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France and England an exchange of views



> Behaviour and discipline in schools



> Literacy strategies



> 14-19 year-olds and vocational education



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education and skills
 creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

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> **What are the expert group meetings?**

Since June 2003, three groups of experts, including officials from the Departments of Education in both France and England, have been meeting on a regular basis to discuss three themes related to education policy areas of joint interest:

- ▶ Behaviour and discipline in schools, *La prévention de la violence en milieu scolaire*;
- ▶ Literacy strategies, *La prévention de l'illettrisme*;
- ▶ 14-19 year-olds and vocational education, *Les 14-19 ans dans le milieu scolaire*.

Following the first meeting, which was dedicated to the presentation of the educational policies and initiatives of both countries, the groups of experts have focused their discussions on specific comparisons of their respective systems, in particular:

- ▶ the "Behaviour and discipline in schools" group on the role of parents, teacher training, and referral classes;
- ▶ the "Literacy strategies" group on the role of evaluation, and the place of spoken language at school;
- ▶ the "14-19 year-olds and vocational education" group on the structure of vocational teaching, guidance for vocational routes, and the role of the "key players".

The expert groups have met three times each, and at every reunion there was an opportunity to visit the schools of the other country to see the subject of their discussions at first hand.

> **What is the purpose of the meetings?**

Both countries have developed systems to attempt to address the educational issues that exist both nationally and internationally, and, naturally, each country has a strong interest in comparing its own responses to the ones found by its partner. These meetings are an opportunity for French and English experts to exchange their opinions and present the way things are done in their respective countries. More broadly, they allow for the comparison of educational policies and strategies.

> **Why choose particular themes?**

The three themes were chosen as they are all related to real issues currently affecting education:

- ▶ behaviour and discipline because all European countries are encountering problems with this, and it is the cause of much discontinued learning;
- ▶ literacy because it is a shared concern. In 1998, a comprehensive literacy programme was introduced in England, aimed at improving teaching in the classroom and raising standards of pupil achievement. In 2002, France introduced a scheme to prevent illiteracy, with a special focus on the first year of primary school;
- ▶ 14-19 year olds and vocational education because mainstreaming vocational education and teaching, modernising training and opening new routes in schools, is a topical area of activity in England, particularly following the Tomlinson Report, and in France.

Introduction

> Why this exchange of views?

Following on from the expert group meetings, we felt that it would be of interest to ask the experts in each field to share their reflections and / or suggestions regarding the educational practices and strategies of both countries. This “crossing of viewpoints” or *regards croisés* should allow the details of each system to be highlighted and could, eventually, bring the English and French educational policies closer together in an even more fruitful collaboration.

Expert group contributors to the brochure

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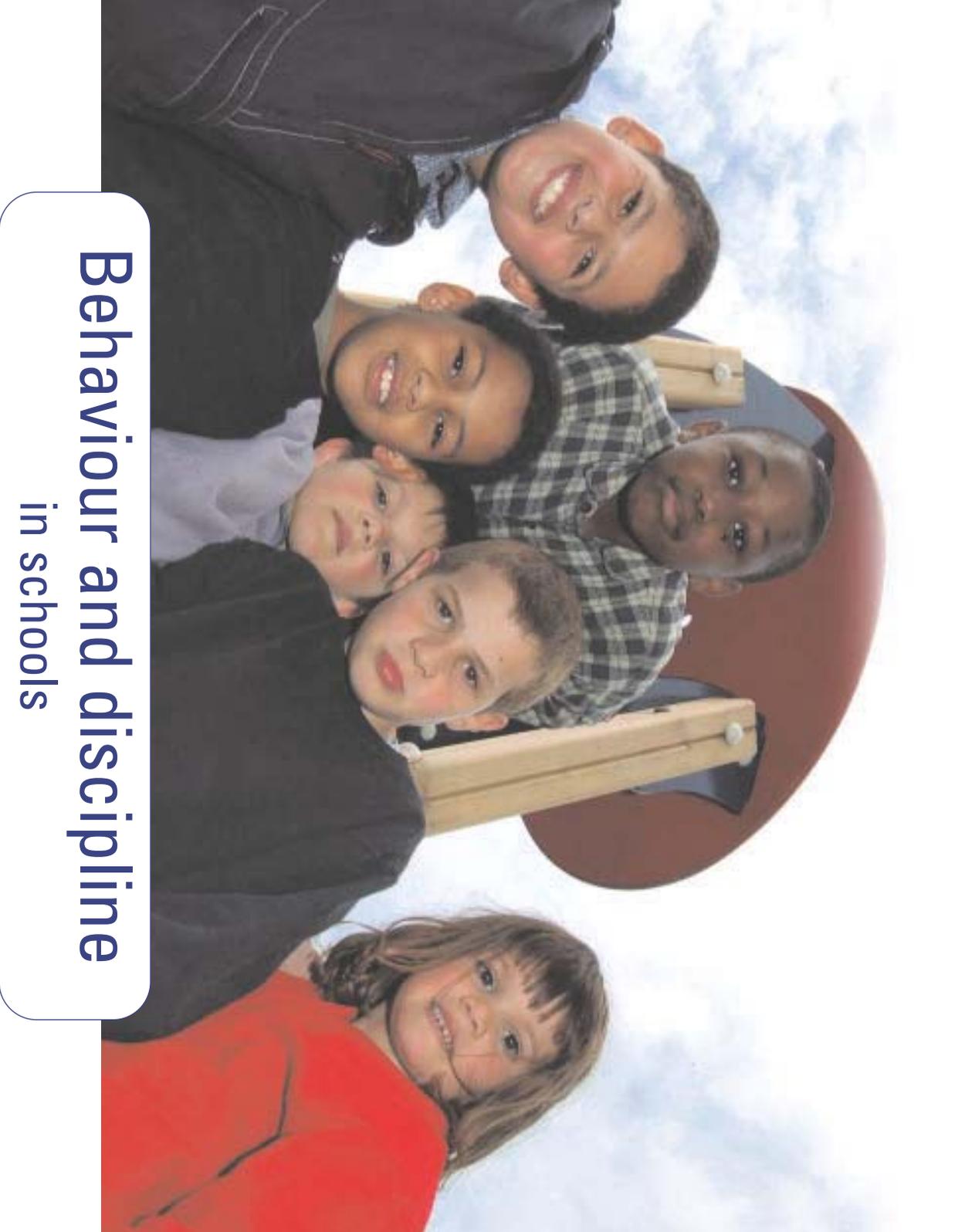
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Exchanging Views

> The point of view of two French experts on the English approach

Claude Bisson-Vaivre, Deputy Director, Regulations and School Organisation Policy, French Schools Directorate, Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research (MENESR)

Nadine Neulat, Head of the Office for Pupils' Health, Social Care and Welfare, French Schools Directorate, MENESR

→ What do you think are the most noticeable aspects of the English system in the field of discipline?

C. B-V. : Prevention of violence occurs at a very early stage in England. Up until now, we have probably designed our [discipline] actions in a generally structural way as a response to situations or facts. This is why the English example is very interesting to study.

N. N. : Yes, the English have a more behavioural approach than we do. They work a great deal on early prevention. They try to develop self-esteem and respect for others at a very early age, and they offer concrete programmes for this purpose. We would also like to work like they do in the area of parental support. It is very advanced in their country and we are only taking the first steps in France.

C. B-V. : The English have established modules to support parenthood. The aim is to make parents work with the school, which gives support to the parents and provides them with indicators at a very early stage in the schooling of their child, or even at the pre-school stage.

N. N. : They have programmes that are for all parents, and programmes tailored to specific groups.

→ Are there similarities between the French and English approaches?

C. B-V. : The schemes that have been created in England are similar to ours. Their BEST (Behaviour and Educational Support Teams) and their PRUs (Pupil Referral Units) are similar to our RASED¹ and

our referral units.

→ What could we borrow from the English experience on the field?

N. N. : Prevention of violence is organised on a very local level that is closely related to the local environment.

There is a whole system for exchanging information, between educational partners, on children in a difficult situation, young parents and social fragility. There is a real synergy between all the players. The social services are integrated into the schools. It is truly pragmatic. In England, resources have to be immediately available to the professionals who are in daily contact with children.

→ Don't the English actually have a more positive approach than the French?

N. N. : It would be hard to say that this approach is more or less positive; it is just different. This can be readily perceived in the vocabulary that is used. They do not use the word *violence* but the term "improving behaviour". In the same way, they do not talk about *lutte contre l'absentéisme* (fight against truancy) but "attendance", and they talk about "continued-learning strategies" instead of *décrochage scolaire* (discontinued learning), and "literacy strategies" instead of *prévention de l'illettrisme* (prevention of illiteracy)...

What can be done to turn schools into schools of well-being? How can children be helped to develop themselves? This is what the English are concerned by. In France, we are more defensive and constantly concerned by prevention. In addition, the English encourage pupils to develop a feeling of belonging to the school community.

→ How could the English be inspired by our system?

C. B-V : By borrowing our indicators on acts of violence in schools; for example, by adopting software such as SIGNA that records more serious incidents. Further, the English do not have training for social workers, for specialised educators, and seem to be interested by what we are doing in this field.



→ And what could we borrow from their training system?

C. B-V : Training of English teachers includes a course on “the psychology of adolescents” that seems to be fruitful. This course focuses on the management of behaviours, the anticipation of crises, the detection of warning signals, and how to deal with truancy.

→ What could be the nature of a future partnership?

M. N. : The English would like us to have discussions on the training of teachers and heads teachers on improving attendance, detecting problems and the resources needed. Indeed, these meetings could be fruitful because these themes are very much in line with what we experience.

1. Le **RASED** (*Réseau d'Aides Spécialisées aux Elèves en Difficulté* - Network of specialised aids for children with difficulties) is a scheme of specialised aid to help prevent difficulties for education providers on the one hand, and to find solutions when difficulties continue. Le RASED includes a school psychologist, an E master (in charge of tutoring in primary school), a G master (re-educator) and a social support unit.



Exchanging Views

> The point of view of an English expert on the French approach

| Helen Williams, Director Primary Education and e-learning, Department for Education and Skills

→ Do you have the feeling that France and England have a different approach regarding the prevention of violence in schools?

First of all, I must say that we are aware, when we exchange points of view on our respective strategies regarding the prevention of violence, that our French colleagues have in mind what we would call “behaviour”. Therefore I will talk about what the French call *violence* and the whole range of anti-social behaviours that include disruptive behaviour, bullying and physical violence.

→ What do you consider to be the most notable aspects of the French strategy in the field of prevention of violence?

The French have collected an impressive quantity of data on the different types of acts of violence, even if their reliability can sometimes be debatable. Too often in the past, the schools have denied the problem because they were concerned by the image parents and other partners had of them. Today, the fact that parents take part in the debate is a strong point in the French approach. Also, it is admitted that the schools cannot solve it on their own, that they must work in partnership with the community that they serve, and this conviction seems well established in France. I think, for example, about the integration of social and educational services that has been greatly developed.

In France, they also recognise that teaching non-violence to children must start at a very early stage to be effective. Conflict resolution training and involving children in mediation with their classmates are important elements of the French scheme.

It is, indeed, essential to know how to deal with situations of violence, in addition to prevention.

→ Have you perceived specific French schemes that you do not have?

We appreciated our visits to referral classes and referral workshops in the Calais region, and we were impressed by the devotion the teachers had for pupils who would otherwise have been excluded from school. It is clearly admitted that punishment is not a solution and that children at risk of violent behaviour need extra help and support. An interesting feature of the scheme is the focus that has been placed on the vocational integration of these pupils; thus, they can understand better what the purpose of secondary schooling is.

On the other hand, research in the “sciences of education” to try to limit violence in France is parallel to what we call assessment in England. We were interested to see how activity in the field included an element of research that helps to measure their efficacy.

→ Do you perceive analogies between the French and the English strategies to prevent violence?

Both countries acknowledge that there is no single solution to the problem of violence. Setting up a climate of non-violence within a school is a complex process that requires a whole set of differentiated approaches and strategies. Also, the response to violence when it occurs is more effective when the response treats the causes of violence and not only the symptom. These two principles are in the French strategy to prevent violence in schools.

Our two countries also acknowledge that it is important to introduce support for professionals who work on behavioural improvement, given the growing number of such professionals. Creating gateways between those who work in the field and researchers in educational science is a way both countries have to reach this objective.

Educational sciences will be able to provide solutions to the problems that are expressed by the staff in the schools. In England, it will be made possible by training the experts in charge of supervising the growing number of professionals in the field. Our experience of the French system has shown us that the training given to specialists to manage the prevention of violence is an indispensable element in any national strategy.

→ How could the French be inspired by the English schemes in the field of the prevention of violence?

In England, we have started to work on designing a national scheme for school staff training. We conceive that a training of this sort should be available for all staff in schools, teachers and non-teachers, so that pupils can feel the united stand of all the adults who set an example and implement a climate of non-violence in the school. This strategy has the specific feature that it focuses on a comprehensive process: it includes all of the school, both the teaching and the non-teaching staff, to help the pupils reach the required level.

→ Can you explain this national training scheme in more detail?

We advise our schools on the means by which to achieve a consistent approach to conflict management. Programmes have been designed for Secondary and Primary schools, and schools that experience the more acute situations. To prevent violence, the schools need diverse methods in order to choose the ones that are the most appropriate to their needs. This involves alternative programmes that are focused on limiting the number of exclusions from school and developing cooperation with the many partners outside the

school. Training starts with teacher trainees and is expanded to the experienced staff, rolling out the required actions to all the staff of the school.

Our most recent innovations are three complementary programmes that are in addition to the national strategy:

- ▶ to make efforts to enable everyone to reach the required national level, and offer life-long learning to a growing number of professionals who work in the field of the prevention of violence;
- ▶ to look more closely, specifically at the programmes on the prevention of violence, at what works in school to create a climate of *convivencia* (living together - a Spanish word that is used here and all over Europe);
- ▶ to set up a campaign against violent behaviour, so as to promote adapted responses, having shown their worth.

Do you have other schemes that could give the French food for thought?

The draft law on childhood in England is an example of a recent legislation that helps to coordinate all the schemes, both inside and outside the school, by placing at its centre the needs of the children. It foments coordination of services for children at a local level, and provides for the naming of a mentor for each child who is at risk.

Also, the help that is brought to children who are at risk of school exclusion because of their behaviour is at a more advanced stage in our country than in France. However, the development of the French model of "referral-classes" and "referral-workshops" could offer a possibility for people who work in the field in our two countries to pool together their experience of work with children whose behaviour is a serious threat for schools.



The Schemes in England

> **Schemes within schools**

▶ Behaviour and education support teams (BEST) are teams of police officers, of educators, medical and social workers, external to the school and in charge of bringing support in different subjects to children with difficulties. This scheme involves 61 Local Education Authorities and 1,700 primary schools. A BEST costs £350,000 a year.

▶ Learning Support Units (LSU) are set up within schools to help children who are threatened by exclusion because of their bad behaviour. These LSU are very close to French referral units. Their objective is to help to improve the behaviour of the children in order to help them return quickly into mainstream classes. Today, there are 1,000 LSU. An LSU costs £50,000 a year.

> **Alternative programmes**

A lack of motivation for certain subjects in the national curriculum can be a source of disruptive behaviour. For some pupils, vocational training in a different framework / environment (colleges of further education, work placements) can improve motivation, behaviour and achievement.

> **The PRU (Pupil referral units)**

PRU have much in common with schools, except they are directly funded and directed by the LEA. They are smaller than traditional schools (from 6 to 200 pupils) and cover pupils of different ages and with different types of problems. The staff-to-pupil ratio is higher than in traditional schools, which allows for tailoring the work to the pupils' needs. PRU referrals are intended to be temporary, allowing pupils to return to the mainstream curriculum as fast as

possible. However, many pupils finish their compulsory schooling in a PRU. Unlike schools, PRU do not offer the entire national curriculum. They only teach English, Maths, ICT and social education.

> **Specialized schools (Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties)**

Behavioural difficulties can be so serious in some cases that some pupils (2 % of the school population) go to schools designed for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). EBD teach the national curriculum and also provide therapeutic support.

The quality of the teaching varies considerably from one PRU and one EBD to another. OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education), an independent body in charge of inspecting and evaluating schools, notes more deficiencies in the teaching and management of these units as compared to traditional schools. Some EBD failed when inspected and had to be shut down.

As a basis, EBD and PRU education works with whatever can be positive in the behaviour of the child.

There are also preventive programmes including:

- ▶ a programme of prevention aimed parents or parents-to-be (e.g. with financial, psychological or social difficulties);
- ▶ a programme for prevention in primary schools;
- ▶ teachers training on how to manage pupils' behaviour;
- ▶ the creation of tools to assess behaviour and improve its management.

> Referral-units

Referral units are designed to provide support both during and after school hours for students who have experienced –or who are at risk for– social and academic exclusion. Referral units are temporary alternative provision for mandatory schooling; referral classes and workshops target lower secondary and sometimes upper secondary school students who have rejected traditional schooling. This can result in serious, repeated breaches of internal school regulations, chronic, non-justified absenteeism, lack of motivation to learn, and even dropping out of school completely.

The majority of these students are adolescents from disadvantaged social backgrounds. Therefore referral units aim to get these students back into academic, technological, or vocational education programmes for the long-term, enabling them to re-engage into society and with the aim of enhancing learning in a sheltered, conflict-free learning environment.

The **classes-relais** provide a temporary structure for pupils who have dropped out of school, in order to help them re-engage in mainstream curriculum. Lower secondary school pupils who attend these classes may stay from several weeks to an entire school year. They may, depending on their personal project, be eligible for special schedules in order to help boost self-esteem and renew their interest in learning. Some pupils, once they have turned fifteen, may also receive support to help them with their vocational project. A *classe-relais* is always linked to a lower secondary school (college) and class sizes are kept small between eight and ten students who come from a cluster of different schools. The focus is on a differentiated curriculum and pupils personal projects that may be based on work-related learning.

The **ateliers-relais** were created at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year as a supplementary

provision to *classes-relais*. Like the *classes-relais*, the *ateliers-relais* aim at getting the student back into learning programmes in a peaceful, conflict-free learning environment. The *ateliers-relais* are designed for lower secondary school and sometimes upper secondary school students for a short period that most often varies from one month to six weeks (attendance cannot exceed sixteen weeks). These pupils are considered as full time students, that is, they still qualify for the status of students in the educational system.

Besides teaching the fundamentals, which is a priority, students are also taught to accept and address the rules of society, civility, citizenship, and democratic values.

> École ouverte (open school)

The *Ecole ouverte* admits, on Wednesdays and during school holidays, pupils from schools that are located in a ZEP (*Zone urbaine sensible* - sensitive urban area). This is intended to help young people build a strong positive bond with the school, and to improve the image of the schools in the ZEP neighbourhoods.

There are local schemes that rely on a link with associations, including **démision impossible**. This scheme in the Pas de Calais was designed to help pupils who have major difficulties at school. It starts by developing a dialogue and mutual trust, then by planning a way forward, to help the pupil take his / her future and training in hand. Usually, the pupil is given the possibility of work placement and / or training in a CFA (*Centre de Formation d'Apprentis* - Apprenticeship Training Centre), a vocational college, or a *Maison familiale et rurale*. The objective is to allow the pupil to breathe, to discover the world of labour, to define more clearly his / her vocational future and, if possible, to build stronger self-esteem in his / her own eyes and in the eyes of teachers and family.



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Literacy strategies

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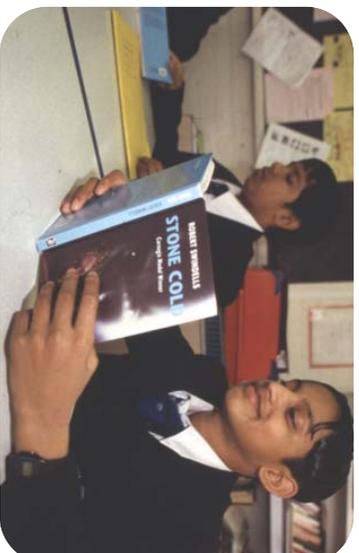
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> Point of view of a French expert on the English approach

| **Viviane Bouysse**, Head of the Office for Primary Schools, Schools Directorate, MENESR

→ What do you see as the most notable aspects of the English system in the field of prevention of illiteracy?

There are many. The first aspect is the recent definition of national standards in England, whereas in France this way of leading our educational policy is as old as School itself, which is designed as a unified public service. For the French, the curriculum is national, and this is perceived as a token of equality.



The decisions that are adopted in England have an “applicationist” nature, as if pedagogy could be deducted from research: the basic principles of the teaching system are inspired by the findings of research. Yet research is essentially in the field of cognitive psychology. To rely exclusively on these findings runs the risk of implementing mechanisms with no real cultural anchoring of skills, the risk of an empty formalism, a bit like when we had a training methodology without any content. This could explain the problems the English have today, since they point out themselves that there is a gap between the satisfactory results in assessments and the low level reinvestment into reading skills in activities that require them.

steering logic based on results; and the organic law on the laws of finance leads us further in that direction.

→ Any other notable English aspects?

What is also striking in England is the lasting nature of the implemented strategy and its sustained financial support. In the sharing of funding between the State and the Local Authorities, do we see a guarantee of a more collective involvement?

Another feature: the “literacy strategies” scheme is based both on procedures (a very precise doctrine that teachers are to follow) and results: the results of the national assessment tests are public and taken into account in management.

→ What are the analogies between the two systems?

The analogies exist in the references but not in the realisation, because England has a different history and culture. We agree on the fact that the first line of prevention of illiteracy is a general improvement of the pedagogy, to which we want to bring more unity, consistency and continuity.

This is reflected in our two countries by the guidance for teachers and the development of tools of reference; but this may simply be a superficial analogy. We do agree on the need to detect pupils who have difficulties at an early stage, and to define specific actions for them.

→ Whereas in France?

In France, steering by the procedures (the curricula that are to be followed) has been exclusive for a long time, without the rigor of the English system that defines as a whole the objectives, the contents, the progressions, and even the standard teaching session. This logic was changed by the law of 1989, which was a first step towards a

Further, our two countries have set up local support systems in which pedagogical counsellors and their equivalents have an essential role.



Exchanging Views

→ **Do you think that each of the two systems can be inspired by the other and benefit from adopting some of the other's schemes?**

There is obviously a limit to what can be borrowed because the gaps between the two systems are too wide to allow us to imitate one another.

→ **How could the French system benefit from the English system?**

The French system could find inspiration from the guidance for teachers and the production of tools that exist in England. It would also benefit from a more comprehensive association with the stakeholders around the school, including parents.

The organisation and use of national assessment, which shows significant differences compared to ours, could also be interesting (protocols that would allow us to compare and have a follow-up year-on-year). But it would not be relevant to imitate everything: the shape and content depends a great deal on the didactic choices that have been made and which are not really ours. In addition, the public nature of the results can only be conceived if we explain to those who would have them in hand the parameters on which the results are based, and how they are widely beyond the scope of the work of the teacher.

Finally, the English institution has shown a capacity to focus in terms of communication, of financial means, and of training as a real priority, and to sustain it long enough to see its effects. We can envy this stability, but here again, the context is different: the French passion for a debate on education does not seem to be shared by our English friends.

→ **Inversely, how could the English system benefit from the French system?**

The English could change their conception of reading and better articulate their Literacy strategies with other fields. Our cross-sectional approach, which can be summed up by the formula Read-write in all subject matters, is, in this respect, undoubtedly relevant. But it is easy to see the difficulty for them: they cannot format all lessons like they have done for reading and writing. Reading is not only a methodology to process information: the reader is not a computer, neutral to texts and insensitive to the stakes and contexts of reading. Reading is a linguistic, cultural, and social act that involves the individual (motivations, tastes, knowledge, inhibitions, etc.). Research can differentiate between these facets because it must give itself a precise object and proceed in an analytical way, but teaching children is necessarily more global, more complex.

> Point of view of an English expert on the French approach

Stephen Anwyl, Senior Director (Literacy), Primary National Strategy, Department for Education and Skills

→ What do you see as the noticeable aspects of the French system in the field of literacy?

Prevention of illiteracy is a priority in the primary school curriculum in France, and a great deal of time is dedicated to it in schools. However, because there are no statistics covering all schools with which to assess aspects of this learning, it is difficult to measure with accuracy the progress that is made, to target the pupils who require additional tutoring or to identify the specific aspects of the pedagogy that would need to be improved.

There is a large consensus in France on the content of learning, but less consensus and unity in respect of the ways to implement it on a pedagogical level: namely, when the children do not achieve as well as expected. There is also less balance between class work, group work and individual work.

The teachers have more freedom in France, but this freedom might lead to less homogeneous methods, not only inside the same school but also between schools.

→ What are the points the English could benefit from in the methods to prevent illiteracy in France?

In France, the children seem to have developed and kept the habit of reading at home. In the same way, a recent survey in England shows that children seem to read more as a hobby than in the past.

Also, the determining role of spoken language in learning to read and write is more widely understood in France by the teachers, the children and the parents than is the case in England.

Finally, the relation between the French inspectors and teachers is solidly built on confidence in life-long training. The English inspectorate would benefit from an enhancement of this system.

→ What are the schemes in the English system that the French system could benefit from?

The French could draw more inspiration from some of the English schemes of intervention – at an early age – with children who have difficulties in reading and writing. I have in mind schemes such as those that involve teaching assistants that could help to limit the number of children who have to repeat their year.

We have also launched a campaign in England to promote ICT, applied to the learning of reading and writing. This is done by reading electronic texts and by using an electronic screen to write, manipulate and exchange texts, instead of the blackboard. And the role of ICT will be developed even more, so that learning itself is in constant evolution.

The recent methods for teaching writing in English primary schools encourages the teacher to show to children what writing is and to explain the choices made by the writer. They should be compared to the methods that are currently being used in France.



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The National Literacy Strategy in England

> **The National Literacy Strategy** was introduced to all schools in England in September 1998 in order to raise standards of literacy throughout the primary age range, to support teachers to deliver the primary programmes of study for reading and writing as set out in the National Curriculum, and to make a significant contribution to the development of speaking and listening.

The National Literacy Strategy set out a **Framework for Teaching** which schools delivered through the Literacy Hour. This was reinforced by subject specific training for teachers, intervention in schools that were failing their pupils, and the setting of clear targets at school, local and national levels.

Following its introduction in 1998 the National Literacy Strategy has continued to evolve to respond to the latest research and policy priorities. In 2000 the Foundation Stage was introduced which provides a structured framework for a play-based approach to learning for 3 to 5 year olds, and includes an emphasis on early literacy, language and communication.

In 2003 the National Literacy Strategy was combined with the National Numeracy Strategy to become the **Primary National Strategy**. This

allowed the creation of a more coherent delivery structure and organisational model, and more effective interaction with schools on whole-school teaching and learning issues.

The overall direction of reform has been set by two key publications. In 2003, the government published the document “Excellence and enjoyment” which set out an overarching framework of reform for Primary schools focussing in particular on excellent teaching, curriculum enrichment and leadership. This was followed in July 2004 by the Five-year plan for Children and Learners, which sets out an ambitious set of commitments to build on the existing strengths of the system and to provide a higher quality offer to learners of all ages.

The Primary National Strategy has considerably improved the quality of teaching and learning and has helped to narrow the gap between schools in areas of high and low disadvantage. The 2004 national curriculum Key Stage 2 tests show that 78 % of children aged 11 in England have reached the required level at their age (level 4) in English.

These results reflect an improvement of 15 percentage points since 1997. The national target is for 85 % of 11 year olds in England to achieve level 4+ by 2006.

The plan to prevent illiteracy in France



The plan to prevent illiteracy was implemented in September 2002. Special care is given to the determining level, the *cours préparatoire* (CP) or first year of primary school. The application of the new curriculum for primary school, which came into force in the CP in September 2003, should enable the improvement of daily activities and help in the field of prevention of illiteracy. The curriculum specifies the compulsory components to teach reading and the time dedicated each day to reading and writing (2hr 30mins).

with extra staffing. It is less focused on the analysis of individual difficulties and is a tool to organize the pedagogy so as to prevent these difficulties.

> Continuation of limited numbers of pupils and extra staffing

After a first phase of development in 2002-2003 (about 100 classes with a limited number of pupils), the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research decided to continue the experience of CPs with a limited number of pupils, approximately 500 classes in 2003-2004.

> **Two documents to help teachers**
Documents, drafted at the national level and distributed to all the teachers involved, are to help them implement the plan. Two booklets have been specifically designed.

The first, *Lire au CP - Repérer les difficultés pour mieux agir* (Reading in CP – Detecting difficulties for greater effectiveness), distributed in September 2003, gives some keys to better identify the skills required for learning to read, and supplies the teachers with a typology of the main difficulties encountered by children and the activities that can overcome them. The second document, distributed in September 2004, *Lire au CP (2) - Enseigner la lecture et prévenir les difficultés* (Reading in CP (2) - Teaching to read and preventing difficulties), completes the first one. It is more specifically meant for those who work in classes with a limited number of pupils or

At the same time, in difficult areas, others schemes allow for diversity of the pedagogy in order to enhance the help given to the children:

▶ in approximately 1,800 CP an extra teacher supports the first teacher by regularly taking charge of groups of pupils, according to the project defined in respect of pupil needs;

▶ in more than 2,000 classes, as a part-time presence in the classroom, there are now educational assistants who are creating working conditions that allow the teacher to better diversify work so as to better take into account the difference between the pupils.

In 2004-2005, the scheme was furthered extended, by giving educational providers the possibility to make it more flexible by pursuing a local project based on an analysis of their needs.



publication DESCO



14-19 year-olds and vocational education

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> The point of view of a French expert on the English approach

Mar Yannick MALLIOT, Head of the Office for Initial Vocational Education, Apprenticeship and Integration, Schools Directorate, MENESR

→ What is the place in English schools for 14-19 year olds?

The English are in the same situation that we are in: they have to provide vocational qualifications, within the European context, to cover all of the active population. With regard to this objective, they encounter the same difficulties as we do with 14-19 year-olds, particularly the boys, who leave school without a qualification.



→ How do they face up to these difficulties?

In England, the recognition of a qualification is assured by the active contribution of the economic world, but the training is entirely in the hands of the training schools / colleges. The objective is to give greater acceptance of the lower levels of qualification, to hopefully allow those who have them to progress. The English are less demanding than the French regarding these levels of qualification. In France, we try to make young people acquire a qualification validated by a degree. The English have neither the CAP, nor the BEP, nor the Bac professionnel vocational qualifications, but types of “elementary units” that can be combined. It is, of course, necessary to connect the vocational training schools / college with the place of employment, and this is more liberal and more flexible in England than in France. There is, in their country, a great deal of part-time or temporary work that only requires low qualifications; but there is also much less unemployment in general, and, in particular, amongst young people. Their vocational training is thus adapted to their economic system: more partitioned and variable than in France.

→ Is the English system evolving in compliance with the European standards?

In England, vocational qualifications degrees are, as I said, of lesser importance than in our country; and this can be a problem in the perspective of Lisbon, which requires an increase in the level of vocational skills. The reform of vocational education in England is thus aimed at giving young people broader qualifications by preventing de-schooling. While they want to maintain the recognition and validity of elementary qualifications, the English want to better identify more complex levels and widen access to them. They have started to simplify the number of already recognised qualifications and have made them more comprehensive than they were. They have restructured the organisation and created a framework for training. However, the contents are negotiated at a local level with all the economic partners, instead of at a national level as is the case in France.



Exchanging Views

→ What are, in the field, the most notable aspects of English vocational training?

Unlike France, there is no training in a company while the trainee obtains their degree. However, the schools have very well equipped workshops. The English do not have alternative training, i.e. companies do not participate directly in the training themselves like in France. But they do participate in defining the content and recognition of the training on a local level.

Another aspect is their training system, which does not aim at the acquisition of general theoretical skills. Our CAP includes a full academic curriculum that, shall we say, makes them smile; it includes courses in English, a bit of maths... Here there is some form of ambiguity: while the supremacy of mainstream education is disowned, we cannot discard some form of reverence to it and, ironically, we are sometimes tempted to prove the value of our vocational qualifications by the role mainstream education has within its curriculum! According to the English, you can very well develop the qualities of an intellectual and the humanities when dealing with the subject matter, but you can also meet the needs and the demands of the people for whom you work without having to pass academic subjects.

→ What do you see as the strong points of English vocational training?

The English schools are multi-vocational and are tools at the service of local development. There are young people as well as adults. These are social premises, available to the local population. Focus is often put upon the computer material that can be useful for all of the public. They also have well-equipped and organised residential schools.

What is also striking is there flexibility: a youth of 16-19 years old can receive free tailor-made 60 hours of training (35 hrs of car mechanics, 25 hrs of maths, for example). Training is only full-time for the state pupil, who is in a minority. So, in one of the schools we visited, out of 12,500 learners, 3,500 were there full time.

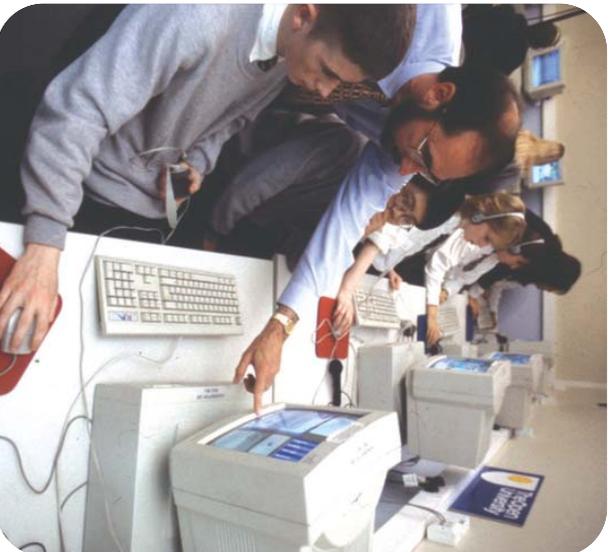
Since the schools are organized as social premises, they also include nurseries. At the same time, these are places to welcome the local population, to educate children and families, to train for health and sanitary qualifications. There is no barrier between training and social life, whereas we tend to have excessive partitioning.

→ Does the English organisation of vocational training allow them to face the problem of failure?

Vocational training seems to develop real inclusive solutions, because there is no standardisation. The English take into account particular situations, the local environment, and social and economic context.

In addition, there seem to be less stringent rules in England. The standards of professional behaviour (dress codes, contact with the customers) seem to be much less constraining. Headscarves and clothes that we would consider to be flashy are apparently not a problem for them.

The absence of standardisation is also found in the training. In France, we train in a uniform way and specialise the teachers. They all have the same obligations of duty. Over there, the organisation is





negotiated within the schools. There is no homogeneity. School is a place to live that adapts itself to its environment.

→ What do the English envy in our system?

It is hard to say! Maybe the capacity of the French system to quickly impose a reform to all its stakeholders if there is a need for it. This would be the positive aspect of our form of standardisation.

→ In conclusion?

I see two main points. In England, the vocational training system is at the service of the population and it really takes into account the economic and geographical context. And, then, it focuses on re-motivating pupils and giving each and every one at least a basic level of skills.





Exchanging Views

> The point of view of an English expert on the French approach

Cela Johnson, Divisional Manager, School and College Qualifications, Department for Education and Skills

→ What are the most notable aspects of the French system in the field of vocational training that caught your attention

We were impressed by the emphasis placed on the strand of general education which continues through vocational programmes, and that there is only substantial involvement in occupational learning post-16. This is in contrast to the degree of specialisation in vocational areas which can occur in England at a younger age and in place of continuing general education. The strong involvement of employers in the strategic planning of your provision interested us greatly, whereas our system differs in that the employers' role is more focused on assisting local delivery of

vocational learning. The primacy of teachers and head teachers in determining in what areas post-16 students will continue their studies was of interest to us, as was the use in France of the tax system as a means of encouraging employer engagement.

→ Did you perceive any analogies between the two systems?

We did share an appreciation that, despite these and other differences between our education systems, there was concern for the problems faced in both countries of reducing the disengagement of those 16-19 years olds who are currently not involved in some form of education or training, and the issue of the vocational and occupational routes being generally less well respected than academic education.

→ What could the French system learn from the English system?

We believe that the degree of flexibility and choice that the English education systems affords to the students does serve to enhance their motivation considerably, and this may be an area of potential gains for the French system. An associated aspect is that educational colleges in England usually offer vocational courses alongside the academic, so that individual students can choose to combine academic and vocational learning to achieve a mix that meets their individual needs and aspirations. We suggest you might want to consider the way English employers are engaged at a local level in planning and delivering vocational education, as we find this proves a useful tool in ensuring that the educational provision offered by institutions matches the local labour market



Caroline Lucas-MENESR

Exchanging Views

requirements. In England, there is a considerable range in the size of components that constitute vocational qualifications, as a consequence of a desire that each component should be no bigger than required to allow students to master the specific competency addressed. Whether this degree of flexibility would be beneficial or possible within your baccalaureate framework is an area you may wish to reflect upon.

Caroline Lucas-MENESR





Extending GCSEs to vocational subjects in England

> The introduction of GCSEs² in vocational subjects

New GCSEs, that validate vocational subjects, were introduced in September 2002 to allow pupils to attain vocational certification age 16, at the same stage as the other GCSEs. These vocational subjects offer a more practical approach and broaden the choices that are offered to the pupils. The new GCSEs are delivered in different types of secondary schools and can be taken at the same time as the other GCSEs.

> Why choose the new GCSEs?

Many young people wish to experience the reality of the labour world and this is why they are interested by vocational education. The new GCSEs give them the opportunity to gain an insight of the professional world without keeping them from continuing their studies through to higher education. They allow pupils to work in companies, to solve problems of the labour world, and to talk with people who work in the field that they are studying. Pupils discover different jobs in the line of business that they have chosen.

The new GCSEs are meant to:

- ▶ make the labour world better known;
- ▶ allow secondary school pupils to begin acquiring the required skills to begin working in the 21st century;
- ▶ initiate secondary school pupils into a line of business, such as engineering or tourism;
- ▶ help to develop certain skills that are used in the field they have chosen.

Eight available subjects:

- ▶ art and design;
- ▶ applied business;
- ▶ engineering;
- ▶ health and social care;
- ▶ applied information and communication technologies;
- ▶ leisure and tourism;
- ▶ manufacturing;
- ▶ applied science.

> How are the new GCSEs prepared?

The new GCSEs include mainstream courses that take place in the classroom to which they are associated, with more practical approaches on the job site:

- ▶ visits to companies to have a practical experience of the skills, techniques, processes and equipment that are used;
- ▶ a better understanding of the job and of the people who are trained to do it, including their degrees and the schools they have been to;
- ▶ a collective project to help pupils develop their self-confidence;
- ▶ solving practical cases;
- ▶ using the Internet;
- ▶ role games and simulations of professional situations given by people in a chosen area of work;
- ▶ a professional presentation of propositions / solutions;
- ▶ working in a company under the supervision of someone from that specific area of work.

> What do these new GCSEs mean?

These new GCSEs are equivalent to two other GCSEs. Schools can, therefore, double the time that is dedicated to this vocational teaching and allow for longer periods of training in companies or for other practical activities, such as visits on site. The guidelines for the certification in each subject are the same that are used for all the exam committees – even though they may have their own methods of teaching and evaluating.

> What can the new GCSEs lead to?

There is a wide choice of lines of business that are adapted to the qualifications obtainable, whether they are traditional or vocational, which places the applicants on an equal footing.

The new GCSEs prepare pupils for AS, A-levels or the VCE (vocational A-levels) either in the same subject or in associated subjects (of a same speciality) or in different subjects. Then, it is possible to go into university or to other higher education schools.

Companies with a stake in the vocational training of pupils in France



> Training in a company

In France today, vocational training always includes training periods in a company, during a period of time that depends on the type of degree that is being prepared for. An indispensable complement to the training at school, this time spent in a company increases the quality of the training and improves access to employment. However, the effectiveness of these periods of training is fruitful only if the placements is right, the right pedagogical support is received from tutors, and the pupils are prepared to make the best of these experiences.

Training in companies can be called a *stage* (training course), a *période de formation en entreprise* (period of training in a company) or a *période de formation en milieu professionnel* (period of training in a professional context), depending on the role they have and on whether they are assessed for the certification or not. These periods are an inherent part of the training: they are a privileged opportunity for the pupils to better define their professional future and to have a real life experience of the vocational training they get at school.

The stages

They are compulsory, but are not assessed for the certification. The *stages* (training courses) exist for some *certificats d'aptitude professionnelle* that have not been updated yet (CAP or lower degree of vocational qualification) and for most of the *brevets d'études professionnelles* (BEP or higher degree of vocational qualification).

The stages allow pupils to discover the corporate world and to apply the skills they have acquired at school in the industrial / business environment.

There are ***périodes de formation en entreprise*** (PFE or periods of training in a company) in BEP, or ***en milieu professionnel*** (PMP or periods of training in a professional context) in CAP and in *baccalauréat professionnel*.

They are compulsory for all the newly created or updated CAPs and in *baccalauréat professionnel*, as well as in several BEPs.



Caroline Lucas-MENESR

Students are assessed for the certification. During these periods, the pupils do not only apply what they have learnt at school. The company becomes a place where they acquire professional skills, defined in the degree as those that can only be acquired through the contact with the professional reality. Whether they are *stages* or *périodes de formation*, the pupils are under the responsibility of a tutor named by the company.

> The apprenticeship tax

The *taxe d'apprentissage* (apprenticeship tax) is a tax paid by companies. It is calculated by multiplying the number of wages paid before tax by the company by a rate of 0.5 %

In addition to the funding that is granted by the State and the Regions, the apprenticeship tax is meant to help fund the first technological and vocational training levels, i.e. according to the law, "those that prepare young people before they enter the job market to work in the industry or in a company, as specialized or qualified workers or employees, or to be an independent

■ Companies with a stake in the vocational training of pupils in France

worker or a family assistant, a technician, a qualified technician, an engineer or an executive in companies of different lines of business”.

40 % of the *taxe d'apprentissage* must necessarily be given towards the training provided / granted by the *centres de formation d'apprentis* (Apprenticeship Training Centres or CFA). The other 60 % can be distributed to any type of training centre that offers technological or vocational training.

A company can pay the apprenticeship tax in three different ways: by paying it directly to the Public Revenue Department, or directly to the training centres, or to a body in charge of collecting the tax to distribute it to the different centres. The yearly amount of the apprenticeship tax is estimated to be approximately 1.5 billion euros.

> The *commissions professionnelles consultatives*

The *commissions professionnelles consultatives* (CPCs or Vocational Advisory Committees) of the *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* are authorities where employers, employees, public authorities and qualified staff (800 people in all) form a counsel and give an opinion on the creation, the

up-dating or the suppression of technological or vocational degrees from the CAPs up to the BTS.

None of the 640 degrees (except for the *baccalauréats technologiques*, and if all the options and specialties are taken into consideration) can be created or changed without an instruction from the committees.

The designs of the degrees are based on an analysis of the situation of the labour market that they are meant for. This analysis can be the result of polls in the field, of interviews with employees and with their managers, of research; it relies on the participation of professionals in the specific line of business, of employers and employees in the field that is being scrutinised and by the task force in charge of updating, reforming or creating a degree.

CPC input is essential all through the designing of a degree and chiefly when the syllabus of the vocational activities is created: specific challenges of the business area that is being considered must be taken into account, as well as the diversity of the situations, of the sizes of the companies, of the types of organisation...

These meetings allowed the French and English experts to have a broader outlook on each of the three themes, not only due to the input of information on the practices and schemes of the other country but also because of the reactions, the comments and questions from both sides: in other words, because of the eye cast by their foreign counterparts.

Beyond the personal and professional enrichment brought to the different experts by expanding their references in the field of educational policies, it is reasonable to say that at length this meeting of ideas and practices could lead in France and England to progress in each area, first on a political level and then in the field.

From one theme to another, notable aspects of the two different systems were detected. These interesting aspects are what can nurture further reflections in the future and could bring about a rapprochement of the educational policies that are most convincing each other.

> The viewpoint of English experts on the French system

▶ The English experts, although they appreciate the French **institutional exigency** in respect of the contents of what is taught and find the wide scope that is given to academic skills in the training of French teachers interesting, have reservations regarding the methodological and pedagogical training they receive. They are, for example, astonished by the freedom allowed French teachers in the pedagogical implementation of the contents of teaching and of the lack of homogeneity that this freedom generates.

▶ They are struck by the pre-eminence of **mainstream education** in France over vocational education. They note, for example, that there is no possibility in France for pupils to combine their

academic and vocational subjects as is the case in England.

▶ They appreciate the role that is granted in France to mainstream education within vocational training programmes, even if they feel at times that it is made too important. The Tomlinson reform project shows a will to delay the specialisation of pupils and to broaden the basis of basic skills, which could improve the transferability of qualifications in time.

▶ They react positively to the commitment of the industrial and corporate world to the designing of syllabi and certifications in vocational training.

> The viewpoint of French experts on the English specificities

▶ The French experts are interested by the **pragmatism**, which characterizes the English approach to issues. This pragmatism is expressed by the quest for solutions at a more local than national scale, and consists, for example, in making connections between all the educational partners at a local level. The flexibility and the absence of standardisation, particularly in training, belong to this pragmatism. **Adapting to a given environment and social and economical context** is constantly at the heart of the English concern, whereas the French system gives greater importance, for reasons of Republican equality, to the homogeneity of training and of degrees throughout its territory. In the same way, for the French experts, there is no gap in England between training and social life, whereas in France there tends to be excess partitioning.

▶ They appreciate how important the notion of **school community** is for the English, the notion of “living together” and the fact that the English schools are designed as places to live – whether they are traditional or vocational schools – so as

Assessment

to create a sense of belonging in the school community. Is it a cause or a consequence? Rules regarding dress codes or behaviour seem to be much less stringent than in the French school community.

▶ They see that the exigencies regarding theoretical skills are lower in England than in France and note that, according to the English perspective, we can very well develop intellectual and human qualities by working without necessarily receiving an in-depth basic education / training.

▶ They appreciate the capacity that the English have to focus on a real priority, to stick to it and to put all their means (financial means, but also means in the field of training, evaluation, communication) so as to reach their objectives. In parallel, they feel that the guidance of English teachers is more “applicationist” than in France: it is meant to give them methods to apply more than pedagogical tools from which they could choose and have more freedom, as in France.

> **Convergences**

The reflections that these exchanges have brought to light rest on our shared concerns and joint priorities. Each and every one of them could become a line of thought to bring together the English and French educational policies. And these lines cross several of the themes that were dealt with in the course of these meetings.

These are:

- ▶ **the role of parents and families**, without whom prevention of violence and illiteracy is to no purpose;
- ▶ **school projects**, which are the only way to give the necessary impulse to deal effectively with the two issues of behaviour and literacy;
- ▶ **taking into account the local economic environment** can help to enhance the value of vocational education.

These are the lines of thought that we need to explore together in the framework of an open and constructive collaboration, in order to give French and English pupils the best opportunities for success.