

*I think I'm not alone in probably demonstrating myself and having expectations for the students behaving in a certain way...*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 11

In contrast, role-modelling was a focus of the discussion with three teachers at Allenswood School who highlighted the importance of demonstrating the values in their own behaviour and in all their interactions with pupils, for example:

*Role-modelling plays a massive part, the language that you use, how you speak to the pupils, how you recognise it, how you interact with different members of staff.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 16

*Demonstrating it, like trying to show the children that we find things hard as well and that we are persevering. We've just had a Snowdon trip, some Year 6s and I'll talk to them about how I did it and it was hard [...] It's trying to demonstrate it.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 17

The visual aids displaying the core values in Allenswood School were identified as forming part of the day-to-day realisation and an approach the Headteacher felt was 'good practice'.

#### *4.4.5.2 Barriers and Enablers in the Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values*

The barriers faced by each school in realising its vision, ethos and values on a daily basis varied. Participants from Linden School spoke more openly about challenges they faced professionally in implementing the School's vision, as well as the challenges they felt the School as a whole faced.

For Linden School, a key challenge was the consistency of the values being integrated into teaching. The responses from teachers demonstrated this inconsistency to some degree and some participants specifically highlighted it as an issue:

*I don't see a level of consistency in terms of if people are putting it in every single lesson - I'm not.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 6

For Allenswood School, a challenge was bridging the gap between knowledge or understanding and action with teachers; the teacher responsible for training staff on the values programme and character education said:

*It's one thing me standing in the front for an hour and preaching it and speaking about it. It's another thing them taking it in and implementing it on a practical basis.*

Allenswood School, Teacher, Participant 16

Another gap identified was that between the language and action for pupils:

*It's just the language, I think really; otherwise these children need to see it in action, especially in the early years. If you just say the word 'perseverance,' they haven't got a clue.*

Allenswood School, Senior Leader, Participant 14

Participants from Linden School recognised resistance from pupils as a challenge the School faced, particularly as at secondary level pupils were aware they would not receive credit for their development or participation in this area. The degree of buy-in from staff was also raised:

*'Cause I think it's one of those things where we've got these great values and they are great and we have a great vision [...] but does everyone know and fully buy into it.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 6

Buy-in from pupils and staff alike was identified as a significant challenge, but was more prominent in Linden School. The teacher leading on the values provision in Allenswood

School had faced resistance from older members of the teaching staff when introducing the values, and also from some members of the senior leadership team as they were busy with other priorities. For Linden School, the prioritisation of subject teaching and reaching attainment targets, as well as time constraints, were highlighted as challenges for gaining buy-in from staff.

In discussion with one teacher, the interview led to some reflection on their approach to integrating the values into their teaching:

*I don't vocalise them in relation to the Linden Values. I'm not expected to and I don't. Having had the opportunity to think about a little bit in the context of what you're doing, I probably ought to because [...] they are kind of useful words.*

Linden School, Teacher, Participant 11

Some approaches that helped to mitigate these various challenges were discussed. For Allenswood School, building milestones into their approach to the introduction of core values across the School enabled manageable targets to be achieved and gave teachers time to buy-in to the new approach. One teacher acknowledged that without the Headteacher driving the vision, the progress in that area and the impact achieved would not have been possible. The Headteacher echoed this:

*It's so easy in schools with these bold plans to die a death after six months, 12 months. You've just got to keep banging away at it as well. It's consistently check-check-check. I do think the leaders play a key role in this as well.*

Allenswood School, Headteacher

The role of the leader was also evident during interviews with Linden School staff:

*That comes from the top. That gets instilled down through the head to deputy head to assistant heads and to heads of year into form tutors.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 3

In order to overcome the challenge of buy-in from staff at Linden School, one senior leader spoke about the role of Form Tutors:

*That's why a lot of our work has been through the form tutors because in their role as a form tutor you can separate. You can say, okay, I'm a history teacher but I'm also a form tutor and when I'm a form tutor I can concentrate on these other things.*

Linden School, Senior Leader, Participant 4

#### **4.5 Summary of Findings Across all Methods**

The findings presented within this chapter cover the three methods of data collection, as well as a number of topics relevant to the research questions of the study. In bringing these findings together for discussion and interpretation the key aspects to highlight are as follows.

Participants, on the whole, were positive in their articulations of their school's aspirational vision, daily ethos and values initiatives with key aspirations evidently shared by all staff. Aspirations fell into two broad areas of academic and non-academic; for Linden School the community was an important part of its vision. Each school's vision, and particularly its renewed focus on values, had led to positive outcomes that impacted on all members of the

school community: uniting pupils and staff around important shared aims; helping to set direction and standards; enabling positive relationships to develop; and, recognising pupils for achievements outside of their academic attainment. The values were specifically highlighted as providing a mechanism through which staff could articulate the non-academic aspirations of the school and helped in achieving the positive outcomes mentioned above.

Each method of data collection contributed to identifying the numerous ways in which both schools expressed, articulated and communicated their vision, ethos and values, including: newsletters, website, school grounds and displays, special initiatives and parents' evenings. A key theme emerged around the role that the language of the values played in the everyday communication of the vision of the school, and particularly in promoting the importance of non-academic development for pupils. The official, more formal, documents that the schools produced to promote their ethos did not feature heavily in discussions.

The realisation of vision was mostly discussed during interviews and featured many of the communicative tools staff identified as ways in which the vision and values of the schools featured in everyday school life. Mixed responses were evident around the incorporation of the values into classroom teaching and a number of challenges to effective realisation, such as buy-in, gaps between knowledge and action, additional pressures, were identified; staff also highlighted some ways in which challenges had been mitigated, for example, through a staggered approach to implementing a values initiative, and through a focus on the role of the Form-Tutor in developing values in pupils.

Leadership, though not explicitly explored through the data collection, emerged as a key theme during interviews in terms of the Headteacher's role in setting, driving and implementing the

vision of the school. Participants often attributed the vision directly to that of the Headteacher and recognised the passion and commitment the Headteacher displayed towards the vision of the school.

These key findings are discussed and interpreted, with reference to the literature, in the chapter that follows.

## **5. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the empirical findings presented in Chapter 4 and seeks to interpret them in relation to the research questions set out earlier in the thesis. The findings from each method of data collection and subsequent analysis are discussed in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2; discussion is presented in the broad areas of the purpose, articulation and communication, and realisation, of vision, ethos and values in the case study schools.

### **5.2 Purpose and Importance of Vision, Ethos and Values**

#### ***5.2.1 Introduction***

The general consensus among questionnaire and interview participants was that vision, ethos and values were important aspects of schools; this was mirrored in the way vision, ethos and values were perceived to be manifested in the environment of each school. Participants spoke about the vision of their school with passion and were able to provide significant insights.

Where the interviewer pressed for further detail in some areas of discussion, for example, when asking what the fundamental role of the vision was, or when participants had first become aware of the vision, some found it difficult to expand on their responses. It could be perceived that this was due to the often-implicit nature of vision; daily norms that constitute the culture of a school can become so commonplace to those within it that they become 'second nature' (see Torrington and Weightman, 1993). This can also mean that members of a school community

may not be able to articulate such norms and practices, though when given the opportunity to reflect, the majority of participants were able to identify and discuss these.

Ethos was viewed as more important, in comparison to the overarching vision and core values (see Chart 4.1); with the ethos being manifested in the daily experiences of staff, this is perhaps at the forefront of their minds as impacting directly on themselves and on their pupils. Considering the definitions of vision and ethos explored in Section 2.3, vision can be thought about in more abstract terms as representing a dream or aspiration which is not grounded in reality, whereas ethos is closely aligned to culture, and is often directly associated with the everyday life of those within the school (see Deal and Peterson, 2016; Donnelly, 2000; Solvason, 2005). It follows that ethos is seen by staff as more important as they experience its realisation through daily norms and behaviours, perhaps with little awareness of the impact of long-term vision and goals in shaping ethos.

A general sense of the positive impact of each school's focus on vision, ethos and core values in the last decade can be inferred from the interview data. For example, all participants indicated that they would consider the vision and values of a school when seeking employment in future; this indicates that the approach by each school was well received by staff and something which they would ideally want to mirror elsewhere.

### ***5.2.2 Establishing the Vision, Ethos and Values***

Interview findings showed that the vision, ethos and values came about in different ways; some aspects were the result of more recent, focused efforts and some had derived through the history and make-up of the school. Whilst both schools had involved the whole-school community

when establishing core values, they had each identified a lead teacher responsible for driving them. When considering the overarching goals of the school, however, many attributed these to the Headteacher, a view which is reflected in the literature (Owens and Valesky, 2015; Bush, 2011).

Participants highlighted that the schools had explicitly identified core values within the last decade, in line with the resurgence in education policy of the place of character and values development in schools. Those core values, however, were not new to the school and had always been present in some way; as recognised within the literature, organisations will operate in line with certain guiding principles and values even where these are not made explicit (Trethowan, 1991, cited in Bell and Harrison, 1995). The identification of core values was not a new approach to how the schools operated, but rather a conscious effort to emphasise those values as being at the heart of the school.

The values-lead in each school, a teacher designated as responsible for driving the values programme, was seen by staff to have played a key role in establishing, and embedding, the core values. The literature emphasises the need for school leaders to share their role with others in the school and the identification of a values-lead seemed to have worked well in both schools (West *et al.*, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1986, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). The majority of staff spoke positively about the values-lead in relation to the values programme, acknowledging their contribution and associating the values specifically with their role.

For Allenswood School, the involvement of staff and pupils in the identification of the core values was seen to have contributed significantly to the positive impact that followed; this was particularly emphasised by the Headteacher, in addition to staff. Through the literature it is

evident that staff need to have a good understanding of their school's aspirational goals, and culture; such an understanding means that the different elements at play in a school environment, including the values, relationships, and structures, can operate in harmony (Dalin, 1993). Further, feeling a sense of ownership over new initiatives or ways of working is also important (Bush, 2011). One can infer that the involvement of staff in the formulation of the values initiative went a long way to ensuring sound understanding regarding the purpose of the values, their meaning, and how they would be implemented.

Further to this, a collaborative approach to establishing vision and selecting values is seen as crucial in gaining support and buy-in from the school community (Wang, Gurr and Drysdale, 2014; Beare Caldwell and Milkian, 1993). Challenges around buy-in among staff were less prominent in discussions with Allenswood School staff compared to Linden School; this was perhaps down to the collaborative approach to identifying the core values which involved staff and pupils selecting the values most important to them. Linden School's core values, on the other hand, derived from the Olympics which featured in a school-wide project at that time; though it appeared staff were involved in the Olympics project, the depth of their involvement was less clear.

The degree of ownership over vision felt among staff varied; an examination of the language used indicated to whom they attributed the vision. For Linden School some participants used the personal pronoun 'we' and the possessive pronoun 'our', whereas some simply referred to 'the vision of this school' with no attribution to a person or group. One teacher used the third person pronoun 'they' implying a low sense of ownership and belonging. Allenswood School staff demonstrated a greater sense of ownership, most commonly referring to 'our vision' and

using the personal pronoun 'we'; two participants attributed the vision directly to the Headteacher using the personal pronoun 'his'.

The role of the Headteacher in establishing and driving the vision of each school was evident throughout interviews. The Headteacher of Linden School recognised how his own values had fed into the vision of the School and the Headteacher of Allenswood School acknowledged that the leader does play a 'key role' in vision. This supports the literature where there is a heavy focus on the role of the leader; values are seen as fundamental to the role of a leader as they seek commitment from others to values which they personally see as important (Greenfield, 1986, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). The 'profound effect' of the Headteacher on the 'culture and ethos' was apparent in both schools through participants' responses (Smith, 1995: p.30).

The Headteacher of Allenswood School emphasised the need to establish success in other aspects of the School, such as attainment, before being able to focus efforts on the non-academic aspirations. The literature identifies a number of factors, alongside vision, that are key to creating a positive atmosphere, for example high quality teaching, indicating that vision and ethos alone are insufficient (Mortimore *et al.*, 1988, cited in Smith 1995). Once good levels of attainment had been achieved at Allenswood School, the Headteacher turned his focus to a values-led approach. This finding reinforces the distinction in the literature between the 'technical aspects' of leading a school, termed 'management', and 'leadership', which is associated with 'values and purpose' (Bush, 1998: p.328). A combination of the two is deemed by Bolman and Deal (1991, cited in Bush, 1998) as the ideal, a view which was echoed by the Headteacher of Allenswood School.

### ***5.2.3 Purpose and Positive Impact of Vision, Ethos and Values***

The literature clearly establishes that vision, ethos and values are important for schools (e.g. Deal and Peterson, 2016; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Holmes, 1993; Bush, 2011). Explorations of their impact, however, tend to provide vague conclusions, or look at the ‘big picture’ as opposed to specific outcomes. In line with Bush’s (2011) conclusion regarding studies exploring vision, the present study found that the perspectives of staff in both schools concerning approaches to vision were wholly positive. Any negative views, or suggestions that more could be done, were in relation to specific details regarding, for example, communication strategies or integration into teaching.

Given the multifaceted nature of schools as organisation and the number of factors at play, a comprehensive view of the purpose of vision, ethos and values requires a whole-school perspective to be sought (Smith, 1995; Playfoot *et al.*, 1989 cited in Smith, 1995). This was evident in interviews as participants covered many aspects of school life in each short discussion.

#### ***5.2.3.1 Uniting the School Community***

Providing staff and pupils with a shared goal, and uniting the school community as a whole, was a prevalent theme during interviews. This reaffirms the attention given in the literature to the impact of shared aspirations in a school; the role of shared goals in ‘setting direction’, as emphasised by Leithwood *et al.* (2006), was echoed by the Headteacher of Allenswood School who referred to this ‘direction’ as a fundamental role of vision.

A senior leader at Allenswood School highlighted the role of vision in helping school leaders ‘know where to go’ in guiding staff and pupils towards a shared end goal. Deal and Peterson (2016) liken vision to a ‘compass’ which guides members of a school towards their aspirations; this purpose was evident in the findings of this study.

The values of each school were also thought to play an important role; one teacher deemed the values key in creating a ‘collective staff unit’ and ‘collective student unit’ as they provided a ‘collective aim’ and ‘collective value’ around which everyone was united. This recognition that shared values united the school community confirms work by Greenfield (1986, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). Evident in both schools was the commitment to shared values and community feel that *The Elton Report* found to be vital for effective schools (1989).

A common phrase used by participants was that the vision meant that everyone in the school was ‘singing off the same hymn sheet’; this phrase concurs with the definition of organisational saga offered by Clark (1972: p.178), in which he highlights the ‘collective understanding’ among members of a community, something that attracts ‘loyalty’ and a sense of ‘pride and identity’. Similarly, vision was seen here to be an important factor in giving the school an ‘identity’, something which is emphasised by Clark (1972).

The emphasis each school placed on shared ideas, goals and values adds weight to the sense of togetherness and commitment that effective vision, ethos and values are seen to create, deemed important by Clark (1972; see also Smith, 1995; Torrington and Weightman, 1993). The sense of community and togetherness at Linden School was summarised using the word ‘family’ by one teacher, a metaphor frequently used in the language of vision (see Beare, Caldwell and

Milikan, 1993). A united school community, which is working in harmony towards shared goals, is vital for creating a school ethos conducive to achieving the school's aspirations.

The importance of having a sense of direction was highlighted by some participants, one of whom provoked thought about what their school would be like without it; Bell and Harrison (1995) note clear vision and a sense of direction as crucial for schools, particularly in times of change. The changing education climate, with increasing external pressures, means this direction is pivotal for schools; this point was reiterated by the Headteacher and a senior leader of Linden School who spoke about the political climate and changes to exams as a particular challenge. It was the case that vision and direction helped Linden School to overcome the challenges presented by the changing environment, as described by the Headteacher as a 'journey' that can be 'slowed down dramatically by external pressures', reaffirming Bell and Harrison's assertion (1995; see also Dalin, 1993).

#### *5.2.3.2 Fostering Positive Relationships and Ethos*

A theme which permeated discussions was the positive impact staff had observed upon relationships and interactions; this included relationships between staff, between pupils, between staff and pupils, and between the school and the external community. Though sometimes expressed explicitly as a direct outcome of the focus on vision and values, more often this theme emerged through descriptions of ethos, of culture, and of the ways in which pupils behaved and interacted with one another, and with staff.

The importance of interactions between members of a school community is implied by Smith (1995) in his acknowledgement that one can infer much about a school merely from the ways

in which its members interact with one another. To have a positive impact on such interactions can therefore contribute positively to the ethos of a school and the sense of community.

Findings showed that, in particular, the explicit focus on values introduced at Allenswood School, and the development of these values among pupils, had created a positive environment in which pupils supported each other and were noticeably more kind, respectful and determined; all qualities conducive to the School's overarching aspiration to develop its pupils beyond academic achievements. For Linden School, the focus on striving for excellence dominated discussions with staff who recognised that the aspiration of the School for academic excellence was reflected in pupils' commitment to learning and united pupils around a shared goal to do their best; this drive, and the development of the core values, was thought by staff to be evident in pupils' attitudes and behaviours. Both schools explicitly highlighted the value of competitive sport and extra-curricular activities in providing a space for pupils to develop positive relationships with one another and with staff, as well as an opportunity to hone in on the development of values in pupils; this emphasises the reinforcement of values through all aspects of school life, including the 'playing fields' and 'extra-curricular activities', identified by the Jubilee Centre as an essential part of developing and cultivating a values-led ethos (2017: p.9).

The impact of vision, ethos and values on relationships is an important consideration given that school ethos is identified by Hoyle (1986: p.3, quoted in Bell and Harrison, 1995: p.3) as being primarily shaped by the 'quality of relationships' between all members of a school community. Smith (1995) also asserts that effective implementation of vision and values in schools requires a person-focused approach that considers the needs and feelings of individuals and that focuses

on relationships, as opposed to results. The emphasis in interviews on positive relationships suggests that this person-focused approach was favoured by both schools.

It is interesting to observe that the literature suggests ethos derives from the quality of relationships, as seen in Donnelly's (2000) work, yet the findings of the present study implied that the ethos and vision established by each school had helped to foster those positive relationships, rather than having derived from them. The vision and ethos were perceived to have improved the quality of relationships through uniting pupils and staff around shared aspirations.

For Linden School, there was a greater focus on the fostering of positive relationships with members of the external environment, and in particular, with parents. The challenges of the local community understanding and buying into the School's vision was also highlighted. Dalin (1993) stresses the importance of a school's relationship with its external environment and the mutual benefits that can be gained from this, something which was clearly valued by Linden School.

Viewed in combination, these findings reflect the importance of the interactions between the key dimensions of a school set out by Dalin (1993: p.7) in which the 'values, norms and goals', 'human relations' and 'environment' all interact with and shape each other. Both schools demonstrated the connections between these dimensions, making reference to the quality of relationships when discussing the 'values, norms and goals', and linking these to interactions with the external community.

### *5.2.3.3 Shaping Decisions, Standards and Expectations*

The literature places little emphasis on the role of vision and values in decision-making in schools. Concurrent with this lack of emphasis, only one reference was made to the contribution of vision to decision-making during interviews and this came from a senior leader at Linden School. It may be argued that the vision will undoubtedly inform decisions on a daily basis, particularly those of the leadership team, but that this is not something the school is explicitly aware of. The vision and values may provide assumed underlying guiding principles, similar to the implicit nature of organisational norms which are often not recognised as they are inherent to daily practices (see Torrington and Weightman, 1993). It seems to follow, given the clarity of understanding and commitment demonstrated by the Headteachers and senior leaders in particular, that their decisions would be influenced by the vision and values they share.

Culture and ethos are associated within the literature with the establishment of standards, or norms, and this was evident within interviews, more so with Linden School staff (see Dalin, 1993; Donnelly, 2000). Participants' accounts of how the vision, ethos and values helped to establish and maintain standards and expectations were similar to that set out by Dalin (1993); a school will have particular ways of doing things that are accepted as the standards or norms for pupils and staff (see also Torrington and Weightman, 1993).

It is interesting to observe that participants at Linden School also pointed to the expectations that the vision and ethos had generated within pupils. The focus on academic excellence was thought to be echoed in pupils' expectations to be challenged academically, and the focus on high quality teaching had lead pupils to expect to be 'taught well'; the vision and ethos of the

School had set a precedent which pupils expected the School and its staff to live up to. Similarly, the staff had come to place those expectations upon themselves, creating a shared understanding and commitment to particular standards across the School community.

#### *5.2.3.4 Positive Impact on Pupils*

The impact of vision, ethos and values on pupils was less prevalent in the literature, with a heavy focus on the effectiveness of organisations as a whole. During interviews, the impact on pupils emerged in discussions about the language of the values, changes in behaviour, and the opportunities the values presented for staff to praise pupils for their non-academic achievements; the values, specifically, featured in these discussions rather than vision and ethos.

The role of the values in providing a language for both articulating and understanding each school's non-academic aspirations emerged as a key theme and is further explored in Section 5.3. In relation to the impact on pupils specifically, language was perceived to have enhanced pupils' understandings of the values and enabled them to develop in those values, as demonstrated through their attitudes and behaviours. Key to both schools' aspirations to develop the whole child, this language was essential for the development of knowledge and understanding of values; the acquirement of a 'complex language' and familiarity with value terms is fundamental to the cultivation of values in young people (Jubilee Centre, 2017: p.8). For both schools, understanding and subsequent development of the core values had been significantly enhanced through the language of values becoming embedded within school life.

Considering the link to praise, Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) allude to this when expressing how the language of vision can be embedded within school activities, through efforts to bring that language to the forefront of interactions with pupils and staff through praise and encouragement. Mortimore *et al.*'s (1988, cited in Smith 1995) characteristics of positive ethos include a focus on praise over criticism; however, no explicit connection is made to values. Though praise does have a place in the literature, the focus in the present findings of the values specifically creating opportunities for the staff to praise pupils for their non-academic achievements is not something that comes through clearly; this adds a new dimension to the positive impact values can have in schools, and on pupils in particular.

Both schools recognised the development of core values in pupils, at both an individual and a whole-school level. Individual recognition, for example, included acknowledging the use of a value in the corridor, and whole-school recognition involved celebratory initiatives such as 'Star of the Week', or recognition through newsletters and social media. A senior leader in Linden School explicitly stated that the values themselves were something 'to be celebrated', linking to Smith's (1995) emphasis on the importance of schools celebrating their positive ethos and successes.

#### **5.2.4 Summary**

The conclusions regarding the purpose and impact of vision, ethos and values were generally positive, with staff in both schools valuing the aspirational vision and the explicit promotion and recognition of shared values. The more tangible outcomes of this focus on vision and values were more prominent in discussions and this highlighted the implicit nature of some key

aspects of vision for schools, which can become so ingrained in the lives of staff that they are no longer conscious of them.

Though the role of the leader was evident in terms of establishing vision, both schools identified a lead member of staff responsible for the values initiative and this appeared to be well received among staff. The involvement of the wider school community in selecting core values had contributed to creating a greater sense of ownership among staff over the vision and values of the school.

The key positive outcomes of the focus on the vision and values included: uniting the school community, both staff and pupils, around shared values and accepted expectations of themselves and of each other; enabling positive relationships to foster between all members of the school community, both internally and externally; and, cultivating positive values in pupils with evident changes in behaviour, as well as enhanced understanding and use of values language. Importantly, the values were noted as contributing significantly to these positive outcomes and the outcomes were often seen as deriving from a positive ethos, as opposed to these outcomes being seen to *create* positive ethos (i.e. positive ethos helped foster relationships, rather than positive ethos being created by positive relationships).

### **5.3 Articulation and Communication of Vision, Ethos and Values**

#### ***5.3.1 Introduction***

Different aspects of articulation and communication of vision, ethos and values were explored through the three methods of data collection: how these were formally expressed was examined

through the documentary data analysis; the questionnaire explored the key methods the schools used to state their vision; and the interviews provided an opportunity to examine how participants themselves articulated the vision, as well as exploring the communicative tools used to promote key messages, internally and externally. The discussion that follows therefore draws on findings from all three methods in relation to the theme of articulation and communication.

It was of interest to ascertain the degree to which staff were aware of the vision and core values that their school promoted; the intention being to gain some idea of the effectiveness of methods used to articulate and communicate vision, ethos and values internally. Though questionnaire participants in both schools were, on the whole, able to successfully identify the core values of their school (see Charts 4.2 and 4.3), Linden School staff identified 11 additional values that were not promoted explicitly by the School. Similarly, Allenswood School staff identified 'resilience' as a recognised core value, which it is not.

As evident in the literature, the values that form part of the culture of a school are often assumed in the daily practices and not always made explicit (Trethowan, 1991, cited in Bell and Harrison, 1995). It may therefore be the case that the additional values identified by staff were values that they perceived as guiding decisions, behaviour and attitudes even though they were not included in the core values. This finding reiterates the idea that sometimes the values identified as 'core' by a school are quite vague and perhaps not as embedded within the school ethos as implied. The higher number of additional values picked out by Linden School staff may be seen to link to the way in which the core values, deriving from the Olympic values, were introduced, which was not through as rigorous or involved a process as that used in Allenswood School. The involvement of staff in selecting the core values, highlighted by

Wang, Gurr and Drysdale (2014) as best practice, may have led to greater awareness and understanding of those values among staff at Allenswood School.

The additional values were more frequently selected by teaching staff compared to senior leaders, and senior leaders demonstrated a better success rate in accurately selecting the core values of Linden School. The role of senior leaders in embodying the vision and values is identified in the literature as greater than that of teaching staff and some warn of potential divide between teaching staff and leadership teams; senior leaders may have therefore demonstrated greater awareness and confidence in correctly identifying the core values as they actively promoted these in their role (see Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993; West *et al.*, 2000).

### ***5.3.2 Expression and Articulation***

The interest in articulation for this study related both to the ways in which the two schools expressed their vision, ethos and values, and to the language they used in this; through what mechanisms did they express their aspirations for their pupils, staff and school as a whole, and what degree of consistency could be seen in the language used.

#### ***5.3.2.1 Approaches to Expression and Articulation***

For expressing vision to their stakeholders, the most common methods were the website and school displays. These two methods differ significantly, with the website easily accessible to externals, and school displays only being accessible to stakeholders on those occasions when they visit the school. Although the school prospectus, and written materials in general, are

seen as the dominant form of expression of vision and ethos in the literature (see Stott and Parr, 1991, cited in Smith, 1995), the prospectus was the 4<sup>th</sup> most frequently selected method for stakeholders after website, school displays and newsletters.

Assemblies were the most commonly utilised method for promoting vision and values to pupils, followed by school displays. Newsletters and, for Linden School, Form-Time and induction, were also frequently selected. Linden School staff spoke frequently during interviews about the transition of primary pupils into the School and induction programmes as key opportunities for establishing standards and expectations in line with the vision and values. Additionally, staff highlighted the use of Form-Time and the role of Form Tutors in providing space for pupils to reflect on their development of the values. Articulation methods frequently selected in the questionnaire were therefore concurrent with the methods highlighted by interview participants as ways in which the schools promoted their vision, ethos and values internally and externally; this suggests a good understanding among staff of the approaches to articulation, something which Dalin (1993) asserts is important.

Community initiatives featured as a common method for articulation in questionnaire responses by Linden School staff, and was a prominent theme throughout interviews. This is in line with the documented vision found on the School's website where community featured heavily. Although links with the community appeared in the written vision on Allenswood School's website, the presence of this theme within interviews was minimal and largely focused on the challenge it brought to the School. This finding reinforces to some degree the discrepancy that Donnelly (2000) found between the official documented ethos of a school, where Allenswood School highlighted 'working in partnership with parents' and developing 'positive links' with the 'wider community', and the reality of ethos as represented by the

attitudes and perspectives of staff, where links with the community presented a challenge and, as stated by the Headteacher, the School operated 'in a bubble'. This points to the work of Schein (1985) and Holmes (1993) who assert that formal statements often only partially present the vision of an organisation and that is usually only the part of the vision that they want the external world to see.

Seen within the literature as a fundamental method for expressing school vision, the Mission Statement for each school provided the most significant documented expression of school aspirations (see Bell and Harrison, 1995). A formal statement such as that found on each school's website is often the initial starting point for schools in establishing and promoting their ethos (Torrington and Weightman, 1993). Alongside the Mission Statement was the Principal's Welcome which also provided a substantive statement of vision; as noted by Owen and Valesky (2015), the leader of a school should be most concerned with its statement of vision so they can draw on this frequently; it follows then that one of the main expressions of vision ought to be attributed directly to the Headteacher.

#### *5.3.2.2 Language of Vision, Ethos and Values*

An examination of the language used across all documentary data for each school is presented in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. The use of language varied across the two schools with a greater frequency of the core values found in the documentary data from Linden School; this will have been increased through the use of the values as the strapline in Linden School's newsletter. It is important to note, however, that the core values of Allenswood School did not appear in the top 50 most frequent words across all of its documentation; this is interesting as, in comparison to Linden School, core values were discussed more prominently in interviews with Allenswood

School staff, were more visible throughout the school grounds, and staff indicated a better ability to successfully select the core values during the questionnaire. Further to this, the word ‘values’ was absent from the two main expressions of vision and ethos for both schools, the Mission Statement and Principal’s Welcome, which is somewhat surprising given the emphasis placed on vision by the Headteacher and senior leaders at interview. A leader’s portrayal of vision is seen to be the most significant within the literature, and so for the Principal’s Welcome to be lacking a fundamental aspect of that vision is a significant omission (Owens and Valesky, 2015).

The official documents of both schools did not appear, therefore, to reflect the focus on the values and the values were not embedded within formal expressions of the wider aspirations for pupils. This finding is in line with Donnelly’s work in which she found that the aspirational ethos of schools, defined as that which is articulated through formal documents, is often the most artificial representation of reality within the school and can be far departed from what actually goes on (2000). This discrepancy also reflects the view of Holmes (1993) on the authenticity of formal school documents.

Further to this, the absence of the language of values within the documentation of both schools, particularly that the term ‘values’ did not appear in the Mission Statement or Principal’s Welcome, is incongruent with the substantial space dedicated on each school’s website to introducing the purpose, role of, and ways in which the values were embedded. The language of the values was emphasised in discussions with staff in both schools, yet this language did not appear to be utilised to its full advantage within the schools’ official documents.

On closer inspection of the language used by Allenswood School, it can be seen that there was not much within the language that was unique to Allenswood School, over any other primary school. The School's focus on providing its pupils with opportunities that were not likely to be available to them outside of school was not prevalent across the documents with the word 'opportunities' appearing only four times throughout. In contrast, the importance that Linden School placed on the local community was reflected in the frequency of the name of the local area, 'Solihull', and the word 'community' appearing 24 and 19 times across documents, respectively.

Though the language used in Allenswood School's formal documents did not appear to be particularly unique, the aspirations of both schools, as expressed by Headteachers and staff, could be considered to be distinctive. Allenswood School emphasised the importance of opportunity for pupils given the lack of prospects in the local area, and Linden School emphasised its role within, and contribution to, the local community. In contrast to the literature, this difference between the two schools' aims, and the difference between the local areas they were situated within, indicates a level of individuality in their visions (see Bolam *et al.*, 1993, cited in Bush, 2011). Further, and also in contrast to the literature, both Headteachers displayed confidence in articulating the vision; their ability to speak about the vision could be described as well-refined (*ibid.*)

Considering further the potential for documented ethos to be inauthentic, an examination of the congruency of language across different documents produced by each school revealed that, for Allenswood School, the core value of 'respect' was emphasised in one document and not present in another, and similarly, the role of staff in realising the vision of Allenswood School was not given consistent attention across documents. It is important to note, however, that

there was a degree of overlap in the terms used in the Mission Statement and Principal's Welcome for each school. These documents did include duplication of language pertinent to vision and ethos, yet overlapping terms were much more closely aligned with the vision articulated by staff in Linden School, for example, the use of the terms 'achieve' and 'community', than for Allenswood School.

A school prospectus is identified in the literature as fundamental in providing a formal, written statement of vision, ethos and values to promote externally; the prospectus is likened to a marketing tool by Smith (1995) and said to leave readers with an impression of the school (Stott and Parr, 1991, cited in Smith, 1995). An examination of prospectuses of each school in the present study, however, found little congruence between the vision, ethos and values of the school as documented elsewhere, or described by staff, and the content of the prospectus. Perhaps most significantly, neither prospectus included any mention of the word 'values' and out of the seven core Linden School values, and the six Allenswood School values, only two of the Linden School values appeared in its prospectus. This brings the idea of a school prospectus, or other formal representations of vision, more in line with the perspectives of Schein (1985) and Holmes (1993) that these should be given the least prominence. It may be that the prospectus is more focused on the education provision of the school, which appeared to be the case in this instance and is an element associated with prospectuses by Stott and Parr (1991, cited in Smith, 1995).

The analysis of language used to articulate vision and ethos during interviews was on the whole more positive and more congruent between participants than the documentary data already discussed. Interview participants demonstrated a shared vision in that the language they used, and the emphasis they placed on certain aspects of the school's aspirations, were consistent.

The word clouds presented in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show that Linden School staff used language that focused on pupils achieving their ‘best’, strengthening links with the ‘community’, providing high quality ‘education’ and ‘teaching’ so that pupils could achieve ‘academically and strive for ‘excellence’. Allenswood School staff articulated the vision as focusing on the core ‘values’, developing ‘rounded’ individuals, providing ‘opportunities’ and pushing pupils to ‘achieve’ in their ‘academic’ studies. Considering this language in contrast to that of the Mission Statement for each school (see Table 4.1) the language used by Linden School staff was much more congruent with its Mission Statement, than that of Allenswood School. Linden School’s Mission Statement emphasised pupils achieving their ‘very best’, being a ‘centre of excellence’ and being ‘rooted in the local community’.

There was a stronger focus during interviews on the values and non-academic aspirations for pupils. Importantly, for Linden School, the community emerged as a strong theme within the interview data. To illustrate this, the interview with the Headteacher of Linden School, to whom staff appeared to largely attribute the community vision to, contained 25 references which were coded under the theme ‘community’. This emphasis by the Headteacher, and consistency of the theme of community throughout data provided by Linden School, adds weight to the notion that the leader of a school ought to articulate the vision in such a way that the staff buy-in to that vision, commit to it, and implement it through their daily practice (Starratt, 1986, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

#### *5.3.2.4 Values as a Mechanism for the Articulation of Vision*

Both schools emphasised the purpose of values as being to help the school achieve its non-academic aspirations; for example, to ‘nurture’ pupils, to prepare them so they can ‘flourish in

tomorrow's society', and to 'develop well-rounded individuals' (see Table 4.2). The purpose of the values set out on the school website was congruent with the purpose staff associated with the values during interviews; they were seen to help staff to articulate and realise the non-academic aspirations of the school for their pupils.

Holmes (1993) recognises the importance of values underpinning vision in schools and this view was supported during interviews. The theme of 'values' generated 99 references in total; 41 of which were from discussions with Linden School staff and 48 from Allenswood School. The importance that Holmes acknowledges was emphasised more by staff at Allenswood School who spoke about the values being the vision in and of themselves, and shaping the vision. The emphasis on values during interviews was reinforced by the strong prominence they were given within the school grounds and physical displays (see Figure 4.4).

This consensus across the two schools regarding the role of values reflects the work of Gibson (2015) who found that values were important enablers in school vision. The values provided a language through which staff could articulate the non-academic aims for pupils and provided clear messages through which these aspirations could be promoted. In the present study this finding associates values specifically with the operationalisation of the *non-academic* aspirations of the schools. This is further supported by the role values were found to have in enabling the school to recognise pupils for their non-academic achievements as discussed in Section 5.2.3.4.

### *5.3.3 Communication*

Following the exploration of how each school expressed its vision, ethos and values, the effective communication of these expressions to members of the school community - internally to staff and pupils, and externally to parents and the community - was considered. Both schools highlighted a wide range of communicative tools at their disposal that they each utilised for different audiences, occasions and messages; as Smith (1995) stresses, there is benefit to schools making use of a wide range of communication methods to promote their success and celebrate their positive ethos. The methods of communicating the vision, ethos and values were predominantly explored through interviews with staff but are also discussed here in light of some findings from the documentary data analysis and questionnaire.

#### *5.3.3.1 Communication with Staff and Pupils*

The most frequently discussed methods for communicating vision, ethos and values across both schools were interactions with pupils, and assemblies. The emphasis given to interactions with pupils reinforces the assertion by Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) that vision should permeate all teacher-pupil interactions and dialogues. Staff across both schools utilised their interactions with pupils, through both formal dialogue and passing comments in the corridor, to reiterate the importance of the core values. The frequent reference to assemblies reiterates the questionnaire findings which highlighted assemblies as the most common method for articulating vision, ethos and values to pupils.

Interestingly, when asked more generally about communicating vision, many participants spoke specifically about communicating the core values, rather than the wider vision or ethos.

This may be linked to the operational significance of the language of the values which was prominent throughout; values provided a language through which the aspirations of the school could be promoted and communicated. The effectiveness of the communication of values by each school can be seen in the overall successful identification of the core values by staff within the questionnaire results (see Charts 4.2 and 4.3).

In the literature, the significance of effective communication in schools is highlighted, and specifically the need for information to reach staff at all levels. In the questionnaire findings for Linden School there appeared to be a gap in terms of knowledge of the core values between senior leaders and teaching staff, with senior leaders demonstrating a greater ability to successfully pick out the values from ones provided. This might suggest that the school does not regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its promotion of values to ensure they are reaching all individuals, something which Smith (1995) deems best practice. When asked about evaluation more generally in regards to the approach to vision, ethos and values, the consensus across both schools was that more could be done in this area to determine the effectiveness of the values initiatives. As the communication of vision is closely linked to gaining wider support and commitment, this is a vital consideration for Headteachers (see Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

On the contrary, the understanding demonstrated by staff in both schools of how the values were communicated, particularly internally, indicated good awareness of not only the methods used, but their own role in promoting the values. This was particularly evident in discussions about staff interacting with pupils, praising them for displaying the values, providing academic feedback framed around the values, and addressing behavioural issues with reference to the values. An awareness of the importance of facilitating good communication among staff can

be difficult to achieve, especially across a whole school, so this finding indicates a strength of both schools (see Bell, 1989 and Beare *et al.*, 1989, cited in Smith, 1995).

The discussions concerning communication of values at Linden School were closely aligned with the methods set out on its website for integrating the values into the daily lives of pupils, for example, through the 'Learning for Life' and 'Tutorial Worship' programmes, and Form-Time activities. This indicates congruency between what Linden School stated in its official documentation, and what staff experienced daily. Allenswood School's website noted that values were integrated through assemblies, but also highlighted teaching and the curriculum, which were not strong themes within interviews. Messages around the place of values in teaching were mixed in both schools and this is explored further in Section 5.4. A focus for Allenswood School was the visual aids used to communicate its vision and values and this was congruent with the experience of the researcher when visiting the School.

Reflecting further on the congruency between the official documentation examined for each school and the experience of the researcher during visits, combined with perspectives offered by staff on the day-to-day reality, the three dimensions of ethos distinguished by Donnelly are useful. Donnelly (2000) sees that schools have: an official ethos which is expressed through formal documents and provides a relatively artificial account of reality; an ethos which is evident through the school's physical environment, operations and the behaviour of its members; and, an ethos which is found in the attitudes and beliefs of individual members of a school community and is the most genuine representation of what actually goes on from day-to-day (see also Holmes, 1993).

In line with Donnelly's distinction, the two case study schools demonstrated different dimensions to their ethos and this is apparent in the consistencies, and discrepancies, between the content of their official documents, questionnaire responses and interviews; some elements were congruent, for example Linden School's methods for communicating values were congruent with those outlined on its website, and some elements were far removed, such as the absence of values in documentation for both schools. The visual aids used across Allenswood School fall under the second dimension of ethos termed 'ethos of outward attachment' by Donnelly (2000) and therefore represent the middle of the spectrum in terms of authenticity; the visual aids were evidently used and recognised by staff, but were perhaps not the most genuine representation of the lived reality within the school.

#### *5.3.3.2 Communication with Parents and the Community*

The perspectives of staff regarding external communication of vision and values, obtained through interviews and concerning parents and the community as key stakeholders, were considerably more positive in Linden School, than in Allenswood School. This links to the centrality of community in the vision of Linden School and more specifically, the Headteacher's passion for this.

In terms of methods for communicating externally, Linden School staff emphasised the newsletter and website; the newsletter was seen as more community-focused and the website a useful tool for parents. This concurs with questionnaire results for the most common methods of expressing vision to stakeholders in which 'website' and 'newsletters' were in the top three most frequently selected. The school prospectus was not mentioned by any interview

participants in either school despite the significance it affords within the literature, and it being selected as the 4<sup>th</sup> most common method for stating vision to stakeholders (see Smith, 1995).

The negativity concerning communication with parents and the community in Allenswood School interviews may be explained through reference to the work of Dalin (1993). Staff in the School, and the Headteacher in particular, highlighted the challenges that the School faced, despite the community forming part of its aspirational vision, in establishing and maintaining a positive relationship with the local community. During interviews, eight references were coded under the theme of ‘negative view of external communications’, compared to just one for Linden School. Dalin (1993) asserts that schools where the external environment is challenging will tend to close themselves off from the local community in order to protect themselves against it; this prevents the school from benefitting from a positive relationship with the surrounding area. Further, Dalin recognises this challenge is likely to be greater for schools that are situated within lower socio-economic communities, such as that which Allenswood experienced, and therefore fruitful relationships with parents and the community are unlikely (*ibid.*). This issue was emphasised by the Headteacher of Allenswood School in stating that the School operates ‘in a bubble’, closed off from the community, and this theme was evident during interviews with staff.

Though communication with its local community featured as part of interviews with Linden School staff, much of this centred around communication with parents specifically, rather than with community members. One participant referred to the ‘community spirit’ which the School promoted as part of its documented ethos, and suggested that rather than explicitly communicating its values and expectations to the community, these were communicated ‘subliminally’. This points to the work of Smith (1995) who states that communication can

happen much more implicitly in a school where observers, in this case members of the community, make subjective interpretations about the way things are.

Both schools emphasised face-to-face communication with parents through parents' evenings, induction, assemblies, drop-in days and visual displays; much of this focused around the praise and feedback which was highlighted as a key element of values promotion. For Allenswood School, the methods highlighted demonstrate agreement with the School's introduction to values on its website where it mentioned 'Values Postcards' and celebration of the values; staff in interviews felt these were key to communication with parents.

The challenges and negative perspectives regarding external communication of vision, ethos and values suggest that both schools would have benefitted from some deeper, or more regular, reflection and evaluation about their efforts in this area. It is common for schools and school leaders to assume the effectiveness of communication strategies and tools, but proper evaluation can reveal the message is not reaching those intended, or is not interpreted as intended (Smith, 1995).

#### ***5.3.4 Summary***

The discussion above, concerning the articulation and communication of vision, ethos and values, illuminates the range of methods utilised by both schools to effectively promote aspirations, goals and shared values. Methods varied slightly between the two schools and were tailored to the stakeholder being considered, whether efforts needed to reach pupils, staff, parents or the community. Staff demonstrated a good awareness both of the key values of their school and of their own role in communicating these to pupils.

Some ways of expressing or promoting vision were more prominent than others; of particular interest, was the lack of emphasis on the school prospectus as a key tool to market the aims or ethos of the school. In terms of providing a consistent and authentic representation of the school, the formal, written expressions tended to be far removed from the genuine culture of the school as articulated by staff, with obvious omission of the values that featured so heavily in interviews and in the school grounds themselves. The examination of different representations of ethos revealed the different levels of authenticity that can exist.

The values were emphasised by staff in both schools as providing a mechanism through which staff and pupils could articulate the focus on, and achievements in, non-academic aspirations across the school. The values provided a language through which staff could illuminate the importance of non-academic achievements and praise pupils for developing the values.

## **5.4 Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values**

### ***5.4.1 Introduction***

The final point for discussion on the consideration of vision, ethos and values regards the realisation of them as part of school life. Staff in both schools demonstrated a sound understanding of how the vision was embedded within ordinary practices and emphasised that this needed to be an ongoing, collective effort.

There was strong agreement among questionnaire participants at both schools that the vision and ethos could be seen within day-to-day operations (see Charts 4.4 and 4.5); further, the

majority agreed, in line with one of the key purposes of vision discussed earlier, that the vision was reflected in the expectations of pupils regarding attendance, behaviour, and attainment. Staff perspectives on efforts to integrate vision, ethos and values into the everyday activities of pupils and staff were on the whole positive.

Aspects of vision already discussed were emphasised in discussions regarding how the schools realised their vision; the language of the values and the communication of those values both formed key approaches through which staff felt the vision was embedded in ordinary activities. This highlights the relationship between the communication of vision and its realisation through daily reinforcement. As with the articulation of vision, the values specifically were the focus of discussions concerning the daily integration of vision and were emphasised as key enablers (see Trethowan, 1991, cited in Bell and Harrison, 1995; Burns, 1978, cited in Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993).

The importance of language, evident throughout the study, reinforces Beare, Caldwell and Milikan's (1993) position that sees the language of values as fundamental in enabling the vision to be realised. As discussed in relation to the purpose of vision, ethos and values, both schools had observed fruitful relationships among members of the school community and it was through these relationships and daily interactions that staff felt the vision and values were integrated into school life; in line with this, the literature suggests the vision should permeate all exchanges between teachers and students (*ibid.*)

The number of challenges noted by participants at Linden School regarding the realisation of vision, and comments by the Headteacher at Allenswood School, reaffirm the emphasis in the literature on how ambitious the task of successfully embedding vision and values within a

school can be (see Donnelly, 2000; Smith, 1995; Fullan, 1992, cited in Bush, 2011). Despite this challenge, both schools adopted a number of dedicated approaches to ensuring their vision went beyond merely an expression of their goals.

#### ***5.4.2 Important Mechanisms in the Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values***

There were a number of key approaches to integrating vision, ethos and values within each school, all of which featured some reference to the contribution of the values. The discussion that follows considers these approaches under the broad umbrellas of the role of the leader in this, the role of the teacher, and the physical environment of the school.

##### ***5.4.2.1 Role of the Leader***

As evident throughout the literature and in the data collected during this study, the role of the leader emerged as central to the day-to-day realisation of vision. It was recognised by staff that the integration of vision was more often than not driven by the Headteacher and was described as being ‘instilled down’ through the hierarchy of staff. The Headteacher of Allenswood School, in particular, emphasised the perseverance and persistence he had displayed in achieving the aspirations he had set out for the School when he was appointed.

The literature focuses heavily on the role of the leader, and the findings presented in Chapter 4, combined with the discussion so far, illuminate the leader as pivotal in many aspects of vision, ethos and values; this is relevant from the outset when they are established, through to how they are expressed and articulated, communicated and promoted, and finally achieved as far as possible for the school, its staff, and its pupils. Interview participants spoke positively

about the Headteacher being the driving force behind the vision, and some attributed the vision, directly to the Headteacher, particularly in the case of community vision for Linden School. This finding is in line with Bell and Harrison's (1995) view that vision is central to a leader's role, the conclusions of *The Elton Report* (1989) which state that leaders' beliefs and approaches are highly influential on school ethos, and the *Ten Good Schools Report* (1977) which recognises the role of the Headteacher's vision in effective schools (see also Smith, 1995; Bush and Glover, 2003).

Headteachers made clear during interviews that the positive impact of vision, ethos and values on the staff and pupils in their care, were the motivation for their continued efforts to instil the values, create a safe and happy environment, and support staff to reach the expectations of the school. A transformational approach to leadership could therefore be seen in both schools, where the Headteacher prioritised people over the operational processes and results; a transformational leader is primarily concerned with how people feel and how they experience the culture of the school on a day-to-day basis, something which both Headteachers focused on during discussions (West *et al.*, 2000). This approach is said to lend itself to the successful fulfilment of an established vision and ethos and so supports the notion, as evident in interviews, that the Headteacher is a key factor in the positive atmosphere which was evident within both schools.

Without prompt from the interviewer, both Headteachers demonstrated an awareness of the challenges facing today's society, the political climate, the changing demands on schools, limited resources, and the pressure on teachers to meet attainment targets. The Headteacher of Linden School emphasised political uncertainties and changes to education policy as a key challenge which slowed down efforts to realise the vision. The Headteacher of Allenswood

School recognised that building achievable milestones into the introduction of the core values had helped to mitigate some of the challenges that the School may have faced in implementing a new initiative with staff who were already extremely busy. This ability for Headteachers to reflect on and respond positively to changing demands, and to view their vision within the boundaries of realism is highlighted within the *Ten Good Schools Report* (1977; see also Bottery, 2007, cited in Bush, 2011; Owens and Valesky, 2015).

Both Headteachers demonstrated a clear passion for their own personal school vision, which was tempered by their understanding and awareness of the environment around them. This passion was echoed by staff, particularly senior leaders, as well as questionnaire participants; the Headteachers' personal dedication to the aspirations of the schools inspired shared commitment among staff (see Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993; Clark, 1972). The vision was often attributed to the Headteacher though more often viewed as a vision shared by the whole-school community, motivated and reinforced by the Headteachers' constant promotion, commitment and encouragement. The practices put in place by the Headteachers to embed the vision into the daily running of the schools ranged from policies, approaches to behaviour, structures (e.g. the role of the values-lead), celebration initiatives focused around the values, staff training, and visual aids which acted as reference points for staff and pupils. Such approaches reaffirm those offered by Beare, Caldwell and Milikan (1993) for the daily integration of vision.

#### *5.4.2.2 Role of the Teacher*

In contrast to parts of the literature, the role that senior leaders and teachers played in ensuring the vision, ethos and values were effectively embedded within the schools was a prominent

theme in this study and brought to light a number of ways in which they reinforced the vision and values. Referring to the questionnaire responses, the majority of participants, consisting of teaching and senior leadership staff, agreed or strongly agreed that they tried to incorporate the school's key values into their professional role, with just one participant disagreeing; this adds weight to the emphasis on the role of the teacher which emerged within interviews.

Though a number of methods for explicitly emphasising the vision and values through ordinary practice were discussed by senior leaders and teachers, the implicit nature of some values-led activities was also highlighted; staff recognised that, following a conscious effort to integrate the core values into their interactions with pupils and into their teaching when the initiatives were first introduced, this approach had become second nature to them. In other words, a planned and explicit approach to integrating values into their roles as teachers or senior leaders had, over time, become an inherent part of their daily practice. This finding speaks to the work of Torrington and Weightman (1993) who see culture, or ethos, as constituting assumed ways of working that are often unsaid, especially when established over a long period of time. Such literature focuses on the historical traditions a school develops over time, whereas the implicit practice described by interview participants implied a shift in new practices, i.e. the conscious efforts to embed values into their role developed into those assumed, unspoken ways of working.

Teachers in Allenswood School emphasised their contribution as role-models in facilitating the realisation of the School's vision; role-modelling was discussed, without prompt, by three teachers who saw this as an essential part of their responsibility to instil values in their pupils. Closely linked to the ways in which teachers integrated the values into their interactions with pupils, particularly through their use of language, role-modelling was seen to encompass more

than this for teachers, including: the way they spoke to pupils, their interactions with colleagues, their own behaviour and display of the values, their general manner and conduct, and their openness in terms of sharing with pupils their own challenges and personal values. Though role-modelling did not form an area of consideration during the literature review pertaining specifically to vision, ethos and values, its place within teaching is widely recognised within education and pedagogical literature, particularly in relation to the moral development of pupils (see Revell and Arthur, 2007; Sanderse, 2012; Willemse, Lunenberg and Korthagen, 2008; Kristjánsson, 2007). The role-modelling approach referred to by teachers at Allenswood School is seen as an inherent part of being a teacher; the teacher is ‘an inevitable role-model *qua* teacher’ (Kristjánsson, 2007: p.38).

As discussed in Section 5.4.2.1 above, the role of the Headteacher is seen as fundamental to the effective realisation of vision, ethos and values, yet this study showed the significant contribution that other staff can make. The values-lead in each school, as well as playing a key role in establishing the values initiative, was central to the continued efforts to promote the values and to embed them within ordinary practices. In addition, a gap was evident, in the questionnaire and interview data, between the senior leaders and teaching staff in terms of their awareness and understanding of the vision and values of the school and how they viewed their own role in facilitating them. Greater negativity or uncertainty was experienced in discussions with teaching staff in both schools than with senior leaders, and one senior leader brought into question the awareness among the wider teaching community of the ways in which the values permeated school life.

The contribution of the values-lead and the senior leaders is important when one considers a scenario in which solely the Headteacher strives for a vision and promotes belief in core values;

genuine, whole-school embodiment of a vision and shared values requires a collective approach and for the role of driving this to fall to key figures other than the Headteacher (Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). The practices recognised as those which a school leader ought to establish to embed culture will lack meaning and impact unless supported by staff at all levels and exhibited through daily approaches beyond those of the Headteacher.

#### *5.4.2.3 Role of Visual Aids*

Reaffirming the recognition within the literature that the physical environment of a school can influence its ethos, the findings showed that the visibility of the values to pupils, staff, and visitors was an important mechanism through which both schools promoted their values (see Schein, 1985; Torrington and Weightman, 1993; Donnelly, 2000). The physical displays of the core values throughout the school grounds were thought to provide a critical point of reference to aid constant reiteration by staff, and reinforce the values to pupils, whilst also placing those values at the heart of the school community (see Figure 4.4 for examples of the physical displays used by both schools).

It is important to note here the different dimensions of ethos (see Donnelly, 2000) and to recognise that the physical displays can only act as a point of reference; they provide a consistent reminder of the core values enabling staff and pupils to more easily refer to these in their interactions, decision-making and behaviour during the school day. As a mechanism, they appeared to have had a considerable impact in Allenswood School, (less so in Linden School as there were fewer displays and they were generally given less prominence), in raising the profile of the core values and helping the language of values to thrive. In the literature, though the physical environment is discussed, this often refers to the layout, buildings, facilities

and general quality of the physical environment of a school which can impact positively or negatively on ethos.

Though the physical prominence of the core values did appear to add weight to their reiteration in daily school life, the impact of physical displays would be considerably weaker if not combined with other efforts by the leader, staff and pupils; to illustrate, if one walks past a poster every morning, the content of the poster becomes less noticeable. The use of the language of the values, special initiatives for recognition of the values, integration of values into teaching, classroom projects based around the values, extra-curricular activities, and approaches to behaviour all ensured that the physical displays retained their meaning within the school community.

#### ***5.4.3 Barriers and Enablers in the Realisation of Vision, Ethos and Values***

A number of barriers to realisation emerged through discussions with interview participants, or were raised explicitly as areas where Headteachers, senior leaders and teachers all experienced difficulties in embedding vision and values into their professional role, through the school culture, teaching or wider initiatives.

Staff with seemingly greater responsibility for integrating vision and values in their role, namely Headteachers, senior leaders and values-leads, identified that there had been some resistance when seeking buy-in from staff across the board. Throughout the literature it is commonplace to see support and commitment from the whole-school community as crucial to effectively realising vision and values; though the leader is seen to be fundamental in this, collaboration and collegiality across the school is important (see Clark, 1972; Torrington and

Weightman, 1993; Smith, 1995; Bell, 1989, cited in Smith, 1995; *The Elton Report*, 1989; Wang, Gurr and Drysdale, 2014; Bush, 2011; Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). Given the pressures and time constraints experienced by schools (see Owens and Valesky, 2015), it follows that leaders will face some resistance when attempting to implement new initiatives, or to shift focus towards a values-led approach and positive ethos.

In terms of overcoming the challenge of buy-in, Linden School had been able to mitigate the extent to which this presented difficulties through emphasising the role of the Form-Tutor. The leadership team had recognised that as teachers of their subject, staff were under greater pressure, and that where they were responsible for a Form they had more flexibility, time and opportunity to focus on the non-academic development of their pupils. For Allenswood School, buy-in from teachers had presented a lesser challenge, though some older members of staff were thought to have been reluctant to accept change and workload pressures of senior leaders had created some difficulties when first introducing the values initiative. To mitigate this challenge, the Headteacher and values-lead pointed to perseverance and persistence as key in implementing something new and suggested that as soon as the impact of the new ideas could be seen, buy-in became less of an issue.

It is important to note that the challenges relating to buy-in from staff were not linked to disagreement with the core values promoted by the schools, or with a lack of commitment to the vision of the school; rather, the difficulties tended to relate to the pressures placed on teachers, meaning that when asked to stretch their efforts further and focus on incorporating values into their teaching their response was not always wholly positive. The conflict in values highlighted in the literature, in terms of individuals believing in different values to those recognised by the school, was not experienced in either school (see Beare, Caldwell and

Milikan, 1993; Smith, 1995; Dalin, 1993; Hoyle, 1986, cited in Bell and Harrison, 1995). This was perhaps down to the fact that the core values had been identified in recent years and had been selected in close collaboration with staff, particularly at Allenswood School where buy-in from staff was less evident as a challenge; the Headteacher of Linden School, for example, went so far as to say that nobody had ever disagreed with the core values.

In addition to some resistance from staff, Linden School staff spoke about resistance from pupils presenting a challenge; this was in the context of expecting pupils to focus on their development in values when they were aware they would not receive academic credit for this or be assessed. As with teachers, pressures on pupils to achieve academically were added to by non-academic expectations. Though identified as a challenge, this was not significant, and it may be that the praise and recognition emphasised by the School went some way to reducing resistance from pupils; regular praise gives weight to the importance of values development and would have helped pupils to recognise that they do receive some form of credit, though not official, for their personal development.

Another challenge relating to pupils, evident in Allenswood School, was the gap between pupils knowing the language of the core values, and actually understanding what it means, for example, to persevere. The importance of pupils seeing the values in action in order to begin to bridge this gap was highlighted; this focus on pupils being able to learn what the values mean, and ‘identify appropriate practices in which to apply them in their lives’ is seen as key to a school’s implementation of a values-led ethos (Jubilee Centre, 2017: p.4). The School’s focus on role-modelling is important here as this modelling of the values ought to provide a starting point for enhancing understanding among pupils of what the values look like and how they might apply to different contexts.

A similar gap was identified by the values-lead at Allenswood School but in relation to staff; though regular briefings and emphasis on the importance of the values initiative were implemented, ensuring that staff followed this through and incorporated this into their practice was difficult. This points to the role of training in effectively disseminating the purpose of such initiatives and equipping staff with the knowledge, understanding and tools required to change their practice. Though the integration of values-led approaches into training opportunities is recognised as contributing to effectively embedding values, it is also acknowledged that this integration is often missing, or when it is present, it is largely implicit only (see Jubilee Centre, 2017; Arthur *et al.*, 2015; Stiff-Williams, 2010; Sanderse, 2012). Although not explored fully within the boundaries of this thesis, when asked about approaches to training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities related specifically to values, the general consensus in both schools was that this was considerably lacking and that more training of this kind would be useful.

A greater challenge relating to teachers, evident in both schools, was the lack of consistency in the incorporation of the values into teaching; though questionnaire participants indicated overall agreement that they incorporated the core values into their roles (see Table 4.4), when the explicit place of values within teaching was explored further during interviews, the responses were mixed. Further, when asked in the questionnaire whether they felt the language of the values was present in the classrooms, participants indicated higher levels of disagreement or uncertainty compared to any other statement regarding the integration of vision (see Chart 4.4 and 4.5). In interviews, some teachers felt that they were not expected to incorporate the values into their teaching whilst others acknowledged that, though this was an expectation, they did not feel it was always achievable within their subject. In contrast, some spoke

positively about identifying areas of the curriculum, specifically within their subject, where the values could be easily incorporated.

The integration of core values into ‘all teaching and learning’ is a key responsibility of schools (Jubilee Centre, 2017: p.4) and so a lack of consistency to this ought to be given due attention. This highlights the need for regular and effective training in ensuring teachers are aware of the importance of, and expectation to use, the values in their teaching, and importantly, feel equipped to do so; this is something that, given the prominence within the literature of teachers’ contributions to integrating vision and ethos, would benefit both schools (see Clark, 1972; Torrington and Weightman, 1993; Smith, 1995; Bell, 1989, cited in Smith, 1995; *The Elton Report*, 1989; Wang, Gurr and Drysdale, 2014; Bush, 2011; Beare, Caldwell and Milikan, 1993). Interview participants demonstrated a general feeling that more could be done to evaluate approaches to, and outcomes of, the core values initiatives; an evaluation of how the values fed into teaching would shed further light on the extent to which the barriers impacted on the realisation of vision, ethos and values.

It is important to return, in light of this focus on barriers faced by schools, to the prominent theme of the values acting as enablers in the implementation and realisation of vision; this reaffirms the role of the values identified in Clark’s definition of organisational saga in which he states the purpose of an organisation will be ‘embodied in...the values’ of its people (1972: p.178). As well as providing an essential language through which staff in the two schools could articulate the non-academic aspirations for pupils, the values enabled the schools to promote their vision, to recognise non-academic achievements among pupils, give prominence to the vision through visual aids, and apply a values-led approach to behaviour. The significance placed on the values as enablers in realising vision is agreeable with the literature (see Deal

and Kennedy, 1983, cited in Smith, 1995; Gibson, 2015); however, the strong relationship between the values and the realisation of non-academic aspirations was an explicit focus in the findings of this study.

#### ***5.4.4 Summary***

Key to the discussion concerning the realisation of vision, ethos and values is the general feeling demonstrated among staff at both schools that intentional and planned approaches to embedding the vision and values within daily life at the school were, on the whole, successful. Despite the numerous challenges, some fairly significant, identified by staff as slowing down efforts or preventing effective realisation, the combined dedicated approaches of leaders, senior leaders and teaching staff helped make this achievable. Emphasising further the role of the values and the language of values, these both featured prominently as significantly aiding the full embodiment of the vision throughout the schools.

The leader, and the staff, of the schools were identified as the key contributors to making the vision achievable and a part of everyday practice. Though the passion and drive of the leader was seen as pivotal in this, it was recognised that this alone would be insufficient and a collaborative approach was needed. The leader played a key role in motivating and inspiring the staff; the staff, on the other hand, were in a position to exert the greatest influence on pupils through their daily interactions, role-modelling and praise. The physical representations of the values utilised in both schools were seen to provide a useful point of reference and reminder to assist in embedding the values into ordinary activities.

The barriers which were seen to impact on the efforts to embed the vision and values included resistance from both staff and pupils, with staff already under pressure to meet expectations and sometimes reluctant to accept change, and pupils less committed to an area of their development that did not result in a grade. More intricate challenges lay in inconsistent approaches to incorporating the values into teaching, and a gap between staff having the knowledge of the values and understanding the expectation to embed these within their classrooms, and this being woven in to regular practice. Though the language of the values was emphasised in many ways as being an enabler in the implementation of vision, bridging the gap between pupils' understanding of the value terms and knowing how to develop those values in themselves was recognised as a challenge.

The discussion presented within this chapter sheds light on the key considerations that enhance understanding of vision, ethos and values in schools and the summary of each sub-section is intended to bring together the key points that inform the conclusions made in the chapter that follows. The understandings discussed above contribute to the aim of the research in seeking to establish why vision, ethos and values are important, how they are articulated and communicated, and what barriers schools face in their efforts to realise them within their day-to-day activities. The concluding chapter that follows brings together the main findings under the research questions set out at the beginning of the thesis.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, the key themes from the interpretation and discussion of findings presented in Chapter 5 are brought together, with an explicit focus on how they contribute to the three research questions that the study sought to answer. Concluding remarks then offer some thoughts on the significance of the study, the questions it raises and the limitations it is subject to.

### 6.1 Why are Vision, Ethos and Values Important in Schools?

This study established that the view among scholars and educationalists, that vision, ethos and values are fundamental in schools, is a view shared by the leaders and staff of the two case study schools examined. This was illustrated by the shared consensus among staff of a preference for working in a school with a clear vision, a positive ethos and explicit commitment to core values, particularly having seen first-hand the impact of this within their current school.

Regarding the purpose of vision, ethos and values and why these are important for schools, the two key outcomes emphasised by participants were the power of vision to unite the school community towards shared goals and shared values, and to help foster positive relationships and interactions among members of the school, including between pupils, between teachers, and between pupils and teachers. The vision gave staff a shared purpose, motivated and inspired them, and created a positive ethos in which key relationships were able to flourish. Further to these core purposes, the vision and values of the two schools played an important role in setting standards and expectations, both academic and non-academic, and enabled the holistic development of pupils to become a significant part of school life.

## **6.2 How do Schools go about Articulating and Communicating their Vision, Ethos and Values Internally and Externally?**

The exploration of the methods for expressing and communicating vision, ethos and values revealed that both schools adopted a wide range of tools in order to do this effectively to different stakeholder groups, both internally and externally. In contrast to the literature, it seemed that the school prospectus, traditionally a key marketing tool, had become somewhat obsolete in promoting an impression of the whole school and digital expressions through websites, newsletters and social media were favoured; the core values which permeated school life did not feature in either school's prospectus indicating a significant shortfall and discrepancy in terms of the impression of the school created.

This discrepancy was also evident between different communication channels used to promote the vision, ethos and values and the role of language was important in this. The language of the values provided a tool through which staff could articulate the vision of the school and emphasise the focus on developing the whole-child; this language, however, was not always consistent or present within official documents and though it appeared to be thriving within the school community, it seemed this shift in focus had not yet been reflected in official expressions of ethos.

The two case study schools appeared to be utilising effective methods for communicating their vision, ethos and values but some areas of inconsistency in awareness or understanding among staff highlighted the importance of ensuring effective evaluation of approaches to address any gaps in knowledge. A key area of challenge for Allenswood School regarding communication

was presented by the external community; difficulties engaging with the local community had led to a reluctance to focus efforts in this area by the leadership. In contrast, Linden School experienced a fruitful relationship with the local community and this could be attributed to the strong passion and commitment to community relations by the Headteacher, as well as the characteristics of the local community within which the School was located.

### **6.3 What Are the Main Ways in which Schools Ensure their Vision, Ethos and Values are Realised on a Day-to-day Basis and What Factors Might Act as Barriers and Enablers in this?**

The effective realisation of vision, ethos and values in the day-to-day running of the school is the end goal of the efforts explored above. The findings of this study emphasised three key contributors to the integration of vision in daily practice; namely, the leader, the staff, and visual aids. The leader was seen to be the key driving force behind the vision, inspiring and motivating staff to work collectively towards a shared aim. The wider staff community, with a particular focus on senior leaders and values-leads, played an essential role in implementing the initiatives that the Headteacher put in place and transforming the vision into something which impacted positively on pupils; two key ways in which staff felt they could achieve this were through the use of values language and through role-modelling the values. The visual representations of vision and values, used by both schools but which were more prominent at Allenswood School, provided an important mechanism for encouraging the daily reiteration of the values and for drawing pupils' attention to them in ordinary interactions.

The efforts of both schools to effectively realise their vision, ethos and values appeared to be, on the whole, effective and demonstrated a positive impact; yet there were a number of barriers

identified which had made this journey more difficult. The challenges emphasised by the two schools included: buy-in from the whole-school community, particularly considering existing pressures and demands on staff and pupils; inconsistent approaches to incorporating the values into teaching; and, a knowledge gap for pupils where, though they understood the language of the values, they perhaps lacked sound understanding of what those values look like in practice. Some efforts to mitigate these challenges had succeeded, for example utilising Form-Tutors to provide dedicated values-focused time in classrooms, but further attempts could be made through training and evaluation. Training would help to ensure that all staff understand and feel equipped to incorporate values into their teaching and evaluation would encourage reflection regarding where initiatives are effective, and where gaps do exist, how these might be addressed.

Important to the challenges faced by both schools were the factors that they viewed as key enablers in implementing their vision, ethos and values; namely, shared values. The approach to collaboratively selecting the core values of the school, something which was more intentional and planned in Allenswood School, meant that there was no conflict regarding the values that were prioritised; the values were emphasised as providing key enablers to articulate, communicate, encourage and realise the non-academic aspirations of the schools.

#### **6.4 Concluding Remarks**

This study has established key findings regarding the purpose, articulation and communication, and realisation of vision, ethos and values in two Birmingham schools. Providing detailed insights into the impact that a clear and supported vision, positive ethos and explicit values can have on staff, pupils and the school as a whole, the study offers some key conclusions for

school leaders and their staff to consider in their approach to establishing, promoting and embedding vision and values.

Though the study examined the state of play in depth at each school, and considered perspectives from both a primary and a secondary school, it is bound by the limitations of examining two specific case study schools; the findings offer important insights into approaches, practices and challenges within those two schools but these cannot be generalised to schools more widely without further evidence. The perspectives of staff, though crucial to any investigation of vision, ethos and values, offer a one-dimensional view; the inclusion of analysis of school documents, and participation of staff at all levels, went some way to mitigate this limitation, yet perspectives of school governors, pupils and external stakeholders would add an additional dimension to the findings of this study.

The findings raise some important considerations for future research. The role of training and CPD, for example, was an evident gap in both schools and better awareness of how this could help equip staff with the knowledge and practical skills to consistently embed values within their teaching would be beneficial. Further, the place of vision and values in a school's approach to the recruitment of staff is worthy of consideration given the challenges concerning buy-in, and the agreement among staff that they would take into account the values of a school were they to seek employment elsewhere in future. The multifaceted nature of schools and the intricacies of vision, ethos and values explored throughout this thesis present ample opportunity for future research to enhance understanding in the field.

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## APPENDICES

## **Appendix 1: Online Questionnaires**

### ***Appendix 1a: Online Questionnaire Participant Information Sheet***

Your school is taking part in a research study about the vision, values and ethos. This research is being conducted as part of a Masters course at the University of Birmingham's School of Education. This information sheet explains a little more about the research and what this will involve for you.

The research is exploring how the vision, values and ethos of a school can be successfully articulated to its stakeholders and both internally and externally, as well as how they are integrated into the day-to-day running of the school.

#### **What will be required of you?**

During this short survey you will be asked about your opinions regarding the vision, values and ethos schools. Some questions will be more generic in considering the vision, values and ethos of schools, others will ask for more specific details in relation to your school.

It is up to you to decide whether you wish to take part in this study. If you decide you would like to take part, the survey can be completed either on paper and returned in the post, or online via a link provided by the researcher.

It is envisaged that the survey will take no more than 20 minutes of your time. Many of the questions involve a scale to represent your opinion (for example whether you see something as very important, or not important at all) but some enable a more open response. Your

participation in this study is greatly appreciated and it is important that you feel able to provide open and honest responses. Any responses you give will be confidential.

The study will also involve interviews with a small number of participants who complete this survey to allow some of the themes to be explored in more depth; if you would be willing to be interviewed there is an opportunity to provide your contact details at the end of the survey.

**Who will have access to the answers and how will they be stored?**

Your responses to the survey will remain completely confidential and only accessible to the researcher. You will be allocated a pseudonym or reference number known only to the researcher. Your name will not be included in any material for the final thesis or any written publication. All data will be stored securely by the researcher in password-protected electronic systems. Data will be kept for at least ten years after the end of the project.

**How will the information be used?**

Your responses will be looked at in combination with responses from all other participants in your school, and these will be further compared to a case study of another school also taking part in the study. By comparing and contrasting responses across the two schools, the researcher hopes to draw out how schools can successfully articulate and implement their vision, values and ethos across all activities and staff.

**What will happen if you wish to withdraw from the study?**

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study without any consequences. Should you wish to withdraw, any content already gathered will be destroyed. However, once data has been included in material for publication, withdrawal will not be possible. Therefore, the deadline for withdrawal will be one month from the date you sign the consent form.

If you have questions about the study please contact the researcher at the address below.

[Insert contact information]

### ***Appendix 1b: Online Questionnaire Participant Consent***

This study is exploring the articulation and integration of the vision, values and ethos of schools. You are being asked to take part in a short survey to contribute to the findings of this study; your participation is very much appreciated.

The researcher may wish to include content from your survey responses in the analysis of this study and therefore you are being asked to sign a consent form. Should you wish to withdraw, any responses already gathered from you will be destroyed. However, once data has been prepared for analysis, withdrawal will not be possible. Therefore, the deadline for withdrawal will be one month from the date you sign this form.

Your survey responses will be treated confidentially. You will be allocated a pseudonym or reference number known only to the researcher. Further information about the conduct of this study is available in the accompanying Information Sheet.

Before beginning the survey online please ensure you have read the Information Sheet [[hyperlink to information sheet download](#)] which outlines the purpose of the study, what it involves and how your data will be used and are happy with all of the information. If you have any queries before continuing please contact the researcher [[Insert contact information](#)]

By continuing to through this online survey and clicking ‘submit’ when you reach the end you are thereby providing your consent to take part in this study and for your responses to be used in the data; your full consent will be assumed by the submission of your responses.

Should you later decide to withdraw, you have one month from the submission of your responses; please contact the researcher as soon as possible if you later choose to withdraw your data.

*Appendix 1c: Online Questionnaire*

1. Please select from the following list the values that your school identifies as *key* in its vision (eg. in its mission statement):

Honesty		Perseverance	
Resilience		Kindness	
Self-discipline		Respect	
Service		Generosity	
Confidence		Compassion	
Focus		Grit	
Humility		Courage	
Gratitude		Justice	
Integrity		Other ( <i>please state</i> ):	

2. Using the following scale, how important do you feel the values a school identifies as its key values are? (*please tick the appropriate box*)

Very important	Important	Neutral	Not so important	Not at all important
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3. Using the following scale, how important do you feel a school's vision is? (*please tick the appropriate box*)

<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not so important</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>

4. Using the following scale, how important do you feel a school's ethos is? (*please tick the appropriate box*)

<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not so important</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>

5. Please indicate which key methods of those listed below your school uses to articulate its vision, ethos and values to its stakeholders (ie. parents, governors, public). (*Please select all methods that apply and state any others in the box provided*)

<b>Website</b>		<b>Prospectus</b>	
<b>Newsletter</b>		<b>Parents' evening</b>	

<b>School displays</b>		<b>Social media</b>	
<b>Community initiatives</b>		<b>Other (please state)</b>	

6. Please indicate which key methods of those listed below your school uses to articulate its vision, ethos and values to its staff. *(Please select all methods that apply and state any others in the box provided)*

<b>Staff briefings</b>		<b>Policies</b>	
<b>Recruitment process</b>		<b>Training</b>	
		<b>Other (please state)</b>	

7. Using the following scale, how successful do you feel your school is in letting people know what its' vision and key values are? *(please tick the appropriate box)*

<b>Very successful</b>	<b>Successful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not so successful</b>	<b>Not at all successful</b>

8. Please indicate how far you would agree with each of the following statements using the scale 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>My school's vision and ethos is obvious in the day to day running of the school.</b>					
<b>I try to incorporate the school's key values into my own role within the school.</b>					
<b>I feel the language of the school's key values and vision is present in the classroom.</b>					
<b>It is obvious to visitors to the school what the ethos of the school is all about.</b>					
<b>The vision of the school is reflected in the expectations of pupils in terms of attendance, behaviour and attainment.</b>					

## **Appendix 2: Interviews**

### ***Appendix 2a: Interview Participant Information Sheet***

Your school is taking part in a research study about the vision, values and ethos of schools. This research is being conducted as part of a Masters course at the University of Birmingham's School of Education. This information sheet explains a little more about the research and what this will involve for you.

The research is exploring how the vision, values and ethos of a school are successfully articulated to its stakeholders both internally and externally, as well as how they are integrated into the day-to-day running of a school. You may have already taken part in a survey for this study; the purpose of this interview is to enable deeper discussion about the vision, values and ethos of the school and to explore your thoughts on this in more detail.

#### **What will be required of you?**

During this short interview you will be asked about your opinions regarding the vision, values and ethos of the school for which you currently work. In particular, the interview will explore the origins of the vision and how the vision, values and ethos of the school are articulated and implemented on a day-to-day basis. It is up to you to decide whether you wish to be interviewed as part of this study. If you decide you would like to take part, the interview will be conducted either by telephone, or in person, depending on which suits you.

It is envisaged that the interview will take no more than 30 minutes of your time. The researcher has some initial questions in mind, but it is hoped that these will lead to a more informal

discussion in which you feel comfortable exploring relevant thoughts you have about the topic. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and it is important that you feel able to provide open and honest responses. Any responses you give will be confidential.

**Who will have access to the answers and how will they be stored?**

With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed for the researcher to analyse. You will be allocated a pseudonym or reference number known only to the researcher. Your name will not be included in any content from the interview included in material for the final thesis. All data will be stored securely by the researcher in password-protected electronic systems. Data will be kept for at least ten years after the end of the project.

**How will the information be used?**

Your responses will be looked at in combination with responses from other staff at your school, as well as in comparison to another school also taking part as a case study. The researcher hopes to draw out how schools successfully articulate and implement their vision, values and ethos.

**What will happen if you wish to withdraw from the study?**

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study without any consequences. Should you wish to withdraw, any content already gathered will be destroyed. However, once data has been included in material for publication, withdrawal will not be

possible. Therefore, the deadline for withdrawal will be one month from the date you sign the consent form.

If you have questions about the study please contact the researcher at the address below.

[Insert contact information]

### ***Appendix 2b: Interview Participant Consent***

This study is exploring the articulation and integration of the vision, values and ethos of schools. You are being asked to take part in an interview to contribute to the findings of this study; your participation is very much appreciated.

The researcher may wish to include content from your interview responses in the analysis of this study and therefore you are being asked to sign a consent form. Should you wish to withdraw, any responses already gathered from you will be destroyed. However, once data has been prepared for analysis, withdrawal will not be possible. Therefore, the deadline for withdrawal will be one month from the date you sign this form.

Your interview responses will be treated confidentially. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed for the researcher to analyse. You will be allocated a pseudonym or reference number known only to the researcher. Further information about the conduct of this study is available in the accompanying Information Sheet.

Please read, and indicate your acceptance of (by ticking the box) the following statements:	I accept: (please tick)
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within one month of the date I sign this form without giving reason.	
I understand that my name will not be included in any material for publication.	
I agree that my interview may be audio-recorded.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant (PRINT).....

Signature.....Date.....

If you have questions about the study please contact the researcher using the details below:

[Insert contact information]

## *Appendix 2c: Interview Schedule*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

I'm currently a Masters student at the University of Birmingham researching the place of vision, values and ethos in schools. My research is specifically exploring how the vision, values and ethos are articulated and implemented across a school and I'm particularly interested in learning about the origins of the school's vision and how this has been realised on the ground. You have been provided with an information sheet. I'm happy to answer any further questions you have concerning the project.

- Before we start, have you got any more questions about the research?
- Are you comfortable that you understand what the study is about and what I am asking you to do?
- 

What you say will be kept confidential, however, it may be the case that your participation in the study could be identified by others due to what you say about your school. I would again like to emphasise that I will not directly name you in my thesis.

You can withdraw your interview data at any point up to one month from the day you signed the consent form. I will ask you some questions that I have already prepared, but I hope the discussion will be informal and that you will feel free to add anything else you think may be relevant. If we come to any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, please just say and we will move on to the next.

Please read the consent form and indicate if you're happy for the interview to be recorded. (*If yes, then researcher will switch on the tape*). Or if the interview is by telephone: before we begin please confirm that you are happy for this interview to be recorded. (*If yes, then researcher will switch on the tape and read the questions from the consent form*). Now we have covered everything, please could you confirm for me with a yes or no answer that you are happy to proceed.

*Note for researcher: Once the tape recorder is switched on please confirm that they are happy for the interview to be recorded once the tape is running. Please also confirm the name of the interviewee (and role/organisation/school) at the start of the interview, so this is recorded on tape. A pseudonym will be used in the transcript. Then go through all the questions on the consent form*

**If you are happy, we will begin.**

- 1. [for teaching staff/senior leadership] Firstly, can you tell me a little bit about your role?**
- 2. Can you tell me about the vision of the school? (this might be in the form of a mission statement)**
  - Can you tell me when you remember first being aware of the vision?
  - What do you know about the origins of this vision?
  - [for headteacher] To what extent were you involved in the creation of this vision during the early stages?

**Prompt questions:**

- [for headteacher] who lead the creation of the vision?

- [for headteacher] describe the process by which the vision was reached and finalised?

**3. What do you see as the fundamental role of this vision/mission statement?**

- Do you feel the vision/mission statement is successful in fulfilling this role?

**4. Has the vision changed at all since you have been aware of it?**

- *If yes, why do you think that was?*

**5. Does the school have an identified set of core values that are linked in some way to its vision/ethos?**

- *Can you tell me what they are and why they were chosen?*
- *Can you talk me through their relationship to the vision/ethos of the school?*

**6. How does the school go about communicating this vision (and the values identified) to the outside world ie: its stakeholders?**

- Eg. Visible on website and prospectus
- Do you feel this is a successful method of communicating the vision?
- Has the school received any feedback (to your knowledge) from parents or other stakeholders about its vision/mission statement?
- Is the vision/values apparent to visitors to the school?

**7. What key methods does the school use to articulate its vision for its schools, and in particular those core values it identifies with, to the individual schools within the Trust?**

- Eg. Is it woven into policies?
- Is one particular method of communication more successful than others in your opinion?

**8. How does the school go about integrating its vision (and the values identified) into the lives of its pupils?**

- *Does it form part of teaching?*
- *Is it woven into behaviour policies?*
- *Can it be seen in the school community, extra-curricular activities?*

**9. How influential was the vision of the school, and the values it places at its core, in your decision to apply for your role there?**

- Is this something you considered/thought about?

**10. How is the vision of the school integrated within the professional development opportunities and training for staff?**

- Do staff engage with the vision eg. in their teaching/training/evaluations?

**11. How do you go about integrating the vision and core values of the school into your professional role?**

**12. Does the school have an approach to evaluating its vision/mission statement (that you know of) and how it is being upheld?**

- *If yes, can you talk me through what this looks like?*
- *In what ways has this process been valuable to the school?*

- *If no, is this something that has been discussed and seen as unnecessary?*
- *What value do you think something like that might bring to the school?*

Those are all my questions. Thank you very much for your time today; your contribution is really appreciated. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## **Appendix 3: Information Sheet for Case Study Schools**

### **Description of the Study**

This study is exploring how the vision, values and ethos of a school can be successfully articulated to its stakeholders including staff at all levels, as well as how they are integrated into the day-to-day running of a school. This research is being conducted as part of a Masters course at the University of Birmingham's School of Education. The aim of the study is to establish how a school might successfully integrate its vision, values and ethos into its day to day activities.

### **What will be required of you?**

Your school will feature as a case study and be looked at in parallel to one other case study. The first phase of the study will involve analysis of your school's communications with its stakeholders (eg. parents, the public) – this may include items such as the website, newsletter and prospectus.

The second phase of the study will involve members of staff at all levels (Head, Senior Leadership staff, teaching staff) being invited to take part in a short survey (no more than 20 minutes). The purpose of the survey is to gather some initial data about your school's vision, values and ethos and the perceptions of staff regarding these.

The third and final phase of the study will involve participants being invited to take part in an interview, estimated to take only 30 minutes of their time, to explore themes from the survey in more depth.

The study will also involve informal observations by the researcher during any visits to the school to conduct data collection. This might involve observing school displays and main areas. The researcher will not need to be present in any lessons and will not need to communicate with any pupils.

### **Who will have access to the data and how will this be stored?**

The identification of the school will be completely confidential; it is however possible that the identity of the school can be ascertained from the information provided about them (for example, information about the vision, core values if these are distinct). Every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure this is not the case. The school will be given a pseudonym and information reported will be kept to a minimum.

Responses to the survey and interviews will remain completely confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher. Any participant will be allocated a pseudonym or reference number known only to the researcher; material will be anonymised for the final thesis or any written publication. All data will be stored securely by the researcher in password-protected electronic systems. Data will be kept for at least ten years after the end of the project.

### **How will the information be used?**

The responses gathered will be looked at in combination with responses from all participants and will be compared to a case study of another school also taking part in the study. By comparing and contrasting responses across the two schools, the researcher hopes to draw out how the schools can successfully articulate and implement their vision, values and ethos.

**What will happen if you wish to withdraw from the study?**

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study without any consequences. Should you wish to withdraw any content already gathered will be destroyed. However, once data has been included in material for publication, withdrawal will not be possible. Therefore, the deadline for withdrawal will be three months from the date you agree to partake in the study.

**What feedback is available?**

It is envisaged that the data gathered will be useful for the schools involved in evaluating the effectiveness of their current methods for articulating their vision, values and ethos and for integrating this into their day to day operations. Therefore, a short report will be provided to each school involved summarising the key themes that have emerged from the data.

If you have questions about the study please contact the researcher at the address below.

Researcher: [Insert contact information]

Project Supervisor: [Insert contact information]

**Appendix 4: Analysis Themes from Interview Data**

<b>KEY THEME</b>	<b>SUB THEMES BY SCHOOL</b>	
	<b>LINDEN SCHOOL</b>	<b>ALLENSWOOD SCHOOL</b>
<b>VISION</b>	<b>Values in Vision</b> <b>Vision Words</b> <b>Vision Pronouns</b> <b>Academic Vision</b> <b>Non-Academic Vision</b> <b>Community</b>	<b>Values in Vision</b> <b>Vision Words</b> <b>Vision Pronouns</b> <b>Academic Vision</b> <b>Non-Academic Vision</b>
<b>VALUES</b>	<b>Origins of Values</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wider School Involvement</li> <li>- Leader</li> <li>- Character or Values Lead</li> </ul> <b>Purpose of Values</b> <b>Impact of Values</b>	<b>Origins of Values</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wider School Involvement</li> <li>- Leader</li> <li>- Character or Values Lead</li> </ul> <b>Purpose of Values</b> <b>Impact of Values</b>

	<b>Realising Values</b>  <b>Negative Views of Values</b>	<b>Realising Values</b>  <b>Negative Views of Values</b>
<b>PURPOSE/IMPACT OF VISION</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>  <b>Positive Impact</b>  <b>Impact on Pupils</b>  <b>Creates Ethos</b>  <b>Articulation</b>  <b>Pupil Recognition</b>  <b>Standards and Expectations</b>  <b>Parent Relationships</b>  <b>Impact on Community</b>  <b>Decision-Making</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>  <b>Positive Impact</b>  <b>Impact on Pupils</b>  <b>Creates Ethos</b>  <b>Articulation</b>  <b>Pupil Recognition</b>
<b>INTEGRATING THE VISION</b>	<b>Methods for Integrating Vision and Values</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual Aids</li> <li>- Teaching</li> <li>- Natural/Implicit</li> </ul>	<b>Methods for Integrating Vision and Values</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual Aids</li> <li>- Teaching</li> <li>- Natural/Implicit</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Language and Communication</b></li> <li>- <b>Initiatives</b></li> <li>- <b>Behaviour</b></li> <li>- <b>Training</b></li> <li>- <b>Decision-Making</b></li> <li>- <b>Community</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Successful/Positive Integration</b></p> <p><b>Challenges of Integrating Vision and Value/Negative Views</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Language and Communication</b></li> <li>- <b>Initiatives</b></li> <li>- <b>Behaviour</b></li> <li>- <b>Role-Modelling</b></li> <li>- <b>Praise</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Successful/Positive Integration</b></p> <p><b>Challenges of Integrating Vision and Value/Negative Views</b></p>
<p><b>ARTICULATION AND COMMUNICATION</b></p>	<p><b>Internal Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Visual Aids</b></li> <li>- <b>Teaching</b></li> <li>- <b>Pupil-teacher Relationships</b></li> <li>- <b>Praise</b></li> <li>- <b>Assemblies</b></li> <li>- <b>Initiatives</b></li> <li>- <b>Values Programme</b></li> <li>- <b>Pupil Planners</b></li> </ul> <p><b>External Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Website</b></li> <li>- <b>Parents</b></li> <li>- <b>Newsletter</b></li> <li>- <b>Community</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Internal Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Visual Aids</b></li> <li>- <b>Teaching</b></li> <li>- <b>Pupil-teacher Relationships</b></li> <li>- <b>Praise</b></li> <li>- <b>Assemblies</b></li> </ul> <p><b>External Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Website</b></li> <li>- <b>Parents</b></li> <li>- <b>Newsletter</b></li> <li>- <b>Community</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Negative Views of External Communication</b></li> <li>- <b>Marketing</b></li> <li>- <b>Social Media</b></li> <li>- <b>Primary Transition</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Successful/Positive Communication</b></p> <p><b>Importance of Communication</b></p> <p><b>Challenges with Communication/Negative Views</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Negative Views of External Communication</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Successful/Positive Communication</b></p> <p><b>Importance of Communication</b></p> <p><b>Challenges with Communication/Negative Views</b></p>
<b>BARRIERS/ CHALLENGES</b>	<p><b>Internal Barriers</b></p> <p><b>External Barriers</b></p> <p><b>Overcoming Barriers</b></p>	<p><b>Internal Barriers</b></p> <p><b>External Barriers</b></p> <p><b>Overcoming Barriers</b></p>
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<p><b>Leadership Style</b></p> <p><b>Other Leaderships (SLT)</b></p> <p><b>Leader Driving Vision</b></p>	<p><b>Leadership Style</b></p> <p><b>Other Leaderships (SLT)</b></p> <p><b>Leader Driving Vision</b></p>

<p><b>BUY-IN</b></p>	<p><b>Positive Buy-in</b></p> <p><b>Pupil Buy-In</b></p> <p><b>Buy-In as a Challenge</b></p> <p><b>Overcoming Buy-In as a Challenge</b></p>	<p><b>Positive Buy-in</b></p> <p><b>Pupil Buy-In</b></p> <p><b>Buy-In as a Challenge</b></p> <p><b>Overcoming Buy-In as a Challenge</b></p>
<p><b>ENABLERS</b></p>	<p><b>Vision</b></p> <p><b>Teachers</b></p> <p><b>Pupils</b></p> <p><b>School Context</b></p>	<p><b>Vision</b></p> <p><b>Teachers</b></p> <p><b>Leader</b></p>
<p><b>EVALUATION</b></p>	<p><b>Positive View of Approach to Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Negative View of Approach to Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>View that Better Evaluation would be Useful</b></p>	<p><b>Positive View of Approach to Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Negative View of Approach to Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>View that Better Evaluation would be Useful</b></p>
<p><b>RECRUITMENT</b></p>	<p><b>Values Play a Role in Recruitment</b></p>	<p><b>Values Play a Role in Recruitment</b></p>

	<b>Values Do Not Play a Role in Recruitment</b>  <b>Consideration of Vision and Values in Future Schools</b>	<b>Values Do Not Play a Role in Recruitment</b>  <b>Consideration of Vision and Values in Future Schools</b>
<b>TRAINING AND CPD</b>	<b>Positive Views</b>  <b>Negative Views</b>	<b>Positive Views</b>  <b>Negative Views</b>