



Risinghill Revisited

The Waste Clay

THE RISINGHILL RESEARCH GROUP

Isabel Sheridan, Philip Lord, Lynn Brady, Alan
Foxall, John Bailey and Yvonne Fisher

RISINGHILL REVISITED – Book 2

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‘Such were the joys

When we all girls & boys

In our youth time were seen

On the Ecchoing Green.’

William Blake,

From *‘The Ecchoing Green, Songs of Innocence and Experience’*

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Risinghill teachers and pupils, in particular those who have participated in the research *for Risinghill Revisited* (RR): without their contributions *The Waste Clay* would not have been possible. Leila Berg, author of *Risinghill: death of a Comprehensive School* is also acknowledged here – for providing the authors with so much background information to the writing of her book, and for producing a piece (entitled ‘The Next Room’) for inclusion in *The Waste Clay*. The authors hope that RR will serve to keep their memories alive, and indeed the memories of all who have fought for an education system in which every child truly matters.

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List of Abbreviations

In presenting this book, we have had to make use of some abbreviations and acronyms, a number of which have now fallen out of current use. We set out here a list of the most important of these.

Abbreviation	Meaning and context
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AC	Advisory Committee for Risinghill's development
AMA	Assistant Masters Association
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CP	Corporal Punishment
EC	Education Committee of the LCC (qv). The LCC took on responsibility for education in London in 1904 from the former School Board for London (also known as the London School Board). The EC had, over the years, many sub-committees. We also use "EC LCC" where there may be confusion
EO	(Chief) Education Officer (See also CEO)
GB	Governing Body (of a school). Also called a Board of Governors. We use RGB to denote the GB of Risinghill specifically where there might otherwise be confusion.
GLC	Greater London Council
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector (of schools)
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority. ILEA was formed when the GLC (qv) was inaugurated in April 1965 taking over responsibilities formerly held by the EC (qv), but only for 12 inner boroughs of London; the outer boroughs each took responsibility for education in their own area. In formal terms it was a special committee of the GLC. It was disbanded in 1990 when the GLC was dissolved. It is important to note that the ILEA was formed and the EC dissolved at a critical point in Risinghill's life, a few months before its closure.
ILP	Independent Labour Party

IOE	Institute of Education
LCC	London County Council. The LCC was the principal local governing body for the County of London throughout its existence from 1889 to 1965, the year Raisinghill closed.
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LSP	London School Plan 1947
MD	(William) Michael Duane
NUT	National Union of Teachers
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RGB	See GB
RR	Raisinghill Revisited
RRG	Raisinghill Research Group
WWII	World War 2

Editorial and Research Notes

The Risinghill Research Group (RRG) has received many communications from a wide range of people involved with the story of Risinghill and its history; and anecdotes of many other people have been accessed for the compilation of *Risinghill Revisited* (RR), which comprises two books, *The Killing of a Comprehensive School* and *The Waste Clay*. Extracts from these communications have been quoted freely throughout RR so that they may be heard with the voices of those who played a role in this story, and in doing so a policy has been adopted of leaving the texts with their original spellings and grammar, except where some editorial intervention has been necessary to make the text clear. Such emendations are marked with square brackets, thus [].

The majority of participants in this study (primarily former pupils and teachers of the school) completed a detailed questionnaire, and at the time gave permission for their names to be cited; indeed for many of the participants, this was a key factor in their decision(s) to share their memories of Risinghill. Unless otherwise stated, all of the contributors are named; however, for the sake of continuity and for ease of referencing, the authors have chosen to identify the pupils by their first names and just the first initial of their family names (as received – either maiden name or married name.). There are some exceptions to this rule, notably in section B, where the first initial of both the first name and family name are used, either because the contributor has expressed a preference for being identified in this way or because formal consent has not been obtained by the RRG; a change of address (home and/or email) from that provided at the time of contact (circa 2004-2006) being the prime reason. Citations from these contributors are relatively short, unlikely to cause offence, and in the opinion of the authors would have received approval had contact been possible. As in Book 1, members of the RRG are cited by their first names - Isabel, Philip, Lynn, Alan, John and Yvonne, who joined the RRG in September 2017 to assist with the proof-reading of both books.

Where the teachers are concerned, only a small number (eight) participated in the research and all gave consent for their names to be cited in full. Leila Berg and Margaret Duane, widow of Michael Duane, whom Isabel and Lynn interviewed in 2004 and 2006 respectively, are also identified, as are some others, notably Simon Duane, Duane's youngest son from his first marriage.

In line with other publications of an investigative nature, the research for RR took a number of forms. Much of the research was conducted on-line; in libraries and archives; and the authors interviewed a number of people, two of whom are perhaps the most important as both were adults at the time and were intimately involved with the events described – Leila Berg and Margaret Duane. The RRG also received many emails, letters and telephone calls, mainly from those pupils who wanted to speak to the researchers direct and/or did not have access to a computer, and so were unable to complete the questionnaire on-line or download it from the RRG's website, *Risinghill.org*.

Many of the documents consulted during the research for this work are available in multiple locations, and some are quoted in Berg's book. The authors have cited the more accessible versions, sometimes using the secondary source where the primary source is not currently available. All of the information gathered for the writing of RR will, on its publication, be deposited with the Institute of Education (IOE), who has expressed interest in this project.

When the RRG began its research over twelve years ago, certain archives, such as the London County Council (LCC) archive (held at the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA)), and the MD archive (held at the IOE) have since been reorganised and catalogued formally, with many files that were open then now being closed, some for one hundred years precautionary to data protection requirements. The authors have noted in the text where reference is made to such files. It is also important to point out here that, in 2006, Margaret Duane gave the RRG full access to the MD archive, kindly arranging with the IOE for any duplicate files (of which there were several) in the archive to be sent to Isabel, and some of these files have since been closed.

In addition, the RRG has its own collection of documents, especially copies of materials received from Margaret Duane direct. This is referred to as the 'RRG Archive'. Bob Dixon, a former Risinghill teacher, kept his own personal archive of Risinghill. The authors refer to this collection as the 'Bob Dixon Archive.'

Introduction and Acknowledgements

In this book the RR story is continued by reporting on the teachers and children who attended the school – now more than fifty years ago. This research (presented in Parts A and B of the book) sits alongside the research that was presented in the companion Book 1: *The Killing of a Comprehensive School*, looking at the story from the perspective of the people involved rather than the politics in which the school was immersed. In Part C, at various points, the authors refer back (briefly) to Book 1, extending the story of educational politics beyond the closure of the school in 1965, through to the introduction of academies and free schools. Here the authors pick up: (1) Duane’s story from 1965 through to his retirement in 1980, and his death in 1997; and (2) their interviews with Leila Berg and Margaret Duane, giving Berg the last say on Risinghill by way of a piece (written by her in 2005) for inclusion in RR. Entitled ‘The Next Room’, this is a moving tribute to Duane and the school. In bringing RR to a conclusion, the authors review (again briefly) the legislative changes to the education system up to the present day, looking at the (possible) impact of Risinghill on said system alongside their collective and personal conclusions of the affair.

Book 1 (The Killing of a Comprehensive School) was about the murky world of politics, and the administrative assassination of a school and its head; the repercussions of which are described here in Book 2 (*The Waste Clay*) where the pupils are, for the first time, given a voice, as are some of the former teachers of the school, notably Bob Dixon.

To recap, in Book 1, the story of Risinghill’s birth in 1960 in Islington, North London, and its five-year life under its inspirational, and sometimes controversial, headmaster, Michael Duane (MD) was described in detail. The school was closed in dubious circumstances (a falling school roll, claimed by the LCC, to have been attributable to Islington parents preferring single-sex schools) with the closure twice becoming the focus of national news and political comment - in the spring and summer of 1965, and again in 1968 when Berg’s book was published. Berg lifted the lid on what she believed was a conspiracy to close the school long before the official decision was taken, and the authors are of the opinion that she was correct. Here, in *The Waste Clay*, they elaborate on Berg’s conspiracy theory, providing at the same time their own hypotheses that Risinghill’s closure was for another, more sinister, reason - one that was linked directly to the educational politics of the time, and not, necessarily, Duane’s progressive methods, though his principled refusal to use corporal punishment (CP) was, undoubtedly, a factor in the equation.

The Research

The RRG approached this research primarily by creating questionnaires aimed at two communities, teachers and pupils. This proved to be a successful strategy in the case of the pupils where seventy questionnaires were completed, but for the teachers, who would be much older, and therefore far fewer, this produced meagre results. However, eight substantial (and very interesting) communications from former teachers of the school were received, and these are reported in section A of this book. For both teachers and pupils, many anecdotes and other items of interest were provided, such as photographs and school reports. The RRG even received information from pupils at schools Duane had taught at before Risinghill; and of course it had the testimonies of: Duane's widow, Margaret Duane; Simon Duane, Duane's youngest child from his first marriage; and Leila Berg, Duane's champion in the 1960s.

The authors would like to thank all those who have contacted the RRG over the years, and hope that, in reporting this research, they have done them all justice, in every sense of the word. They regret that they have not been able to name all the contributors, to whom they are profoundly grateful, as without their inputs, RR would not have been possible. The authors would also like to thank their spouses/partners for putting up with their absences while they revisited the school.

The Risinghill Research Group

Isabel Sheridan, Philip Lord, Lynn Brady, Alan Foxall, John Bailey and Yvonne Fisher.

Part A – The Teachers

When John Bailey, the creator of the Risinghill website, joined the RRG in 2005 he set up a special page for the teachers on which he posted a bulletin requesting their support, also a questionnaire that could be downloaded or completed on-line: the teachers' questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix 1. A year later, the *Times Education Supplement* (TES) did the RRG proud by putting Isabel and Lynn on the front page of its journal, entitled: 'Back to Battle – the fight to clear a school's name – 40 years on'. (Newnham 2006). The RRG also had a small piece in *The Teacher* magazine. (National Union of Teachers, ca 2007). These

initiatives, coupled with personal contacts supplied by Leila Berg, Margaret Duane and others, eventually brought about a small measure of success.

The RRG's initial attempts to contact the teachers were, of course, some forty years after the school closed, so it is not surprising that it was difficult to find many since they would have been at or past retirement age, even if they were in their early twenties then. Contacting the more mature teachers was even more difficult. All the teachers reported here would have been in the (fairly) early years of their professional life when at Risinghill.

In the following chapter (A1) eight contacts with teachers are reported, supplemented with other contact information.

It is worth mentioning here another kind of tribute to the teachers, which has recently been published in a novel by the actress Sheila Hancock. Her book, *Miss Carter's War* (Hancock, 2014), follows the career of an imagined, but wholly believable, teacher at Risinghill, Marguerite Carter. Actual scenes at the school and interactions with Duane are reported, giving life to the novel. In her Acknowledgements, Hancock notes:

For information about Risinghill School I am grateful to ex-pupils Isabel Sheridan and the Risinghill Research Group, who will be publishing a factual version of the school's history. I was also helped by the builders working on the site of the school, little of the original of which remains, it having been replaced by a fine comprehensive, the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School. I think Duane would have been pleased. I am indebted to Leila Berg's version of what happened there in her book Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School.

CHAPTER A1 - The Teachers Voices and Reflections

'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'

L P Hartley, 'The Go-Between', 1953

When Isabel and Lynn met up with Leila Berg in 2004, unfortunately she could not recall all of the names of the teachers whom she had interviewed and/or gave aliases to when writing her book. However, she did remember Zvia, an Israeli artist and sculptor, who had no qualms about being named, probably because she was not dependant on the London County Council (LCC) for work, and so did not have quite so much to lose:

Anyone with vision would have moved heaven and earth to keep Zvia at Risinghill. But anyone with vision would have kept Risinghill. The Divisional Officer wrote to say that it appeared she had what amounted to a private studio at the school, free of charge, and that she would have to leave. Zvia's experimental plastic columns stand today in Ken Wood, shining and bubbling in the slanting sun. Risinghill pupils, boys on probation, worked on that first one. (Berg, 1968, p150)

The following extract, taken from Berg's interview with Zvia, can be found at (Berg, 1968, pp261-265):

I was sitting in the staff room. My English wasn't very hot at the time. The children loved it. They corrected me, and taught me. There was a group of about fifteen teachers there; I was writing something. I noticed they looked round to see who was there and then someone said 'Yes, those Jews are a pest. Thank goodness we don't have many of them in the school.' I think they thought I was French. People like this always believe Jews have enormous hooked noses, and so on. I was shocked. These were teachers in a school of numerous nationalities. Then I discovered the educational authority was not horrified at such attitudes at all.²

² This might well be a reference to the race relations survey that was stopped by the LCC on account of some communist teachers objecting to the nationality of the researcher, as reported in Book 1, *The Killing of a Comprehensive School*.

In Israel, it is against the law to send a child out of the class, or to lift a hand against the child. You can't leave a child in a class more than a year because he isn't good enough to go up – you must give him special coaching. It would be good for English teachers to be aware of some of these things. They are not aware everyone does not think in the English way, and may sometimes be thinking more intelligently. (Berg, 1968)

The interview with Zvia continues:

I came back to the school later on. I had some large plastic sculpture to do and Mr Duane said 'You could use the large studio, and in return take the boys on probation, so that they will not disturb the other classes; they can work with you like apprentices.' I learnt a great deal from these five boys, who, because I was not part of the Establishment, spoke frankly to me...

An Italian boy Vittorio, was in my class. He used to come in very smart exquisite clothes, and write on the walls 'Vittorio is the most handsome boy in the world', and dance round me brushing me with his hips. One day he walked out of my class. I said nothing. I was very aware they were always in a dangerous emotional state. He came back very very pale. I said 'Vittorio! What has happened?' He said 'I went to get a broom to sweep the room.' I was amazed he should think of doing such a thing. He had gone to this teacher's room where the broom was kept, and asked if he could take it. The teacher told him to get out of the room, knock on the door, and wait till he was told to come in. So he told the teacher where to stick his broom. Then the teacher came into my room, screaming with rage, and shaking.

Another teacher, who was described by Berg as 'Just – a man', – echoed the thoughts of many teachers today, in particular those who work in some of our tough, inner-city schools:

I think tiredness is inherent in teaching. But at Risinghill it's exaggerated, because the children are so demanding ... It has always been a great problem getting teachers for Risinghill. No one wants to teach in this district. We have part-time, temporary, supply teachers. It all adds to the strain. You never get any free time during the day, and you find yourself

teaching thirty-five periods a week. Teaching here is difficult, but it gets better as you go along. Basically it is a question of knowing the children...

In my last school, they had houses – but only for football; and there was no machinery for knowing the children's backgrounds ... People say you can't get to know children in a large comprehensive. I have found it just the opposite. I have never known my children so well as I do in this school.

One of my main problems has always been what to do with a child who wrecks a lesson, and does it week after week. In my last class there were four who had had psychiatric treatment, and at least three others who should have had. Or it may be a child who is very backward. We have one trained remedial teacher for the whole of the school – and he says a quarter of the children in the school need remedial teaching...

At that last school, I had some brilliant children. I took them all the way up till they were at the end of their fourth year. Then the head there decided they should take G.C.E. a year earlier. I had been doing all kinds of things with the kids – they were being educated. I protested. But I had to take it. I told the class 'It has been decided I must stop educating you and get you through exams.' It ruined them. They lost all interest. And although the head had envisaged them having an extra year in the sixth and all going to university in consequence, in fact most of them left without doing any higher education at all. (Berg, 1968, pp265-267)

Yet another teacher - again described by Berg simply as 'A man' – said this about the staff at Risinghill:

Fifty per cent of teachers – higher at this school – have their own ideas about when children should stand up, when they should sit down, and so on. The trouble's in training colleges – especially single-sex ones. People who have gone to a co-educational college are much more relaxed

In this school you have an incredibly varied staff. Some of them, in a limited way, are good. But they don't think in terms of developing and learning from new situations. They just stick. The wrong people are

teachers. Calling a boy by his surname is ridiculous. You get a much better response from him if you call him by his first name. You do in the family. (Berg, 1968, p268)

There are, however, always two sides to the story and Berg did make some attempt to tell both sides where she could. Here the two interviewees are each described as ‘A woman’ and both were teachers at Risinghill.

I’m an old-fashioned teacher. A child has to do as it’s told for me. I go to great lengths to understand it; to know the background; but beyond that I don’t think it’s kind to the child ... I shut my door and get on with things in my own way ... I know the background well – I’ve taught in this particular district twenty years. No, I don’t know their families. I know perhaps two of their parents. The background of these children is exceptionally difficult. But they have to know before they go into the world what their limitations are... The world is a hard place. Many of them are going to find things difficult next year, when they are not going to be allowed to do as they like. I believe a child likes discipline, knowing that if it oversteps the mark it is a calculated risk. I don’t think children are capable of deciding for themselves the difference between right and wrong. (Berg, 1968, p271)

We have the right to be led ... and to be told.

The head should know the children through us, not on his own, or what are we for? We can tell him what the children are like, and he should take our word for it; otherwise he is demoting us. He should see the children through the teachers. Otherwise, if the teacher is not very successful, he demotes them.

You can’t help one person at the expense of others, as has happened here. (Berg, 1968, p271)

The RRG tried many different routes to find the teachers, but most of its searches were in vain. Alan, who was given this unenviable task, first tried the National Union of Teachers, then My School and the Friends Reunited websites. His

biggest disappointment was not being able to locate Flora Rosenberg, a French Canadian teacher who married the actor, Joe Melia, whilst working at the school. Her name cropped up several times in the research with the pupils - either as 'Miss Rosenberg' or 'Miss Melia' – and this was because they remembered her talent for making learning fun. One pupil described Rosenberg as 'silly as a box of lights' (an affectionate, not derogatory, term) but this teacher was by no means silly, nor was she the only teacher at Risinghill to connect with the children in this way:

I'd like also to mention Mrs. Mary Corner who organised some great dramatic and musical productions; she was good with the kids too. Some found her enthusiasm a bit too much to handle, for example kids arriving for a formal lesson after the high excitement of her sessions. (Rogers, 2011)

Of the eight teachers contacted, five completed the teacher questionnaire (see Appendix 1); two contacted the RRG via email; and one gave an interview over the telephone. The RRG also had an email from a Dr Simon Murray whose cousin, Philippa Herbert, had just died. This was in March 2006. Murray had written an obituary for Herbert, which he kindly passed on:

In 1960 she joined the staff of a new co-educational comprehensive school – Risinghill – in Islington. Led by its inspirational headmaster, Michael Duane, Risinghill was a courageous experiment in comprehensive education in which Philippa played a major role. Despite support from children, parents and teachers, Risinghill was closed in 1965 by an unholy alliance of educational bureaucrats and politicians threatened by its compassion and success. (Murray and McCullagh, 2006)

Two of the teachers who completed a questionnaire (Margot Coates and Bob Dixon), have also died, in 2007 and 2008 respectively. The RRG owe so much to Bob Dixon and regret that he did not live to see RR finished.

The contributions from the eight teachers are summarised in the following. Unless otherwise stated all quotations are taken from their questionnaire responses.

A1.1 - Margot Coates

Margot Coates was Isabel's form teacher at Gifford School. She was, in Isabel's opinion, strict but fair, and seems to have been as popular with the staff as she was with the children. What is interesting about her questionnaire is that, although she appears to have shared the same educational values as Duane, she did not agree with his methods, in particular his approach to discipline:

My answer to question 5.29 is complex. Firstly, I would ask you to look very carefully at the character of Duane himself. Doubtless you have read the various obituaries. Here two salient facts emerge. He had a major breakdown on leaving the army at the end of the war which necessitated some form of psycho-therapy. I would guess that his therapist was a Freudian. Certainly Freud was one of his guiding lights. The other beacon in his life was A.S Neill, whose educational theories he greatly admired and tried to emulate in the unlikely setting of a large, new comprehensive school.

There was a nucleus of staff who did believe in a more liberal attitude in education but I believe they had marked reservations about the way in which Duane tried to bring this to pass. His theories should have been introduced very gradually, and argued with patience and clarity.

Discipline was not a popular word with Duane and he had little discipline in his make-up. On a personal note, when I eventually became a teacher-therapist working in a child guidance clinic, I soon came to realise that what I had always suspected with regard to troubled children was true, namely that there are those who crave structure in their lives, that only when they feel safe in an ordered universe can they begin to deal with their problems. Risinghill was not a "safe" environment! And equally, not all our pupils were emotionally troubled and were crying out for limits (however elastic) to be imposed ...

It should be explained that, in question 5.29, the teachers were asked to list the school's five main strengths and in question 5.30 its weaknesses. Under question 5.29, Coates listed "certain talented members of staff; initial good will of the children; initial good will of the

families; and some senior members of staff” but wrote “see my letter” in answer to question 5.30. Her comments are, therefore, in response to question 5.30 and not 5.29.

The suggestion that Duane had “little discipline in his make-up” surprised the authors as this was a man who, during World War II (WWII), was decorated twice and held the rank of Major. And while it is true to say that, as children, some of the pupils, including the authors, thought he was a bit soft on discipline (because of the rumours that were circulating in the school when it first opened about him giving the tearaways cups of tea in his office instead of a good telling off or maybe a few strokes of the cane) all of the RRG members who attended the school respected him enormously, as did the majority of the pupils surveyed; to be discussed later in Part B.

Coates’ claim that Duane had had a major breakdown after the war was, for the authors, equally baffling as she had read Berg’s book and would have been aware that, on leaving the army, he was given a clean bill of health. His testimonial, which is cited in full in Berg’s book, shows that he was “energetic both mentally and physically”. (Berg, 1968, p25) Berg also charts Duane’s employment history immediately after the war and there are no breaks in it. As reported in Book 1 (at chapter B1, section B1.3) he returned to his teaching job at Owens Grammar School in Islington, and from there went to the Institute of Education (IOE). In 1948, when he left the IOE, he was given an excellent reference:

I have read what is said about Mr W.M. Duane (3 May 1948) by Dr. P. Gurrey, who has been in the best position to assess the quality of Mr Duane’s work in the Institute. I endorse all that he says and I would wish to pay particular tribute to the very lively part that Mr Duane has played in our affairs. (Institute of Education, 1948)

Also, as documented in Book 1, (at chapter B1, section B1.4) in 1948 Duane was given the headship of Howe Dell, a new school in Hertfordshire. But because Howe Dell was not quite ready, he was asked to run Beaumont School in the interim where he appears to have done a sterling job:

It is seriously contended that the day of miracles is past, but in the eyes of the Committee so great changes have been accomplished in so short a time that it would not be too extravagant to refer to the changes as miraculous. In thanking you for your work here, may we express the hope that you will

find joy and satisfaction in your new School at Howe Dell. (Berg, 1968, p27)

Although Duane left Howe Dell under a cloud (as discussed in Book 1, at chapter B1, section B1.4) his reference from the Divisional Executive was equally impressive. It is the authors' contention that, had he suffered a major breakdown during this period, he would have been discharged on medical grounds as the chair of Howe Dell's governing body (GB), Maynard, would probably have leapt at the opportunity to get rid of him. At this time, Duane was also a Justice of the Peace, often sitting on the same bench as Maynard, who was chairman of Magistrates.

Duane's next headship was at Alderman Woodrow where, as reported in Book 1, (at chapter B1, section B1.5) he met his second wife, Margaret. Even though the authors were pretty sure that Margot Coates was mistaken about Duane's mental health, Margaret Duane was questioned about this:

Margaret: Mike didn't have a breakdown; in 1977 he got shingles, also encephalitis, not a nice thing to have. He was very ill in 1977 and could have died then. He wasn't ever really quite himself after that; he did lose a bit after that. But I mean, he was still fine and managed to enjoy life...(M. Duane, 2006)

There is no doubt however, that Duane did suffer with spells of depression, as has been discussed in chapter B1 of Book 1. But this was later in life - when he and Margaret had retired to Devon. It was around this time that Duane's war experiences began to catch up with him:

Margaret: Cannot quite remember the detail, it was a sign, twinned with something, France and I can't quite remember ... this is what you get when you are 85! Anyway we approached this sign, and suddenly he looked terrible; he was driving and he stopped the car. He looked absolutely awful. I thought he was having a heart attack. I was really worried about him ... and he was trembling ... and I said "What's wrong, are you not well?" "Oh", he said, "That is French, it's twinned with ..." or something like that. He said "I'll be alright in a minute, don't worry,

don't worry" ... He sort of pulled himself together but he still would not talk about it, he just would not talk. (M. Duane, 2006)

Duane's refusal to talk about these flash backs and/or his feelings of anxiety are not unusual. He may have been suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – a condition that affects people who have suffered a traumatic event, such as a war. It was not until the 1980s that PTSD was recognised formally, and this might have been the impetus for Duane eventually seeking help. He did see a psycho-therapist though whether she was a Freudian is anyone's guess:

Margaret: But when he went for that therapy it was with a woman, I can't remember her name. (We asked if this was straight after the war) Oh no, it was not straight after the war ... it was some time after. (M. Duane, 2006)

From the perspectives of Isabel, Philip, Lynn and Alan, all of whom attended Risinghill, they can only remember a man who had a smile for everyone, and whose whole demeanour exuded energy and confidence. If Duane was suffering from PTSD or any other mental condition they would never have guessed; however, as children, they were probably not in the best of positions to judge. All they can say is that their memories are of a strong, energetic man, who was often seen in the playground(s) at break times, usually with a gang of boisterous children in tow, and seemingly loving every minute of it. They cannot remember him being stern, grumpy or short-tempered: to the contrary, he had a very cheerful disposition. Moreover, he appeared to know all of his pupils well, and by name:

Lessons like maths, geometry and science I could not get the hang of and sometimes I was made to sit outside in the corridor reading a book ... Often Duane would come along and seeing me sitting there would say "Maths lesson, Parlour. Keep reading." He seemed to know every pupils name! (Andy P., 2006)

As with Duane, Coates did not believe in corporal punishment (CP). She was also supportive of the School Council. In fact, many of the answers that she gave to the questions asked in the survey suggested that, in her own way, she was very progressive. What the authors found interesting was that, although she appeared to have been somewhat dismissive of Berg's account of the Risinghill affair, she did support Berg's conspiracy theory:

Q.5.21 In your view was there a hidden agenda behind the closure and what were the real reasons for this?

Ans: *There was undoubtedly a semi-hidden agenda.*

Q.5.22 Can you remember when you first began to feel that the school (and perhaps your job) was at risk because of Starcross?

Ans: *About two years into the life of the school.*

Q.5.24 Did you agree with the closure of the school and if so why?

Ans: *I could sense that closure was inevitable.*

The year in which Coates felt that the school was under threat was 1962, the year in which inspector MacGowan produced his damning report, as discussed in Book 1 (at chapters C5 and C6, sections C5.5 and C6.3 respectively). Her response to question 5.22 was, therefore, quite revealing. However, it was her response to questions 5.16 (Do you feel that the inspections of Risinghill were justified?) and 5.18 (Did you agree with the findings from these inspections?) that confounded the RRG, as she responded in the affirmative to question 5.16, but to question 5.18 simply stated “I only ever saw one report.” This was the report that crucified Duane; condemned many of the teachers; and marked the beginning of the end for Risinghill.

Coates’ response to question 5.15 (What do you think prompted the inspections of Risinghill?) was also very interesting. Here she cited “Discipline breakdown” as the reason, which, of course, put the ball firmly in Duane’s court. The reason for the breakdown, however, was because of Duane’s decision to remove CP; something that, to all intent and purpose, Coates was in agreement with. The authors could not help but wonder if this was the reason why she avoided answering question 5.18. In retrospect, this was an awkward question for the teachers as CP was inextricably linked to discipline in the minds of many; was common-place in most schools then and was something the teaching unions did not want to relinquish. Times were, as Coates so eloquently pointed out to the authors very different then, and they were asked to bear this in mind when writing about the staff in their book, quoting L. P. Hartley’s opening sentence in *The Go-between*:

For their sakes too I would ask you to take to heart the phrase: 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'. (Coates, 2004)

Margot Coates was, undoubtedly, a valued member of Duane's team; she was also very popular with her colleagues. This comes across strongly in the many tributes that were paid to her by some of the former Risinghill teachers on her death:

I first met Margot at Risinghill Comprehensive when our schools were amalgamated. She endeared herself to me immediately because of her sense of humour. We had a lot of laughs, and believe me, we did need them at Risinghill. Hardworking and conscientious Margot had a genuine concern for children in her care... (Mary Rushworth (Fen))³

I first met Margot in 1960 when Risinghill Comprehensive School was being formed. Classes at that time were as large as 40, and Margot was put in charge of an all boys' class called 2H (the children used an aspirate 'H' and were soon known by all as 2'Haitch'). With alphabetical academic streaming the practice at the time, the challenges of an 'H' stream are obvious, but Margot soon established herself as a charismatic and attractive person with a profound concern for her mostly very deprived charges – but without sentimentality, and always expecting the best from them.

She was a superb disciplinarian, but without any tyranny. She had a talent for creating fun and merriment among children and staff, and a wonderfully robust laugh... (Annie Burton)

I think that Margot made me laugh more than anyone ever has! She was a wonderful colleague who could make every 'break' time memorable – her timing and turn of phrase were brilliant and we could forget our difficult lessons as we literally cried with laughter. Yet Margot was always supportive and so helpful. She was quick to get to the 'nub' of any problem and made a demanding job in Islington bearable for me... (Ruth Catchpole) (Rushworth et al., 2007)

³

We suppose this was a contraction of Fenoughty, her maiden name when at Risinghill.

A1.2 - Bob Dixon

Dixon, whom was introduced in Book 1 at various points, was a staunch supporter of Duane. After the school closed, he stayed in touch with Duane and they became good friends. He was not aware of Duane suffering a breakdown after the war and did not, in any event, think this was relevant. Insofar as the removal of CP was concerned, Dixon was of the opinion that it would not have been possible to introduce the change gradually, as had been suggested by Coates.

Much to the RRG's delight, Dixon had kept his own, personal records on Risinghill. He had also kept many newspaper cuttings and articles about education in the 1960s, and in particular the debates about the comprehensive model. These records helped the authors to piece together the facts about the Risinghill affair, and to understand the politics of the time. Dixon had always hoped that his Risinghill collection would come in useful one day, and he handed it over to the RRG without any strings attached. His only stipulation was that, once the RRG had finished with his papers, these be deposited with the IOE. The idea that his collection would become part of the Duane archive pleased him immensely.

Until the authors spoke to Dixon and examined his records, they had not realised what a broad curriculum was on offer at Risinghill. They had assumed that education was better now and more interesting, but this could not have been further from the truth. Dixon's timetables show the wide range of subjects that were being taught at the school; even then pupils whom were new to the country and could not speak English were learning English as a foreign language.

He joined Risinghill in 1963:

I managed to get a post as English teacher at a (mixed) comprehensive school which became quite famous: Risinghill. A very important factor for me was that Michael Duane, the headmaster at Risinghill, was against corporal punishment and was non-authoritarian. This was what I was looking for. (Many of the teachers at Southall Grammar School couldn't understand why I was making such a move, the more so as my new school was in Islington, then a very run-down, working-class area of London, only later to become 'gentrified'.) Duane was, politically, an anarchist but, as a teacher, was in a direct line of descent from H Makarenko,

Homer Lane and A S Neill. The first two of these, arguably, had the hardest job as they were dealing, specifically, with delinquents, though they were not operating within education systems. A S Neill, to my mind, had an easier task as he ran a private school to which self-selected, 'progressive' parents sent their children. Duane, who would have acknowledged his debt to Neill's theories (which were based on practice) had a harder task ...

The greatest difficulties were presented (I almost wrote 'caused' but, of course, they were symptoms of social problems, rather than causes) by native English children, white and black. The reasons are too complicated [for] here but motivation, or lack of it, would be an important factor

Briefly, Duane believed in love rather than punishment. Of course, many children make it difficult for you to love them but he, himself, was a very gifted teacher and I think I learned a lot from him. (Dixon, 2007b)

The Wrong was Dixon's last book. He died on 4 October 2008, just after it was published. Sue Lord, who wrote his obituary, said that he would be remembered as a "much loved writer, poet and peace activist." To this the authors would add a gifted teacher:

I do remember a great teacher Mr Dixon who helped me with my speech and pronunciation in drama class. (Kyriacou, 2006)

A1.3 - Anne Burton

Anne Burton was a teacher whom most of the pupils surveyed remembered. She was young, very attractive and the authors know (from their memories of the time and from their research with the pupils) that many of the boys in the school had a crush on her. Burton, however, would probably prefer to be remembered for the fantastic musical performances that she, as head of the Music Department, delivered. As she, herself, reported in her questionnaire:

Q.5.31 Can you describe any examples of good practice and co-operation between pupils and teachers at Risinghill?

Ans: *Two superb productions – a Christmas and Easter oratorio involving every child and most staff.*

Whereas some of the other teachers expanded on their questionnaires by providing additional information on a separate sheet, or in a covering letter, Burton simply completed the document. Therefore the RRG is only able to provide her replies to the questions asked. Here are some of them:

Q.2.5 Can you recall what your feelings were regarding corporal punishment prior to joining Risinghill and whether or not these views changed afterwards?

Ans: *I smacked on a few occasions in anger and desperation as a new teacher having serious discipline problems. My views changed totally.*

Q.2.6 Were you ever in receipt of any LCC booklet or instructions concerning the need and/or usage of corporal punishment?

Ans: *I don't remember ever seeing one.*

Q.5.4 Do you feel that some of the children/classes you taught were virtually unteachable?

Ans: *In some cases almost whole class did not understand English, in some behaviour was disruptive.*

In answering question 5.30 (the school's five main weaknesses), Burton listed the following:

- *Academic imbalance – too few high flyers*
- *Differences between staff on punishment*
- *Class sizes, not unusually large for the time, but a new school with so many problems needed a better staff/pupil ratio.*

In line with Margot Coates, Anne Burton felt that the inspections of Risinghill were justified; however, she too did not state whether or not she agreed with the inspectorate's findings. With hindsight, this question (5.16) which dealt with the quasi inspections of the school should have been expanded as this would have provided a better understanding of the teachers' views. By way of example, question 5.16 simply asked the question: Do you feel that the inspections of Risinghill were justified? Had the words 'and if so why?' been added,

or a separate question asked along these lines, this would have given a more accurate picture of the teachers' opinions on this issue, also a better feel for what might or might not have been happening (from a management perspective) in the school. As reported in Book 1, at chapter C5, section C5.5, the Ministry HMI, Munday, was perfectly happy with school, but the LCC inspectorate had a completely different view – hence the reason for question 5.16. Burton did not answer question 5.15 either (What do you think prompted the inspections of Risinghill?) The removal of CP, however, does seem to have been a contributory factor:

Q.5.10 In your view were problems caused because some of the teachers did not have enough experience to manage their classes without using corporal punishment?

Ans: *Most definitely.*

Burton, to use her own words, became “very anti corporal punishment” (Q.5.13) but once again there is this confusing picture of indiscipline being linked to Duane’s removal of CP yet this was something Burton and others, including Coates, supported strongly.

In responding to the question ‘How much contact did you and the other teaching staff have with Michael Duane?’ she said that this was regular – in formal meetings, informal meetings and in the staff room. She also responded in the affirmative when answering the question “Was the educational ethos at Risinghill explained to you when you joined, if so who by?” In fact, all five teachers who completed a questionnaire responded in the same way as Burton, that being, that Duane had explained this to them. The main reason for asking this question was because of Terence Constable’s claim that Duane did not communicate his policies to his staff, as reported in Book 1, at chapter C11, section C11.4: Constable was a former teacher of the school, and author of *The Risinghill Myth* (1968).

A1.4 - Jane Canelle

Jane Canelle was a Remedial teacher, who did not stay at the school for very long, but made detailed comments on her questionnaire:

I was at R for one year when it opened in 1960. I believe I was the last to ‘get out’ as staffing was frozen. I went to Hugh Myddelton as H[ead] of Dept.

As 2nd in dept (Remedial) I was somewhat isolated as Mr B would not let me do any teaching until he had 'tested' the children.⁴ I think he used Richmond Tests which seemed to me – young, inexperienced, but very keen – to be very dated, and had little non-verbal content. I was bored and frustrated – the children were coming to me for help and when I gave it surreptitiously, and B found out, he was furious and stopped it. Thus, children who desperately needed help were running around causing mayhem. B – when we eventually got going – was loathed by the children, and one day a large queue formed outside my door and the leader asked me to teach them as B caned them if they could not read. Duane heard about this (not from me) and warned B re caning...

He interviewed me, was very kind as I was upset and told him I could not stand anymore of B's pseudo philosophising, lack of creativity and attitude to me and the children. Duane was v[ery] supportive and when I said I felt I had something to offer the children – particularly the less able and/or difficult children he said he would back me with references etc and I left for Hugh Myddelton – an extremely tough school about a mile away.

In the short time I was at R, I was aware that the behaviour of the children was deteriorating. I saw a teacher attacked and brought to the ground, when I tried to make some boys leave the girls' toilets one came up to me and spat in my face. I slapped him. I told Duane who said I must have upset the boy and I refused to go on duty again unless he gave me some support – he didn't but the boy came up to me a few days later and apologised for spitting at me! Fire alarms were constantly being set off and on more than one occasion the school stood freezing in rain, wind, etc while Duane entertained youngsters in his office (the difficult ones) with coffee – and I was told, cigarettes. Those children jeered and yelled at the rest of us in the yard!

However, Duane was charismatic and humane but his ideas were ahead of their time, and the poor area, difficult buildings, mixture of staff – many of

⁴ Her Head of Department. This was the same Mr B, who introduced Michael D to communism as described in Book 1.

whom did not know or understand his philosophy made a very difficult situation even worse. The amalgamation of 4 such disparate schools was crazy, political and I felt the LEA (was it still L.C.C.?) did not support Duane. I met Duane on a train some years after I left and I gather he and the local Division 3 inspector were not allies. They (ILEA) had a similar amalgamation in Peckham in 1984, with I believe similar results. Had the Remedial dept been stronger and active immediately instead of endlessly testing children who obviously needed help I think some of the problems could have been eased, and the children, excited by this “wonderful” new school, would have got far more out of it, and there would have been fewer discipline problems.

There was considerable good will amongst the staff and there were some excellent teachers. There were some extremely difficult and deprived children but I think 3 of the amalgamated schools had some very middle class children and staff, and they felt threatened by the ‘rough, tough, beat them’ ethos of some of Gifford’s children and staff.

I learnt a lot from Duane, fought against corporal punishment (difficult sometimes!) when I went to other schools and began to appreciate what he was trying to do. There was a considerable problem among the staff caused by one or two rabid communists. I felt that they added to the difficulties by causing dissent and discontent. If I had had a more sympathetic H[ead] of D[epartment] I think I might have stayed at R, but the experience I had there stood me in good stead in my future career. When I left, one lad - ??? Rush ? – hugged me and said ‘We’re going to miss you Miss, you’re the only teacher who says ‘please and thank you’ – I think most teachers by then were feeling too exhausted to worry about courtesy!

Sorry if the above ramblings don’t give much useful info. But I had only sketchy contact with what was going on in other parts of the school.

(Canelle, 2005)

As reported in Book 1 (in chapter C4) 1960 was Risinghill's most difficult year and for several reasons. Leaving aside the fact that a third of the teaching vacancies were unfilled when the school opened, and remained unfilled throughout its short history, the merging of four very different schools (with different heads and staffs who had different ideas about how education should be delivered), and children who also had their own loyalties and rivalries was an enormous challenge. To add to the problem, three of the schools were single-sex schools (Ritchie Secondary School (for girls), Bloomsbury Technical School (for girls) and Northampton Technical School (for boys) which meant that many of the pupils and staff were mixing with the opposite sex for the first time. Some found the transition easy while others found it difficult, in particular some of the teachers from Northampton whom, from Isabel and Lynn's perspective, appeared to have little or no understanding of how to teach or treat the girls: examples of which are provided in Book 1, again at chapter C4.

Gifford Secondary School was a mixed school with a tough reputation, especially amongst the boys. This was the year of the gang fights (between the Gifford and Northampton contingent) and it was also the year in which CP was removed, making life even more difficult for those teachers who had relied on CP to maintain discipline. For young, relatively inexperienced teachers like Canelle, who joined the school at the very beginning, it must have been horrendous ... a baptism of fire no less:

Q.5.4 Do you feel that some of the children/classes you taught were virtually unteachable? If yes what would you say the reasons were?

Ans: *Poor backgrounds, confusion over school policy to discipline. Discipline in the first year deteriorated rapidly and it became increasingly difficult for teachers e.g. covering absence of staff. Poor buildings; nearness of Chapel Street Market encouraged truancy*

Although Canelle was not at the school for very long, she too believed that the LCC had its own agenda:

I wasn't there but I lived and taught locally for a time. I think there was a hidden agenda ... I think Duane was an embarrassment to the LEA.

In her opinion, the reason why there was never a public inquiry into the school was “because the ILEA was afraid of opening up a can of worms.” In conclusion, she states:

Risinghill I think brought about change – because of the publicity people began to think more about social issues, the use of corporal punishment, etc. However, did the publicity create the overly p.c. attitudes which have apparently resulted in lack of respect for adults, less respect for education, lack of support from parents, etc which exists in many schools today? It was a catalyst to many issues, some good some bad... Having been at R for only 1 year I think some of my views have developed as a result of subsequent experience in other tough schools. Had I been in a different department I think I might have enjoyed the school more and felt more useful. I think Duane was trying to use Summerhill ideas in a school 10 times – at least – larger.

The authors were interested in Canelle’s comments about the children being tested, largely because they had heard a rumour that the Raven’s Matrices Tests (not the Richmond Tests) had been used at the school. However, they could not remember being tested, and for this reason decided to include a question about the Raven’s Matrices in the teachers’ survey. Nobody, not even Canelle, was able to throw any light on this so the authors were pleasantly surprised to find in one of Bob Dixon’s files (containing obituary information that Margaret Duane had sent to him upon her husband’s death) that the rumour was, indeed, true:

Michael Duane’s death, reported in Freedom,⁵ amid the current mania for standards and testing everybody for everything with paper and pencil instruments, reminds me of an experience relevant to both. The incident I will relate marked a turning point in my own thinking when I began to recognise that ‘standards’, when applied to people, are instruments of coercion and oppression. Against our better judgement, we tolerate these absurdities because they offer a secure refuge to human mediocrity and anxiety.

⁵

An anarchist weekly newspaper, published in London.

In 1962, as a newly-appointed assistant lecturer full of good professional intent, I found myself taking part in a testing programme at Risinghill school where Duane was headmaster. This was correctly described by Donald Rooum as a school which socially disadvantaged and less academic youngsters could enjoy. Some of Duane's colleagues didn't relish the way he ran the school, but that's another matter.

Among the battery of tests imposed on the 13-14 year olds was the Raven's Matrices. This is a non-verbal instrument not apparently depending on the respondent's level of literacy and numeracy. Hosts of people now in retirement would have completed this test of intelligence. I found many of the kids I was supervising finished the matrices well within the allotted twenty minutes: no doubt fudging, skipping and wrongly guessing the answers, I assured myself. I was wrong. Getting on for half of these 'dull' kids turned up higher scores on the old matrices than I could muster. Their speed of accurate completion suggested they were 'breaking the rules' in the way they solved the problems. The official way to complete each puzzle of the 'find the missing bit to fit the pattern' kind involved a step-by-step rational process of elimination. This method, contrary to Raven's claims, favoured the literates over their less literate brothers and sisters.

I have never put much store on the information such tests provide, but these discrepant results got me observing with purpose. I was forced to conclude these 'backward' kids were using a smarter method of reasoning for the problem in hand based on a more holistic recognition of patterns. I'll bet Duane would have been chuffed to learn his school was full of geniuses, but I'll also bet he wasn't told because above all else tests must discriminate (against the less privileged). The matrices were dropped, without ceremony, from the battery of tests. It's no good discovering we're all intelligent. People might escape from their cultural prisons. From this incident I began to question my past in the professional's collusive conspiracy against people. (Pym, 1997)

Although pleased, the authors were not entirely surprised, by these results - not that they needed a piece of paper to tell them that they were not dumb. As will be seen in the next

section, some of the Risinghill children were very resourceful when it came to ‘breaking the rules’ to earn money, in particular the boys.

A1.5 - John Rogers

John Rogers was, to use Alan’s words, “the keenest to follow what we were up to” bar Bob Dixon, and this was probably because Rogers did not feel in any way threatened by the RRG and/or its decision to write a sequel to Berg’s book.

Rogers joined Risinghill at a crucial time in its history, that being the spring of 1964. This was when the school came under attack for the first time, and when the LCC’s Chief Education Officer (CEO) W Houghton, along with his officers Drs Briault and Payling (the deputy CEO and Chief Inspector respectively) were beginning to put pressure on Duane, as discussed in Book 1, at chapter C8. His memories of that period are, therefore, particularly useful:

After a few days teaching at Risinghill it was clear that there were two factions, for and against Michael Duane. In between these two factions and within them were shades of opinion.

By the time I was appointed Head of Art Dept. the school had been running for approx. 4 years. It was clear that Michael Duane had inherited a core of staff from the existing schools mentioned on your form. Some staff, a considerable number, on reflection were older and therefore had ‘older’ ideas concerning education and found it hard to adapt. Some older staff were well able to change. Michael Duane was in the process of appointing younger, more liberal-minded staff.

But then I was only 29!

This is not to say that younger teachers were lax or unable to achieve the required “order” in which to teach, nor conversely that the older school could. Teachers since time began have been good, bad and indifferent regardless of their culture, and it will remain like that, I suspect, for a very long time. (Rogers, 2006)

In responding to Question 5.8 (How far was the teaching staff involved in the running of the school?) Rogers had this to say:

Some staff were very “involved” in the running of the school – others left on the dot of 4. Some who were involved were inept, but many were excellent teachers and worked hard ... some who left at 4 on the dot were excellent teachers. It is true to say that, because of all the factors mentioned above, many teachers were physically and emotionally drained by the close of the afternoon.

There was also a close social bond between many of the younger staff that cut across the shades of opinion and expertise I mentioned earlier.
(Rogers, 2006)

To questions 5.9 (Duane’s priorities) and 5.14 (the different teaching factions in the school), he summarised the position as follows:

I believe that Michael Duane tried to build an ethos of caring at Risinghill. He believed in people’s humanity, acknowledged faults rationally, despaired sometimes at an inability to risk in order to improve. He abhorred mindless organisation. It is worth mentioning here that there was a strong left-wing political faction on the staff, quite Marxist in attitude and they were in the main anti-Duane. This was understandable. They believed in education as the ladder for disadvantaged urban kids. Who could blame them for that? (Rogers, 2006)

On the different political factions, Bob Dixon had a similar, but more interesting, view:

It occurred to me – and it’s just a thought – that you might like to emphasize a theme (for instance, the way Mike tended to polarize people). I underline it from time to time... I’m not suggesting that’s the way you intended to write the book as I don’t know. Also, as I write, it occurs to me that the people without much say in what was going on – the parents, usually – were normally on his side.

It's odd – at first – to think that people considerably on the right, politically, were opposed to him alongside others who thought of themselves as communists. I think the link here is perhaps that both were strongly authoritarian, which Mike certainly wasn't. (I think that's a distortion of communism – but that's by the way.) (Dixon, 2007a)

John Rogers concludes:

But Michael Duane had been appointed by ILEA with a known record of advocating a more liberal education in our state schools. They wanted results overnight – an impossibility in education.

As time began to run out Michael Duane dug in his heels against a hard-line and in my opinion a hypocritical elite in ILEA. I saw them in action later as Head of Art as another merger was being constructed between grammar and comprehensive in south London.

Ironically on the closure of Risinghill Michael Duane was appointed Principal Lecturer in Education at Garnett College within ILEA. Was it to get him out of the sharp end of education? If so it failed. Much later in my career, when teaching the PGCE course at Goldsmiths College, I invited Michael to conduct some seminars on his educational beliefs as did many of my contemporaries throughout the UK. His views were certainly controversial and sparked off profitable debate. (Rogers, 2006)

It is Rogers' final words, however, that bring a wry smile to the face:

I'm reminded of the old cleaner with whom I was working on one of my student vacation jobs. We had to clean out a cockroaches' nest in a basement – 'Make sure you get every last un of the buggers, else there's no point in botherin'. (Rogers, 2006)

A1.6 - Chris Lymbourides

Lymbourides, whom Isabel contacted through Margaret Duane, provided some useful information about how the different ethnic minority children were integrated into the school. When Isabel spoke to him on the telephone in June 2006 he had not been very well. He did

promise to meet up with her, but this did not happen, and unfortunately she lost contact with him. However, the authors were able to confirm that he was the character ‘Mr Colinides’ in Berg’s book. Together with Duane, he worked tirelessly to bring about a true community school; something that he was very proud of:

We managed to integrate children from all over the world. (Lymbourides, 2006)

This was accomplished by setting up different functions in the community so that the parents and children could learn about the different faiths and cultures. For the immigrant families this was important, in particular the Greek/Cypriot and Turkish/Cypriot families; there being a lot of tension between these two groups. Through these initiatives the children, as well as the parents, learned to live together in relative harmony. Duane, as mentioned in Book 1, at chapters C5, C6 and C7, was highly respected for his work in this area, so much so that he was invited to the House of Commons to address a committee of MPs about it.

As well as teaching the Greek children, Lymbourides took quite a few remedial classes. He also worked alongside Duane when it came to tackling some of the social problems in the community. This involved visiting the children in their homes. Because many of them came from poor and difficult backgrounds, they were often in trouble with the police. One event that Lymbourides remembered clearly was when a small group of children were charged with theft - for stealing toys from Woolworths. When they were brought before the Magistrate, Duane used an argument in their defence that stunned Lymbourides and others in the court. It was Duane’s contention that, because the children had never seen some of the toys on display, much less owned any toys in their lives, they were seduced into taking them. His argument appears to have been one of child exploitation - through sophisticated marketing techniques, such as encouraging the buyer, in this case a vulnerable child, to handle the toys before purchase - when it would have been kinder and/or more sensible to keep them well out of reach. As far as Duane was concerned, this put Woolworths firmly in the dock, not the children, which amused some in the court, including Lymbourides. Unfortunately the RRG lost contact with Lymbourides so the authors were unable to establish what happened to the children.

When asked about the divide between the teachers, Lymbourides confirmed this was the case. Some teachers were anti-Duane. He admitted that, at first, he did not understand Duane's methods, but was won over when he saw the results.

It was disappointing to lose contact with this teacher as he had promised to help the RRG locate some of the former Turkish/Cypriot pupils whom he knew personally, also some of the teachers whom he remained in contact with.

A1.7 - Bill Ashton

Bill Ashton, founder of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO), contacted the RRG via email:

I really do not feel myself qualified to fill in your questionnaire. I was never appointed to Risinghill, I just went there on supply.

The story is as follows:-

After doing my Dip.Ed. at Oxford in 1962, I went off and worked in France on the American bases, returning to England at the beginning of 1963. As you may remember this was a bitterly cold winter and I moved into a house where the water pipes were frozen and we were getting water from a standpipe in the road. I was determined to make it as a musician but started to work as a supply teacher in Division 2 to pay the rent. I was desperately poor and quite literally was living off soup boiled up from bones begged from a butcher in the Finchley Road for a non-existent dog (Shades of Monty Python!). I went into the Div 2 office every Monday and work was in such short supply that I would often be sent home and that was me for the week.

I went to a lot of schools in the area and was finally sent to Risinghill. I liked the vibrancy of the atmosphere there both of the staff and the pupils. I don't know how long it had been open for. The head of R.E. had broken her hip so I became head of R.E. I was not religious so was permitted to teach Social Studies. Michael Duane was determinedly non-religious. I actually heard him start assembly by saying "There is no God!" This in a school full of Catholics, Protestants and all sorts of other religions.

This was only for one term. I was then offered a job teaching French under Flora Rosenberg, which I did for one year. When she left to marry Joe Melia (I was at the wedding party in a flat on the side of Primrose Hill) I was offered the post of Head of Modern Languages but turned it down. I had been offered a job at Kynaston in St John's Wood, near where I lived, so went there. I moved thereafter to various other schools including Sir Phillip Magnus before getting a graded post at Highbury Grammar School, which became Highbury Grove under Rhodes Boyson!

The idea for NYJO came to me whilst I was at Risinghill and gradually that took over my life (It still does) and I ended up with 4 years at St Clement Danes Grammar School in White City. I gave up teaching in 1963 and have run the orchestra ever since.⁶ I do remember two or three of the names you mention but it is 40 years since I left there.

I do not think there is anything more I can tell you. I was glad to have taught at Risinghill and happy to go back twice to Starcross for our Easter Jazz Courses. Paul Hart wrote his first composition for us there. Its title? "Acres of Glass"! (Ashton, 2004)

Because the authors had read reports that Duane was an atheist, Margaret Duane and Duane's son, Simon, was asked about this:

I've no idea when MD became an atheist – it would have been long before my time, and he and I never discussed religion, as far as I can recall. His atheism didn't prevent my parents sending me to St Mary's Convent between the ages of 4 and 7, and my being expected to attend church for a few more years after that. (S. Duane, 2007)

Margaret was unable to throw much light on her husband's religious beliefs either, but amongst Bob Dixon's papers there was a personal letter from Duane to Dixon that provides an insight into Duane's thoughts and feelings about this matter. The letter was written on Duane's return from a trip to the USA, where he had been visiting a terminally-ill friend:

⁶ The NYJO was established in 1965. It looks as if Ashton had a job at St Clement Danes whilst establishing the NYJO.

Your contemporaries simply go, leaving you with fewer and fewer contacts who speak the same language because they've shared most of the same experiences. Loneliness in that sense is inevitable. For me it first started when I could no longer believe in a god and so lost all the contacts with whom I had shared a common faith. That was while I was quite young and still at university.

I think it was that that began my search (if that is not too pompous a word) for some sort of meaning to life. My present position is that since there is no 'soul' apart from our own sensitivity, there can be no after life. When we die that is an end to our personal being – though some memory of us may remain for a time with our surviving friends.

Death has ceased to be a worry. When I was young I worried about it a lot – probably because of my preoccupation with guilt and with having to render some kind of account to 'god'. Now I know – or at least I would place a big bet on the likelihood – that death is the end of the individual.

One could go on and on e.g. if man makes god in his own image – why? As a guide to his own conduct while alive? But that would make god a pretty horrible monster – in view of what men do to one another!

No. There is no escape from the fact that we have to live with what we've got and make the best of it by cultivating good friends and arguing about how life should be lived. (W. M. Duane, 1993)

While the authors do remember their humanist assemblies, they cannot recall Duane actually saying “there is no God” although it is possible that he might well have given this impression to some. One of the things they did learn at Risinghill was that people from different cultures and faiths worshipped their god(s) in their own way, and that it was important to respect each other's beliefs. In a school where there were children of nineteen different nationalities with different faiths, in the opinion of the authors this was not an unreasonable approach to take.

A1.8 - Dr John W Fielder

John Fielder joined Risinghill at the beginning of January 1965, the month in which he turned 24. As with Bill Ashton, on leaving university he decided to go off travelling:

After graduation, I bought a one-way ticket to London and set off on a month-long tour of Paris, Madrid and a small town in Germany (to see a friend from Queen's University). There I ran out of money but was able to make it back to London. Somehow I found a room in the German YMCA in Finchley Street. The room cost me one pound per night, and I had 21 pounds to my name.

Through the St Paul's Employment Agency, I found a temporary job at Singer Sewing Machines in the City... The office caretaker, a graduate of Dulwich College, suggested that I try teaching. (Fielder, 2011)

When Fielder's qualifications came through from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario to the Ministry of Education and Science, he applied to the LCC for a teaching job. Within 2-3 weeks of his interview, he was hired as a specialist in English and a teacher of general subjects. His first teaching post was at Risinghill:

I looked around for books, there were none in sight. I asked about notebooks, and found some of the students could produce them. I went down the hall to see Dr R, the English department head. He told me there were no books because the children were throwing them out of the window. But when he saw I wasn't going away, he relented and gave me two sets of readers. (Fielder, 2011)

To help him recall his memories of Risinghill, Fielder read letters that he had written home to his parents in Toronto in the 1960s. The following is an extract taken from one of these (dated 7 January 1965):

Margaret (my teacher sister) will be interested to know that I have been given no specific syllabus, no books lists, no covered work, no marks, no outlines or anything. I walked in cold and was forced to give (the students) all the comics from the cupboard to keep them quiet. (Fielder, 2011)

A week later, he wrote:

Today I took three classes in the afternoon. What a laugh. There is absolutely no DISCIPLINE. The school is in a tough neighbourhood ...

and the students are hopeless. You cannot teach them. They talk out whenever they want, or stand up and walk about ... (Fielder, 2011)

It was around this time that another new teacher joined the school, prompting the following memory:

Another new teacher was a Ceylonese named Henry X. I never found out his surname; he lasted about four weeks then suddenly disappeared. It seems that some students threw books out the window. When he looked out, they slammed the window closed on his neck. (Fielder, 2011)

On 12 January, 1965 (see below) Fielder refers to the publicity following *The Sunday Times*' disclosure of the LCC's proposal to close the school. This caused a back-lash, not for Duane but for the LCC, who was criticised in the press for not seeing the Risinghill experiment through. As indicated in Book 1, at chapter C10, the focus of attention at this time was on Duane's refusal to use CP so it is hardly surprising that, in his letters home, Fielder latches on to this albeit that he gets some of the facts of the matter wrong:

I have lately discovered (12 January 1965) that my school is famous for its progressive methods. At this moment the headmaster is being asked to resign because his anti-corporal punishment position doesn't seem to have worked. All the reporters, TV men, etc, were at the school yesterday, giving us ... notoriety unbounded. (Fielder, 2011)

For the record Duane was not asked to resign. In a bid to keep Risinghill intact he did offer his resignation, but this was declined. Again, this matter is discussed in Book 1.

What the authors were more interested in was Fielder's comments about the behaviour of the children and how he coped with this:

Except for my three (out of six) problem classes, I am getting into teaching quite well. Here, only your imagination is the barrier to free-wheeling teaching methods. Theory is generally overlooked, e.g., we do not use the grammatical terms, nor teach the formal elements as we do in Canada. Just get them to write and read, prod their imagination, get them even to pay attention, and you're away. I do not teach anything but English, and I do not teach literature, only language. (Fielder, 2011)

Because the authors were all in the ‘A’ stream and had not experienced the level of disruption described by Fielder and some of his colleagues, they assumed that he had been teaching the lower ability groups, but this was not the case. When asked if he could remember what stream(s) he had been teaching, he responded that this was the ‘C’ stream across all age groups. This came as a surprise, as in a ‘C’ stream one would normally expect to see a fair proportion of children in the lower-top to middle-ability range who were not, as Fielder described, hopeless. However, when the school opened in 1960 around 43% of the children were bordering on ESN, and in 1964 the records show that this situation remained unchanged, explaining perhaps why Fielder had so many ‘problem’ children in the classes that he had taught:

Our present first year contains 0.7 of 1% Group 1, 22% of Group II, 15.6% of Group III, 38.8% of Group IV and 42.7% of Group V. This has meant that our present 1A has several Group IV children. (W. M. Duane, 1964b)

In all probability Fielder was also teaching some of the school’s most challenging pupils. With around one third of the Risinghill children coming from poor and dysfunctional families – many of whom were on the books of the LCC’s Care Committee and were known to the NSPCC – it is not unreasonable to assume that a large proportion were in the mid to lower streams. So if Fielder did not have a set syllabus with all the other conventional tools that he mentions, it was probably for this reason.

Today we have SEN (Special Education Needs) teachers to support children that are in trouble, but this was not the case in the 1960s, explaining why young, inexperienced graduates like Fielder was given so much responsibility:

I have six classes plus a home room tutor group whose attendance I keep and act as their form teacher. I have five spares a week, and yard or house duty twice a week at lunch time. My timetable is considered heavy, but it was given to me because I am a specialist. (Fielder, 2011)

Despite his naivety, Fielder appears to have coped admirably. One experience, which he described as “enjoyable, if trying” involved taking a group of forty children on a school trip to the Lake District:

I am sitting in the library of Patterdale Hall – a 17th century mansion converted to a group hostel – overlooking Lake Ullswater, Glenridding, Cumberland. Tonight I begged off the scheduled farm exploration, and am thus free of the chirping of our forty little companions.

Things are going actually better than expected. True we had a shoplifting incident this afternoon while visiting a town (Windermere) on our five-hour coach tour.

The wholesale thefts could have caused unfortunate repercussions but for the way the teachers handled it. All the kids were ordered to leave their stolen treasures on the bus, while they got off. The merchants boarded the bus and retrieved their goods. (Fielder, 2011)

In tough, working-class neighbourhoods it was not unusual for children to steal, sometimes just for the hell of it. Risinghill was not unique in this respect by any means.

This research sample, although small, confirmed what the authors had suspected – that not all of the teachers were against Duane and those who did disagree with him were not, necessarily, the bad guys. As John Rogers so aptly put it, there were “shades of opinion” between and within the two factions, which does not come across in Berg’s book: the prime reason, no doubt, for some of the teachers, notably Margot Coates, contesting Berg’s account of what happened at Risinghill. Having said this, it is clear (to the authors) that there *was* a small communist faction in the school, which caused a lot of problems for Duane. And as Berg correctly points out, this group does seem to have had the ear of the LCC, or at least some of its officials. Examples of the communist divide are provided in Book 1, at chapter C6, section C6.2.

What this survey also confirms is that there were disciplinary problems in the school, and some of these problems were quite serious. The most interesting aspect of this study, however, is that while many of the teachers blamed Duane’s non-caning policy for the breakdown in discipline, the majority appear to have supported him on this.

Part B – The Waste Clay – Risinghill’s children

In this section the authors present the results of the questionnaire that was made available on-line to their fellow pupils. These results are presented in four chapters:

Chapter B1 presents the overall response to the questionnaire and discusses how representative the results are of all the children who passed through the school. In doing so, a model of the likely numbers of children attending the school year-by-year over its life is presented, alongside the overall profile of the children by age, sex, and background.

Chapter B2 addresses (in detail) the lives of the children as recalled by the respondents, and in doing so addresses the concern that Berg might have overstated her characterisation of all the children as deeply deprived.

Chapter B3 records the collective memories of the pupils of their teachers (including Michael Duane), and provides recollections of, and attitudes to, the regime fostered in the school.

Chapter B4 ends this section by examining the subsequent lives of the respondents, their families and their work. Some findings about the respondents’ attitudes to current day education are also presented here.

CHAPTER B1 – The pupil survey

B1.1 - Introduction to the Research

Finding the Risinghill pupils was an essential, indeed a major, part of this research; however, in 2004, when the research process began, and when a questionnaire for the pupils was developed, it would be fair to say that the RRG did not have a clear understanding of what it wanted to achieve with the results, other than to establish the following key points:

- Did the pupils, as children, feel poor and/or deprived?
- What did the pupils think about Duane and the school?
- How did the pupils fare in life?
- What did the pupils think about education today?

The RRG was also quite naïve in terms of how it approached the research for this book, and with hindsight would probably have done things somewhat differently, particularly with the questionnaire (see Appendix 2).

At the start, none in the RRG could have predicted the different directions in which the research would take it. This was because it had not envisaged researching the politics of the comprehensive school and/or Berg's conspiracy theory, albeit that some in the group did suspect, strongly, that there had indeed been a hidden agenda to close the school.

The RRG did try to establish directly exactly who, and how many, children attended the school between 1960 and 1965, but this was extremely difficult to determine as most of the LCC files on Risinghill have been lost or destroyed. A microfiche document found at the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) contained pages of information about the pupils; however, it was impossible to quantify the data. Nevertheless, as will be seen later in this chapter, it was possible to estimate (roughly) the number of pupils who passed through the school by using information obtained from other sources.

The microfiche document contained the names of the authors; the names of a large number of pupils known to them, and many others. To date, the RRG has been in contact with around 300 ex-pupils through various channels: the RRG'S website (Risinghill.org); Friends Reunited; other social media sites; personal contacts; emails; letters; telephone conversations;

and meetings. Many of the pupils contacted, however, did not complete the questionnaire, preferring to speak on the telephone directly to the authors or by recording their memories in a letter or email via the RRG's website.⁷ Many interesting letters, anecdotes and photographs, plus other information, were received, including copies of school reports. The authors have used this material freely throughout *The Killing of a Comprehensive School* to allow the pupils to tell their own stories, and in this book, *The Waste Clay*, will adopt the same approach.

The main period of research was during the period 2004 to 2006, though replies to the questionnaire and communications have trickled in over the intervening period. Needless to say, those of the RRG who attended Risinghill all completed the questionnaire.

B1.2 - The School Roll

In this chapter, some of the results of the survey are presented, using the less formal, discursive information gathered to give life, vitality and colour to the findings. In order to put these findings into context, and also to get a more complete picture of the school, a model was developed of the numbers of pupils thought to have flowed through the school.

As stated, access was not available to the exact school roll over Risinghill's short life, assuming one existed, but as discussed in Book 1 (at chapter C8) information was found about the numbers of pupils joining in 1960, and September 1964 when the school roll stood at 854, as well as a detailed breakdown of the numbers of boys and girls in the school in February 1962 by class. The latter was obtained from the 1962 inspection report produced by HMI MacGowan, discussed in Book 1, at chapter C6. Using this information, a reasonable model of the number of children in the school in each form year (1st form to 5th form) for each term that it was open, was produced. Table 1 presents a picture of this, which is probably near optimal.

⁷ All of this material will, eventually, be deposited with the Institute of Education, subject to the agreement of the pupils. To date, most have given their permission.

School years:	1959-60	1960-61		1961-62		1962-63		1963-64		1964-64	
Semesters:	3	1	2,3	1	2,3	1	2,3	1	2,3	1	2,3
Calendar years:	1960		1961		1962		1963		1964		1965
Form years:	Number of pupils per form year										
5	93	93	93	69	69	68	68	88	88	116	116
4	375	375	375	270	270	294	294	291	291	189	189
3	375	270	270	294	294	291	291	189	189	204	204
2	270	294	294	291	291	189	189	204	204	203	203
1	294	286	286	189	189	204	204	203	203	142	142
Total Roll:	1408	1319	1319	1113	1113	1046	1046	975	975	854	854
Actual:		1323			1113					854	

Table 1: Model of school numbers for each half year (autumn term and spring+summer terms)

In Table 1, the top row shows the school years during the life of the school, and the second row semester numbers (the autumn, spring and summer terms in that order) – note the second and third semesters are presented together as no separate figures for these could be found. The third row shows calendar years – and it has been noted here that calendar years were assumed throughout the questionnaire. The next line is a heading and the five rows below that show the numbers of pupils for each form year (in reverse order) through the life of the school, left to right. The next row shows the total number of children over the whole school and the last row those (actual) figures available. All of the figures in ***bold italic*** are known from acquired sources; the rest are modelled from these: figures in **bold** are taken forwards and/or backwards each semester. From this model, it is possible to make a few, reasonably accurate, statements about the numbers of children passing through the school. A striking feature of the figures is the decline in the total school role from circa 1405 to circa 845 in a little over five years, representing a 40% reduction.

In all about 2500 children appear to have passed through the school during its life, even if briefly: the range of uncertainty is probably in the region of 2450 to 2650 children. Firm details about the numbers of children entering and leaving the school outside the normal entry times (of the start of term in September and leaving at end of term in July) are not available.

1. About 1400 children joined the school when it opened in May 1960, nearly all from one of the four merged secondary schools (Gifford, Ritchie, Northampton and Bloomsbury.).
2. In subsequent Septembers at the start of the school year and autumn term, children would have been recruited into the first year forms from the local primary schools. About 1024 children did this. As noted above, there is no reliable information about

children joining and leaving outside this pattern, but it is reasonable to assume that the numbers were quite small – perhaps affecting numbers by circa 5%.

3. There was a decline in the school roll from circa 1323 pupils in September 1960 to 854 pupils on closure in July 1965. (N.B. it is possible that the initial May 1960 total reached circa 1400.) This decline gives weight to the discussion presented in Book 1, at chapter C8 regarding the suspicion of admission figures being pushed down deliberately by the LCC.
4. When the school opened in May 1960, there was probably a heavy excess of girls over boys, which righted itself quickly over subsequent September recruitments to about 50:50 boys to girls. There is a hint that, towards the end of its life, there may have been an excess of boys.

The figures from the model (apart from those that are known, and are marked in bold italic, in Table 1) are subject to some uncertainty as noted. It is also the case that figures derived from the questionnaire will be subject to uncertainty when extrapolated to the actual whole population of pupils. This arises from a number of factors and is probably the case for all such surveys. The main sources of this uncertainty are: (1) random errors – just the random luck of the draw about who answered the questionnaire and how they answered it; and (2) bias, where those who answered did not represent the whole, and so their answers do not properly represent the group of people to be described.⁸ The first of these is unavoidable, but can be reduced by increasing the sampling size if possible (alas not possible for this type of questionnaire since the RRG could not find more ex-pupils). For the second, it was not possible to take a random sample of all the children who attended the school; rather the researchers had to rely on those who happened to get in touch with the RRG (in most cases electronically, therefore, one bias is that it excluded those without the internet), and so were sufficiently interested or motivated enough to reply, and/or had clear memories of the school. There is no guarantee that such a group properly represents **all** of the children attending Risinghill, and to that extent there may be bias. In reading what follows, these sources of error need to be borne in mind.

⁸ To illustrate these ideas: suppose the RRG wanted to know the average height of Londoners, and decided to do a survey to find out. If it only asked one person it would not tell the researchers much (apart from one person's height). If it asked five people, again it would not tell the researchers very much more, and would give only a very rough estimate of the average – more samples would be needed to get a more reliable estimate and reduce these random errors. If the RRG did its sampling outside Kings Cross station, it would probably get a lot of non-Londoners, and the sample would be biased: similarly if it chose young people over old people its sample would again be biased.

Most of the figures are given in terms of number of respondents, supplemented by percentages where relevant. These percentages are usually over the whole sample of seventy replies, but where this is otherwise it is noted. Regarding accuracy, in statistical terms seventy is not a large number, hence percentages are given to the nearest whole number as any further accuracy is spurious – remember just one person represents 1.43% of the sample.

When analysing the questionnaire(s) the RRG was aware of its deficiencies, and in retrospect would have liked to have added further questions (or modified the ones asked), and possibly omit others. Despite these deficiencies, the results give a fascinating picture of the Risinghill children and their families, their environment (at the time of attending the school) including housing, work, perceptions of their wealth or poverty, psychological well-being, and their lives subsequently - to be discussed later, in chapters B2, B3 and B4 respectively.

B1.3 - How the respondents matched the school population

The research sample does not allow absolute answers to the questions set, but the RRG believes the sample size is large enough to provide a good understanding of the pupils' lives (Gilbert, 1993). Some of the pupils, although interested in the research, were reluctant to complete the questionnaire, possibly because they had known some of the researchers personally, and so did not want to answer some of the more sensitive questions that were asked about their homes and families:

Well I have read your questionnaire I even filled it out, then I couldn't send it to you so that was a waste of time aye? Looking at the photos that are in the Risinghill School website it looks like I was in the same class as Isabel. I hope your book goes well for you both, if there is anything I can help you with let me know. Bye for now. (Email from Australia, J. B, 2006)

Seventy people completed the questionnaire, slightly more men responding (thirty-eight) than women (thirty-two), a ratio of 1.19 (question four); a fairly even distribution but perhaps reflecting the later excess of boys over girls (see above). The ages of respondents (question two) at the time the questionnaires were completed ranged from fifty-one to sixty-four (four respondents did not reveal their age); their mean age was 56.8. Unfortunately, the researchers did not ask directly for year of birth, but the question was asked regarding the student's age when they joined Risinghill (question six) and the year that they joined (question five); this gave estimates for date of birth, which ranged from 1945 to 1952. Also asked was the year

that the student left Risinghill (question sixty-one) and the answers showed twenty-nine students (41%) left in 1965, possibly because this was the year that Risinghill closed. Thirty-six students left before 1965; twenty-one to go to work, one to take an apprenticeship, five to further study; one of these students stating they were moving on to grammar school education to study A-level Economics and British Economic History at Grammar School, and a further student left because their parents were moving to a different area. Eight students gave no reason for leaving. Five people did not respond to this question

The ages at leaving school at that time, not necessarily Risinghill, (question sixty-three) were as follows (Table 2):

Age:	15	16	17	18
Number:	33	25	3	1

Table 2 – Ages at leaving school

Five gave ages below fifteen years, which was below the legal age to leave school then. There were three non-responses: these are approximate figures as a few respondents may or may not have counted post-school college as ‘school’.

The response rate to the questionnaire over the estimated number of pupils who passed through the school was estimated at 2.8% to 2.9% - which could be considered impressive as contact was sought forty to fifty years after the school closed, and it had long been out of the general news. It is interesting to see how this response varied with joining and leaving years, as shown in Figure 1.

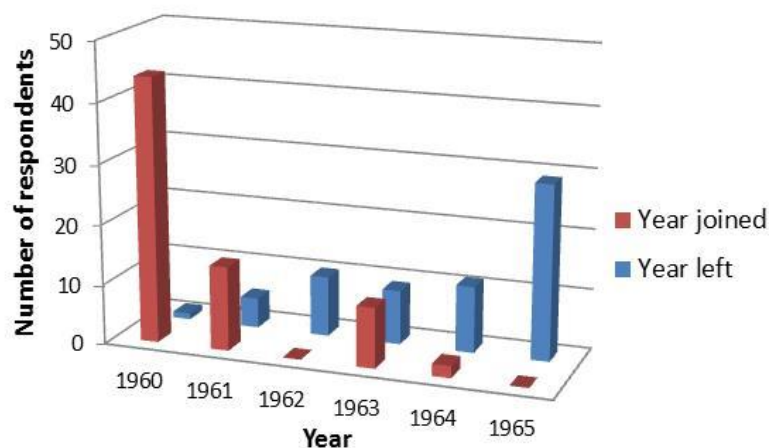


Figure 1 – Year of joining and leaving Risinghill

In the calendar year 1960 some 1694 children joined the school, and over subsequent years some 738 joined from junior schools – a total of 2432. It is, therefore, not surprising that most responses (forty-four) came from the 1960 joiners: for this group there was an estimated response rate of between 2.6 to 3.0%, in the same range as the overall response rate. In 1965 the school's population was 854, and the response rate from the twenty-nine respondents who left in 1965 (and therefore experienced the traumatic closure) was, perhaps, unsurprisingly higher at 3.4%. An interesting subgroup was those nine respondents who joined in 1960 in the first form and left in 1965 from the fifth form and so were present through nearly the whole life of the school. Their response rate was 7.7% - though this is a very rough estimate, based on assumptions made in the model of the 5th form size in 1965. Therefore the respondents were, possibly, somewhat biased towards those with exposure to the events of 1965.

The number of respondents by age at which they joined the school by year of entry is shown in Figure 2 below:

Most (forty-four students, 63%) joined in May 1960 from the four merged schools, and the subsequent 11+ first form intake in September 1960. The peak of thirteen-year-olds in 1960 is hard to explain – they would have been pupils in the 3rd forms of the four merged schools; perhaps they were at an impressionable age? In the main, respondents joining in subsequent years were from the 1961 and 1963 cohorts, and mainly aged eleven on joining.

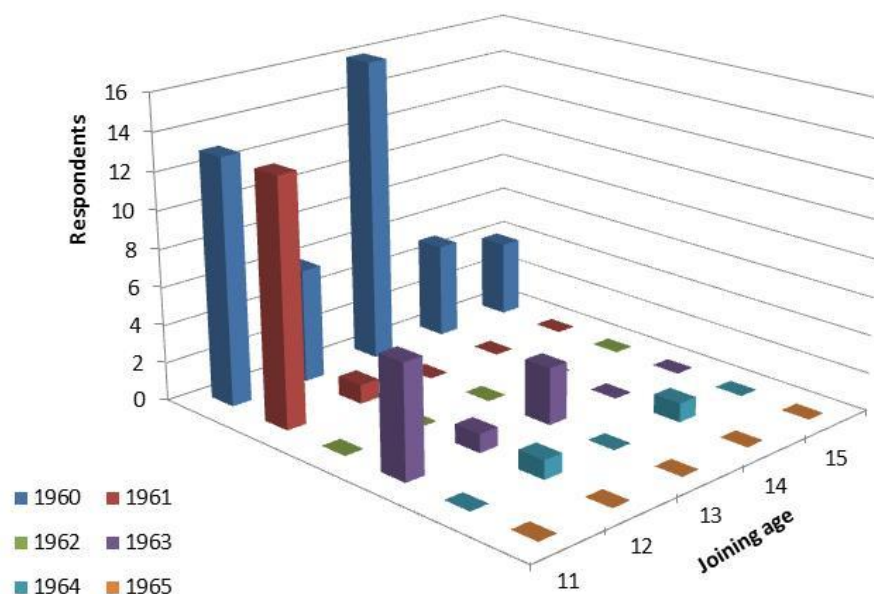


Figure 2 – Numbers of respondents by age of joining and the school by year of joining

Interestingly, there were seven respondents (10%) who joined the school when aged over eleven after 1960. This gave a rough measure of the proportion of children joining outside the normal joining and leaving times of September and July respectively, taking into account some children entering form 1 in September must have been aged twelve. Here there is a rather high estimate of between 6% and 10%.

Nearly all of those joining the school in the calendar year 1960 came either from the four schools that merged to form Risinghill in the summer term or from contributing primary schools in the autumn term (question thirty-three); subsequent intakes would be mainly in the subsequent Septembers from local primary schools, but a few entered the school from other secondary schools (shown in Table 3 below). Figures shown in square brackets, thus [], show the numbers joining the school at age over eleven, and thus not coming from primary schools. The following table gives numbers and percentages (in brackets) of respondents in each of these categories (boys and girls), and for comparison in the final column the intake from these sources (in absolute and percentage terms from the optimum model). No respondent joined the school in 1965, for obvious reasons.

Previous School	Respondents			Modelled intake (%)
	Boys	Girls	All (%)	
Bloomsbury	-	0	0 (0.0%)	80 (3.3%)
Gifford	3	5	8 (11%)	627(25.8%)
Northampton	13	-	13 (19%)	200(8.2%)
Ritchie	-	12	12 (17%)	501(20.6%)
<i>Merged Sub-total:</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>33 (47%)</i>	<i>1408 (57.9%)</i>
Other schools by year, all [after 11]				
1960 [age >11]	8	3	11 (16%)	286(11.8%)
1961 [age >11]	8 [0]	6 [1]	14 (20%)	189(7.8%)
1962 [age >11]	0	0	0 (0.0%)	204(8.4%)
1963 [age >11]	4 [1]	6 [3]	10 (14%)	203(8.3%)
1964 [age >11]	2 [2]	0	2 (3%)	142(5.8%)
<i>Non-merged sub-total:</i>	<i>22 [3]</i>	<i>15 [4]</i>	<i>37 (53%)</i>	<i>1024 (42.1%)</i>
Totals	38	32	70	2432

Table 3 – Numbers of respondents by previous schools

This indicates quite clearly that, among the merged schools, Gifford and, arguably, Bloomsbury schools, were under-represented – indeed not represented at all - by the responses, and Northampton school was over-represented. The researchers have no ready explanation for this. Also the four merged schools in total are under-represented in the sample. The 1960, 1961 and 1963 cohorts from the non-merged contributory schools are over-represented.

When considering the findings presented below these biases in the responses should, once again, be taken into consideration.

B1.4 - Who were the respondents?

The thirty-seven respondents who were not from the four merged schools mainly joined Risinghill from their primary schools. Some thirteen schools were identified, most contributing a few people, though Copenhagen Street School contributed seven, probably because it was within easy walking distance of Risinghill. Only one respondent joined from

another UK secondary school (Tollington Park Comprehensive) at age fourteen in 1964 and another respondent joined from a school in Cyprus at the age of thirteen in 1963. For seven respondents the school from which they joined was unspecified; four of these were identified as junior/primary schools.

Asked about their ethnicity (Question four) sixty-seven replied, sixty-one (91%) of whom reported English (including three replies of British, one of White). The remaining six were two Greeks and three Turkish Cypriots, and one St Lucian. From other information received, one of the non-responders to this question had a French background. Answers to the question (Question thirteen “Is English your first language, if not what other language/s did you speak and could you speak English when you started at Risinghill?” followed ethnicity (one spoke Creole from St Lucia, two Greek from Cyprus, four Turkish from Cyprus – one of these gave ethnicity as British). The only second language reported (Question fourteen) was English, by all those reporting another first language.

As was expected, the majority of children lived locally or in the neighbouring boroughs. Fifty were living in Islington, forty-five were living very close to the school in the N1 post code area, and some lived in the neighbouring boroughs of Finsbury, Holborn and Hackney. Northampton school was a specialist institution and its catchment area was large, so of the seven respondents who reported travelling to school by rail (including the underground), six used to attend Northampton (question nine, means of getting to school). It would have been interesting to see if this pattern also applied to the girls who came from the specialist Bloomsbury school, but unfortunately no responses were received from this cohort. Most pupils, however, walked to school, in some cases supplemented by a bus ride.⁹ The following chart, Figure 3, shows the numbers using the various methods of transport.

⁹ Though the questionnaire did ask where people lived when at Risinghill – this produced very few replies, which are ignored.

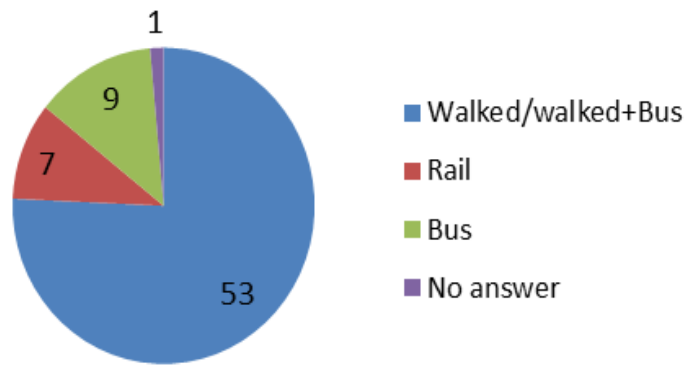


Figure 3 – Means of getting to school

This concludes the first part of the research investigation into the number (and profile) of pupils attending the school. What this small sample demonstrates is that, all other things being equal, the numbers should have remained pretty stable and not declined – and possibly to have increased as 5th and 6th forms were developed - had the LCC not meddled with the intake, as reported in Book 1, in chapter C8.

CHAPTER B2 – The Risinghill Children and Their Families

B2.1 - Home backgrounds of the Risinghill children

Today family structures appear to be more diverse, but in the 1960s two-parent heterosexual families were, for most children, the norm, and this was found to be true for the majority of pupils who participated in the research.

Regarding family type (question ten), only three (4%) of our respondents lived in a one-parent household: the rest lived with two parents (93% - higher than today's 71%). Two respondents also said they had grandfathers staying with them, and another a stepmother. The average number of children today is 1.8 children, so from today's perspective a family size of five persons looks high - 30% were over five persons and the largest was twelve (question eleven). There were no two-person families (i.e. single parent and one child) – so all those living with a single parent either had siblings and/or were in extended families with other, unspecified, family members living with them. See Figure 4. When asked if they all shared the same accommodation (question twelve), all but two answered the question, with a 'Yes' from sixty-seven (96%), and the only 'No' gave no further information.

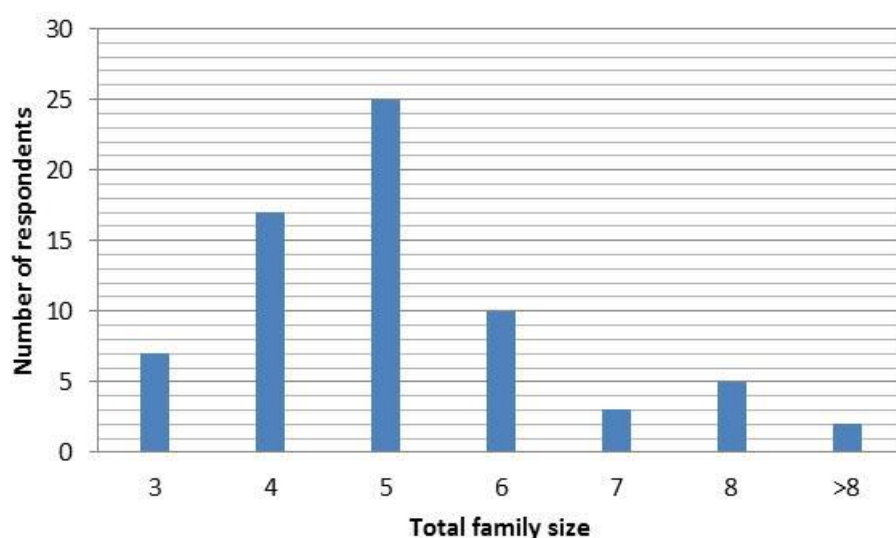


Figure 4 – Distribution of family size (including parents)

Two gave the reasons why they lived in single, male-parent households:

*My mum died when I was seven. (JP)*¹⁰

My mum committed suicide when I was 15. (JS)

Looking at the wider communications, in the extended families it was often grandparents who lived with the family. Four of the children in the extended families group had one or more grandparents living with them. One girl was living with her parents and both of her grandparents in a single room (Yvonne). Others had more rooms, but were still very overcrowded:

The living room doubled as a bedroom as well. We had bunk beds everywhere! When our nana (mum's mother) came to live with us in 1960/1, we added a bed settee to the front room and nana slept on this. She wasn't with us for long, just over a year, and she died on that bed settee, late one night, with Sue and I watching anxiously from our bunks. Susan was just six years old. (Isabel)

In inner-city areas, such as Islington, it was common for members of the same family to rent rooms in multi-occupied houses. They often had their own multi-purpose rooms, sharing toilet and/or washing and cooking facilities with relatives and other people living in the house.

My Nan, aunt and uncle shared the toilet with us. (Kathleen D)

Some of the other rooms were occupied by Nan and a distant aunt and uncle. We all shared the toilet and wash house. (DP)

We lived in a house in Islington that was also lived in by my mother's grandmother and my own grandmother, as they moved on so newly wed children (my mother) moved in with their new spouses. I was born in that house. It was privately owned (rented). We lived in two rooms on the second floor. My aunty lived downstairs with her two children. The top two rooms belonged to another aunty who also had a house in Brighton (rented) where we would spend every summer holiday. (Yvonne W)

¹⁰ In this Part we use the given name and initial of the surname for pupils who are quoted from their questionnaire replies. Where the person has not provided written permission to quote we have used their initials.

B2.2 - Housing

One gets the impression from Berg's book that the Risinghill children lived in Dickensian hovels with large families living in one room, ceilings falling down, and rotting garbage on their doorsteps:

Who except a Londoner would expect Half Moon Street,¹¹ a romantic reference to the beautiful curve of the pavement, to be made-up of rotting gutted houses with rotting gutted cars outside?... (Berg, 1968, p44)

The quality of people's housing and the type of home they can afford is usually linked to income. The researchers asked (question eight) about the kind of accommodation that pupils lived in at the time they were at Risinghill, and nearly 43% of the respondents said they lived in Council owned housing. Though only one person further specified a flat, it can be surmised that the majority were in flats rather than houses. A further 37% lived in private, rented accommodation (again it is reasonable to assume that most of these were nearly all flats or rooms), and only 13% said they were in owner occupied accommodation – probably all houses. See

Figure 5 where the number of responses is shown. A few specified flats, without saying what their ownership was.

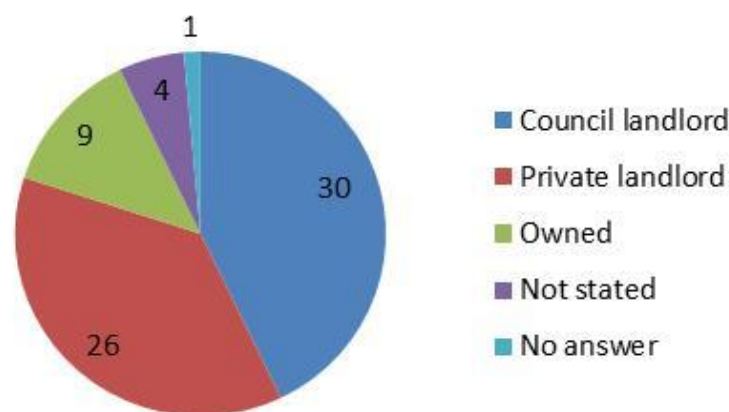


Figure 5 – Housing type

¹¹ Now the site of the Half Moon Housing Estate.

B2.3 - Home area

Islington is, and always has been, an area of contrasts with the rich and the very poor often living in close proximity; a situation that can create tensions. This was especially the case in the early 1960s when there were very few parks or adventure playgrounds for children to play in:

Their whole environment is hostile to ordinary human growth; it spits at them. You climb over a wall – and are pinched for trespassing. You race down the street together – and are dangerous hooligans. You linger and become absorbed a little – and you are plotting something. You congregate on a street corner to talk quietly, because you have no home to talk in, no fields to walk in, no grass to sit on – and a policeman settles down to watch you over the road, knowing you are likely to break the law and waiting for it. (Berg, 1968, p13)

Beat police officers were certainly more common in those days, and the majority of children were wary of them, especially the boys. By the age of ten or eleven most of the boys had moved on from playing games in the street with the younger children (unless they were bored) and had turned their attention to activities of a more challenging kind. At this age, they were also old enough to roam the streets and meet up with their friends.

Only six pupils in the survey said that they had been in trouble with the police, but they did not provide details. One referred to petty crimes and the other, Denis M, who did not complete a questionnaire, said he never made it to Risinghill from Gifford because he was sent to an approved school instead. Denis came from a good family and was not a delinquent child, though he was probably more adventurous, shall we say, than most. Taking and driving away motor scooters for the fun of it was, for example, a common offence in the 1960s, though not too many twelve-year-olds were caught taking and driving away a double-decker bus in broad daylight. In this respect Denis was in a class of his own:

Well, if you'd have seen this copper's face, pure disbelief, and all these people shouting and waving at me. I don't know if it was because they wanted to get on the bus, or whether it was the sight of this kid driving a

number 14 up the Cally.¹² I didn't get very far. So that was why I didn't join you at Risinghill. I was charged with driving and taking away and given three years at approved school. (Denis M.)

The authors wondered how Denis had managed to start the bus, let alone drive it away, but as he pointed out, in those days buses had a simple 'start' button to turn on the engine, and he had taught himself to drive when he was just ten or eleven years old. This was in one of the many goods yards that were scattered around Kings Cross Station but have now been demolished. In the 1960s, there were no CCTV cameras or sophisticated burglar alarms to deter intruders, making it relatively easy for Denis and his friends to climb over the yard gates and get into the Lorries, which had been parked up for the night. These vehicles had the same 'start' mechanism as the buses and were easy (apparently) to drive. In chapter B4, when looking at how the pupils fared in life, the authors will return to Denis, who, after serving his sentence, joined the army and later became a very successful business man.

In the post-war years there was a strong work ethic and boys, in particular, were very resourceful when it came to finding ways of supplementing their pocket money. This often involved a scam of one description or another. By way of example they would short-change the delivery men they worked for, usually the 'paraffin man' or the 'milk man' as all of the transactions then were made in cash and at the door. Because the customer often lived in an old tenement where there were several flights of stairs, or a block of old tenements where, in addition to the stairs, there were a warren of passage-ways to negotiate, the delivery men were happy to pay their 'helpers' a few pennies to do all the leg-work, especially those men on the wrong side of forty. Therefore, it was relatively easy for the boys to fiddle the change, and they did so without any qualms whatsoever. They also chopped and sold wood (found on the bomb sites) for kindling as most working-class families then relied on coal fires and/or paraffin heaters to heat their homes. Stripping lead and copper from the roofs of condemned buildings (mainly on the bomb sites) was another ruse, but in doing this they crossed the line into petty crime. The scrap merchants, however, took the material with no questions asked,

¹² The local name for the Caledonian Road.

and as such it became a legitimate pastime. Conkers, marbles and cigarette cards were also sold or swapped, along with many other items that had been found or ‘fallen off the back of a lorry’ (cockney speak for the selling of stolen goods).

B2.4 - Perceptions of Family Life and Environment

The researchers went on to inquire about the respondents’ perceptions about the status of their family, housing and locality (including their perceptions of their neighbours) as children (Questions eighteen - twenty). These three issues were explored on a scale of ‘Very good’ to ‘Very poor’, as shown in the following Table 4:

Question	Number of respondents				
	Very good (or Great)	Good (Incl. Clean and warm housing)	Adequate (or average)	Poor	Very poor
Qu. 18: How do you think you would you have described your family’s status?	2	18	40	8	1
Qu. 19: How do you think you would have described the quality of your housing?	7	28	26	8	0
Qu. 20: How do you think you would have described your street/road overall?	14	30	18	7	0

Table 4 – Indicators of status, housing quality and local environment

(There was one non-respondent to each of these questions.). Quite clearly the general consensus was of a good or adequate status of home and local environment, though interestingly there was a suggestion of more favourable answers between successive questions. However, it is possible that the most deprived children of the time in later life did not respond as much to the questionnaire. Paradoxically, questionnaires were returned from three children in the same family; one thought their housing was poor, whereas the other two said it was adequate.

In contrast to the descriptions in Berg’s book, the answers received from the pupils did not suggest that the majority of children were living in very poor housing. To the contrary, most were satisfied with the area they had lived in, some thinking it was good or very good.

However, there were some respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with their surroundings, and all of these lived in Islington; one lived on a busy main road, another on a poor housing estate and two in run-down streets with old, dilapidated houses:

I can remember that Grant Street was lit by gas light until the late 50s. Every evening a man would cycle along the street without getting off his bike. He would open the door on each street lamp to turn on the gas. Then he would use his ignition pole to open the door and then ignite the light. In the morning he would cycle along the street again and turn off the gas supply to each lamp. (DP)

In these comments, some of the descriptions given by people who said their housing was poor were similar to those given in Berg's book:

When we moved into Rodney Street we had a kitchen come sitting room. We had two double beds and I slept with my mother and my brother with my dad.

On Sundays, I used to go to the pictures with my dad, while mum boiled water that she carried up in a gallon container, three flights and had a wash down. The ironing was done with flat irons. As I told you we had no electricity and you could see daylight through the cupboard on the chimney breast.

Mum had our names down for years for a council house and Ron Brown the Deputy Prime Minister George Brown's brother told mum we were lucky to have a roof over our heads. We lived in these conditions until I was two months short of my 18th birthday. Although, it was tough, it probably gave us an incentive to improve our lot. (Barbara, A)

We lived in Grant Street, our ceilings falling down, it was damp and we had mice. (Annette, M)

These houses were, without doubt, slum dwellings. Grant Street and Rodney Street have since been demolished whereas the houses in Richmond Avenue, where some of the pupils lived, have been gentrified and now sell for in excess of £1million.

New housing, such as the Priory Green Estate in Islington, had recently been built. This estate, designed by the renowned architect Berthold Lubetkin,¹³ boasted modern, self-contained flats which had central heating, fitted kitchens, bathrooms and piped television, plus its own laundry and tenants' social hall. Five respondents in our survey lived on this estate.

As a rider to these questions, the researchers asked (questions twenty-one and twenty-two) if the respondents liked the area they had lived in as a child – 93% said 'Yes'. However a number of comments were elicited, three saying that they knew 'nothing different'; the others show interesting insights into their lives and thoughts:

- Council estate with no leisure facilities. Nothing in common with other families.
- Lack of garden or open space to play. Awareness at a young age that there were better properties to live in and that other people did not live near a street market.
- Lived on main road.
- Lived on Pentonville Road where it was dangerous to play out and I had no friends nearby.
- Only met friends to walk home with. Was never allowed out at night.
- Run down and rough.

B2.5 - Working Parents

The respondents were asked whether both their parents worked (question fifteen), to which fifty-three of the seventy replied 'Yes' (76%) – a high number in those days. However, when asked about each of their parents' jobs (questions sixteen and seventeen) a larger number of the parents showed up as both working – fifty-eight couples in all (83%), and only eleven (16%) were in households where just the father worked. The difference here was probably a question of understanding and interpreting the question. In total there were sixty-nine (99%) working fathers and fifty-six (80%) mothers who worked. No households reported being supported by the mother only. There was one response reporting their mother as a housewife, but with no information about the father, whether in work or not. Interestingly, there was no evidence of unemployment – though the survey did not have any questions exploring this specific point, and it must be remembered that the 1960s were a time of relatively low unemployment. As expected, there was a huge range of jobs, throwing up some interesting

¹³ Locally, he was also responsible for Spa Green Estate, Bevan Court, and the Finsbury Health Centre. These and Priory Green Estate are all still occupied.

occupations – button dipper, for example, for the fathers, and costume jewellery maker, dye-stamp printer and hat packer among the mothers’ occupations. For the fathers there was also bank manager, precision toolmaker and café proprietor.

Of course, many of the occupations were to be expected, and there was more than one instance of some of them. For the fathers, there were four each of Post Office workers, three each for all of railway workers, printers, lorry drivers, carpenters, and two each of bricklayers, engineers (unspecified), plumbers, and window cleaners. An attempt was made to classify the occupations into the categories Unskilled (eleven), Tradesmen (thirty-two), Skilled (fifteen), Office (two), Managers (five) and Self-employed (four), and though rough it showed a distinct bias towards blue-collar jobs. Many of the jobs then were in nationalised industries – later to be privatized under the Thatcher and subsequent administrations. Among these industries the General Post Office (GPO), British Railways, the Metropolitan Water Board, and London Transport, were identified, though other parents may have been working in or for other nationalised concerns too.

For the mothers there was less variety in occupation: eleven of sixty-seven replies indicated housewife, or not employed; fifteen cleaners, and six machinists – perhaps all in the clothing trades (two seamstresses and one ‘tailoress’ were also reported). There were in fact very few - in what nowadays we might expect in broadly service occupations – save one waitress, two nurses, two cooks, and a catering manageress and a sales person. Using a similar broad classification, as for men the jobs tended to be unskilled (twenty-four of the sixty-seven). There was just one who could be called self-employed, and one manageress, and six office workers. These broad classifications for fathers and mothers are displayed in Figure 6.

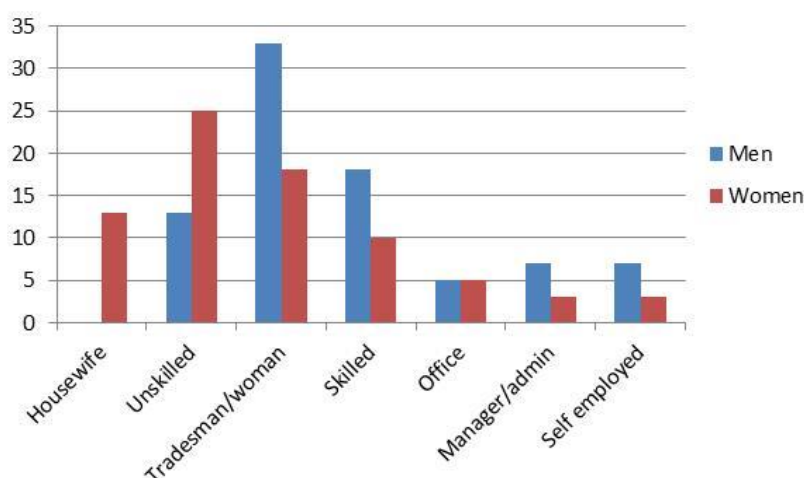


Figure 6 – Classification of jobs by men and women

When Risinghill opened, the types of jobs available for parents were changing, and so was the make-up of the workforce. Manual work was decreasing and more women were in employment, especially married women (Holdsworth, 1988, Giddens, 2001).

The majority of parents would have been classified as ‘blue collar’ workers:

My parents had low paid jobs they weren’t professional people. (JM)

My mum worked in the offices of Exchange & Mart as a general office clerk and my dad worked in a paper mill/factory. He was the floor supervisor. (Yvonne, W)

Some fathers and mothers were skilled crafts people, but wages were not always high:

Dad didn’t earn much as a chippie in the building trade, certainly not enough to cover all the extras. Even so, he handed his pay packet over to mum every week and this was quite rare in those days. A lot of men either drank or gambled the best part of their wages away each week, but dad never did any of these things. His whole life revolved around his family and we were lucky in this respect. (Isabel)

The clothing industry, or the ‘rag trade’ as it was often called, provided employment for many of the mothers whose occupations were listed as machinists, seamstresses and dressmaker. One set of parents shared this trade — the father was a tailor and the mother a seamstress. Some of these women could have been doing this work at home as ‘outdoor’ or ‘homework’.¹⁴

Later on, when she acquired a sewing machine, she was able to earn a bit more money doing ‘piece work’ for a local factory, but it was still hard work for a pittance. (Isabel)

Being ‘in the print’ was seen as a good occupation. In the 1960s, Fleet Street was the home of the newspaper industry,¹⁵ and just a short distance from Islington. One mother was a

¹⁴ This work was normally for factories that paid on piece rates (per item). Outdoor work or homework was often very low paid. There was no statutory minimum wage at that time.

¹⁵ Rupert Murdoch was the first to move the Sun and the News of the World to Wapping in 1986. When Reuters moved out in 2005, this marked the end of Fleet Street’s long association with journalism.

‘forelady packer’ and several fathers were printers. Sons often followed in their fathers’ footsteps to become print apprentices.

Because of the lack of childcare, mothers often had a job(s) to fit in with their children’s needs. Thirteen mothers were cleaners, several were in catering and two did home work (unspecified):

She had been up since 5.00am, finished her early morning cleaning job, and returned home to see to us before dad left for work at 7.00am. In the evening, she would be out again office cleaning in the West End and didn’t get home until around 10.00pm. During the day, she did ‘home work’ of some description or other – stuffing envelopes, making Christmas crackers, that sort of thing. (Isabel)

My mum had an early morning cleaning job. She made the porridge for breakfast the night before and got home from work to warm it up for us before we went to school. She also had a job making tea morning and afternoon in offices nearby. Before she had children she worked in a factory as an armature winder (engineering). (Lynn)

As noted, some parents worked in the same industry:

My dad was a chef and my mum was a waitress. (L S)

Both of my parents were bank workers. (Ian, H)

There are jobs parents did then that still exist today, but with the introduction of new technologies some occupations have probably disappeared: for example, button dipper, dye stamp printer and hat packer.

In contrast to today, when some parents rely, totally or in part, on state benefits, no one reported that their family was living on benefits, explaining, perhaps, the strong work ethic described earlier. The only universal benefit then given to all families with children was the Family Allowance. However, this allowance was very small and was not paid for the first child. Consequently, families often struggled financially and needed both parents’ incomes.

B2.6 - Happy Families

On the whole, the families were reported to be happy (question twenty-nine) – all but three respondents answered this, most saying ‘Yes’ or ‘very happy’ (fifty-two, 74%) and a further five a qualified ‘Yes’ (such as ‘Yes, on the whole’), only six (9%) saying a definite ‘No’. A further four gave equivocal responses (‘ish’, ‘Not always’, ‘Sometimes’). There was no discernible difference between men and women answering this question. The only reason offered for a ‘No’ was related to poor relationships between parents and grandparents, not to physical circumstances.

Illustrating these generally happy families:

We were all happy together when we were at home. No major problems. I was conscious that we did not have a bathroom, because friends were moving into new flats. I also wanted my own bedroom. There were 8 children, like most men my dad only gave my mum a certain amount of money and spent the rest going out. (Annette, M)

However, a further question exploring the personal happiness of the respondents themselves when at Risinghill provided further insights into the ‘No’s’ (question thirty-two) - a further six provided comments, which related to personal circumstances rather than to living conditions:

- *My mother and father found it difficult to live with her parents and there were always lots of rows etc.*
- *They were poor because they [parents] were immigrants from Cyprus. Fairly depressing childhood staring out of bedroom window looking at passer[s-]by. Not allowed out really, too scared and no friends allowed around either.*
- *I was badly bullied at Risinghill, asked my tutor for help, got nothing, hated the place.*
- *I was lonely.*
- *Parents did not get on.*
- *Parents not in happy marriage Mum took overdose on [my] 15th Birthday – Lived.*

Quite clearly the school, or rather the teacher, failed a third of these respondents. This question also elicited comments from some who said they were sad children; others reported

living in a happy family or were somewhat equivocal about it. Two mentioned economic circumstances:

- *Being very shy and being poor.*
- *It was unhappy because friends lived in better housing and had their own bedrooms.*

Three noted more personal reasons for their own unhappiness:

- *Mainly in my early childhood a lot of bullying took place. Later on began to stand up for myself more.*
- *I was always troubled by self-doubt and a lack of self-confidence that I kept hidden.*
- *Mum & Dad not suited to each other. I clashed with DAD.*

It was of course not all gloom – one respondent reported “[I] loved it” as a child.

B2.7 - Children Working:

Twenty-one respondents (30%) reported having a job outside of school (and possibly within school hours – one reported “I loved working - bunked off school to work”), and some had multiple jobs (questions thirty, thirty-one).¹⁶ In the main the jobs were predictable: working in a shop (twelve), paper round (six), paraffin boy (three)¹⁷ (supplemented in one instance by stealing). More unusually there was a seamstress, butcher, and two hairdressers. There seemed to be very little difference here between boys and girls.

Because most of the Risinghill children came from families that were relatively poor, they were brought up to believe that it was good to work. Therefore the researchers were not surprised to find that many pupils - themselves included – had worked outside of school hours. At that time children were not required to provide their employers with a National Insurance number and they all worked for cash at the end of the day or week:

I had my first job working on a flower stall in Exmouth Market when I was eleven, after that I had lots of different jobs in shops and supermarkets. I even worked in a baker's shop on Christmas Day one year. (Lynn)

Helping out in the pie and mash shop in the market (LS)

¹⁶ N.B. This question was not included in the first 20 questionnaires. We added it when we remembered that it was possible that pupils were working before they left school at 15 or later.

¹⁷ The use of domestic paraffin heaters was common at this time, and though dangerous they were popular because they were cheap to run.

Paraffin round 3 nights and Saturday mornings. (JSS)

I was a paraffin boy and I did car cleaning. (DS)

Friday evening and Saturday all day in a hairdressers. (SN)

I did a milk round before I was 13. (MS)

Popular jobs for the pupils included shop work, shelf filling in supermarkets, paper rounds, helping on market stalls and, for girls only, hairdressing. For some children, working alongside their parents was essential:

My father was a tailor and my mother a seamstress, my job was finishing jacket seams and the money went to paying family debt required to get over to England. (Kyriacou, 2006)

B2.8 - Meeting up with friends

The researchers asked about meeting friends, play and other activities outside school (questions twenty-three and twenty-four), and had replies from fifty-nine respondents. By far the most popular was hanging around in the neighbourhood, or in the flats (thirty-nine respondents, 56%) and meeting friends at their homes (sixteen). Next came visiting clubs – youth clubs (twenty). Sports were a little less popular with some (seven) playing football (in the streets), some swimming (seven), and three just saying “sports”. More organised activities were not so popular; just five people cited scouts, brownies, boys’ brigade or army cadets. More independently, four said they walked the streets (one at least alone), five cited the cinema, and there were a couple of “chased the girls.” The independence of the children was illustrated by comments such as “Anything for a laugh” and “Never stayed in.”

Some respondents lived long distances from the school — in Poplar, Edmonton, Clapham, Eltham (Kent) and Redhill (Surrey). For these children meeting school friends outside of school was difficult, if not impossible:

Due to long travel I only met friends from my old school. (RH)

Playing out with friends was an important part of the respondents’ childhoods, also their teenage years. The majority of questionnaires referred to ‘hanging out’ with friends and spending a great deal of time outdoors.

Islington was, indeed still is, an area with a limited amount of green open space(s) for children to play in, as has been discussed. However, in the post-war years many buildings had been destroyed by bomb damage, and as noted elsewhere these bombed ruins were used by the local children as alternative ‘adventure playgrounds.’ The ruins were good places in which to play ‘hide and seek’; make camps; light fires; and generally look for things that had been left behind.

Sports, such as football, cricket and tennis were improvised in the streets, local parks and the grounds of the housing estates, despite most places displaying prominent signs that said ‘NO BALL GAMES ALLOWED.’

The majority of parks had ‘Park Keepers’ who tried to ensure that everyone behaved properly and played safely on the equipment. Some stayed in their jobs for many years and were renowned for ruling with a rod of iron.

Children living in streets with multi-occupied houses and on housing estates had large numbers of friends and lots of places to play; in the grounds of the housing estates when the weather was fine and, on the stairwells, and balconies when it was raining.

Generally met up and roamed the streets. (Bob J)

Met on the estate and hung around. (CT)

Met around the local housing estates. We basically ‘hung out’ in the grounds. Played ‘knock down ginger’ (knocking on people’s doors and running away), ball games, marbles, rode bikes and (pedal) scooters like loonies up and down the street. (Yvonne, W)

Three women said they did not meet friends out of school. One lived in a single room with her parents and grandparents.

I walked a lot by myself. (Yvonne)

The two other women were from Cyprus, one Greek and the other Turkish. Neither was allowed out in the evenings as a child:

Only met friends to walk home with. Was never allowed out at night. (GO)

Never met friends out of school, nowhere to go and mother strict would not let us go out. Too embarrassed to invite people round in our poor situation. No extra food to go round either. (Kyriacou, 2006)

All of the other respondents reminisced fondly about the things they did outside school hours. Church halls and schools were open during the evenings for a variety of clubs and activities. They talked about youth clubs, brownies and guides, scouts, church groups (such as the girls and boys life brigade), the air training corps, judo and karate.

Swimming was a popular activity. There were, and still are, several local swimming pools in Islington, and they provided good meeting places:

It only cost 4d to go swimming. There were different coloured arm bands and when the colour of your arm band was called it was time to get out. If you didn't the attendant walked round the pool carrying your clothes. It was a good place to meet boys and I met my future husband at the Merlin Swimming Baths when I was 15. (Lynn)

Going to the pictures (cinema) was relatively cheap and there were at least a dozen cinemas to choose from in Islington:

Going to the 'pictures' meant a visit to the Angel Cinema, the Blue Hall, the Carlton in Essex Road or the Odeon in Upper Street. Occasionally we would go to the Cameo in Shaftesbury Avenue to see Cartoons. This was very popular with adults and you always had to queue up. (DP)

For those who had no money (or not enough) to buy a cinema ticket, there was a well-known scam. One person would pay to go in and then open the fire exits (usually in a corridor near the toilets) to let everyone else in. It was often a strange sight to see boys and girls coming out of the same toilet; but nobody worried. Isabel remembers 'bunking in' to the 'pictures' with her older brothers when she was about eight years old. She had been taken (somewhat reluctantly by them) on this escapade and shoved through the fire exit with strict instructions on where to sit after going through the swing-doors leading into the cinema. So, while it is true to say that many of the Rivinghill children were poor by today's standards the question of whether or not they were deprived remains a matter of opinion. This is something that the researchers explore in more detail in the following chapter(s).

CHAPTER B3 - The Children and the School

In this chapter the researchers look at the attitudes of the pupils to their new school, presented alongside the results from the questionnaire, which explored several, other issues.

B3.1 - Raison d'être for Risinghill

There was weak appreciation about the reason(s) for setting up the school and merging the four contributory schools - Gifford, Ritchie, Northampton and Bloomsbury. Of the thirty-seven (53%) respondents from these schools, fourteen had no idea of the reason (Question thirty-four) or had forgotten. Two said 'Yes' but volunteered no reason, and three must have misunderstood the question, answering "Northampton". Eight did volunteer reasons, ranging from: better buildings; an experiment; providing wider opportunities; and issues with falling numbers of school pupils.

B3.2 - Comparison with Previous Schools

The researchers were interested to know how Risinghill compared to the pupils' previous schools (whether a junior or secondary school), and asked the questions (questions forty to forty-six) "In your opinion how did Risinghill compare with your previous school in terms of the building itself, the facilities, the wider curriculum and the quality of teaching? Was it better, similar or worse?" and invited general responses along these lines, including "discipline" and "atmosphere." There were only three abstentions, and three just answered the overall comparison question with a rather ambiguous "Nothing compared to a Cypriot school", echoing a common theme: "Felt it was rather large and confusing at first" and a blanket "All were great." The results - from looking at various aspects of the school - showed interesting contrasts, as shown in Table 5 below where the number of various replies was classified broadly into 'Better', 'Similar' and 'Worse' than the previous school:

	Building	Facilities	Curriculum	Teaching	Discipline	Atmosphere
Better	50	54	40	34	25	37
Similar:	2	1	8	14	8	7
Worse	2	3	4	8	17	8

Table 5 – Comparison of Risinghill with previous school

Risinghill was clearly seen as being better, but where ‘Discipline’ was concerned, there was less unanimity. These questions also revealed graduations in responses – from “Brilliant” to “Far, far worse.” The researchers expected the pupils to rate the building highly as the vast majority had come from schools that were very old and/or were earmarked for demolition. Nor were they surprised to find that most of the pupils found the wider curriculum and the quality of teaching better. At their previous schools, the core subjects had often been taught by the same teacher in the same classroom whereas at Risinghill there were specialist teachers for practically every discipline. Regarding ‘Buildings’ and ‘Facilities’ a number of pupils noted their modernity, and regarding ‘Curriculum’ a few noted how much wider and varied this was. In respect of the teaching it was found to be less regimented and more liberal, and with regard to ‘Discipline’ comments included “Good with lots of reasoned arguments”, while others noted it was more relaxed or even lax. Lastly, regarding the general atmosphere of the school, five described it variously as “overwhelming”, “scary”, “fun”, “dangerous”, “mad”, but on the other hand there were many comments like “friendlier”, “more liberal” and “perfect.”

A further question (question fifty-five) asked what they didn’t like at Risinghill – forty-one (59%) responded to this, making a range of points: by far the most frequently cited (twenty mentions) was “yobbishness” and “unruly behaviour”, including three mentions of “bullying.” Discipline (or the lack of it) was mentioned six times, and four noted “confusion.” Two noted poor teaching. Other comments could be elicited from any school: Dislike of mathematics (three), dislike of PE (one), dislike of a particular teacher (one), general dislike of school. Two comments referred indirectly to the physical aspect of the school: “No place to go when raining” and “Having to carry everything around the school in long hikes to lessons in different blocks.”

B3.3 - The Classes, Teachers, and Curriculum

The pupils were assigned to one of seven ‘Houses’ (later reduced to six), and for administrative and pastoral purposes within each House were put into Tutor Groups of about thirty children of mixed sex and ages with an assigned teacher as ‘Tutor’. The Houses were named after famous literary figures associated with Islington. We asked (question forty-seven) if they could remember which House they belonged to and the name of their Tutor (question forty-eight); fifty-nine (84%) could remember their House and thirty-five (50%) recalled their Tutors, and these were distributed as shown below in Table 6:

House	Number of respondents	Tutors recalled (number of mentions if recalled more than once)
Blake	4	Miss Bride
Defoe	12	Miss M Coates (5), Miss Knowles, Mrs Rosenberg
Fox	6	Mr Lewis (3), Miss Myers
Johnson	14	Mr Butterfield (2), Janet Leamonth, Mark Wilson (3), Miss McKee (2), Mr Rowland, Mrs Martin, Mrs Swan.
Keats	10	Mrs M Clayton (3), Miss Hester
Milton	13	Ann Bowen (2), R Catchpole, Mr Hallowell, Mrs Kilroy, Mrs Mellor, Miss Stegall (2), Mr Willis
Payne	0	-

Table 6 – Memories of school houses and tutors

Twenty-two Tutors were recalled. One person could not remember their House, but did remember Mr Butterfield and Mark Wilson, and another who did not recall their House remembered Miss McKee, so both of these must have been in Johnson House.

A surprising forty-nine (70%) of the seventy respondents could remember the form they went into when they joined Risinghill (question forty-nine). Most (thirty-five) thought they stayed in the same group as they moved through the school (question fifty); seven thought they went down in grade; and fourteen that they went up, though some could not recall their actual form.

Some teachers leave a huge impression on their students and this was reflected in the pupils' answers to the question who they recalled, and by subject taught (questions fifty-one and fifty-three). Fifty-one (73%) respondents were able to remember at least one teacher – a few could remember up to as many as thirteen. Eighty-three teachers were named – though this number is not certain because variations in remembered spellings may inflate this figure a little. While many were remembered just once, some were clearly very memorable, either positively or negatively: Miss (or Mrs) Rosenberg who taught English and French (seventeen

mentions); Dr C Rawson (or Ralston/Rawlson) who taught English (fourteen); Mr R Nunn who taught mathematics (eight). Of course these teachers taught subjects taken by all students, and would, therefore, meet more pupils – but some of the specialist teachers, who had fewer pupils, were also well remembered: Mrs Mellor (Art, seven mentions), Miss (or Mrs) Hill (French, seven), Mrs Anne Burton (Music, seven), and Mr H E Woolhead (Metalwork and Woodwork, nine).

Below is a list of the subjects offered at the school recalled, and the number of recalls of teachers for each of these subjects, sorted on recall size (Others here would include remedial teachers and perhaps photography from the early days, etc.):

Subject	Recalls		Subject	Recalls
English	31		Woodwork	8
French	31		Typing and Shorthand	7
Art	26		Commerce/Civics	5
Mathematics	23		Other	5
Physical Education	16		Religious Education	4
Music	12		Technical Drawing	3
History	11		Needlework	3
Geography	11		Domestic Science	3
Metalwork	10		Accounts	2
Science	9		Biology	1

Art and music at Risinghill had some very gifted teachers, so it is not surprising that they are near the top of this list; the same can be said of English. Of course not everyone will remember names (as will everyone not be remembered); some comments indicating loss of names include:

I can remember them but names escape me.

Miss Fenerty - A lady. She was brilliant. We had a good football teacher, can't remember his name, very funny man.

Many of the teachers recalled evoked fond memories. Mrs Corner was one of them:

*But what sticks in my mind was when my sister Joan and her class left
4HM she got them all to sing school days are over to the tune of the
party's over and it brought a tear to the eye ...*

School days are over its time to call it 4 years

So finish your lessons and lines

From this we resign today is the day

It's time to wind up this time must end

Pack up your school books the time is over its all over

It's all over my friend.

(Mary, S)

Mary continues:

*I also remember with fondness Mrs Gilbert my housecraft teacher and
form tutor and Miss Hendricks the gym teacher. I also loved the
trampolines and can still boast to this day I'm quite good on that even
though I am now 56 ... well I could go on and on but I won't be boring as
that is what I thought I was through my teenage years, but then they sent
me to Starcross and I hated it. I could not wait to leave. (Mary, S)*

There were quite a few pupils like Mary who, after Risinghill closed, were sent to other schools and did not settle, but more about this later.

Amongst the many happy memories was one that the authors could relate to – of bringing records in to school on the last day of term and being allowed (by some teachers) to play them in the class room:

*Another story that features Ray B was the day he was persuaded by a
teacher to give a demonstration of a new dance craze. I am not entirely
sure but I think it was the 'Hitch-hiker'. The class was near to end of term
and the teacher concerned – Ms. Duvall again, had thought it a nice idea
to have a small party – we could bring in a few records and the class room
was cleared slightly for dancing room. I can't say how the subject arose*

but suddenly there was Ray and Ms. Duvall out there on the floor as he was showing her how to do this dance – it ended up as a full demonstration as Ray ‘strut his stuff’ to ‘Glad all Over’, the Dave Clark Five number one, in front of the whole class – with Ms. Duvall picking up the idea and joining in – what a sight this was.” (David, Y)

Although nobody in the RRG can remember any of their teachers getting down to boogie with them on such occasions, they do recall some of the teachers giving Traditional Jazz (or ‘Trad Jazz’ as it was called then) dance lessons in the gym at break times. The new Motown, Soul and Pop were dominating the charts then, but Traditional Jazz was still very popular, and at Risinghill the children were dancing to Acker Bilk and Kenny Ball and loving every minute of it.

David also talked about outings to the cinema and other interesting trips that were organized by his teachers:

One day upon entering class I was to learn that the teacher had obtained tickets to go and see a film in the West End for the whole class – it was the English teacher Ms. Duvall. The film was ‘West Side Story’ and it was for an afternoon performance.” ...

... another time our small group were part of a larger group that had some free tickets that one of the teachers had obtained, to go to the BBC TV center to see a pop show called ‘Gadzooks!’. On the bill were the ‘Who’ and ‘Donovan’. (David, Y)

The authors’ own school trips were not quite so exciting. Isabel remembered going to the Old Vic Theatre to see Othello but because she and her class-mates did not understand the Shakespearean language, did not appreciate the play fully; nevertheless everyone enjoyed the experience. The researchers did find at the Institute of Education (IOE) a list of school excursions for the summer and autumn terms of 1961 which, in addition to the Old Vic, included the Tower of London, the Planetarium, London Zoo, the Science Museum and many other places of interest. The ‘Gadzooks’ and ‘West Side Story’ outings look like they might have been organized independently as these outings did not feature on the list.

B3.4 - Michael Duane

Significantly, since Michael Duane was the core of the school and its story, sixty-five (93%) of the respondents (question sixty-four) recalled him, only one qualifying by “vaguely”, but two by “very well.” There were three ‘No’s’, one ‘no response’ and one ‘can’t remember.’ Remarkably, nearly all respondents had some further comment (question sixty-five) to make fifty responses, 71%; it is worth listing them all here. Note one comment was repeated:

A Kind and understanding man who was used as a scapegoat.

A Kind sensitive decent human being.

A lot of contact - a good man.

Amiable, friendly very supportive.

Approachable.

Brilliant.

Brilliant headmaster.

Easy going. (two times)

Fabulous man like a Dad.

First class chap.

Gentleman.

Good with the rough boys.

Got on well with him.

Great.

Great. - Firm but fair approachable. Good Listener.

He was a gentleman of the old school, though I disagreed with his views on discipline and conduct - at that time. Right man - wrong school.

He was a gentleman who gave us all the time he could. He was great for our area.

He was a nice guy.

He was always calm. When I asked he made Mr N. rub out some of his comments in the yearly report home. Namely the word bastard in his summing up of me as 'a nasty little bastard'.

He was an excellent Head. Very approachable and had a lot of time for his pupils. An Extremely nice, polite and positive

I liked what I knew of him.

[knew him] just in passing, but very nice man. Kind. Friendly. Fair.

Lots of fond memories.

Much admired and respected gentleman.

My recollections of him was a kind soft spoken man.

Nice and easy to talk to.

Nice; could not believe that you could have a teacher like him.

Nice man.

No [personal] contact. Always showed real interest in pupils.

Not strict enough. I can remember him giving a boy the bus fare to see his probation officer/social worker

Ok.

Reasonable man.

Soft touch/ Nice man.

Striking blue twinkling eyes. Always smiling and always said Hello. Treated everyone kindly. Early days thought he was a bit soft.

Terrific Man.

Too honest for his own good.

Very genuine & kind Person.

Very good head teacher.

Very kind person.

Very kind man, pupils liked him and respected him.

Very nice.

man who would try to guide you in the right direction.

He was very good when I was sent to him over a classroom strike.

I have a great respect for him to this day and have gone on to work in the education industry because of him.

I liked him, I thought he cared deeply about underprivileged children. However he left the others to take care of themselves.

Very nice person.

Very sincere person, open & honest

[Knew him] very well - my mother was Chairman of the PTA when the school closed and he (MD) would often visit our flat (which was local). I thought he was a nice man- a great headmaster and amazing educationalist am only sorry that I never managed to tell him so in adult life.

Was impressed by him.

These comments, and their near positive unanimity, speak for themselves.

One pupil qualified her response beginning “Not strict enough” with a story that exemplifies Duane’s approach with some of the older, disaffected pupils:

I can remember the first time I ever met Mr Duane, I had gone to the ‘Office’ on a message of some sort for the teacher and was waiting outside his office with an older lad, probably 15 or 16. Mr Duane came out of the typists’ office and asked the lad what he was doing outside his office again when he had promised him he would not misbehave. The boy said he hadn’t ‘f...ing’ been sent there in trouble, but that he had to go and see his Probation Officer and didn’t have the bus fare! Mr Duane gave him some money out of his pocket and told him not to spend it on fags! For some reason I have never forgotten that event. I couldn’t believe that someone would have the brass neck to say that to a teacher, never mind a Headmaster. (Linda, R)

At fifteen or sixteen years of age this was probably one of the 4th Year pupils who joined in May 1960 and was at the school for just the one term, kicking his heels like so many others who would have preferred to be at work. Another head would probably have given the boy a ‘flea in his ear’, if not a caning, and sent him on his way. Whether this would have improved his manners or his behaviour is open to question.

The most Interesting anecdote came from a pupil who, in describing Duane’s qualities, recalled an incident that had a profound effect on her:

Found Mr Duane so kind and easy to talk to, which was not easy for me as I was usually in awe of most teachers in my early years. I did have to go to his office after a fight with a boy in my class, his name was RS, he was black and he pushed me on the stairs so I hit him and called him a black bastard. He told Mr Duane and I lied and said R called me a white bastard. Mr Duane sat us down together and got us to talk to each other, R then apologized to me for pushing me and made me feel terrible for lying, but I wouldn't admit it. But I have never been racist again, and always loved having many nationalities as friends. (Jackie, S)

The researchers end this part of the survey with a quote that was remarkably close to what Michael Foreman (one of Duane's former students at Alderman Woodrow School) had told them about his old headmaster, as reported in Book 1, at chapter B1.5:

Mr Duane let you believe you could do anything in life. (SN)

B3.5 - Co-education

Because Risinghill was closed on the premise that Islington parents preferred single-sex schools, the pupils were asked about their feelings in this regard, and what their parents' attitudes were to co-educational or co-ed schools as they were called (questions fifty-two and fifty-three). Thirty-two (47%) responded to the former, but only nineteen (27%) to the latter. The researchers classified the answers given in terms of being positive towards co-education, neutral and negative; they also included categories for no opinion offered and that Risinghill represented no change. The following Table 7 summarises the results

	No Change	No opinion	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Pupils' attitude	3	3	11	9	6
Parent's attitude	0	6	7	5	1

Table 7 - Attitudes to moving to Risinghill as a co-educational school

From this it can be concluded that there were no great feelings opposed to co-education, and particularly among parents. Some typical comments were:

Among pupils on the positive side: "I enjoyed it" (a male pupil), "Brilliant" (a female), "Good" (female pupils); expressing neutrality: "Fine by me" (male), "Can't

remember” (female); and on the negative side: “A bit worried” (female – apparently her parents were not concerned), “Disastrous, my view” (male).

For parents on the positive side: “Society is mixed so why shouldn't school be mixed” (reported view of parents of a female pupil), “Good” (for four parents of female pupils); expressing neutrality: “They didn't worry” (male); and the one negative comment “My father considered girls a distraction” (for parent of male pupil).

B3.6 - The Conduct of the Pupils

According to some of the reports of the time, Risinghill was a ‘Blackboard Jungle’ with pupils who were out of control. This was not how the authors saw the school, but did their fellow pupils agree? Insofar as the behaviour and the general atmosphere in the school was concerned, it was found to be better but only marginally, confirming what they had suspected - that in this respect Risinghill was no better or worse than any other state secondary school of that era.

The researchers asked about truancy (‘bunking off’) in question fifty-four. Of the sixty-seven answers to this question, thirty respondents said “never”; twenty-eight said “sometimes”; five said “often.” Four gave more detailed answers: “Never - only because I got free school dinners”, “All the time”, “As often as possible”, “in the 1st and 4th years.”

These figures are illustrated in Figure 7 .

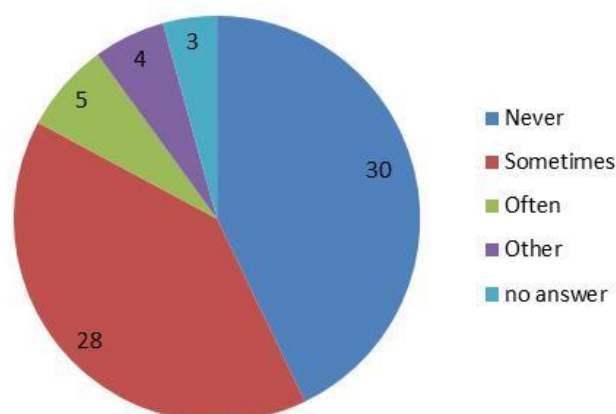


Figure 7 – Reported “Bunking off”

Asked about the overall behaviour of children in the school and during lessons (question fifty-seven), forty-six (67%) said “well behaved” (one saying “very well behaved”), and sixteen (23%) said “badly behaved”, four going further and saying “totally out of control.” Three noted it depended on the teacher; there were four non-responses. This picture confirms that overall the pupils were not out of control and the authors’ conviction that behaviour was no worse than other schools in similar circumstances.

For some of the pupils, however, the indiscipline in the school was an issue with the odd pupil holding Duane personally responsible for this:

I need to point out that generally speaking I had a great time at Risinghill. The problem was the total lack of discipline. I was there for the full five years from age 11 to 16. Therefore I had no experience of any other senior school. When I was informed by Mr Duane that I would not be caned no matter what I did I, as an 11 year old boy, thought I had died and gone to heaven. My mates and I along with everybody else ran riot...

I am ashamed of the stupid things I did at school and the education I wasted. I know I only have myself to blame but I feel things would have been different if there had been caning and much tougher discipline. I lay the blame for this firmly at Mr Duane’s door. Don’t get me wrong I thoroughly liked Mr Duane. (Andrew, L)

And from another pupil, who also liked Duane, but disagreed with his methods:

Yes, he was a gentleman of the “Old School” though I disagreed with his views on discipline and conduct – at that time. Right man – wrong school. (IW)

Isabel and Lynn could remember holding similar views about Duane when they first joined Risinghill. This was when the rumours about the gang fights were spreading like wildfire through the school, and when Duane, reportedly, was giving the trouble-makers cups of tea in his office. At break times, this was a hot topic of conversation amongst the girls who, when they misbehaved, were sent to the deputy head’s office where there were no cosy chats or cups of tea to be had as Duane’s deputy was a strict disciplinarian. But for all their grumbling

about the boys getting away with murder, the girls hated, with a passion, the teachers who used CP so their criticisms of Duane were always somewhat muted.

Bob J highlights the predicament that many found themselves in when talking about this issue:

Duane was right about corporal punishment, but bad behaviour is a common element of school life today and nobody seems to have the answer to controlling the natural exuberance of children, without imposing some authoritarian controls. (Bob J, 2004)

Although the authors agree with Bob that bad behaviour is common in most schools, they are not convinced that authoritarian controls are the answer. They were reminded of Michael D whom, as discussed in Book 1, was a child who hated everything about school, and truanted on a regular basis. Duane brought him back into education without the use of CP, and without imposing any draconian sanctions. More important, Michael came to love school and never truanted again, at least not until the LCC announced its decision to close the school when, like many other pupils, he dropped out of education, not even bothering to turn up for his exams.

The reduction of Risinghill's probationers (from ninety-eight to just nine within four years of the school opening) is another, fine example of Duane's non-authoritarian methods working. (W. M. Duane, 1964a). This was achieved without any support from the LCC who, arguably, was more interested in derailing the school than it was helping it. Duane listened to children and acted, instinctively, on what they had to say; Michael D being a prime example of this. Listening to children has been talked about a lot in recent years, but whether or not this is happening in schools today is impossible for the authors to say.

The RRG received so many stories about this issue that it has been difficult to know which ones to choose. Many pupils found the lack of discipline in the school to be a problem, but what is interesting is that those who complained about this often qualified their answers along the following lines:

Risinghill was no different to most other secondary schools in the area, Tudor Rose, Shoreditch, Hugh Myddleton were all very rough schools.
(CN)

Those who found the behaviour of their peers in lessons to be more disruptive than in their previous schools tended to find the general atmosphere intimidating also. Illustrations of this have been provided in Book 1, but here are some more examples:

I was bullied by RB and her gang. It came to a head in the gym. We started to fight, all her friends joined in, pulling my hair and hitting me. I just kept my concentration on hitting her and ignored the rest. I was getting hurt but so was she. I was left alone after that ...

On reflection we did not have many lessons that were not interrupted by fire alarms or disruptive pupils ...

Memories of Risinghill, as you can gather, are not good. As I said on the telephone I saw a fight with FC and his gang who beat a boy unconscious and got excluded because of it. I had experienced violence at home and was very scared to see it out in the open. (JS)

The boy that JS mentioned (FC) was, indeed, the leader of a gang that, in the early days, was involved with a lot of the fighting. But as far as the authors are aware, he left school in the summer of 1960 to start work (or soon afterwards) and was not expelled. Duane did not believe in expulsion, and it is clear from the Parent Teacher Association's (PTA) appeal to the Secretary of State (discussed in Book 1, where the appeal is provided as an appendix) that no child was ever excluded from Risinghill. Moreover, in a letter to *The Sunday Telegraph*, Duane talked about the gang fights at or near Risinghill where he referred to a boy called 'Bert' whom the authors believe was FC or a member of his gang:

Gradually the activities of the gang became less destructive if no less boisterous. More and more they were prepared to come to my room to discuss their grievances, real or fancied, against prefects and staff. Within a year of leaving school Bert paid £27 to enable his younger sister to join a school journey to Italy. He paid it out of a weekly wage of £6 from which he gave his mother £2. (The Sunday Telegraph, 1965)

Ian H, whom was mentioned earlier, was very unhappy to start with, but after getting beaten up quite badly, who wouldn't be? He described his first term at Risinghill as follows:

The first term was just a nightmare, I could not come to terms with my new situation. My friends from N T [Northampton] were just the same. The lack of order and discipline was the worst aspect of all and I completely disconnected from school life. I asked my parents if I could change schools, but their view was that another move would be very bad for me! Fools. The new curriculum with its lack of sports afternoons and less technology left me disinterested. We asked our P.E. teacher, EC, one of the few good teachers I came across at RH, about the lack of sports and he got MD to come and talk to us. He told us that unfortunately we were going to miss out not only sports but that as part of the initial intake we would miss out on other things as well. Totally honest but as an exercise in demotivation it was superb. This seemed to confirm suspicions that N T had been included in RH to facilitate its closure. Certainly there has been a move away from specialist schools ever since. (Ian, H)

Isabel's two younger brothers, Neil and Philip, both attended Risinghill. Neil did not like it very much, but he had always had problems with school, so this was not surprising. As a child he had stammered badly and was painfully shy, making him an easy target for the bullies at all of his previous schools, including his primary school. He truanted often but Isabel's parents were unaware of this as he was never caught. Philip, despite catching a glimpse of Risinghill's darker side, and on his first day at that, was more philosophical:

I don't remember having really good or bad memories of the school, but I do remember my first day. I was in Johnson House when a lad approached me called Billy. He was a year older than me but much shorter and had been at my primary school, Copenhagen. He said something to me, which I don't remember but it couldn't have been nice because I hit him. During the morning break another lad who was a friend of Billy's put a penknife to my throat and said I was to stay away from Billy or he would cut my throat. (Philip, W)

He, too, spoke about the indiscipline in some of his classes:

Another episode I remember was when we had a music lesson. A very nice young female teacher who I'm pretty sure was called Miss Moody was

taking our lesson. It didn't last very long, everyone it seemed was being very noisy and boisterous. She was unable to control the class and ran out of the class room. I don't remember ever seeing her again so she must have been pretty upset. (Philip, W)

Philip joined Risinghill in 1963. This was the year in which the school lost eight of its most experienced teachers (one to retirement, three to deputy headships of other schools and four to headships of large departments outside of Risinghill) which had a devastating effect, not just on the staff, but also the pupils. (W. M. Duane, 1964b). Nineteen-sixty-three was, as described in Book 1, at chapter C7, the beginning of the end for Risinghill. This was the year in which Houghton (in his 1958 report) had predicted that the staff numbers would fall in line with the number of pupils. Unfortunately Risinghill had never had a full complement of staff so these reductions compounded what was already a serious problem in the school. Supply teachers were used to fill the gaps, many of whom were young and inexperienced: the result(s) of which can be seen in the chaos that Philip describes. The authors are not condoning the behaviour of the pupils, merely pointing out that the LCC ought to have been taken to task for the part that it played in this debacle.

The research study, however, demonstrates that, for every bad memory, there were at least two or three good ones with some teachers featuring more prominently than others – as will be seen later in this chapter.

A surprisingly high percentage (11%, eight responses) of respondents confessed that they had been in trouble with the police during their stay at Risinghill (question fifty-six). No details were given but one pupil said that he had been in trouble after the closure and had been visited in remand by some of his former teachers at Risinghill. There were two non-responses to the question with one of these commenting “Never got caught!”

B3.7 - Bullying

The researchers asked specifically about bullying (question sixty), and found that just under a third of the sixty-five respondents (30%) to this question experienced some bullying at Risinghill. Most of this appeared to be by fellow pupils, but of the twelve people who specified the type of bullying, three mentioned bullying by teachers. One was to a girl who said “Had trouble with one Science Teacher: she smacked the back of my legs and my parents took it up with Mr Duane - anyway she apologized begrudgingly and left at the end of

that term”; the second to a boy: “One teacher (art). Most of my fights were helping others”; and another unspecified (all teachers were unnamed). According to the informant, the third was coped with by the pupils with a classroom strike. Eighteen respondents offered comments on how they dealt with bullying – from “ignoring it”, “walking in a crowd”, absconding (e.g. “I bunked off for months”) and fighting back (e.g. “I learnt Judo and Karate to defend myself”). One respondent who was bullied (unspecified type) confessed “I suppose I was a bully but many of the teachers were physically abusive to me.”

These statistics do not, in the opinion of the researchers, suggest that Risinghill had a major problem with bullying, confirming what they had suspected – that in this respect Risinghill was no better or worse than any other secondary school in the area. As discussed in Book 1, at chapter C4, fighting was common-place in Islington in the 1960s, especially amongst rival gangs: it was very much a part of the youth culture then, and still is today.

One pupil, as noted above, admitted to being a bully but qualified this by saying that many of the teachers had bullied him. The researchers can believe this as they know, from experience, that there were teachers who, despite the ban on CP, still threatened, smacked and pushed the children around, presumably because they believed this was not CP in any true sense.

The most harrowing tale of abuse by the staff, however, came from Yvonne, who still bears the emotional scars:

In the third year, I must have been fourteen, and I was in a French lesson. This particular teacher did not like me and destroyed any enthusiasm I may have had for learning French. I took things out of my bag and put them on the desk while I tried to find my pen. One of the items was a teenage magazine called ‘The Boyfriend’. This screaming banshee came and tore the magazine up, accusing me of reading it in her lesson. Even now, the injustice of the situation makes me angry – I was looking for my pen! She would not listen to any explanation that I offered. Not that bad you might think, but then, as now, I cannot abide unfairness. I decided, along with a few others in the class, to stage a sit-in at the end of the lesson. This meant that we would not move and the next class could not come in. It didn’t last long as this particular teacher ran to fetch Miss R, who soon shifted us. I was not frightened of Miss R, for some reason I had

the greatest respect for her. Still not too bad you may think. Now this vindictive French teacher took me to the deputy head, a woman who also had trouble listening. The teacher told her version of the story and then turned and shouted into my face, 'you are a prostitute'. Getting better? This very quickly led to my being questioned and examined by a doctor to see if I was pregnant. I remember sitting on a couch wearing only my 'navy knickers' and then being asked to remove them. I lay on the couch to be examined; 'When was your last period?' 'Are you sure you haven't missed a period?' 'When did you last have sexual intercourse?' I truthfully swore to them that I was a virgin, and they in turn said they did not believe me. Where was my mother in all of this? I don't remember if I told her, but knowing my total embarrassment, I doubt I did. I don't think I actually told anybody.

I played a lot of truant following that; this compounded their suspicion about my behaviour; they were so wrong about me and I still feel hurt when I think back. I gained my education and qualifications after Risinghill, in fact I would say, in spite of Risinghill, and have done very well in the choices I have made. There are many different ways to abuse a child. I was abused. Forty plus years later, this and other incidents are very clear in my mind, some are not so clear and some are too painful or provoke too much resentment within me to want to recollect them. I don't mean any of my memories or feelings towards Risinghill to reflect on Mr Duane, as I said he was ahead of his time. I didn't have much to do with him but on reflection, maybe I should have tried to speak with him. (Yvonne F.)

A couple of weeks later, Yvonne sent the RRG another email:

It would be interesting for me, if contact was made with Miss R, if she remembered me and what she thought about me. This may give me an insight as to why I was bullied and disliked by so many – not just at Risinghill but at primary school. Maybe I had an attitude that I didn't realize or maybe I had a 'victim persona'. My MA is in Medical Law and Ethics. The law in regard of children changed dramatically with Gillick v

West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA and the DHSS (1985), (which is relevant as you may recall it was regarding parental consent), this also impacted on The Children Act. As all this is post-1980, one must refer back to 'consent' and the 'best interests of the child'. The 'competent minor' was a Gillick principle. I don't remember being asked for my consent, I certainly never gave written consent. Whether my mother knew or consented, I can't say; I never told her and so it was never spoken about. I doubt very much that she knew. I imagine, as now, if a doctor can justify his actions in court, if he can prove he was acting in beneficence (my best interests), then the action is justified. It may, at that time, have been justifiable to examine a 13/14 year old female if it was thought she needed some form of protection from neglect or promiscuity and to safeguard the sexual health of the males she may contaminate. I was not physically neglected, nor promiscuous, nor a threat – I don't think I'd even got as far as kissing; I was too self-conscious, it just wasn't me. (Yvonne)

Exploring the relationship between Duane, his deputy (Miss A) and the LCC was an important part of the RRG's research, not just because it wanted to establish the part played by Miss A in the demise of the school, but because this did have a direct bearing on what happened to Yvonne. When the authors received her email, one of the first questions they asked was: How could this have happened without Duane knowing anything about it? They also found it very difficult to believe that deputy heads (or even heads) had the authority to sanction an examination of this type; in turn, raising other questions about the LCC, questions that Yvonne herself had asked. Unfortunately, they were unable to throw any light on this for her - not that they expected to find, or have access to, records of this type, even if they were available. John, the RRG's website manager, had a vague recollection of some girls at his school (another secondary modern in North London) being subjected to the same type of examination as Yvonne; however, he was unable to verify the fact(s). The idea filled everyone in the RRG with horror; however, the establishment had some very strange ideas about sex and morality in those days so maybe this was part and parcel of the secondary school culture?

It saddened the RRG to think that, after all this time, Yvonne believed that she might have had a "victim persona" when she could not, in any way, have been responsible for what was,

in effect, an abuse of power by people who ought to have known better. It is hoped that, in publishing her story, this will help in some small way. And who knows, she might, in the fullness of time, get some of the answers that she has been looking for. An apology would be good, but the authors are not holding their breath.

As has been demonstrated throughout RR, Duane did not have a good working relationship with his deputy, who preferred to run things her own way. And she appears to have had the backing of the LCC in this regard or at least some of its officers, notably those involved with the inspections of the school and the school's admissions process. According to the PTA's appeal to the Secretary of State, it was Risinghill's deputy head that had turned parents away from the school on account of it (allegedly) being full. Duane knew nothing about this, and the authors doubt that he knew anything about Yvonne's ordeal either. In fact they are almost certain that he did not. As Yvonne herself pointed out, she had very little to do with him and this was true for most of the girls, who were sent to Miss A when they misbehaved. One must assume that this was because of the rules governing the use of CP where male teachers were prohibited from disciplining (physically) young girls. In a school where the head and the deputy head shared the same educational values this arrangement probably worked very well; however, as reported in Book 1, this was not the case at Risinghill. Here the head and the deputy head were working against each other, and this was not good for the children or for the school. In Yvonne's case, it proved to be a catastrophic failure.

The authors know - from Margaret Duane and from other sources - that Duane's working relationship with his deputy was very difficult, and in Book 1 have provided examples of this. Here is another, straight from the horse's mouth so to speak:

Miss A was appointed as Deputy without an interview and without any opportunity of our meeting or getting to know each other. Briefly she has not the intellectual calibre, the experience or the temperament to function in a school of this kind, and certainly not so as to carry out the policy that I am pursuing. Over the four years I have been compelled to restrict the work she does to those areas which, administratively, have the least impact on the school, because of the mistakes made by her in the past ...

Above all Miss A has not the temperament for a school like this. Her tendency to panic and to make rash decisions in the heat of the moment

have caused me much embarrassment. She too easily projects her own insecurity and instability on to others. This instability makes her judgement of people quite unreliable. Her valuation of even very senior and experienced members of Staff, and undoubtedly of myself, varies from week to week...

My Chairman of Governors has long been aware of my difficulties in this matter, but we agreed that, in view of Miss A's impending retirement, it would be unkind to do very much about it. (W. M. Duane, 1964b)

The LCC, however, had a different opinion of Miss A altogether:

His Deputy, the former Head of Ritchie, is a woman of outstanding integrity and character. Nothing which was said of her work at Ritchie in an earlier report needs to be unsaid. Much of Risinghill's relative success is due to her and she has not always been sufficiently consulted or considered. It must be said that she is unfortunately not the professionally happy woman that she was once. (London County Council, 1962)

The PTA did not have an axe to grind with Miss A so for the authors it was simply a question of did they believe that she had been turning parents away from the school on the pretext that it was full (as reported in Book 1), and they did without any hesitation whatsoever. They could not, for example, think of one reason why the parents would have made up such a tale if it was not true. And they believed Yvonne's story of abuse for the same reason. It is difficult to say, however, whether Miss A was a willing partner in the conspiracy to deflate the pupil numbers as it is possible that she was simply acting on Houghton's instructions or of those who reported directly to him. As for the part played by her in the abuse of Yvonne, maybe examinations of this type were routine in those days, as has been suggested.

To return to the question of staff bullying, Yvonne was by no means the only pupil to have fallen foul of the French teacher in question, as the quote below demonstrates. This time, however, Duane was involved. How he dealt with the situation is indicative of how he handled disputes in the school, and how he might have handled Yvonne's grievance *if* it had been brought to his attention:

In the morning we had been to a French class with Mrs H (the drop-dead gorgeous French lady married to a British copper). Due to some trouble, either general unruliness or failure by the whole class to hand in homework, she decided to give us all detention every Thursday for the rest of the term, a period of at least 8 weeks. During the break a few of us discussed the injustice of this, especially as some of us had handed in our homework (OK mine was simply a copy of Barbara Pope's work, but at least I had taken the trouble to copy it out). We made a childish plan to draw up a petition that threatened to strike if the detention wasn't cancelled. At the next lesson after lunch, at the infamous room of M, he noticed a lot of murmuring and passing round of the petition sheet. He demanded I hand the sheet over and insisted on knowing what it was about. After we explained, he got stroppy and told me to go to Mr Duane and justify our actions. Even though I knew MD was not going to give me out a punishment, I was still fairly frightened when I went to the headmaster's office. His secretary told me to wait until the traffic light outside his office turned green. Nervously I went in and explained why M had sent me. MD listened and gave me a speech about respect for teachers etc, and agreed to talk to Mrs H. The end of the story is a bit of an anti-climax, as he got her to agree to make a one-day detention and everybody went away content with the outcome. Mind you I now doubt it encouraged Mrs H to get the class to work, as I seem to remember we all got lazier and lazier as the year in French progressed. My school report for that year in French says 'Robert has refused to do any work'. (Bob J., 2004)

Another issue that the RRG did not get to the bottom of was the rumours about 'sexual irregularities' at Risinghill. These, as discussed in Book 1, began to circulate at around the time of the LCC's proposal to close the school. Duane had a plausible explanation for this:

A long-established method for discouraging teachers from putting into effect curricula and methods based on democratic participation of teachers, pupils and parents, has been the creation of simple-minded slogans aimed at poisoning their minds. So Homer Lane is said to have had 'sexual relations' with pupils; AS Neill was said to be a communist at

a time when in educational circles, to be a communist was almost the most dreadful thing you could say of anyone. He was also said to permit 'sexual irregularities' – the very phrase used about Risinghill. It seems that administrators, especially the senior ones who are almost universally products of the Public school, are obsessed by sex. (Risinghill, undated, IOE Ref: XX)

B3.8 - Punishment

Corporal Punishment was a major theme in the Risinghill story (as reported in Book 1) so the researchers asked about experiences of punishment at Risinghill, and at previous schools (questions thirty-five to thirty-nine). Sixty-six respondents answered these questions, of which forty-seven (67%) said that they been subjected to CP at their previous schools. An attempt was made at analysing this by school, sex, method of punishment and by whom administered, but the data did not permit more than an impression of the reported experiences to be inferred:

- Seventeen schools were mentioned at least once, including Risinghill (eight respondents);
- The following eleven methods of punishment were mentioned at least once. Physical CP comprised:¹⁸
 - Cane (nineteen)
 - Ruler (fourteen)
 - Slipper/slipperd (eight)
 - Smacking (twenty)
 - Hitting with a chair leg (one)
 - Pulling hair (one)
 - Throwing an object at pupil (one – a board rubber).
- Non-physical punishments mentioned were:
 - Writing lines (one)
 - Detention (fifteen),
 - Being sent out of class (one)
 - Being put “on Report” (one).

¹⁸ Numbers in brackets show the numbers of mentions made. N.B. Some people mentioned more than one method.

- Of the thirty-two female respondents, eighteen females noted punishments (60%); eleven of these noted one or more administrations of CP – hitting with a ruler being cited most often, but three noted they had been caned.
- Of the thirty-eight male respondents, thirty had been punished (69% of males); physical punishment was more frequently mentioned, with twenty-three mentions, of which about half (ten) noted being caned, and one hit by a chair leg (“on the bottom”).
- Little could be inferred about individual schools due to lack of numbers. For Risinghill, six mentions were made of physical punishment (two for the cane), and seven for non-physical punishment (six of these for detention).
- Similarly, little could be inferred about who administered the punishment. Form teachers were mentioned most frequently (twenty times) and then headmasters/head mistresses (fifteen times).

B3.9 - School Council

In the early years of Risinghill a School Council was established so the RRG asked if pupils had any recollection of this and solicited any memories of it (question fifty-eight). It also asked (question fifty-nine) whether it was useful to engage pupils in the running of the school. Few remembered the Council (eleven of sixty-eight replies); one of these remembering being a member of it. There were just five substantive comments: The member noted that it gave him freedom to speak, others noted briefly “It was a mystery”, “It was interesting”, “No bullying issues”, “Vote on School Uniform”. Despite poor recollection of the Council, most felt that it was useful to involve pupils in the running of the school (forty-six from fifty-two replies), with just two ‘maybe’s.’ Interestingly two of the forty-six positive replies felt that perhaps it was not appropriate at the time of Risinghill – implying it was introduced too early.

B3.10 - Risinghill’s Closure

Eleven of the twenty-nine respondents who left Risinghill when it closed (38% of that group) said they and/or their parents were involved in the campaign to stop the closure, representing 16% of the total replies (question sixty-six). Nine of these respondents provided further information about their involvement (question sixty-seven):

*Appeared on a television programme and went to the Houses of
Parliament with a petition*

My Father [was involved]

Attending meeting(s), petitions, gave interviews, etc.

Could not do nothing about it when you're young

I did write to the Evening Standard on one occasion to reprimand them about a cartoon they had published about the school. Whilst I accepted that the school was going to be closed I felt that the paper was not taking a balanced view.

I distributed petitions to be signed My mother appeared in newspaper articles and on TV with regard to the school closure and of course my sister and I, who were both pupils attended as well. I was even interviewed on TV once about the closure. I was not allowed on the March to Downing Street but my family were very political and I understood exactly what was happening at the time and I remember reading Sebag-Montefiore's speech¹⁹ about us being the 'blackboard jungle' and totally resenting all the implications. I have of course read Leila Berg's book and have issues with some of it as well.

My Mum and I went to the school protesting with banners not to close the school

We signed petitions and cried.

Of those eleven (16%) that went on to other schools from Risinghill in 1965, the RRG had comments summarised as follows regarding their new school compared to Risinghill (questions sixty-seven to sixty-nine):

- One simply said “No atmosphere”
- One went on to Highbury Grammar School, which was simply described as better than Risinghill.
- One went on to Hugh Myddleton Secondary Modern and gave the following comment: “No comparison. Victorian building, few facilities, tiered [tired?] teaching staff. In the two terms I attended I never had a class at the stand[ard] I had been taught

¹⁹

See Book 1.

at Risinghill. I was top of maths whereas I have been bottom of my set at Risinghill. So I often used to bunk off. Couldn't wait to leave school at Easter".²⁰

- One went to Islington Green Secondary Modern, simply described as worse than Risinghill.
- Four went to Sir Philip Magnus Secondary Modern, with comments of "same", "worse", "better" and "I found the lessons and the way they were taught very boring, lost my enthusiasm."
- One went on to Sir William Collins, described as similar to Risinghill.
- One went to South Hackney Comprehensive and noted "Not as much fun".
- Two implied they stayed on in the successor school Starcross, described by one as better and by the other as worse. Another pupil noted they went to Starcross and found it worse, but they did not give the year they left Risinghill – but it may be reasonably assumed that it was 1965, and that the majority of the Risinghill girls transferred over; it being the obvious choice for those who lived locally.

One pupil, Keith D, who transferred to Sir Philip Magnus, did not have anything good to say about it:

When the school closed in 1965 both myself and approximately a dozen other pupils together with the Risinghill Mechanical Engineering department and teachers Mr Woolhead and Sam Lesser were transferred to Sir Philip Magnus, the reception we received there from both staff and pupils was anything but welcoming. (Keith, D)

He continues:

What a surprise it must have been to them when the following May the majority of their Risinghill 4th year Engineering drop outs passed all five GCE's, a higher percentage than any other class in the School. At Xmas on that first year at Magus each 5th year class throughout the School were given a Pensioner to adopt with the task of raising enough money to buy them a Christmas Hamper. I can always remember their faces when our small class of 6 to 8 Risinghill boys turned up with a Hamper bigger than

²⁰ The comment about mathematics implies that they were with brighter and/or more engaged children at Risinghill

the rest of the Magnus 5th form classes put together. Philip Magnus was a School that prided itself on tradition and discipline and achievement and for them to have captured 2 teachers of Woolhead and Lesser's quality together with an Engineering facility second to none from Risinghill must of seemed for them like winning the Lottery. (Keith, D)

B3.11 – Effects of Risinghill

In bringing this section about the school to a close, the researchers leave the reader with the answer to an exploratory question that they asked of the pupils: “Do you believe that Risinghill or anyone at the school particularly influenced or contributed to your life in any way?” and asked them to comment if so. (Questions eighty-four and eighty-five). Thirty-nine people answered this (56%), nineteen (27%) saying ‘Yes’, twenty (29%) saying ‘No’ (Figure 8).

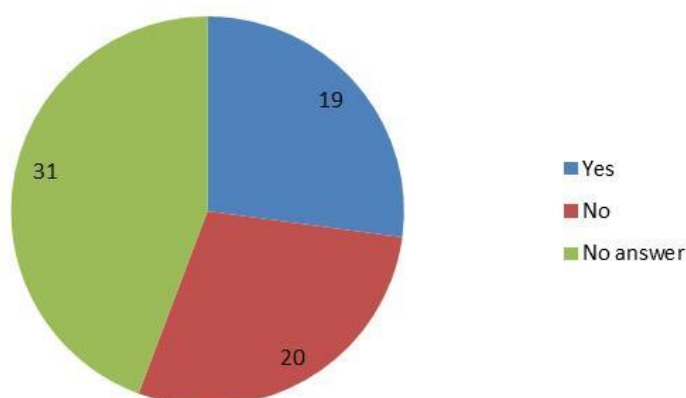


Figure 8: Did the Risinghill experience influence your later life?

The RRG had forty comments on this, the overwhelming number (seventeen) mentioning the teachers at the school. (Most noted the teachers in general but one specified Mr Nunn, a mathematics teacher, another Mrs Fenerty (i.e. Miss Fenoughty), an arts teacher – “She was so special, she had time for all of us”). Seven people (10%) mentioned Michael Duane. Three people mentioned their school friends, the rest of the comments had one mention only, all from responders who said ‘Yes’ to this question; those interpreted positively were:

The cultural mix of the school. In general gave me greater confidence.

[I] realized [I] wasn't thick.

Made you want to succeed.

Corporal punishment wasn't necessary (a comment).

For those which can be construed negatively:

Turned [me] into [a] world case cynic.

[An] example in poor education.

Perhaps one comment is worth picking out especially:

Yes it showed that corporal punishment was not necessary. I was never smacked at home, my father only had to look at me and slightly raise his voice and I knew I was in trouble. (Anne, B)

Duane was, in many ways, a father figure to some of the Risinghill children, one of whom actually said he was “like a dad” when describing his qualities in their questionnaire.

The next chapter concludes the research with the pupils. Here the RRG will be looking at how some of the former students of the school have fared in life, and what they think about education today.

CHAPTER B4 - After Risinghill

The third and final part of the survey looked at how the pupils had fared in life, and what their lives were like now (2004-2006). The authors did not consider themselves to be the ‘waste clay’ of an educational experiment, but did their fellow pupils agree? What did they think about their education, and in their opinion(s) how did this compare to the education of today’s children? Was it better or worse? In addition, the researchers were keen to establish the pupils’ views on Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and school league tables, recognising that many probably had limited knowledge of either as these were relatively new initiatives, introduced in 1989 and 1992 respectively, when their children had left school. They were also interested to know what their fellow pupils believed were the most important things that children needed to learn in school, and this question produced some interesting results with one pupil (now living in Canada) expanding his answer as follows:

As a side note: my eldest daughter is now a teacher and I have seen the school system here in Canada as a parent, and I think it is a constant battle by society to determine what an education system is and what it is supposed to do. Keep kids off the streets? Keep kids away from parents so they can work? Educate them to the ways of society? Educate them to fit into society? Educate them to serve society? Educate them for the joy of learning? Educate them to discover more things? Educate them to make money? Educate children in areas where their parents cannot? Educate children so teachers have a job? Educate them to socialize? Or a little bit of all of the above. I am not sure they asked that question then in Risinghill’s case, and I am not sure they have the answer today. (Eric, B)

Duane had posed the same sort of questions in his paper entitled ‘Education for What?’ some twenty-seven years previously (W. M. Duane, 1982), to be discussed in the next section at chapter C2.

B4.1 - Qualifications – Post Risinghill and After

A group of questions explored what qualifications had been obtained at school (whether or not at Risinghill), and afterwards.

Over thirty-six (51%) of the respondents had obtained a qualification before leaving school (question seventy) where they volunteered the institution: ten had obtained at least one qualification at Risinghill, another three from Sir Philip Magnus after Risinghill's closure, and four elsewhere (City Day College, the RAF, and other schools post-Risinghill). Some of the replies to this question were inconsistent, preventing alignment of the qualifications with the school or college in which they were taken. The sex ratio was very close to that of the sample as a whole (nineteen men, and seventeen women). Twenty-five had gained at least one 'O'-Level (one had gained five, and had gone on to a grammar school and then obtained two 'A'-Levels); four gained CSE's (Certificate of Secondary Education), introduced in 1965, so if obtained at Risinghill all were obtained just before Risinghill's closure); eleven gained administrative and secretarial qualifications from the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) while at school.

Many of the pupils went on to gain further qualifications after school – forty-five (64%) of respondents indicated this was the case (questions seventy-eight and seventy-nine). Again the sex ratio was nearly equal (twenty-four men to twenty-one women). The qualifications varied from the vocational to higher degrees, as can be seen from the numbers given in the following Table 8:

Qualification	Number
Vocational	7
Trade	3
Professional	4
City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI)	7
Royal Society of Arts (RSA)	3
General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	1
General Certificate of Education (GCE) O Level	4
GCE A Levels	4
Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) / Higher National Certificate (HNC)	6
Degree	14

Table 8 – Qualifications achieved after school

The numbers obtaining a degree reached a gratifying 20% of the whole sample - a high percentage, particularly against the norms of the 1960s where around 5% of the population went to university; however, some of these degrees were not obtained until much later in life (2006 for one respondent), indicating a sad waste of earlier talent and opportunities. Nine men and five women obtained degrees. Three of the researchers themselves went on to get higher degrees (Masters or Doctorate); perhaps there were others?

A few people provided further information. For example: one vocational qualification was 'The Knowledge' (to become a London cabbie); another was an accountancy professional qualification; and a further stated a degree in English. Three people noted that though not gaining a formal qualification, they considered their qualifications were "further experience" after school.

Ambitions to learn still more were expressed strongly (questions seventy-one and seventy-two): twenty-four (34%) of respondents said they would like to improve aspects of their education, with varying degrees of ambition ranging through maths (twice), English, learn a language, understand grammar, take 'A'-Levels, complete a degree, to get a PhD. One respondent to this question noted she wished she had stayed in a comprehensive school rather than moving on at Risinghill's closure to a secondary modern so that she could have achieved more in the subjects that she was good in.

B4.2 - Ambitions and Work

To the question (question seventy-three) as to whether the respondents could remember their ambitions on leaving school, whether related to work, family or further education, fifty (71%) of them said 'Yes', twenty-four from women and twenty-six from men. The pattern of responses differed somewhat between women and men as there were fewer ambitions by women related to specific careers, just eight in all (hairdressing – two, Nurse – one, secretary/office – three, teacher – two); however thirteen mentioned simply (to) work. Thirteen women referred to getting married and family life. The men mentioned ten specific jobs, and nine mentioned simply getting work – one specifying a 'top job', another to be self-sufficient. Only seven men referred to getting married and family life.

The specific careers mentioned by men were, alphabetically: architect, armed forces, bus conductor, car mechanic, electrician, footballer, journalist, photographer or pilot, tool maker, train driver.

Apart from the implication of earning money by wanting a job, there was surprisingly little sign of mercenary ambition in the responses – only three people mentioned money or getting rich. There were a few, all male, who wanted to travel or to get away from their environment (five responses), including wanting to live and work in the USA (an ambition achieved). Three people only mentioned obtaining more education at the time they left school. By and large these ambitions were achieved – forty-three people (61%) answered 'Yes' to this

question (question seventy-four), and four more said “partly achieved”. There were five definite ‘No’s’. The would-be architect became an engineer (a profession he found satisfying), but alas the would-be footballer did not make it.

So what did the responders actually do (question seventy-five)? There was a huge variety of jobs with one hundred-thirty-one separate jobs being mentioned (of course some people had taken multiple jobs). Top of the list was: secretarial work with nineteen mentions; then various varieties of engineer with eight mentions; accountancy with seven mentions; shop work with six mentions; five joined the armed forces; four had their own businesses; and two became company directors. Some of the more unusual jobs included: commercial artist; musician; medical research worker; interpreter; and weed sprayer. Other jobs included: hairdressers (two); taxi drivers (two); cleaner; cook; waitress; tool maker; electrician; and so on. Overwhelmingly the respondents found these jobs satisfying – fifty-seven (81%) saying ‘Yes’ to question seventy-six, and only one definite ‘No’ (a male, who on leaving school, said he was aimless, but unfortunately did not give further information about his career). There were twelve non-responders to this question.

Many gave reasons for their satisfaction; however it is only possible to quote a few:

Broking, the thrill of working in international markets.

I started my own optical co[mpany] in 1972, sold it in 2009.

Hairdressing. I now own a salon.

Worked with decent and interesting people.

Chip shop gave financial independence.

[Career] diverse and changing all the time.

Loved the buses.

Liked to be in the open not in an office.

Working with children.

Working in an office.

I enjoy the job I do because I feel Mr Duane moulded us to have a career.

The researchers looked at the number of jobs mentioned, averaging about two, but since there were problems in definition (for example, does getting a promotion mean a new job?) and almost certain incompleteness in the answers, they abandoned this.

B4.3 - Where Living Now?

Asked whether they still lived in the same area as when they were at Risinghill (question eighty-six), sixty (86%) of respondents said ‘No’ (there was one abstention). They were also asked where they were now (at the time of answering the questionnaire – question sixty-seven), and sixty-three (90%) of respondents gave a response (note some saying ‘Yes’ to the first question said where they lived now). Of course the phrase “same area” could be interpreted variously – same street, borough, London? However, the results indicated how mobile the pupils had been as represented by this sample, as shown below (Table 9):

London (London boroughs)	Home Counties (Including Bedfordshire, Sussex, Hampshire, Essex)	Rest of UK	Abroad
27 (39%)	21 (30%)	11 (16%)	4 (6%)

Table 9 – Where respondents live now (at time of answering the questionnaire)

The four former students living abroad were in Canada, two in Greece (apparently not a Greek Cypriot going to Greece). One more had a home in the USA (the same individual whose ambition was to live there – he also had a home in the UK). Of course the researchers took only a snapshot at the time the questionnaire was answered. They know, for example, that some people have moved around, and that over the last fifty years, some have lived in Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, and other places.

B4.4 - Looking back to Risinghill

The RRG asked the respondents to look back at their educational experiences as a whole, not just at Risinghill, with a series of questions.

First, the respondents were asked what parts of their education they had enjoyed most (question eighty) to which there were sixty-six replies (94%), some giving multiple answers. There were a few responses which looked at general qualities of the experience: “enjoyed

none (of it)” from four people, but also five saying “all of it” and a further four “most of it.” Interestingly five people noted that the experience of learning and achievement was what they enjoyed. Others referred to a phase of their education; one said “primary school”, two “technical college”, and three “higher education”, and one to “learning when employed” (specifically in the RAF). Another noted “my time at Risinghill”, and yet another “the feeling of being part of something special” at the school.

Many noted particular items on the curriculum: joint top of the list was history, English and physical education (including games and sport), each receiving eight mentions. These were followed by art (six mentions), then workshop practice (including metalwork and woodwork) and domestic science (each with five mentions), followed by mathematics and drama (both four mentions). They were followed by commerce, geography, science, tailoring (including needlework) (all with three), French (including ‘languages’), music, and technical drawing (all with two); and lastly physics (one vote). Some interesting comments are worth recording:

Looking back I think my education was good at Risinghill and on the whole I enjoyed the classes I was in.

The last two years, as it was more to do with what I wanted to work at.

Learning as much as possible and getting good exam results.

All sports, the gym and the trampoline, cookery and history.

In response to the question ‘What had proved most useful from their education?’ (question eighty-one) fifty-nine (84%) people volunteered an answer, of which seven said “none of it”, but another seven said “all of it.” There were three “don’t knows”. One person noted that building their confidence was the most important element for them, another simply said “being at Risinghill.” Three people noted that the most useful period of education was after school, in further education or simply gaining experience. As with the previous question, specific subjects were noted: English headed the list as having been most important (eight mentions), followed by mathematics (six). Commerce, history and metalwork followed with respectively three, two and two mentions. There were also votes for: behavioural science (at a higher education level); domestic science; music; needlework; and science. Again, a few comments are worth noting:

I just loved the place. [Risinghill]

Most of what I have learnt in life was outside of school.

None for work but helped with a lot of hobbies.

The researchers asked if Risinghill had had any detrimental effect on their subsequent lives (question eighty-three). Of the thirty-six (51%) people responding to this question, thirty (43%) answered “No”, but just four (6%) answered “Yes”, and two said “don’t know.” Those that elaborated are reported below:

- Three ‘Yes’ respondents simply said they had a poor education. There were no other comments from those saying ‘Yes’.
- A few people who gave no direct Yes/No/Don’t Know answers provided the following rather negative comments:
 - One said “we were guinea pigs [at Risinghill]; too many children [at the school]; not enough teachers.”
 - Another simply said “too liberal.”
 - Another just said “Can’t read, can’t write, can’t spell.”
 - Another said “Chip on shoulder.”
- A ‘not sure’ respondent said “Have always felt slightly stigmatized/embarrassed when other educators bring up the subject.”
- Another ‘not sure’ said “The beating up caused me to lose some aspects of the education I should have benefited from, caused due to bunking off.”

Alan was one of the pupils in the sample who transferred to another school when Risinghill closed. In answering this question he was keen to point out that, whereas Risinghill had not had a detrimental effect on his life, the successor school (Sir Philip Magnus) had:

Not Risinghill, but the treatment we got at Sir Philip Magnus because we came from Risinghill. I learnt more about card tricks than maths, as our so-called math teacher was an amateur magician who wanted to try out his tricks on us. (Alan)

The researchers mention this purely because it ties in with Keith D’s observations earlier.

Despite the few negative comments, when asked if Risinghill should have remained open (question eighty-two), there was a response of sixty-five (93%), of which fifty-three (76% of the whole sample) said ‘Yes’, and only eight (11%) said ‘No’ - as shown graphically below (Figure 9). This suggests that the vast majority enjoyed their time at the school.

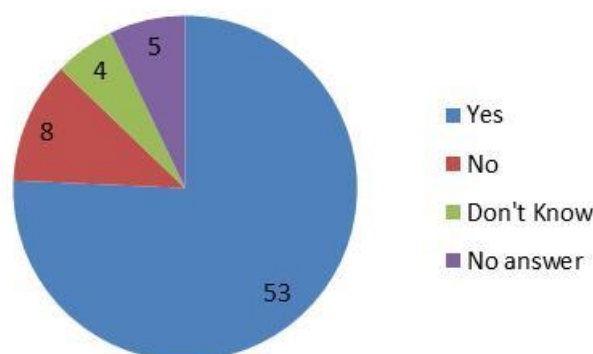


Figure 9 – Should Risinghill have kept open in 1965?

One of the ‘No’s’ commented: “Would never have achieved what I have in life if I had not moved on to a school which gave me a chance to study & take exams”. A ‘Yes’ noted “Would it have been the same without Mr Duane?”

B4.5 - Education today

Having explored the respondents’ experiences of education, the researchers went on to examine the respondents’ attitudes to their own children’s education and education today (that is, at the time the questionnaire was completed – mid-2000s for most).

What type of education did their own children enjoy (question eighty-eight)? The fifty-six (80%) of answers to this were difficult to analyse, since there was much variety, and many did not specify whether the education was co-educational or not (and if not, which sex applied), and/or omitted the type of school; however the researchers classified as best they could, assuming that ‘comprehensive’ implied co-educational unless otherwise stated (can a true comprehensive not be co-educational?). A boarding school was assumed to be a private school; ‘Normal’ (two times) was treated as state education – unspecified. The following table gives the results (Table 10):

	Comprehensive	Secondary modern	Grammar	Academy	Church school	Private	State - no type given	Abroad	Totals
Co-educational	18	1		1				1	21
Boys	1						1		2
Girls	2						1		3
No sex given	1	8	3		4	4	9	3	32
Totals	22	9	3	1	4	4	11	4	58

Table 10 – Types of school Risinghill pupils sent their children to

As can be seen, the comprehensives clearly dominated, followed by secondary modern schools and state schools (unspecified); the variation of the answers is, in itself, quite interesting. Though it is not clear from this information, the RRG suspects most people sent their children to co-educational establishments. It is worth noting that, by the time new school types had emerged, such as specialist schools and beacon schools, most of the respondents' children must have gone through their schooling. Very little comment accompanied this information, though someone who had sent his children to a private school noted "One with a degree in maths (Proud of that)."

The RRG went on to ask (questions eighty-nine and ninety) "If you could go back in time would you or wouldn't you have sent them to Risinghill and why?" Fifty nine people (84%) responded to this, thirty-six (51%) saying 'Yes', and nineteen saying 'No' (27%). There were four others who were undecided. See Figure 10.

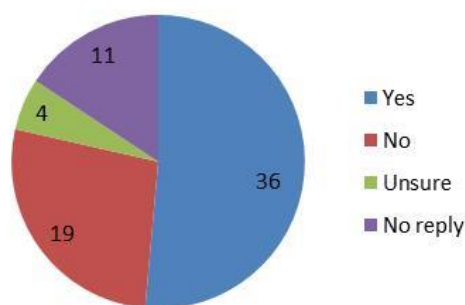


Figure 10 – Would you have sent your child to Risinghill at the time?

It would seem this is something of an endorsement of the school. Some of the comments could be classified under the following headings: Mr Duane as the reason (two both 'Yes's'), also four for the school being undisciplined ('No's'), and two saying it provided a poor education ('No's'). Other causes cited singly were, 'No's': "Too big a gap in [the] social structure", "Not single sex and wasn't the best in area", "Poor environment", "Wrong type of people", "Too confusing", "Undisciplined". The 'No's' were somewhat more vocal than the 'Yes's'.

In the various answers elicited, it is worth listing some of the more extended comments:

From those saying 'No':

Would have had them educated privately if possible.

I wanted them to achieve more than I did.

Don't think my daughter would have been suited for a mixed school.

From those saying 'Yes':

They would have been in the top set yet would have seen people around them struggling. It would keep their feet on the ground.

The concept of the school was good, trades and general education were all covered.

New opportunities were available at the school.

Without a doubt.

Good School.

And two who said neither 'Yes' or 'No', but generally positive towards the school:

Would have because they could have developed themselves more.

In some ways yes, because it was life.

From two who were equivocal:

Difficult one to answer. I would look to send them to the best school in the area. I am not sure that my parents had that much choice at the time. I think it was quite hard and hectic for them.

I passed the 11+ but father decided I should go to Risinghill even though it was not in the catchment area, so on balance would not have sent them to Risinghill in the same circumstances.

The RRG moved on to ask four questions about attitudes to education delivery today and some of the practices within it (questions ninety-one to ninety-four). Firstly, were schools better or worse today than they were in the 1960s? Fifty one people (73%) answered this with the majority tipping definitely to ‘worse’, thirty-seven replies (53% of the sample) as against fourteen (20%) saying ‘better’ (Figure 11). The RRG wondered if this was a case of looking back with rose-tinted spectacles, or perhaps sober experience.

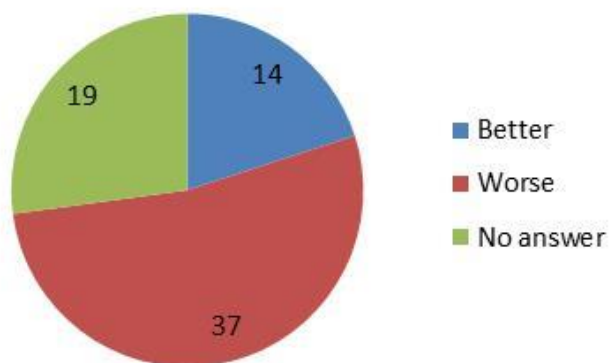


Figure 11 – Do you think today’s education is the same or worse than in the 1960’s?

The few comments received did not help much – for example, those saying “worse”:

Insufficient vocational subjects.

If a child is average [they] will be left by the wayside.

No respect for teachers.

And from those saying “better”:

More opportunity.

Higher standards.

Because now ALL children are given the opportunity of an education and before 1973 they were not.

More Vocational Teaching.

Clearly there was not agreement on vocational teaching. A number of those who did not give an opinion as to ‘better’ or ‘worse’ made interesting comments:

One small box is inadequate to express my views on education today.

Not compatible - young people are now so different from us.

Words fail me!

Same as Risinghill worse than Gifford.

Different times!

The RRG also looked at SATs²¹ (question ninety-three) and school league tables (question ninety-four) – were they necessary? The results are shown in the following, Table 11:

Are they necessary?	SATS	League tables
Yes	38	5
No	23	7
Not sure	4	1

Table 11 – Are SATS and School League Tables necessary?

The SATs question provided more responses, sixty-five (93%) answering this, but only thirteen (19%) gave an opinion on league tables. No comments were provided. Given that a majority of the sample thought that education today was worse, the researchers were intrigued that the majority thought that SATs and regular testing were necessary. Again they wondered how many of the sample understood the purpose of SATs and their relationship to school league tables since these initiatives were, at the time of completing the questionnaire, relatively new.

Lastly, in this section the researchers asked what people thought were the most important things children should learn in school (question ninety-five). Sixty five people (93%) responded to this question, and the following list shows the numbers mentioning various outcomes, in descending order (Table 12):

²¹ National Curriculum assessments, colloquially known as SATS (but not to be confused with the same acronym from the USA)

Topic	Mentions	% of respondents
Respect [for] others	36	51.4
[The] three r's	21	30.0
Self sufficiency	13	18.6
Good Education	6	8.6
Technology	2	2.9
Encouragement	2	2.9
Learning how to learn	2	2.9
IT skills	1	1.4
World Issues	1	1.4
Literature	1	1.4
Religion	1	1.4
Confidence	1	1.4
Education is fun	1	1.4
Another Language	1	1.4
Same as Risinghill	1	1.4

Table 12 – What is most important to learn at school?

The researchers found it very interesting, and encouraging, given the ethos of the school, that respect for others topped the list. It was also interesting that mathematics, English and trade skills got zero mentions (though the basic three-R's made second place). The researchers did not understand the last comment.

Of all the questions that were asked of the pupils, the answers to this question surprised everyone in the RRG. The relative high number of replies covering Respect for Others and the three-R's speak volumes in terms of the inherent concerns of the respondents, many of whom were parents and had seen their children (and for some, grand-children) go through the same system. Since 'respect for others' was very much a part of Risinghill's ethos, this might account for the large number of pupils who rated this highly - above everything else in fact. Self-sufficiency also gained a lot of following. Perhaps one, general comment received "Discipline, love, friendship, team playing, respect" summed up attitudes?

Risinghill, as has been demonstrated, was loved by some and loathed by others. One of the respondents, however, described her time at the school in a way that the researchers believe will ring true for the majority, in particular those who were not academically inclined and left without any qualifications. While some of her observations will undoubtedly attract criticism from those who were bullied and/or witnessed first-hand some of the gang fights, they are of

the opinion that even these pupils will have to agree that what she says about some of the schools of today puts what happened at Risinghill in perspective:

I know we were all very young at the time, but all I remember of my days at Risinghill is very good friends, very nice teachers and a very happy time. It was a very rare thing for there to be a fight, and it was all stopped very quickly, in fact I think most schools nowadays are far worse, we did not have magnetic doorways to detect guns and knives, in fact when I look back I think we were very lucky to have been to such a good school. I was never very academic but what has stayed with me all my life is my lessons in housecraft and sewing. I have always been able to cook, look after a family and work. What Risinghill did for me and quite a number of us is give us the confidence to have a go at anything and believe in our own ability. I have for the last 23 years been a manager in the NHS, firstly in Radiology and then running the Breast Screening Programme. I do think we had the best, probably because we were not pressured into being the best, just the best we could be. I always felt it was a privilege to be part of such a school. (Jennifer C.)

B4.6 - How important are examinations?

A large proportion of the school's population (almost half) was in the lowest ability group and the RRG doubts that many of these children were entered for any examinations. Today these pupils would probably be regarded as 'failures' but as the research sample, small though it may be, has shown, this could not be further from the truth.

Risinghill "may have lacked what others produced academically" - as one of the respondents pointed out - but as he went on to say "it made up for what it taught in real life skills" and helped to shape the person that he is today. (Peter H.). This is something that the researchers explore in the following pages, starting with those pupils who were not expected to achieve much in life, having spent most of their school days bunking off lessons and/or making a nuisance of themselves when they did make an appearance. One such pupil was Len D who, by his own admission, truanted on a regular basis as he preferred to be working, earning money:

When I left Risinghill I did not know the alphabet all the way through. Even today I find it very difficult to write letters. I can read and know what I want to say, but one of my daughters or my wife then puts it into proper English. In my business, I had people doing this for me. I have never been embarrassed by this. I just found it difficult.

I grew up in a tough environment, no money and sometimes nothing to eat. I remember always wanting things. My mum used to say I was a 'right little terror' but in those days you had to be tough. I used to fight a lot and do other stuff. When I was in the 4th Year I was quite uncontrollable and could not wait to leave to start work. My friends laughed when I said that I was going to America but that is where I live now, and have done for many years. I still have a house in the UK though and come home often. Is a long story, but I set up Horizon Optical (one of the UK's leading prescription houses) in 1972; a company that serves more than 500 independent optical practitioners and their patients. Two and a half years ago, when I sold the business (for a respectable fee) I had 65 people working for me.

But there were things about the school that I loved. Sounds strange to say it, but I loved the morning assemblies. To me it said a lot about the school. And I loved the sports, the football and hockey and going to Friern Barnet.²² What I didn't like was the history and geography lessons; I just couldn't stand either. Funny thing is I'm currently thinking of doing a degree in history on the Mongolian people which, for me, is quite a challenge. I spent some time in Mongolia and loved everything about it.
(Len D.)

The RRG was reminded of Michael D who, as with Len D, hated history and had bunked off school as a result. He (Michael) was devastated when the announcement to close Risinghill was made and, in consequence, dropped out of school without taking any of his exams. After trying his hand at a couple of things, he decided to work for himself:

²² This was where the playing fields were.

I fancied being a bricklayer and they took us to do a bricklaying course at Dove Builders, but it was too cold out there! The Youth Employment Centre in Bunhill Row linked up with the school to do this. When I left, I went to Spitalfields to work in the fruit market, but it was a 4.00am start and I couldn't hack it. I had no exams. I then went into the carpet trade and earned quite a good living from that. (Michael D.)

While the carpet trade did not make Michael a millionaire, it gave him a steady income for over thirty years, and was work that he enjoyed.

Someone who did succeed on a par with Len D was Denis M, who, as mentioned earlier, was sent to an approved school for taking and driving away a double-decker bus. It was the best thing that could have happened to him (his words not the researchers') as he loved all the outdoor activities, abseiling in particular. When he came out he joined the army; a life that he loved, but not enough to make it a career. On his return to civilian life he set up his own mini-cab company in Islington, which he sold as a thriving business, using the profits to fund his next venture in logistics. Here, too, he was very successful, selling the company for a tidy sum, enough to live on comfortably for the rest of his life.

Another pupil, who did not want to complete the questionnaire, but did tell the RRG something about his life post Risinghill, was equally successful in running his own business. This was the same pupil who said that, although he enjoyed his time at Risinghill, he regretted not making the most of his education:

I left school with no qualifications worth mentioning. Despite all this I managed to work my way up in life and own a very successful precision engineering firm. (Andrew L.)

There were many other pupils who branched out on their own. And it was not just the men who had the monopoly on running their own, successful businesses:

I didn't study whilst at school and basically mucked around. I left with 5 measly O levels and a couple of CSE's. I travelled around in France and Spain for one year with my sister and two girlfriends. Much later on I gained two A levels at evening classes. Art and French. During the Europe trip I met my first husband, Christian, a Frenchman and we lived in Paris

together for 10 years. My children were educated at the French Lycee in South Kensington, for obvious reasons where my son is concerned, and I sent my daughters there because I wanted them to also speak French. I speak fluent French and Spanish also.

On the work front, when I returned from Paris, I trained as a Fitness Teacher and to cut a long story short eventually owned my own Ladies only Health Club in Covent Garden. It was The Gym at the Sanctuary. I owned and ran that for 6 years, then sold and bought another club (set the whole thing up) in Kensington called the Phillimore Club. I came out of that club after 2 years and went to work for an organic company called Aveda and ran the Harvey Nichols health Beauty Salons in London and Leeds. Finally, after working for many years and enjoying a good income, I wanted to do something using my brain even if it meant no salary! So I decided to completely give up work and study! I am now doing a 3 year full time Science Degree. I am in my third year. The course is Nutrition and Health and once completed I plan to do my Masters, then a PhD.
(Yvonne W.)

What this part of the research has shown, albeit on a small scale, is that school examinations are not, necessarily, a measure of intelligence; that it is possible to achieve in life without any formal qualifications, and that every child has something to contribute to the whole.

Within the RRG, this was found to be the case. Lynn, for example, left Risinghill without a single examination to her name, yet today she is one of the most qualified members of the team, having obtained her degree and PhD later in life – when her children were all grown. Philip, Alan and Isabel on the other hand all left school with some qualifications. Philip continued his education after leaving Risinghill and has a BSc and MSc in Mathematics, also a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and went on to hold senior positions in medical research, medical publishing and pharmaceuticals, finishing with owning his own specialist archiving consultancy. Alan obtained a Technical Diploma in Engineering (the equivalent of a degree) as part of his apprenticeship whereas Isabel never improved on her qualifications. With one GCE ‘O’-Level and a handful of RSAs she is the least qualified member of the group, but is the main author of RR, which would never have seen the light of day had there not been such a diverse range of skills within the group. Then there is Yvonne, who joined

the RRG in September 2017, specifically to help with the editing and proof-reading. Yvonne left Risinghill in 1963 with no qualifications although she had been an A stream student throughout. She gained her SRN (State Registered Nurse) in 1971, a BA (Hons) in English Literature and History, a BSc in Professional Nursing Studies, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, a Master’s Degree in Medical Law and a PhD in Medical Jurisprudence.

All of the RRG members have contributed to RR, including John, who, although not a Risinghill pupil did go to a comprehensive school and left with no formal qualifications to speak of: he, too, has run a very successful business of his own. These are personal anecdotes, but ones that many of today’s entrepreneurs can probably relate to. The same analogy can be applied to those who have found success in the arts and/or in sport. Education is not just about passing exams.

B4.7 - Life now

Finally, question ninety-six asked the simple question “How would you describe your life now?” There was a high response to this, from sixty-eight people (97% of the sample), and most of these reported they were content or better. The researchers were able to classify sixty-three. The number of ‘mentions’ of the ‘descriptors’ used are as shown in the following table (Table 13), which also notes the number of them (using the terms either explicitly, or by use of synonyms – ‘very good’ or ‘spot-on’ for example). Note that a few people mentioned more than one item.

Descriptor	Number of mentions
Very good	11
Good	15
Comfortable/content	13
Happy	12
OK/Satisfactory	7
Equivocal	4
Not good	1

Table 13 – Summaries of life now

Some descriptions mentioned could not fit this pattern: there were two mentions each of “life being busy” and of having been “lucky in life.” Other comments mentioned singly were “*boring*”, “fearful of retirement”, “pressured at work (but family life fine)”, “restless” and “stressed (by caring duties in the family).” More positively there were also “interesting life”, “rewarding” and “fulfilled.” And one person noted “Better since leaving England” – now

living in Greece (but provided well before the current crisis in that country). Overall Risinghill was clearly not the source of an unhappy or unfulfilled life.

Of course most of these responses were obtained in circa 2005-6, before the recession hit in 2008 (one person answering after then saying “very good” also noted “despite the recession”). Perhaps the generally optimistic responses might be somewhat different now.

So many ex-pupils contacted the RRG to share their memories of the school, and the authors regret that they have not been able to include more of these in RR. Indeed they could have written a book just about the pupils, many of whom have prospered in life despite being written off as failures, and despite being forced to change schools twice (or even three times for some) in the space of five years, and at a critical point in their education, such as those who took the 13+ examination to gain entry to Northampton, Bloomsbury, and, surprisingly, Risinghill. (Two pupils who completed a questionnaire (David Y and Linda S) reported that they had to take the 13+ examination to secure a place at Risinghill).

The research sample, although relatively small, does show that many of the pupils achieved their ambitions, however simple, with some succeeding beyond expectations, notably those whom, by today’s standards, would probably be regarded as ‘failures’ for not passing (or even taking) any tests or examinations. For the authors, the most rewarding aspect of this project, however, was that all of the pupils surveyed reported that, on the whole, they were happy, raising one final question: What constitutes a good school?

In the following chapters, the authors attempt to answer this question, recognising that, in today’s test-driven society, where ‘success’ is measured solely in terms of academic achievement, their findings and conclusions are likely to be contested, strongly. However, as will be demonstrated in the authors’ conclusions, there is much to be learned from Risinghill, explaining (perhaps) why it continues to inform educational debate(s) and opinion(s).

Part C – Policies, People and Endings

In this section the authors return to the politics of the comprehensive school, and to Michael Duane. Here they report (briefly) on their interviews with Margaret Duane and Leila Berg, and before bringing their story to a close look at the politics driving education today. The latter provides the backdrop to their conclusions where they ask the question: What has changed?

CHAPTER C1 - Comprehensive Education 1965 - 1997

'The soft-minded man always fears change. He feels security in the status quo, and he has an almost morbid fear of the new. For him, the greatest pain is the pain of a new idea.'

Martin Luther King

In this chapter the authors continue their investigation of the comprehensive school, starting with Circular 10/65 (discussed in Book 1) which came into play soon after Risinghill closed.

C1.1 - Circular 10/65

Although Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were requested, but not required, to submit plans for the reorganization of secondary education on comprehensive lines, the majority do appear to have complied:

Despite being only requested to submit plans, most local authorities did so, although 20 authorities indicated they would not. Many of the submitted plans were not acceptable to the Department, particularly where, as was frequently the case, they proposed the retention of grammar schools alongside comprehensive schools. (Fogelman, 2006)

The LCC's response to Circular 10/65 was prepared by Houghton, the Authority's Chief Education Officer (CEO) who, it would seem, did not believe that a "tidy uniform scheme of reorganization was practicable" as despite the Authority's stated preference for 11-18 schools, "practical difficulties were likely to prevent this." (Kerckhoff et al., 1996) Furthermore, the Authority's experience of the last ten years had shown that huge comprehensives were no longer a pre-requisite because the LCC's schools were already offering a broad curriculum.

Another problem facing inner city LEAs at this time, including the LCC, was the provision of education for the large numbers of immigrant children entering the country. Additional support for these children was approved in the 1966 Local Government Act when the Home Office, under Section 11 of the Act, was authorized to contribute towards the costs of introducing programmes to support those learning to read and write in English as a second language. The authors were reminded of Dr Briault, the LCC's deputy CEO, who, three years

earlier, had, as reported in Book 1 (at chapter C7, section C7.3), reprimanded Duane for even daring to suggest that the integration of immigrant children into the British way of life was, in any way, the responsibility of schools. (Briault, 1963)

As has been demonstrated throughout RR the development of schools and changes in educational policy are not only affected by swings in government, but also by changes in political power at Local Authority (LA) level. The 1967 swing to the Conservatives in local government elections resulted in many LAs withdrawing their plans for comprehensive reorganization. The Labour Party, however, was still in control of the central government, and continued to explore the viability of creating a more unified system of education, commissioning, in 1968, the first report of the Public Schools Commission, which recommended that independent schools should be integrated into mainstream education. It should come as no great surprise that this recommendation was not taken up or even taken seriously. One thing the authors have learned from researching the politics of the comprehensive is that politicians rarely respond to the recommendations of committees and/or commissions that they themselves have set up when said recommendations do not chime with their policies or personal opinions. The Newsom Report of 1963 (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1963) was a prime example of this and, to some extent, so was the 1944 Education Act.²³ In 1944, when talking about this issue in the House of Commons, Rab Butler (architect of the 1944 Education Act) made his position clear:

Hon. Members have put forward arguments in favour of the course that all secondary education, including that in direct grant schools, should be free. It has been mentioned that the school is a social unit and that it is impossible to get democracy, unless we have a complete sweeping away of the fees in these secondary schools. My answer is that education cannot, by itself, create the social structure of a country. It can very considerably influence it and I believe the fact that we have got priority for this great Bill will very much influence the world in which we hope to live in the future. But I have to take the world as I find it ... I have to apply myself to the world as I find it and the world I find is one in which there is a very diversified range of types. (Butler, 1944)

²³ John Newsom, the report's author, was knighted in 1963 for his report 'Half our Future'. This report was about the 'average child' and was one of the milestones in the history of comprehensive education.

The suggestion that education cannot, by itself, create the social structure of a country is, of course, a matter of personal opinion, not fact. As for taking the world as one finds it, thankfully there have been people like Duane – and many others before and after him – who have taken the educational world that they have lived in by the scruff of the neck and challenged it, paving the way for changes that would probably have taken much longer had they not done so. Duane's removal of corporal punishment (CP) at Risinghill at a time when every other school in London – and indeed across the country – were using CP to instil discipline is but one example of this. In *The Killing of a Comprehensive School*, a whole chapter (chapter B2) is devoted to this practice.

The reprieve for the grammar and independent schools was reinforced in 1970 when the Conservatives were returned to power. Secretary of State, Margaret Thatcher, immediately withdrew Labour's 10/65 Circular. Her Circular (10/70) no longer compelled LEAs to go comprehensive:

Whilst Thatcher was undoubtedly an opponent of comprehensive schooling and the 'progressive' educational ideas which she associated with it, her action did not have the desired effect. It did encourage those authorities who had refused to submit plans, but for most authorities their plans were too far advanced to change or withdraw. (Fogelman, 2006)

Ironically, Thatcher presided over the creation of more comprehensive schools (though the authors use the term 'comprehensive' loosely) than any other Secretary of State, 2,677 in fact. This represented 62% of the secondary school population. (Fogelman, 2006)

In addition to planning changes to the education system, LEAs were faced with another challenge in 1973. This was when the compulsory school leaving age was raised to 16:

In the years before the raising of the school leaving age to 16 in 1972-73, it was possible for pupils to leave school without embarking on a fifth year of secondary schooling. Indeed, large numbers of pupils with the 'appropriate' dates of birth were able to leave school after completing only two terms in the fourth year. (Benn and Chitty, 1996)

The dilemma for LEAs was how to encourage young people who did not want to stay on at school to take examinations. Weston (1977) argues that LEAs missed the opportunity to

develop a unified five year curriculum for all pupils as there was not a National Curriculum at this time. Benn and Chitty made the case that the staying on rate, after the compulsory school leaving age, was a good indication of how well the schools and education system were doing. They found that rates were affected by localities, by types of school and how Sixth Form education was organized. Because many pupils were not convinced that they would benefit by remaining in school for another year, legislation was introduced (The 1973 Education (Work Experience) Act) to ensure that pupils were given careers advice, and the opportunity to obtain work experience in their final school year.

When Labour regained control in 1974 there was another change in direction. Thatcher's 10/70 Circular was replaced immediately with Circular 4/74, which provided another form of wording to encourage LEAs to go comprehensive. This Circular asked for their 'co-operation' in much the same way that Circular 10/65 had, suggesting Labour had not learned any lessons from the past. Either that or, as in the past, it remained reluctant to rock the boat for fear of upsetting middle England. Labour's 1976 Education Act did, however, abolish selection by ability; a policy that was repealed three years later when the Conservatives won the 1979 General Election. What is somewhat disturbing is that very little, if any, consideration appears to have been given to the effects of all this swapping around on the children going through the system. More worrying is that not one of these changes was based on any scientific evidence. Research and experimentation is the life-blood of any successful industry, driving, in many instances, its policy and future direction. In education, however, this does not happen. In Book 1 (at chapters C1-C3) attention is drawn to a number of committee reports that have been watered down or kicked into the long grass simply because the research findings did not suit the government in power, be it Labour or Conservative; the 1963 Newsom Report (entitled 'Half our Future') being a prime example of this. (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1963)

Although the authors have taken only a snap-shot of the educational developments up to 1979, they believe they have provided sufficient information to demonstrate that, where the secondary school system is concerned, in the 1970s, nothing much had changed. In fact some educationalists would probably argue that, during this period, there was regression.

C1.2 - The 1980s

The Labour Party's main focus in the 1980s (and now) seems to have been one of raising attainment and educational opportunities for all children whereas the Conservatives have

always been more interested in providing high quality education for those who meet the required academic standards, however measured. By way of example, the Conservative's 1980 Education Act introduced an Assisted Places Scheme for 'gifted' disadvantaged children, which gave free places to those who passed a fee-paying school's entrance examination. The 1980 Act also gave parents greater powers on school governing bodies (GBs) though it was mainly middle-class parents who had the confidence to put themselves forward for the GB elections. In addition, the admissions process was taken away from LEAs and devolved to GBs, thus giving parents (in theory) more of a say in how their children should be educated. Another point that is worth mentioning here is that families on low incomes were affected by other parts of this Act, notably the removal of: (1) the provision of free milk for all primary school children, earning Margaret Thatcher the title 'Maggie Thatcher - milk snatcher'; and (2) the obligation of LEAs to provide school meals. Harold Wilson, incidentally, had banned free school milk for secondary school children in 1968, but did not attract the same criticism(s).

C1.3- The 1988 Education Reform Act

It was the 1988 Education Reform Act, however, that stripped away the powers of the LEAs, giving most of these to the central government:

- A National Curriculum was introduced to ensure that all LEA schools taught a range of compulsory subjects. Previously the only compulsory subject was religious education. However, the majority of the 'newly identified' subjects were already being taught in most secondary schools. Surprisingly, teachers had little or no say in this, and it inevitably caused problems;
- Standard assessment tests (SATs) were introduced for pupils in all state schools. They would now be tested at ages seven, eleven, fourteen and sixteen;
- School league tables were to be published nationally, setting out the SATs results for all state schools. This was supposed to give parents the opportunity to compare individual school results, thus enabling them to make informed choices;
- Schools within the state sector were to be funded using a formula based on the number of children in the school. The theory behind this was that it would encourage school improvement in order to attract more pupils.

Moreover, schools could choose to opt out of LEA (now called Local Authority (LA)) control under the new legislation, and become ‘grant maintained’, receiving funding directly from the central government. City technology colleges, partly funded by private finance, were to be set up (under a Trust arrangement) in deprived, inner city areas and these, too, would be independent of LA control. According to some educationalists, one of the aims of the Act was to encourage privatization. (Chitty, 2004) There is some merit in this argument as these reforms did not apply to independent schools.

Within London there was continuing conflict between the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), and the Conservative government in office. This ended when the Conservatives abolished the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986 and disbanded the ILEA (in 1990), devolving the management of education in inner London to the individual London boroughs. For the first time since 1870, London no longer had a strategic body that was responsible for all of its schools. Labour’s stranglehold on the capital had finally been broken. This was also the beginning of the state taking full control of education.

C1.4 - The 1990s and beyond

The 1992 Education (Schools) Act saw a further erosion of the LA’s responsibilities. This was when the central government set up the centralized Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), giving Ofsted the responsibility for inspecting all primary and secondary schools. Previously this had been the role of inspectors (HMIs) employed by the LAs. It was also an attack by the central government on the delivery of educational services (the ‘national system, locally administered’) where, previously, the central government, local government and schools had all worked in tandem.

One of the effects of giving parents more power on GBs was that many schools – often those with a high level of middle class involvement – opted out of LA control. In some areas, this reduced the intake of children in the higher ability groups to comprehensive schools, which in turn had an impact on a school’s SATs results, Ofsted report and, ultimately, on its ranking in the school league table(s).

The 1992 Act also put enormous pressure on teachers because of the amount of paperwork that had been introduced to support the reforms. The sudden switch from ‘learning’ to ‘testing’ infuriated them as this had changed their jobs dramatically. As they pointed out, this was not education, and was not why they had joined the profession. They disagreed strongly

with the SATs and school league tables which, in their opinion, were not an accurate measure of a school's performance: (1) because the SATs scores were biased in favour of schools that had more pupils who started in the higher ability range; and (2) the scores did not take into account the level of progress made by some of the lower-achieving pupils after their admission.

Another problem for some schools was that GBs were now accountable (legally) for the delivery of the National Curriculum, also the school's budget. This was a huge responsibility for unpaid volunteers (parent governors and others not employed by the LA or the school) and few were prepared to take on the role, even with the offer of free training. It goes without saying that, for some schools, particularly those in the inner-cities, where the recruitment of parent governors (and possibly other appointments, such as co-opted governors with specific skills to help fill the gaps in knowledge) was proving to be quite a challenge, making the delivery of the curriculum and the production and management of the school budget even more difficult. Today the role of a head is more akin to that of a chief executive in that heads probably spend more time balancing the books and satisfying the needs of Ofsted than they do on education.

The 1993 and 1996 Education Acts extended Thatcher's 1988 market-driven policies, placing new responsibilities on heads and GBs. Both Acts were massive; the 1993 Act being the largest in the history of education. Selection was back on the agenda, not that it had gone away completely, and so was the grammar school. John Major, who succeeded Margaret Thatcher, declared in the Conservative's 1997 election campaign that he wanted to see a grammar school in every town, but it was Tony Blair who came to power in 1997. Blair's famous 'Education, Education, Education' speech rallied the troops and caught the electorate's attention; however, few understood what the slogan meant in practice. The question on the lips of many at this time was one that successive governments had all failed to ask: Education for what purpose? Duane, interestingly, had asked this question sixteen years earlier, in 1981, and, interestingly, was a question posed by one of the authors' fellow pupils, Eric B, who now lives in Canada, as reported in chapter B4.

Here are some extracts from Duane's paper, entitled 'Education for What?'

In a class-divided society the system of education, like everything else, is subjected to the subdivision of labour, specialization and standardization

of product. Education maintains the same purposes that Durkheim found to be true, viz. to transmit to the young those forms of knowledge and skill and those patterns of value that the parent society has used to survive.

A society made up of masters and men will therefore educate the children of the masters to assume the roles of their fathers; so in Britain they are educated in private schools, ironically named 'Public' schools. The children of the men are educated in state schools at public expense. Those who are to be 'stewards': those entrusted with the increase, protection and management of the masters' wealth, now called the professionals – are educated in grammar schools. The hewers of coal and the drawers of oil are trained in what are laughingly called 'comprehensive' schools.

In each of these different types of schools the numbers, qualifications and social backgrounds of the staffs are carefully screened to foster the correct social attitudes and responses in their pupils. The headmistress of an Infant school in a working-class area scolded one of my students for introducing basins, buckets, pint and quart containers to the classroom so that the children could experiment for themselves and find out their relative capacities. "These children will have to spend their lives working not playing, and the sooner they realize that the better!" And one of Her Majesty's Inspectors condemned my efforts to introduce modern methods of teaching and more informal relationships between staff and children in a Secondary Modern school by saying, "These methods may be all very well in private progressive schools but they are not suitable for working-class children."

He concluded:

We cannot begin to answer the question 'Education for What'? unless we have tried to envisage the kind of society we would feel reasonably happy to live in. Society, inescapably, determines the forms and the objectives of education, not the other way round. Our task, therefore, is to start to create a society in which man's potential for love and growth can flourish. John Dewey once wrote: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his

child, that must the community want for all its children. Anything less is ignoble: acted upon it will destroy our democracy". Perhaps the significance of his remark lies in the fact that he used the word 'community'."

(W. M. Duane, 1982)

Many believed, indeed hoped, that New Labour would reverse the Conservative's policies. But this did not happen. Chitty (2004) has suggested that this was because it was probably too late to turn back the clock:

By the time the Conservatives left office in 1997, there were 164 grammar schools in England and Wales, together with 1,155 opted-out schools accounting for 19.6 per cent of pupils in secondary schools and 2.8 per cent of primary schools, 15 City Technology Colleges, 30 Colleges specializing in languages and 151 new Colleges specializing in technology. At the same time, it has to be admitted that many comprehensive schools did not really deserve the appellation, so it was indeed a very divided system that New Labour inherited from 18 years of Conservative rule.

While Chitty might well have had a point, history suggests that Blair had his own agenda. This was to take his Party from the left to the centre-right of politics as it would seem this was the only way to win a General Election, and to stay in government. In consequence, he pursued the same, market policies as his predecessor, Margaret Thatcher, to the annoyance of the Conservatives, who accused him of stealing their ideas, and to the consternation of some in the Labour Party. Grammar schools were not abolished under Blair's leadership, despite Labour's promise at its Party Conference on 4 October 1995 to do away with selection by examination or interview. The authors were reminded of another Labour leader, Harold Wilson, at another Labour Party Conference (1964) who had promised something similar, but on coming to power failed to deliver. The arrogance of some politicians is truly breath-taking.

The authors leave the politics of the comprehensive school at this juncture to pick up Duane's story, which provides the backdrop to their conclusions about: (1) the Risinghill affair; and (2) education today.

CHAPTER C2 – Michael Duane and Margaret Duane

*'Heav'n has no rage, like love to hatred turn'd, nor
Hell a fury like a woman scorn'd.'*

*William Congreve,
'The Mourning Bride', 1697.*

C2.1 – Cast aside

Duane remained a fervent supporter of the comprehensive school, and the authors are of the opinion that his demise was probably as much for this reason as it was for his refusal to use the cane.

Although the LCC had made an undertaking to offer staff comparable posts on the closure of Risinghill, Duane's first job offer was as a lecturer in English at a London training college for adults. It was made very clear, however, that he would not be allowed to teach; he was to mark English essays instead. Needless to say, he turned the job down:

To this offer, made by telephone through the Secretary of the London Teachers Association, Mr C.L. Allen, Duane replied that neither his training for and experience in secondary schools, nor his experience in the London Institute of Education training graduate teachers for work in secondary schools, would seem relevant to this post. He further questioned how long such a post, at his salary of £3,000+, could be justified to visiting H.M.I.'s. He also pointed out that neither the Head of the English Department nor the Head of the Social Studies Department had heard of such a vacancy, and that his salary alone would be greater than the combined salaries of these two heads of Department. (London County Council, 1965)

His next offer of employment from the LCC was for a job in Nigeria as an inspector of schools. Again, this was made via the London Teachers Association, and this, too, was declined. At the time, three comparable headships were open (all of them bordering Islington) but Duane was not invited to apply for any of them. He finally took up what he called his 'non-job' at Garnett Training College:

Mr Duane, frustrated, depressed and unemployed, and humiliated at being paid so much for doing nothing, had already suggested to the L.C.C. that until they found him a headship he would be prepared to fill in for absent training college lecturers. There now evolved the suggestion from the L.C.C. of 'peripatetic lecturer'; he would be based at one training college and administratively attached to it, and would try to arrange lectures and seminars with various London colleges. This job, on the understanding that it was temporary, he accepted. (Berg, 1968, p243)

Little did he know that this 'temporary' arrangement would last for fifteen years, taking him into retirement, during which he would not be allowed to teach or lecture at any of the LCC's schools or colleges of further education.

I was looking forward to speaking to your A level sociology students as I had hoped to show the relevance of recent research in the problems of making schools comprehensive.

This morning Miss Coughlin, who invited me, phoned me, obviously in some embarrassment, to say that your deputy had told her that I could not be invited to the school.

I wonder whether there has been some misunderstanding, since recent conversations with some members of the Education Committee suggest that they would be, at the least, surprised at such an embargo.

Lest your deputy thinks my qualifications may not be sufficient, may I simply say that I am regularly invited to speak on this topic to under graduate and post graduate students at both Oxford and Cambridge and at 15 other universities. (W. M. Duane, Undated)

There are several files in the Duane archive at the IOE (notably files MD/5/5/17, 19 and 29) relating to this aspect of Duane's employment. He was very unhappy with the situation and did try to do something about it. Here, in a record of a meeting with the then Sir William Houghton, he expresses his frustration:

Mr Duane outlined the reasons for which he had requested a meeting with Sir William. These were:

- a) that, the terms on which he had been based on Garnett College (set out in Sir William's letter of 10 November 1965) had not been fulfilled*
- d) that, in the meantime, Duane's teaching timetable at Garnett had increased, at Mr Jamieson's request, to its present extent of some fifteen teaching hours per week.*
- e) that, over the last four years, there had been a large growth in the number of requests to lecture and to take seminars and tutorials from over twenty universities, seventy colleges of education and colleges of further education, and eighteen secondary school staffs in and around London.*
- f) that, where such requests did not clash with my normal commitments, I had undertaken them during normal teaching time, but otherwise during evenings and weekends....*

Sir William indicated that he would like to think further about these proposals and would probably hold a meeting later with Mr Jamieson and Mr Duane.

(W. M. Duane, 1970)

In the event, Houghton did nothing. He did not meet with Jamieson²⁴ or Duane. Yet when Risinghill closed, all of the staff, including Duane, was promised comparable posts within the London Teaching Service:

On the closure of Risinghill staff were promised 'comparable posts' in the London service. 'Comparable' was explained to mean 'equivalent in status, as nearly as possible, provided such vacancies existed, and with salary guaranteed at the same level as at the time of the closure'

During the controversy over the closure of Risinghill it had been stated publicly by Dr Briault, Deputy Education Officer, that the authority, in closing Risinghill, had no criticism to make of Duane or of his running of the school ... (London County Council, 1965)

²⁴

The Principal of Garnett College.

The above document, although undated, appears to have been produced by Duane in October 1965 or thereabouts, possibly for a solicitor as the authors do know (from their discussions with Margaret Duane) that he questioned the legalities of the terms and conditions of employment being forced upon him. In this document reference is made to Mrs Joan Evans, who was the chair of Risinghill's governing body (GB) throughout the consultation and appeal processes leading up to the school's closure. This was the same Mrs Evans who was chair of the GB when the school opened in 1960, but removed (on a technicality) shortly thereafter, along with two other governors, both of whom were supportive of Duane (Book1, chapters C4 and C5 refer). Mrs Evans was an ally of Duane, and later became a good friend. According to the above document, Evans told him that she "was convinced, as a result of conversations with members of the Education Committee, that he would never be appointed as head again in a London school" and this did turn out to be the case. He applied for over 200 headships in and around London after Risinghill closed, but always failed the final interview at County Hall. As one newspaper was to ask some ten years after the school closed:

Why are we still wasting his talents?

You might imagine him to be a raving freak, an ageing hippy with lapels smothered in revolutionary badges. This man has been the bête noir of the Inner London Education Authority since 1965 when the Government closed his school

In a few years he will retire, his talents wasted. Yet he has already proved himself to be one of the outstanding educationalists of our time. (Evening News, 1978)

Upon his retirement, the following memorandum (addressed to various officers within the LCC) provides an answer to the above question:

Mr Michael Duane, formerly headteacher of Risinghill (SM) School and currently an unattached headteacher based at Garnett College, was 65 years of age in January and consequently retires at Easter 1980.

Our normal practice is to prepare a termly report for Schools Sub-Committee giving the names of headteachers who are retiring and recommending that appreciation of their services be placed on record.

I do not think that in Mr Duane's case that this would be appropriate. I have therefore arranged on this occasion to include only headteachers retiring from schools. Mr Duane's name consequently will not appear in the list.

This will avoid any possibility of the Press picking up notice of his retirement from a committee document. On the other hand it could give rise to Mr Duane complaining that he has been treated differently to other retiring unattached and advisory headteachers (he is, however, the only one who would have appeared in this Sub-Committee report).*

We have in the past reported the retirement of some advisory heads. (GLC Development Subcommittee, 1980)

The signature on this document is unreadable, but the reference (5634 EO/TS10) suggests that it came from the Education Officer's Department. When Isabel and Lynn showed Margaret Duane this document at their interview with her in May 2006, she was shocked to the core:

Oh, 1980, goodness! Shocking! (she is reading the memo) ... I don't think that would have worried him, oh my goodness! He would not have bothered. Signature unreadable, I can well imagine! This is very strange. You see ... I think that proves quite a lot. It proves quite a lot indeed. (M. Duane, 2006)

While it is probably true that the snub, in itself, would not have worried Duane unduly, the authors found it hard to believe that he would not have taken this personally. He had, after all, convinced himself that the closure of Risinghill had been for political, not personal, reasons and he was still saying this in 1990, seven years before his death:

It really had nothing to do with me. I was merely a convenient instrument with which to batter the Labour Party. Some officials wanted to destabilize

the school to bring the Labour Party back into line. Duane quoted by Wade (1990))

Although Margaret had brushed off the snub, underneath the bravado Isabel and Lynn could see that she was terribly hurt; not for herself, but for her husband who had given so much of himself and received so little in return. It has been said that, in politics, honesty is not always the best policy and MD, unfortunately, was too honest for his own good:

He campaigned openly about the children's home background and the way society forced them to live 'that's our game not his.' Apart from enraging politicians of both sides he maddened the pussy-footing Socialists, particularly when he kept speaking openly if commendingly of their election programmes; they often said he was 'tactless.' Secondly, he undermined the hierarchy; he was not interested in the pecking order; people who benefited from it, and people who had sacrificed their lives to it, were disturbed. Thirdly, he did not beat children, thus blaspheming against the only philosophy that an educated Englishman gets mystic about. Fourthly, he held humanist assemblies. Fifthly, he really believed in comprehensive education, not the distortion we are being offered now, but the original idea, that every child has a valuable contribution to make. (Anon, 1968)

Duane, it has to be said, was guilty of all these things and more, explaining, no doubt, the reasons for his failure to secure another headship or even a permanent teaching post.

C2.2 – Michael Duane: the Seventies and Eighties

In his 'non-job' at Garnet, Duane remained as controversial a figure as ever. The LCC/GLC/ILEA might have been able to contain him in establishments where it had some control, but it could not prevent him from taking up invitations to lecture and/or teach anywhere else:

I am writing to invite you to speak to the John Locke Society. The Society is open to all the members of the Upper School and meets on Mondays either at noon or at 1.45 p.m. The session is about 45 minutes and

speakers may use the time entirely as they wish. Some speak for the whole period, most speak for about 25 minutes and then call for questions. The subject is the speaker's own choice but I think if I might suggest 'anarchism', I know that would be a topic of great interest for us ...

The John Locke Society has always been run on the basis of Voltaire's dictum that the members may not like what every speaker has to say, but they will defend 'to the death' his right to say it. I can assure you of an appreciative audience. Speakers in recent years have included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Enoch Powell, Lord Chalfont, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Dalai Lama, Shirley Williams, Angus Wilson, Huw Wheldon, Alan Sillitoe, Edward du Cann and Joe Gormley.
(Rae, 1976)

The above letter was posted to Isabel by Margaret Duane, who identified the writer as John Rae. Her hand-written postscript shows that her husband went on from here to take classes at the school (Westminster School) once a week for which he did not receive payment. The postscript was quite interesting as this tied in with: (1) the transcript of an interview that the authors had stumbled across on their first visit to the IOE; and (2) a tape (cassette) recording found in a box of cassettes (of Duane's lectures and seminars) given to them later by Margaret:

Since coming to Westminster two terms ago he has given a slightly baffling lecture on his political beliefs, written an article for the Regaud's House Magazine and taught two General English sets. This interview is taken from a conversation with the Remove set.

Q. Did you run your school on your anarchic beliefs?

M.D. Not really, no. When I started to run a school in 1960 I was very traditional in my views, I believed that one should aim for academic excellence, polite well-mannered students and a good wide range of things to be done, decisions made by the staff and so on, and it was only our experience of the kids that caused us to start changing our assumptions. It's fine to talk about uniform and good manners, if the background of the children is already

moving in that direction. Where you have children whose fathers are thieves, where some people, for whatever reasons, are behaving in ways that we here would consider antisocial then how do you start to deal with those children on the assumption that they will have the same kind of values as oneself.

Q. Isn't this the trouble in believing in anarchy anyway in the sense that it does assume a clean sheet to begin with in order to develop. It's a beautiful ideal, but it's almost impossible to build it on anything at the moment. I can't see an anarchic society ever happening in my lifetime. Or it implies people accepting anarchy from the beginning of time.

M.D. Or else it implies a collective decision to move in that direction. You see had I decided alone that there would be no corporal punishment, and many of the staff had not agreed with this then clearly there would have been a chaotic situation after it. But because the staff had discussed it and the majority had said "well it's not necessary" the others having had their chance to argue for corporal punishment said "Okay we'll accept". Now once you present a collective front to the children then they can see that the situation has changed radically. (W. M. Duane, ca. 1995)

Because the authors had come across other references to Duane being an anarchist, Margaret was asked about this:

He sometimes called himself an anarchist, which used to make me rather cross and he would say "I don't mean the sort of anarchist that goes around with bombs and things." And I mean I probably didn't understand quite what he did mean! (M. Duane, 2006)

As has been reported in Book 1, at Chapter B1, Duane was a Labour Party supporter in the 1950s, as evinced by his standing as a Labour candidate in the local elections in Hertfordshire. The authors also know, from Duane's youngest son, Simon, that he was much opposed to the Communist Party; he seemed always to have had a libertarian socialist political orientation. The experience(s) of Risinghill and after appear to have moved his

political views more formally towards anarchism (and more specifically probably the anarcho-communist strand in anarchist thought): at any rate, he first published an article on anarchism in 1971 for *Peace News*²⁵ (W. M. Duane, 1971), and then, between 1991 and 1995, he published two monographs (1991c, 1995) through the London-based anarchist publishers and booksellers *Freedom Press*, also three articles in the anarchist review *The Raven*. (1991b, 1991a, 1994)

Anarchism, it has to be said, is not widely understood. It is a complex and subtle political philosophy that takes many forms, and has its own contradictions, though all anarchists are sceptical of the state, or believe in a minimal state. It also gets a bad press through association with past terrorist acts and by the homonymy²⁶ between the meaning of the word anarchy as a political philosophy and anarchy as a synonym for disorder, chaos and confusion. This has led many people to believe (mistakenly) that all anarchists are intent on bringing about political change through violence and/or coercion, which might explain why Margaret was confused. Duane, however, abhorred violence and removed CP at all of his schools through consensus, not force. As for him being a rebel or a mutineer, as some have claimed, his educational values seemed, to the authors, to mirror:

- what many other educationalists were advocating at the time;
- what appeared to lie at the heart of the 1944 Education Act (to give every child an equal opportunity to succeed); and
- what the LCC itself had supported, unequivocally, in its *London School Plan 1947*, as discussed in Book 1.

Besides, in the above interview with the Remove set, Duane is on record as saying that, in 1960, he was very ‘traditional’ in his educational views. Moreover, this was the experience of the authors. As reported in Book 1, Risinghill was run on the same lines as Gifford, Ritchie and Northampton, the authors’ previous schools, and was not, as some educationalists have suggested, another Summerhill.

²⁵ Duane had previously published a piece in *Peace News* in 1968 defending Leila Berg’s account of Risinghill: . ‘Children are not factory Fodder’, *Peace News*, 21 June, 19658.

²⁶ Some might argue the relationship as polysemy, implying a closer semantic relationship. The word is derived from the ancient Greek ἀναρχία, (“*anarchia*”), from ἀν (“*an*”) meaning not or without, and ἀρχός (“*arkhos*”) meaning ruler or rules; thus literally meaning "absence of a ruler" or "without rulers".

In 2011 the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, made an interesting speech about the ‘Big Society’ that, to the minds of the authors, embraced the same principles that Duane had believed in, that being a freer society in which every child truly mattered. But who would call Cameron an anarchist? And are the architects of the ‘Every Child Matters’ (ECM) framework also anarchists or rebels? The authors doubt it.

Although some in the LCC hierarchy appeared to have had little or no respect for Duane, in educational circles he was highly thought of. Risinghill might have been his downfall, but it was also the catalyst for him becoming one of the most popular educational speakers of the 1970s and 1980s. People just could not get enough of him:

Risinghill did consume him, but it also opened up a lot of other things ... we met an awful lot of people through that ... groups of students and that. Even America, he went to America and spoke over there and that was all because of Risinghill. This is how it was, people wanted to know about it.
(M. Duane, 2006)

Duane was also a prolific writer. Although he did not produce a book, many of his articles and pamphlets were published, which probably annoyed the LCC who was unable to contain him completely. Here, in one of his publications, he takes a swipe at the teacher selection system:

EDUCATION cannot change society because it is used to serve the interests of society and in particular the interests of society’s ruling classes,” educationist Michael Duane told Hampstead Young Socialists last week...

He had made a study of several thousand reports by heads on applicants to teacher training colleges. The ones who were well recommended were usually middle-class, had identified strongly with the school ethos, behaved in a seemly manner and were not academic “high-fliers”.
(Express & News, 1972)

It was Duane’s contention that the training colleges were “presented with an already selected group from whom the militant or highly creative had already been eliminated” and in this paper he talked about the school system being tied to the structure of society - where the top

five-percent (those destined to become the policy makers) went to private schools and received as much as twenty years education, whereas the rest went to the grammar schools and the comprehensives representing 20% and 75% of the secondary school population respectively. The vast majority of children were, as he put it, expected to go on the ‘assembly line’ and because of this received only ten years of education. It was a familiar theme, one that he had been shouting about since the 1950s.

Limond, in one of his papers, reported that Duane never quite got over the loss of Risinghill; that he was depressed and found life difficult. But this was not the case. Margaret assured Isabel and Lynn that, although at first, her husband missed Risinghill terribly, he was not the type to sit and mope or harbour any grudges. He led a very full and active life, even after his illness in the 1970s:

He did all these things, silly to say he was pining and so on; he was too busy doing all these things. We did consider going back to Lowestoft – I think we should have done actually – but we had a lot of friends in Devon and Cornwall when we retired. We made friends with the Kitto’s – he was bursar at Dartington.²⁷ Dick and his wife Pat, they ran The Terrace. The Elmhursts²⁸ invited us down to test the water I think. They asked Mike if he would take on the headship before Roy Lambert²⁹ took it on. They wanted a new head and I think it was Mike’s for the asking. We talked it over but he just felt at the time that they were privileged children, whose parents had the money to spend on school fees and so on. They showed us what would have been our house – very nice – but he just did not want to do it. He still would not do it I think. (M. Duane, 2006)

‘The Terrace: An Educational Experiment in a State School’ (1995) is one of Duane’s most significant pieces of work, not that the authors propose going into the detail of this or any of his other activities post Risinghill. To do so would take them beyond the scope of RR; besides, they do not feel that they can do his work justice. The Wikipedia contains a list of Duane’s papers to show his wide range of interests, also the type of work he was involved

²⁷ Dartington Hall School (1926 – 1987) was a progressive coeducational, fee-paying boarding school in Devon run by the charity The Darting Hall Trust.

²⁸ Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst founders of Dartington Hall. Leonard died in 1974 and Dorothy in 1968, so it is possible the reference here is to Leonard and one of his children.

²⁹ Roy Lambert was headmaster of Dartington Hall School. It is not clear from this quote whether the headmastership of Dartington or The Terrace was on offer from this quote – but it reads more like the former.

with after leaving Risinghill. These papers can be found at the IOE, along with his tape recordings, some of which relate to his work at The Terrace but in the main are recordings of his lectures and seminars on education. The RRG has looked at some of these papers and found them to be interesting and well written. Limond (2005) however, disagreed:

Duane did not produce the quantity or quality of work that might have assured him a more certain and deserved degree of historical fame to go with his sometime celebrity. Perhaps he was never quite able to crawl out from under the shadow of Berg's account of his Risinghill days.

The authors were at a loss to understand the above and other acid comments that Limond had made about Duane. The man he described was not the man they had known as children, and was not the man they had come to know later as adults - when researching the material for RR. He (Limond) is, of course, entitled to air his views about MD in much the same way that the authors have, but some of his observations, notably those about MD's character, are based on assumption, not fact. His view that Duane courted publicity, and was vain, conceited and lacking in humility (as reported in Book 1 at chapter B1) is wildly off the mark. While he could not have known that Duane never applied for any of his war medals,³⁰ he ought to have been aware that Duane had held the rank of Major during WWII but did not use the title in civilian life.

Margaret was deeply offended by Limond's descriptions of her husband's character, and here the authors provide a more accurate description of this by offering the following anecdote, supplied by Margaret:

Do you remember Lord Bath? His son has these 'wife-lets' or whatever. He (Henry) and Mike were in the same mess together and I always remember Mike was very loathe to get in touch with these people. So he did not court publicity at all. We went to Longleat not long before Mike died really, a few years I suppose, we had never been before. I said, "Now you are here, just go up to the house and say who you are and is it possible to speak to him because you were comrades in the war." We were told that his lordship had retired and was living at an address in a village nearby; he was not very well but would love to see Mike. But Mike would

³⁰ Margaret Duane did this in 1997 shortly after Duane died.

not go. So you see he could have courted that sort of thing had he been the man that this chap says he is, but he did not want to do it. He would not go to any of the Dunkirk reunions, or anything like that. (M. Duane, 2006)

C2.3 - Obituary

Michael Duane died on 21 January 1997 from a stroke, leaving behind a legion of friends and acquaintances. Amongst the many letters of condolence, the authors were drawn to one from Professor Shin-ichiro Hori who, after studying progressive schools in Britain as a student and as a university professor of education, went on to set up his own free schools in Japan. When Isabel wrote to him in 2006 about RR, he replied straight away:

How exciting your letter is! It's very nice to hear about Mike. Yes, I love and admire him. We met in person five times....

I have mentioned Mike and his works in my books and lectures at universities. The best points of his works, I believe, are

- (1) He tried to introduce Neill's principles into state schools although it was a much more difficult job*
- (2) He looked upon the school as the community centre. I can understand why the people in the area were strongly against the decision by the authorities that he should go...*

It is, I believe, an important part of my life-work to spread the ideas of Neill, John,³¹ Mike and other pioneers in education. (Hori, 2006)

Born in 1943, the Professor now describes himself as “the busiest and poorest but happiest headmaster in Japan.” Had Risinghill been allowed to continue, Duane would, in all probability, have been equally happy and just as poor as his old friend.

It should be noted that Japan's free schools are very different from the free schools introduced in England by the Cameron administration (2010-2016). As the authors draft this chapter, free schools are beginning to spring up in different parts of the country, adding yet another type of school to what is already a long list of schools that currently sit under the ‘comprehensive’ umbrella. The authors must also point out (again) that Risinghill was not, as

³¹ John is probably a reference to John Holt, an American educationalist.

Professor Hori intimates, a Summerhill. Summerhill children were, and still are, given extraordinary choices (and freedoms) to drop out of lessons they consider to be boring and/or simply do not like. This was not the case at Risinghill. There was, undoubtedly, a friendlier approach to teaching and, of course, less CP, but on a day-to-day basis, life in the class-room was pretty much the same for the authors as it had always been. Some things were different – for example the humanist assemblies and the sex education lessons – but they simply accepted this, believing this was happening in every other state secondary school of the time. Nor did they then really understand the significance of the School Council. This was an extension of the idea of getting children to take responsibility for their own actions; something Duane had believed in long before he visited Summerhill and met A S Neill. And where corporal punishment (CP) was concerned, Duane had dispensed with this at Howe Dell, his first school, again before he had met Neill, so he was not Neill's protégé, as some people have claimed. If Duane was influenced by anyone as a teacher, the authors believe it was John Dewey. He did however, become great friends with Neill later in life:

Twenty years of friendship with Alexander Sutherland Neill had convinced me that his gentleness, insight and courage were rare. Gradually, and especially during the last weeks of his final illness – my last sight of him was on the evening before he died as he dozed, exhausted, in a brief respite from long spasms of breath-taking pain – I have come to realize that he is one of the truly great men of the 20th century.

Between bouts of pain he would talk of his hopes for the young and about the deep pessimism he had long felt as he watched power-made psychopaths seek, in the name of 'security' or 'democracy', to mould them for the purposes of this or that set of political dogmas. Even in his last hours he was preoccupied with the problems that had been with him for seventy years: how to enable the warm, squirming, lovable infant to retain and develop the infinite range of sensitivity with which he arrives from his mother's womb. How, in home and school, to inoculate the individual against the social sickness that generates the hating 'little man' who is the massive anonymity of industrial society spawns the bureaucrat, the party politicians and, ultimately, the Hitler. How to protect man's specific human birthright – love. (W. M. Duane, Unclear)

Perhaps the authors are biased, but they believe that Duane was also one of the finest educationalists of the twentieth century. His job was, as many have pointed out, far more difficult than Neill's, and this has not always been appreciated. It is too late to give him the public apology that he so rightly deserves – for the loss of his school and what should have been a promising career in mainstream education – but it is not too late to recognise the enormous contribution that he has made to education. It is hoped that RR will serve to put him right up there – with Neill, Dewey and others who have spent their lives fighting for a system of education that benefits all children, not just the privileged few.

C2.4 – Afterwords: Margaret Duane

When Isabel and Lynn interviewed Margaret Duane on 6 May 2006 at her home in Exeter, she was then aged eighty-five. Apart from a sore back, which she said she had strained using a lawn-mower the previous day, she was remarkably fit, physically and mentally. On being shown into the lounge, they paused to admire a photograph of Duane, which Margaret said had been taken in Switzerland at a conference organised by the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE), run by the late Brian Jackson, and his wife, Sonia, whom Margaret spoke very highly of:

She is a lovely lady. After Mike died, she very kindly invited me to stay with her in Bristol, and I stayed there for a few days; she was very kind. She has been here; she came a couple of times when I first moved. She was the one who told me to do something with Mike's papers, as I didn't know what to do with them, there were so many. She said she had deposited Brian's papers at the Institute of Education and she kindly offered to take them up to London for me, but in the end this wasn't necessary. I did take her advice though as there was such a lot of papers. (M. Duane, 2006)

As the authors have indicated in the introductions to RR, all of the documents used for the writing of it will, eventually, be deposited with the IOE. It is hoped that this material will form part of the Duane archive, to which Margaret gave the RRG full access. She also provided the authors with other materials, notably some of Duane's poems, two of which appear in Book 1 (at chapter B1) and his library of tape recordings. With regard to the latter, it was a strange, but uplifting, experience for the authors to hear their old headmaster's voice again, and although they were tempted to keep the tapes until they had finished writing RR, they did not feel comfortable hanging on to them. These are now with the IOE.

The interview, though it was more like a conversation between old friends, started at 2.30pm and finished at around 6.45pm. Margaret gave permission for the interview to be recorded, and while she was nervous to start with she soon got into her stride, answering Isabel and Lynn's questions without any prompting. In fact she was very animated, providing anecdotes to supplement her answers, some of which have been used here in Book 2 and others in Book 1.

In his twilight years, Duane had tried his hand at painting and pottery, and Margaret was eager to show off his efforts, pointing proudly to various items in the room. She clearly missed her husband, but not in a morbid or sentimental way, rather a fierce pride in what he had achieved educationally despite all the political back-stabbing, and the loss of what should have been a fine career.

When providing Margaret with a list of teachers that the RRG had compiled, she commented on those whom Duane had admired. Two members of staff that she, personally, remembered with considerable affection were Anne Burton and Keith Yon. She also spoke fondly of the school caretaker. Yon visited Duane in hospital just before he died, and sadly passed away himself, a year or two later. As had been the case with Leila Berg, Margaret expressed deep regret that she had not seen the nativity play produced by Burton and Yon, as described in Book 1. Duane had told her that it was an amazing production, one that had brought the whole school together. He had never seen anything like it before or after.

There were, of course, some teachers of whom Margaret did not have such fond memories, not that she was inclined to talk about them. And Isabel and Lynn did not press her. However, she did remember Terence Constable, author of *The Risinghill Myth* (1968), without any prompting. Her views about this teacher are discussed in Book 1. Suffice to say here that her comments about him were brief and not complimentary. Conversely Zvia, the Israeli artist, was someone that Margaret (and Leila Berg) had admired. In talking about Zvia, Margaret recounted the following tale about one of Zvia's students:

One boy sticks in my mind a lot. Zvia, she was part time because she had a very young child, and she has died now of course. She made that enormous sculpture in the school. I had been up to see this in the art department. This boy, R, I think he came from an Italian family. I was walking along across the playground, swinging my handbag, and he

caught up with me and took my handbag off me, took it right out of my hand and ran off, and then walked beside me and would not let me have it, and he was really tormenting me. Anyway, I just kept walking until we got over to the main building and he asked me where I was going. I told him I was going up to the headmaster's office, and I asked for my bag back and he gave it to me. (M. Duane, 2006)

The authors believe R was the boy mentioned in Berg's book, at page 263. Here he is given the pseudonym 'Vittorio'. Vittorio, according to Zvia, always came to school dressed in "very smart exquisite clothes", and would sometimes dance around her, brushing her with his hips in the process. It occurred to Isabel that Vittorio was probably more of a flirt than he was a tormentor as Margaret seemed a little embarrassed when recalling this incident.

Because *Risinghill: death of a Comprehensive School* appeared to be factually correct (insofar as life in the school was concerned) Margaret was asked about Duane's involvement with the book. Had he worked closely with Berg, and to what extent? She responded along the following lines:

Yes indeed, very much so. She used to turn up at the school and tell him what she intended to do. That was in the last year of the school, 1964/65. The press was very pro, and this is what fascinated her, there was no adverse publicity from the press. Somebody called Peter Bazalgette, which is a very famous London name ... I think it is to do with the sewers and things? I think one of that family was on the local paper, and I remember him turning up at the school. They were all extremely interested in it. (M. Duane, 2006)

The RRG has since discovered that Peter was the great great grandson of Sir Joseph Bazalgette, architect of London's sewage system in the mid-nineteenth century.

In answer to a question about why the LCC was so upset about the publicity, which seemed to the authors to be very positive, Margaret said that she could not fathom this at all. As for her husband's view on this issue, she replied:

Well, he thought they were just very angry because he refused to carry on caning kids left, right and centre. (M. Duane, 2006)

Duane, however, did not believe *at the time* that this was personal. It was not until the school was about to close that he discovered otherwise:

He did find out he was only appointed on a very slim margin. He did not know that at the time. He did not know until nearly the end because he said. I think he said ... "I don't think I would have taken the job had I known there was so much opposition to my appointment; I think perhaps I would have hesitated to take it on." But it was a huge job, and I suppose he was ambitious really – he was a very capable man in all respects. (M. Duane, 2006)

Margaret was also asked if Duane believed there had been a conspiracy to close the school:

I only know Mike's side of the story so I feel awkward you see. There are some missing papers aren't there? There's some missing stuff and this is where the conspiracy thing comes from ... it's because they are missing. If they hadn't been so foolish to have destroyed – or whatever it is they have done with them – this question would not have arisen would it?

When we were in Brook Drive, we had the ground flat there and there were two young people above us working in County Hall – a couple of young men I think. And they also belonged to the Territorial Army at that time. One of them spoke to Mike one time and said to him, "You better watch out ... what's going on at County Hall." And he said that they were destroying papers. That would be in 1967. And he told Michael, he said that. All Mike said was, "But what can I do?" No good people saying it doesn't happen, because look what's happening now. (M. Duane, 2006)

It was at this point in the interview that Margaret was shown the ILEA memorandum from the Education Officer's department (about Duane's impending retirement) referred to earlier. As stated, she was very shocked, but also very pleased, saying "... Oh that cheers me up a lot. It proves quite a lot indeed." It was a disturbing document but one that, nevertheless, shone a light on what Margaret had always suspected, that her husband had been the victim of a conspiracy, thus giving her some closure in the process.

Responding to a question about what Duane might have thought about RR, also how his children felt about it, Margaret said:

Mike would have been so thrilled if he knew about you writing this book, I just cannot tell you! I have told the children and not had any adverse comments. They have seen all the information you have been sending me. And you have said Simon has been in touch. (M. Duane, 2006)

In talking about family matters, Isabel asked the following question:

I was just curious to know how he had the time to comb the streets of Islington looking for some of his troubled children ... how did he balance this with family life as Risinghill seems to have consumed him entirely? (M. Duane, 2006)

Margaret replied:

Yes, I know, he never got home on time, and it did consume him, yes. And on one evening a week he used to go and see his mother, who was in a home. She was a really lovely lady, she always used to say “What’s kept you?” but it was always so difficult getting out of London. (M. Duane, 2006)

When it was suggested that Duane was probably very organised or disciplined to just fit everything in, Margaret agreed. However, the authors did ponder on how this devotion to the Risinghill children had sat with Duane’s own children, whom, at the time, were still living in Lowestoft with their mother, and could not have seen much of their father given that most of his evenings and weekends seem to have been taken with up with engagements to speak about Risinghill and/or to sit on various committees, as discussed in Book 1. This must have been terribly hard on his children, especially the younger ones.

Communism had featured strongly in some parts of Berg’s book, and at the time of Margaret’s interview the authors were still struggling to understand what this had to do with Duane or Risinghill. Whereas Berg had been unhelpful in explaining the connection, Margaret cottoned on to what Isabel and Lynn were trying to establish:

Oh yes, they thought Michael was a communist, did you know that? You realise now. Was that in the book? (M. Duane, 2006)

Berg had simply responded to this question along the lines that she couldn't understand the communists at Risinghill, not quite the answer Isabel and Lynn were looking for so it was useful to have Margaret's take on this:

Well, when he was at Howe Dell, he had as his chair of governors this man Maynard, the wine gum king. He was Lord Lieutenant of the County, and he saw in one of Mike's papers (I suppose) that he was a member of the 'Left Book Club' so he immediately assumed Mike was a communist. Well the 'Left Book Club' was instituted by Victor Gollancz, the publisher, when Mike was a student. And what he did he got these publications cheap – when paper-back publications were first coming in – because university students could not afford to buy books. And you joined this 'Left Book Club' and I don't know, but you paid so much, sixpence, and you could get books. It was called the 'Left Book Club' for some reason, but you could buy all kinds of books; it was nothing to do with communism. But this idiot Maynard saw that and went mad. At the same time Mike was also made a JP and Maynard was furious, he was livid. He did stop it in the end because he wouldn't let Mike have time off, he stopped it straight away. People had a lot of power in those days. (M. Duane, 2006)

As has been demonstrated throughout RR some people did, indeed, have a lot of power in the 1950s and 1960s. Duane might have been of the left but he was not a communist; however, it probably suited some to give him this label as to be a communist then was tantamount to be being a traitor or even a spy.

In talking about the different nationalities at Risinghill, Margaret reported that Duane visited the Greek Cypriot Commissioner and Turkish Cypriot Commissioner regularly, and they would say to him “you are doing something the politicians can't do” which, in the 1960s, was very true. She also spoke of Duane's commitment to the Risinghill children, how he attended court to speak up for them when they were in trouble, also how proud he was of them to the end:

One of the things I found so touching about the closure of the school was that there were no riots, and it closed without any trouble because he asked them. The kids could have smashed it up and there was damn all anyone would have been able to do about it. Mike did not threaten them at all, he spoke quietly to them. I don't think it would happen with today's children. (M. Duane, 2006)

Margaret's recollection of the Risinghill years was quite extraordinary, but what stood out for the authors was how closely her memories of certain events tied in with the claims of others interviewed for RR.

One final point that was raised with Margaret was MD's intention to write a book. There were several references to this in the Duane archive at the IOE, and the authors had seen what appeared to be draft chapters started, but not finished:

... yes that's right. As for the chapters started and never finished, he thought he could not write. He thought he couldn't write and I don't think I helped much because I sometimes used to get at him. People who have this very academic training and this very literary type of education sometimes find it very, very difficult – they always have this professor at the back of them criticising everything. I mean he used to write and he took forever rewriting the bits that he did write, crossing out and going over it again and again, refining and refining. And I would say, "for goodness sake, I like it, please, please leave it." That was a terrible failure, if that's the right word on his part. It was one of the things about his education I suppose. Where have I read it? Somewhere I have heard it said that people who have not had that kind of rigid discipline of every dot and comma thing - you know, get on with it. And you see the thing about it, he always loved that type of writing and thought it was wonderful – but to do it himself? Another thing I heard said was when you heard Michael speak, everybody said they were absolutely fascinated and I said to him, "Why can't you write it as you speak?" But he just could not put that into print because he would want to tidy it up and he said: "You know, there is an awful lot of difference between speaking and writing." And I said "Yes of course there is, but I think that's half the problem." He was very charismatic, but it did not come over in the writing. I did send Leila a bundle of poems and short stories ... she has got them now. And she said to

me “I didn’t know Michael could write like that.” You see that was better, mind you he still went over and over it.” (M. Duane, 2006)

Margaret did give Isabel and Lynn some of Duane’s poems, two of which appear in Book 1; however, the authors did not get the opportunity to read any of his short stories.

The RRG is indebted to Margaret for giving it an insight into Duane’s personal life, also for providing it with documents that have helped to piece together the Risinghill story. Alas Margaret died on 10 May 2011 (aged ninety) and the authors regret that she did not live to see RR published.

CHAPTER C3 – Leila Berg and Memories of Risinghill

Leila Berg (1917-2012) was a journalist and author for much of her life. Born in Salford, Lancashire, her *Flickerbook* (1997) gives a detailed account of her Jewish childhood and adolescence.

Berg grew up to be a very strong and independent woman with left-wing libertarian views. In her youth she was a member of the Young Communist League and joined the Youth Front against war and fascism. Two of her boyfriends, who were members of the International Brigade, were killed fighting against fascism in the Spanish Civil War. When she qualified as a journalist she first joined the *Daily Worker*, a communist newspaper, which later became the *Morning Star*. From there, she moved on to writing articles for other newspapers and journals, including *Anarchy* magazine. She was also involved in the Campaign against Nuclear Disarmament.

It was after the birth of her two children (Daniel (Param) and Jenny) that she began to focus on writing books for and about children. She was greatly influenced by Susan Isaacs, a psychoanalyst, who was the first head of department for Child Development at the IOE. Berg's first children's book was published in 1948. Many others followed, including the *Little Pete Stories* and the *Nippers* and *Little Nippers* series of books - all of which were controversial as she wrote for what she called 'ordinary' children, using language and situations that they could relate to. Her books were very different to those used in most primary schools then where the heroes and heroines were usually cast as white, middle-class children (such as in the *Janet and John* series of books published by James Nisbet and Company in 1949) whose every-day lives bore no resemblance to the vast majority of children growing up in post-war Britain.

Berg's most successful book, however, was *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School* which was also very controversial. She was often 'fished out' – as she put it - by the media and the BBC for interviews of a provocative/confrontational nature, earning her a degree of celebrity status.

Three years later she was in the news again - when she and Michael Duane were witnesses for the defence at the famous 'Oz' Obscenity trial in 1971.³²

In recognition of her services to children's literature, Berg was awarded the Eleanor Farjeon medal in 1973 and in 1999 an honorary doctorate by the University of Essex. She had an extensive book list with her last book *The God Stories: a Celebration of Legends* being published in 1999.

Berg's archive is now part of the Seven Stories Collection held at the National Centre for Children's books at Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. Seven Stories is a charity supported by the Arts Council.

Isabel and Lynn first met Berg in June 2004 when she was then aged eighty-seven. When they arrived at her cottage in Wivenhoe, Essex they were amazed to find her outside, watering the pots in her front garden ... with a small, glass jug in one hand while hanging on to her Zimmer-frame with the other. Both of her hands were crippled with rheumatoid arthritis, and she was just getting over a hip replacement operation so was not very steady on her feet, not that she wanted to dwell on any of this when her visitors insisted on helping her back into the cottage. That she had managed to get into the front garden at all was a feat in itself; there being two large (and fairly steep) stone steps leading up to her front door. She was, without doubt, a very independent and determined woman.

Although quite frail physically, mentally Berg was razor sharp, and had no problems recalling the events of 1965 when she first became interested in Risinghill. This was in the January when the national press was covering the LCC's announcement to close the school:

I went down because I saw all the stories in the press about the school that's built on love and all sorts of things like this, and it sounded fascinating, so I went down to investigate. That's when I became involved and met Mike [Duane]. (Berg, 2004)

When she arrived at the school (unannounced) she was surprised and impressed by the friendly, polite welcome that she received from the pupils: Duane had been called away and they looked after her until he returned. After this visit she became deeply involved in the

³² The magazine was being prosecuted for the publication of an article that was said to conspire to corrupt the morals of young children.

struggle to save the school, so involved that she decided to write a book based on her interviews with MD and others caught up in the drama. This included the teachers, pupils, parents and some of the LCC officials. Her story, like the authors' story, was complicated, baffling her editor, Dieter Pevsner:

Dieter Pevsner, my editor, said to me: "You know I could never understand how you had all those masses of official papers from the LCC, masses of minutes – appalling stuff – masses of it - and how you could turn it into a book that nobody could put down. And it's a complete mystery to me, so how did you do it?" (Berg, 2004)

During the interview, Berg reminisced about the amount of detective work and digging that she had to do to uncover the truth of the Risinghill affair. The authors understood how difficult this must have been: for her there was no Freedom of Information Act, just a wall of silence and secrecy. To compound the problem, the LCC appears to have mislaid the file(s) on Risinghill or destroyed them, as reported by Margaret Duane in the previous chapter:

The 'loss' of the Risinghill file at County Hall was a very hard blow since any independent inquiry or libel action against Leila Berg would have depended heavily on it, and I had hoped for such an inquiry or libel action to uncover the mass of material originally intended for publication but blocked by the nervousness of witnesses. (W. M. Duane, 1985)

Controversially, when writing her book, Berg made a point of naming and shaming many of the LCC officials involved in the closure but used pseudonyms for the pupils and teachers. The 'naming and shaming' resulted in the book being scrutinised heavily, delaying its publication by two years:

They were dreadful years being sent round the whole area by Penguin to see if a libel lawyer would back us. Penguin was going to publish it if we could get this clearance. So we had to submit to this tearing apart by lawyers, barristers, who were incidentally socialist so called! And none of them would back us and so we had to make do with very right wing, but very well known barristers in London, who were very polite and very nice.

*But all of the socialists turned us right down because they thought we were a menace to the government.*³³ (Berg, 2004)

When, finally, *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School* hit the bookshops, it brought about massive (and often contentious) media attention. Her website notes:

Leila's book went deeply into the ethos and daily life of the school, its birth in its desperately deprived surroundings in North London and growth in stature and recognition to a point where its success clearly became a threat to the status quo. Then she chronicles the entire debilitating attack and the resistance to it, blow by blow, to the very end.

(Anon, Undated)

The authors are truly fortunate that Berg agreed to provide them with background information to the writing of her book, and the events as they unfolded at that time. Unfortunately, RR has taken longer than expected to finish, and they are deeply sorry that she did not get to read it as she was thrilled with the idea that Duane's pupils were taking her story forward. It is hoped that the RRG's analysis and continuation of her book proves to be just as interesting.

When Isabel and Lynn asked Berg to write a Preface for RR in 2005 she did so willingly, producing 'The Next Room' which is a moving tribute to Duane and the school. After her sad death in 2012, however, it seemed more appropriate to use this piece as the final part of this section: (1) because it celebrates, powerfully, the school and Duane; (2) RR has developed beyond just a sequel to her book; and (3) the final chapter of *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School* is called 'Obituary Last words – for the moment' - a perfect ending for her involvement with RR and one that, fittingly, gives her (once again) the last words on Risinghill. It is presented below (unadulterated) as Berg was adamant that the authors present her piece as written.

³³

There was a Labour government under Prime Minister Harold Wilson during this period.

THE NEXT ROOM³⁴

By Leila Berg

Whenever I think of Michael Duane, I don't see his face. I hear his voice. So relaxed. So unfrontational. So light. Even in the army winning medals, he seems to have been just as unperturbed.

When he re-entered civilian life, it was as a teacher. He had already, typically, decided one day he would run his own school. As practice, so to speak, he became head of several schools, one after the other, put forward for each by John Newsom,³⁵ who publicly declared that Mr Duane was the head our schools needed. Finally in 1960, he was given the headship of Risinghill School, a new school in Islington, **formed from four still-functioning schools, all with heads and staff opposed to his ideas.** How that light voice infuriated them. They belonged to an era when teachers voices cracked out like lion-tamers' whips, and the children were supposed to slink back to their little seats, snarling a bit, but defeated. His light voice, to them, meant he was deriding them, belittling them, betraying them even.

I remember him once replying to a newspaper man, who asked him if the report was true that "he favoured the children over the teachers." His reply was very considered. His voice, still light, was slow, thoughtful and sober. "I think a great deal of my staff," he said. "I know they are finding things very difficult and have to work very hard ... But I have to say that if I must choose between teachers and children, in truth I will favour the children. The reason is the teachers are the adults they are now. But the children are the children they are now, and the adults they will become."

There was one middle-aged woman teacher, very capable in an old-fashioned way, who simply, literally, closed the door on "all that nonsense," and said she would run her bit of the school her own way. And she did.

³⁴ Leila used fictitious names throughout this piece apart from the obvious ones. She was also very insistent that we reproduce 'The Next Room' exactly how she had written it, and is presented so here.

³⁵ Sir John Newsom (1910–1971), was Chairman of the committee of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) that produced the Newsom Report of 1963 entitled "*Half our Future*", which looked at the education of average and below average children. Newsom was Joint Managing Director of the publishers Longmans Green and Co Ltd. and formerly the County Education Officer of Hertfordshire.

She was hampered, as the school built up, by not knowing the language. One day, when Mike [Michael Duane] had put some dignity and self-belief into the children, two furious small girls, chests heaving with outrage, claimed a teacher had disgustingly insulted them. The teacher was obviously amazed at the accusation, so Mike asked him to go, slowly and carefully, over every detail of what had happened. "They were just being a silly nuisance, so I said "Oh you prigs!"

"Prigs" Michael said to the children. "That means people who think they are always right, and other people are wrong". He showed them the word in a large dictionary. "Prigs. People who are always careful to speak very exactly and properly." They were placated, though grudging and lofty and shoulder-heaving about it. But they had gone in their passion and distress to this elderly old-fashioned teacher. They normally found her reassuring. But she now couldn't understand what was going on:

"It was a misunderstanding." he said to her. But she had found the whole episode distressing and bewildering and wanted it made clear. "What did he say?"

"He called them 'prigs'".

"Yes?"

"They thought he said 'Pricks', but he didn't."

"Pricks?"

"It is a colloquialism for the male sexual organ ... it denotes contempt"

She left the room hurriedly.

The older teachers particularly hated a boy I'll call Kevin. (I called people so many different names when I wrote the book, that I've forgotten their real ones). He was a very pale child. He constantly hit out at invisible enemies, which was frightening to see, and when he did this, his breathing got hoarse and wheezy.

Once I saw him lunge for a milk-bottle on the table, smash the top off, and whirl around, crouching. I remember it very clearly, because during the time I was considering whether to write the book that became 'Risinghill'. I bought the local paper to see what went on in the district, and there in a news story, was a man who did exactly the same. But the adult who got

the jagged glass in his face in the news story was the man's best mate, who had laughed at something he said, which was unwise. It wasn't because it had happened that it was in the paper, but because of the vast number of stitches he had to have.

I remember hearing that late one night in the market, Kevin was poking about among cabbage leaves when a policeman appeared behind him and said "Out late aren't you Kevin?" And Kevin shot back "How d'you know my name?" The policeman smiled and said "What are you doing, Kevin?" And Kevin shouted "How d'you know my name?" The policeman just smiled. "I ain't done nothing!" shouted Kevin. "We know you, Kevin" smiled the policeman. And Kevin, backing, shouted "I ain't done nothing! I done nothing!"

There were always meetings about Kevin. I heard of one where one of the older teachers said, meaning to be taken seriously, that Kevin was "crazy" and that the only time Kevin hadn't gone raving mad was a day when he was so quiet the teacher thought something had really happened to him. And a younger teacher said very gently "It had. His mother had taken an overdose. For the third time." When I heard he'd added "for the third time," I thought Risinghill is impossible. It so overdoes everything.

But an older teacher cut in contemptuously "Well, if teachers took an overdose whenever things got too much ..." and Mike, taking deep breaths to keep himself calm, said Kevin should be in a quiet residential home. He had tried to find one but there weren't any places.

That was when Martin, a young teacher who liked Kevin, said Kevin was a very intelligent kid. When the psychologist came to examine him, Martin said he handed Kevin a billiard ball, and said "Peel that for me," and Kevin shot back instantly "I'll peel it if you eat it." That story, which said a great deal about Kevin, was told quite a lot.

It was then that Mary Osborne spoke up. She was a teacher who I knew had troubles enough of her own. Her daughter, Ann, worked in an asbestos factory, and came home every day covered in white powder. This worried Mary intensely, and she was constantly researching it. It was largely through Mary's focussed insistence and her public protests that it was discovered indeed to be causing as much harm to the factory girls as coal-dust to the miners. Apparently it helps cause cancer. Mary was undeniably a serious person, not a sentimentalist.

Mary said she and her husband Dick, and Kevin, always got on fine together. She'd take him home with her for two or three days. They'd have a calm weekend.

Kevin met her outside the staffroom. He was very chirpy. Suddenly he announced he had “business to attend to” and disappeared. Mary called after him “Where are you going? Dick’s tooting on the horn!” He came back with a carrier bag. “I didn’t realise you needed anything” she said. “Is it important?” The bag was obviously disintegrating and almost empty. Reluctantly he said “If you must know it’s our baby’s old jersey ...” Then belligerently. “You’ve got to have luggage when you go away”.

When they got to the house, Mary started to change the sheets on Ann’s camp-bed. It always had a particularly beautiful Welsh quilt, which Mary put back over the clean sheets.

At two in the morning, Mary came down. Kevin still wasn’t in bed. He was fastening the bolts on the front door, top and bottom. Then he tested them. He fastened the chain. Then he tested that, insisting on turning the key which was very hard to do, since it was obviously never used. Mary said “Don’t you ever go to bed, Kevin?”

Then she said “What’s that you’ve got stuffed under your jersey?”

“It’s my hatchet-head. I brought it with me. I got to have it!”

“You don’t need it in this house. Give it to me. I’ll put it on the table here. In the morning Dick will look after it for you”.

She turned back the bed-clothes, saying regretfully “I put a bottle in, but it’ll be stone-cold now”. But Kevin whipped the quilt off, yanked the top blanket out, backed into a corner of the room and lay down on the floor. Eventually she had to leave him there.

He didn’t waken till quite late. Mary was saying “Dick and I have had our breakfast. But we’ll just have some coffee again with you. I’ll get some bacon going for you, coffee and toast ... What on earth are you doing with that enormous toasting fork?”

“I took it to bed with me, I always take a weapon to bed with me”.

I heard all this from Mary.

“But not here, Kevin”, she said to him. “Not here”. He quite nonchalantly handed over the toasting fork without any argument. “Look outside” she said. “See those trees? Squirrels live in them”. She put some cold toast in his hand and said “They come down for it if you hold it out”, and pushed him out into the garden.

As she was calling Dick down to join them for coffee, a policeman entered, clutching Kevin none too gently, by the arm. “Good morning Miss. This boy was in your grounds”.

Mary exploded. “Of course he was! He’s staying with us!”

“I said I was” shouted Kevin, wrenching himself free.

“I had no way of knowing Miss”, said the policeman. It was certainly not an apology.

“He told you!”

“It wouldn’t do to believe everything we’re told, Miss”. This with a smile.

“Well, he is staying with us ... Thank you!”

“He didn’t look like the kind of boy to be staying here.” And he smiled again at Kevin. “Glad all’s well then, Miss. Good morning then”.

And then Mrs Wilkinson from next door, a kind middleclass woman, called “I don’t like complaining, but glass marbles are dangerous. People can fall on them. I spoke quite politely to him, and he was very rude to me”.

The door slammed in Mrs Wilkinson’s face, and Kevin was howling, sobbing and beating on the door.

“Why’re you trying to come between me and Mary! Why’re you coming between us?” And she was totally bewildered, because she was really a good soul.

I was in Mike’s study the day Miss Tuke burst in, saying Kevin and Alan Cox³⁶ had been sleeping all night in the school flat, living there! And Mike just said, in that light voice, “Kids have to sleep somewhere”, which made her momentarily speechless with rage. He added “At this moment Kevin’s father is dying of cancer ... that old devil. Well, he won’t have the strength to beat the whole family now “ ... and he laughed. As for Alan, he told her that when she went to bed, Alan was thrown out in the street, because his mother worked.

“At night?” she asked icily.

“Yes”, Mike told her.

³⁶ A Risinghill teacher and two pupils respectively.

“Well, it’s been pouring all night”, she said, struggling for dignity.

“I’m glad they were indoors”, Mike answered her, courteously.

She was instantly blazing again. “And they’ve left muddy marks all over the window glass where they’ve climbed in, and over the window sill, and all over the floor, and they’ve half-pulled the curtains down!”

That was when Kevin appeared at the study door again. “He’s dead!” he said. “Finished! And the Old Bill’s³⁷ outside. Because I punched up a teacher. Not here”, he added impatiently. “At Jackson Street, down the road. He belted our kid. So I went down and belted him ... I’m coming up for taking-and-driving away anyway, aren’t I? Makes no odds.”

I read in the local paper that the magistrate said “It’s the greatest pity that someone cannot take a birch rod, and give you a thorough good hiding. That is the thing you need more than anything else. And if it had been done early enough, you wouldn’t be in the court today. How these teachers keep their hands off people like you, I just don’t know.”

He got Borstal in the morning on one charge, and a day’s imprisonment in the afternoon on the other. And they took him from one court to the other in handcuffs.

His mother used to bring news of him to the school. She was genuinely happy he was in Borstal. Understandably, because Borstal had taken over responsibility for one member of her gang of ten children. She said one day “Our Kevin’s all right at this Borstal. They keep him working in the sewers now. He likes it there. Says it suits him. Yes, he’s quite content, quite happy ... he likes the sewers ...”

And Mike, remembering too, saying “When he wasn’t in one of his wild fits, he was like a bright bird.”

All that happened next, how the enemies of the school systematically destroyed it, I describe in detail in my 1965 book ‘Risinghill, Death of a Comprehensive School’. Contrary to what many people thought and perhaps still think, I don’t myself think the ‘Labour’ politicians cared what Michael Duane was doing at Risinghill, just as long as he didn’t talk about it, because that was giving ‘the wrong image’ to middle class voters, and that was what they really did care about. This was when, to counter Michael, they invented the bizarre slogan

³⁷ London slang for the police.

‘**Eton** is a comprehensive school.’ Not only was he publicly discussing what was happening there as if it was important, they felt, but he was inviting people in to see for themselves, and to discuss it with the pupils, and the parents – uneducated parents – and not just ordinary people but **newspaper** people (and how they revelled in it: ‘Love Conquers All’ ... ‘Wild School is Tamed by Love’ ... ‘That Four-letter Word’ ...).

But I remember now, how, suddenly, everyone seemed to be making banners.

Of course I remember how once **we** had also made banners. Not fighting to save a school, but in jubilation, celebrating our certainties; and how the wind, playing and laughing and clapping with us, would almost tug them out of our hands. But this was different.

I think three quite young kids had the temerity to start it. On a page torn from an exercise book they wrote (I have polished up the spelling):

“We are self-deputised and strongly object to the attempted closure of our school. The rumours about fires being lit in the school, pregnant girls and so on, we all deny it. I would like to add that Mr Duane is great. He does not need to use the cane. If he can stop the fight between Risinghill and Tudor³⁸ which you know was very fierce, he can easily handle children.”

In one school lunch hour, these three thirteen year olds, two boys and a girl, took this petition into the market, and got 178 signatures from stall-holders. They took a copy to County Hall. Then they made banners saying (shouting!) ‘Hands Off our School!’ and ‘Mr Duane Must Stay!’ and with eight other young pupils marched to Downing Street.

After that, everyone – pupils, parents, social workers, prefects – everyone was making banners.

I still remember certain particular moments from that time. When the parents had learned that the Education Act gave them certain rights. They called a meeting, because they intended to claim them. But trying to draft their appeal, they realised they had no idea how to go about it, and they grew panicky and despondent. Someone said “It’s no use. We don’t know how to do it. We need a lawyer to do it for us!” And rapidly a feeling of desolation and disintegration swept through the air. Then a mother stood and said stoutly “We’re not asking to be

³⁸

A rival school in Islington

considered as lawyers. We're asking to be considered as **citizens** and as **parents!**" Instantly they rallied again. She was unconquerable, and very moving to me, even now.

And I remember how the London County Council came to a very stormy and angry meeting of parents, and wagged their fingers, and said "We have come here only to be polite. We didn't come to hear from **you**. We came to **tell** you." And when a mother kept asking questions, she was told "I've heard quite enough of you!" Who are these people, our representatives?

I still remember the day I walked through the market on half-day closing, when Bob Redrupp, who was leader of the parents and had become a borough councillor, was packing up his potato stall in blazing fury and despair. He talked in jerks, very close to tears.

I was so struck by what he said, and by the savage rhythm he was using to express it, that in those days, 45 years back, when I was young, and could remember words, I could cry it all through, the rage and despair of it.

"I used to hit my kid! (slam)

Now I don't! (slam)

I don't need to! (slam)

I didn't have people from Oxford or Cambridge to teach me that! (slam)

Duane taught me! (slam)

This may not matter to people high up in education, but it matters to me!
(slam)

If someone says he won't hit children, he's a trouble-maker! (slam)

From what I've seen of back-biting among people of education, I'm glad I left school at fourteen and work in the market! (slam)

I'm an average person. I'm not too clever, and I'm not too dim! (slam)

The higher in the scale you go, the bloodier the rat-trace is! (slam)

This thing stinks! (slam)

We're completely disregarded! (slam)

We had an average of 150 people to 250 people to our parents' meetings
(slam)

At the borough council meeting, not more than 10 people turned up to hear
about 12 million pounds being spent on rates on their behalf! (slam)

And the LCC said that our parents' meeting did not represent parents!
(slam)

If I thought I could help Duane, I'd go to the end of the bloody earth for
him!" (slam)

The raging, jerking rhythm of him smashing out his words kept them in my memory till I got
far enough away from him to jot them all down in my notebook.

And then, much later, I remember talking to a child I was letting out of my own front door,
and dreamily reminiscing about the events, expecting her to appreciate the glory of the failed
campaign. And she answered forthrightly "Well it wasn't enough, was it? It wasn't good
enough."

There was desolation in her. It was not so personal as to be contemptuous. She was
disassociating herself from me. She knew I had been daydreaming. She had relied on people
like me, thinking we knew how to manage the world, and she now knew she had been
mistaken. She certainly had a more realistic sense of the present than I needed to have.

And then – but that must have been when the book was out – I remember the Borstal, that
open Borstal.

I had been asked to turn the book, which had made publishing history as a best-seller – into a
play to run at Salisbury Theatre, and just for one night at the Young Vic. Salisbury
despatched a very sparse travelling company – I think there were six people, maybe less – to
tour the large educational districts with meetings, conferences, theatres and the like.

The play began with children, on tape, singing “Everybody loves Risinghill”. It was to the tune of ‘Everybody Loves Saturday Night’, very popular at the time. But these children sang first in a Cockney voice, then Italian, then Greek, then West Indian. (Risinghill had children of 19 nationalities, which in 1960 was unheard of).

The Borstal boys began to whoop and shout and stamp their feet, and for a short but very tense time it looked as if all hell would break loose. Then things calmed down, and went very quiet, spookily, shiveringly, quiet. Suddenly a Risinghill boy’s voice rings out furiously “If **you** can’t have the school, no-one else will! We’ll smash it up!” As it echoes, a girl walks quietly on to the stage, a spot[light] trained on her. She reads from a book:

“On that last day at Risinghill, no one did break up the school. The people who came to move the piano said another school had smashed theirs to smithereens. A teacher said that at a Lambeth school, the children tore the school apart on the very last day. Another said that at a Paddington school, all the doors were taken off their hinges. At a school **near** Risinghill, the staff had been pelted with tomatoes and the staffroom set on fire. At another school, equally near, the children were rehearsing their brass band with the music teacher and another **teacher** said they were making too much noise and furiously threw a bucket of water over them all

But Risinghill closed quietly, with crowds of children talking in Mr Duane’s study and the toughest kids of all crying in the lavatories.”

With the spot still on her, she walked out, a very lonely walk.

The play was finished. Still not a sound from the audience. Gradually, in the silence and the growing light, seats bang, feet scuffle. Still no one speaks. Everyone keeps their head low. As the lights go up, you almost have to stoop to see their hidden faces. They are crying.

I said of that child I let out my front door that she saw I had been daydreaming. Michael Duane was a different matter. He was no daydreamer, no romantic.

When the destroyers had done their work, instead of planning out his own future, he was hunting for a kid who had run away from home because his mother and father didn’t want him. He found him eventually, late at night, in his own safe-house, which turned out to be a

disused loft in a disused factory, furnished with part of a broken chair, a broken alarm clock and some crisps and bits of bread that caring friends had brought him.

In 1960, the first year of Risinghill School, 18 pupils had entered for GCE O Level exams and 5 had passed. In 1962, 32 entered and 16 passed. In 1962, 39 entered and 20 passed. In 1963, 59 entered and 34 passed. In 1964, 80 had entered and 42 passed (in 1 to 6 subjects), 3 took A Levels and 2 won University places. (In 1960, 98 of the children were already on probation, in 1964, only 9 were).

In 1965, children, parents and social workers were making banners that said “Save our School” and marching with them to Whitehall, to the Houses of Parliament, to Buckingham Palace. In 1965 the Socialist Government and the Socialist Borough Council, closed the school down.

A short time after Risinghill had been closed, Neill, John Holt, Bob MacKenzie³⁹ and Mike Duane met in my house. It was the first time they had all physically met each other. Now they are all dead. I am the only one left, and the wrong one, the scribe. It should have been Mike Duane.

It happened too swiftly for him, that stroke. If he had been ready, poised as he generally was, he would never have accepted it. I don’t mean in the sense of ‘Rage, rage, against the dying of the light’. He would simply have thought about it and lived on, unperturbed.

A parent once said in my hearing, ‘If the ceiling had fallen in, in the room where we were all talking, he would have said in that amazing voice of his, “Come on, let’s move into the next room”’.

Let’s do that now, Mike. The next room. The floor’s yours, in 2005.

Leila Berg, 2005

³⁹ Presumably A. S. Neill (Headmaster of Summerhill School in Suffolk). John Holt was the American author and educator who advocated home schooling and unschooling. Robert (Rob) Mackenzie was the Headmaster of Summerhill Academy in Aberdeen, a post from which he was sacked in 1974 for implementing policies similar to Duane’s at Risinghill. It should be noted that the similarity of names between Neill’s and Mackenzie’s schools is coincidental.

CHAPTER C4 - Comprehensive Education 1997 – 2012

‘As long as society itself is class structured, the comprehensive will remain a school within which the social class differences will be maintained both in the segregation of children and in the segregation of staff – by longer experience and higher qualifications to teach children of the higher social classes.’

Michael Duane

To arrive at any meaningful conclusions about the relevance of Risinghill to today’s education system, it is necessary to return to the politics of the comprehensive model. In this chapter, the authors review the fate of the comprehensive, noting that education in England and Wales is in an almost constant state of revolution, and in pulling together the various threads of RR, they formulate some conclusions on the different elements.

Educational Changes Post 1997

It was tempting, initially, to write a history of education in England between the period from Risinghill to today, looking for progress and improvements. The authors soon realised, however, that this would take many books, and they suspected (strongly) that evidence of progress would be thin. With the exception of corporal punishment (CP), which is now a thing of the past, they would have had to report much change, even continuous revolution, overlaying some fixed foundations: continual government interference; continued division between the public and private sector; the continuance of faith-based schools; and a national neurosis about ‘successful outcomes’, that being good examination results. In lieu of a history what they do in the following pages is to note some of the changes that have taken place since 1997, and ask whether these have made any difference to producing the healthy, assured pupils Duane had fought to deliver throughout his career.

C4.1 - Choice

While New Labour, on coming to power in 1997, restated its commitment to comprehensive schools and abolished the Conservative’s Assisted Places Scheme, which had enabled poorer children to enter fee-paying schools, it retained many of the previous (Conservative) reforms, including grant maintained schools. Within the state sector, it also continued the

Conservative's policy of naming and shaming failing schools. In 1999, a number of Labour-run Local Authorities (LAs) across the country and in London had schools that were deemed to have serious weaknesses in their Ofsted inspection reports, several of which lost control of their schools - their management being transferred to private companies. One of these LAs was Islington where its schools are now managed by Cambridge Education Authority, a private company.

Other reforms to change and (allegedly) improve state education included the introduction of beacon schools,⁴⁰ city academies⁴¹ and an expansion of specialist schools.⁴² The secondary school system and the range of schools available were becoming more and more complicated for parents to understand. Chitty (2004) sets out the eight categories of secondary schools identified by Newsam (2003). These are:

1. *Category 1*: super-selective (independent or state grammar) schools, taking children almost exclusively from within the top 10% of the ability range at the age of entry.
2. *Category 2*: selective (independent or state grammar) schools, taking children almost entirely from within the top 25% of the ability range, including some pupils from the top 10%.
3. *Category 3*: comprehensive (plus) schools, taking children of all abilities, but with the intake heavily concentrated in the top 50% of the ability range.
4. *Category 4*: comprehensive schools, taking a balanced intake of pupils of all abilities.
5. *Category 5*: comprehensive (minus) schools, taking children of all abilities, but with few pupils in the top 25% of the ability range.
6. *Category 6*: secondary modern schools, rarely recruiting any children in the top 25% of the ability range.
7. *Category 7*: secondary modern (minus) schools, having no pupils in the top 25% of the ability range and with only some 10 to 15% of their intake in the next 25%.
8. *Category 8*: 'other' secondary or sub-secondary modern schools, having no pupils in the top 25% of the ability range, having 10% or less in the next 25% and, most significantly, having the remainder of their annual intake heavily weighted towards the lower end of the bottom 50%.

⁴⁰ This programme creates partnerships between schools to share and improve practice.

⁴¹ Independent schools within the state system funded by organisations such as businesses and charities.

⁴² These schools teach a specialist area of knowledge (such as science) or skill (such as music) in addition to the National Curriculum.

The Education and Inspections Act (2006) extended the Conservative's free market policies even further, to the dismay of many. Amongst other things it allowed schools to become Trust schools, giving them autonomy to: forge links with commercial partners/sponsors; to own their own assets; to appoint their own staff and the majority of school governors; and to set their own admissions arrangements (within certain criteria). Teachers were given a statutory right to discipline pupils, confiscate their property and search for weapons, also to regulate the conduct of pupils when they were off school premises. In addition, Ofsted was expanded to monitor the full range of services for young people. There were many Labour MPs who, because they were opposed to the Trust model, voted against the Bill on its first reading in the House of Commons (15 March 2006). Tony Blair, however, was determined to take his Party to the centre-right of politics, and with the help of some Conservative MPs managed to push the Bill through.

Trust schools, city academies and free schools have since been added to the above table (or replaced some of the schools identified) and as the authors finalise this chapter there is talk about adding more grammar schools to the mix, making it difficult to track such a fast-moving target. Where all of these new schools will sit in the table presented by Chitty is anyone's guess, though it is probably safe to assume that none will sit in categories five, six, seven or eight. One thing the authors can say with confidence is that these new additions will have their own contradictions in line with all the other schools that currently sit under the one, secondary school-cum-comprehensive umbrella.

All of these changes have taken place on the back of 'choice' which, according to the politicians, be they Labour or Conservative, drives up standards. With the UK falling behind other, poorer countries in literacy and numeracy, however, one does have to question (seriously) if this is the case.

So how does 'choice' work in practice?

For today's parents, getting their children into a good, local school is becoming a problem of some magnitude; the definition of a 'good' school (for most parents) being one that sits at the top or towards the top of the school league table. However, with everyone vying for the top spot, it goes without saying that, for many parents, there is no choice whatsoever:

Last year, almost one in six children in England were refused a place at their first choice of secondary school – and the rate rose to one in three in and around London. (Guardian, 2010)

The reality is that a good state school is fast becoming a luxury that only the more affluent can afford. Those who are able to buy or rent a property as close to the school of their choice (to ensure that they meet the admissions criteria) are the ones who benefit most from the system. Others will use whatever means at their disposal to get around the problem; the most popular ruse being to give the address of a relative (often a grandparent) or friend living in the catchment area. And some parents will even lie about their faith to get their children into a faith school if that school happens to occupy a good position in the league table. The legal profession has latched on to this sorry state of affairs by offering services which can range from help with completing the admissions form (to maximize the chances of acceptance) to appealing a rejection. Alternatively, those who can afford to pay for their children's education will opt out of the state system entirely. The effect of all this on schools is that some lose their diversity in terms of academic ability, ethnicity and/or social standing with many children being forced to attend schools outside of their area.

As for 'choice' driving up standards, this is debatable:

Some 22% of 16-19-year-olds in England are functionally innumerate – meaning their maths skills are limited to little more than basic arithmetic, researchers from Sheffield University discovered. This means their numeracy levels are at or below an 11-year old's.

This is a higher rate of innumeracy than many other industrialized countries, the study of literacy and numeracy rates over the past 60 years found. (Shepherd, 2010)

One question that the authors were bound to ask was: How does this system sit within the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework? The ECM reforms, which were introduced in 2004, state that:

Its aim is for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- *Be healthy*
- *Stay safe*
- *Enjoy and achieve*
- *Make a positive contribution*
- *Achieve economic well being*

(Cm 5860, 2003)

The authors cannot see how the last three objectives can possibly be met in a system that names and shames failing schools, and very publicly at that. A child caught in a failing school is, by association, also labelled a failure. And bearing in mind that a school placed in ‘special measures’ (the official term for saying that it has failed, miserably) can take up to three years, possibly longer, to be turned around, what is presumed to happen to the children in the meantime? Do they knuckle down and work diligently to pass their SATs to get their school out of trouble (assuming they have the motivation or even the academic ability to achieve the necessary scores) or do they stick two fingers up to a society that has dis-owned them and become the failures as dubbed by Ofsted? One only has to look at what happened at Risinghill when it was under threat of closure to find the answer. There was a mass exodus of staff, which unsettled the children, many of whom made their own exits by truanting or dropping out of education all together.

The majority of today’s ‘failing’ schools are those in deprived areas with the same problems that Duane had encountered at Risinghill. Turning these schools around requires a change in direction, not a change in the head and/or a change in the name of the school, which still seems to be the current plan of action. It is one thing, however, to change the face of a school but another to change the community in which it is situated, and it is this which successive governments have all failed to comprehend. As was reported in Book 1, when Starcross took over the Risinghill premises, once the honeymoon period was over (of the LCC giving it for the first two years a better distribution of pupils in the higher ability groups, and complete freedom to reorganize the school where money was no object) it succumbed to the problems of the district, and the problems of the education system itself. Starcross was eventually replaced by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (EGA) which, as the authors draft this chapter, is to become a city academy that will open in November 2012. Whether EGA will fare any better as an academy in the long-term remains to be seen – but the authors do wish it well.

Despite all these reforms, it is recognized that many children are still not achieving within the state sector, and this is impacting on their lives, their communities, and the economy as a whole. The fault, as indicated in Book 1, and here in Book 2, lies not with the children but an education system that favours one at the expense of another. The truth of the matter is that choice comes at a cost, and what we are seeing in our schools today is as much the fault of government policy over the last 60 years as it is poor parenting, poor teaching, poor behaviour and poor examination results.

Blair's new academies might have fooled the public, but not those who had a genuine interest in education and were not afraid to speak out:

Tory and New Labour governments have schools to compete in an effort to drive up standards. In the shopping mall competition is driven by the price mechanism, which indicates value and rations the supply of goods and service. In the 'education market' the price mechanism fails because education is compulsory and most people are not prepared to pay the full cost directly. In consequence politicians have devised alternative price-tags. Policy-makers then take the analogy a step further by noting with dismay that their 'education outlets' are all selling the same goods. Their solution is to encourage schools to differentiate between their goods and services by offering specialist products such as engineering or the arts. Such reasoning lies behind the introduction of specialist schools and the recently announced city academies. (Alexander and Potter, 2004)

That some of these 'educational outlets' will, in the face of so much competition, inevitably go to the wall is the dark secret that our politicians do not want to share. The children in these 'outlets' are, of course, the disadvantaged children from poor backgrounds whose parents do not know how to work the system and/or do not have the money to move house. And it goes without saying that these parents do not have the funds to pay for their children's education privately either.

Anthony Giddons (2001) and many other academics, professionals and politicians argue that schools should be educationally and socially comprehensive. But as reported in Book 1, Rab Butler, in 1944, did not believe that education by itself could create the social structure of a country; a view that was shared by Margaret Thatcher, who once famously said "there's no

such thing as society” - and the authors suspect that, in some quarters, this belief still holds good today.

Roy Hattersley, a former Labour MP and Minister, now a Labour Peer, pointed out in 2006 that many schools were still not genuine comprehensives “*either in the range of ability or the social and ethnic origins of the pupils*”(Hattersley, 2006). This was (and still is) an ongoing problem, created by parents opting out of local education to place their children in schools that had better league table results. Tony Blair, Diane Abbot, Ruth Kelly, Harriet Harman and Margaret Hodge were just a few of the New Labour politicians to have done this, choosing the private sector, grant maintained schools or schools outside of their boroughs. When interviewed by the media about their lack of support for local schools, some of them said they were parents first and politicians second. It would seem that what was good for the goose was not necessarily good for the gander. But had Butler (when talking about taking the world as he found it in 1944) not said something similar?

In a keynote speech to the National Grammar Schools Association former Chief Inspector of Schools, Professor Chris Woodhead, made his position on this issue clear:

A further uncertainty rests with the politicians. The parties have different views on selection but education will not be transformed by city academies or by secondary specialist schools. If breadth is to be maintained in the post 18 phase (and onwards for lifelong learning) we must celebrate the virtues of the achievements of grammar schools. It would be a very brave politician who would authorize their cull. (Woodhead, 2005)

David Cameron once spoke about the removal of grammar schools (in a bid to bring about more equality in the system) but there was an immediate backlash from his back-benchers. So yes, the authors too agree that it would take a very brave politician to do away with selection, and they cannot see this happening in the immediate future either.

C4.2 - Testing and examinations

There is much that could be written about the value of testing and examinations; however, to do the subject justice would, like many other aspects of RR, take the authors beyond the scope of this book. Therefore they are only able to provide a brief outline of the main points (as they see them) in relation to the secondary modern/comprehensive school. What they

have found interesting is that, as far back as 1938, the experts were predicting what would happen if governments became too obsessed with examinations:

As the schools gained experience, it was increasingly found that the system tended to restrict their progress. Pupils and teachers had become unduly concerned with examinations; concentration on examination syllabuses and the requirement that pupils must pass in a group of subjects had restricted the initiative of the teachers; and the artificial division between fifth and sixth form work hindered the development of a unified secondary school course. The Spens Committee, reporting in 1938, recorded that witnesses were almost unanimously of the opinion that “despite all safeguards, the School Certificate examination ... now dominates the work of the schools, controlling both the framework and the content of the curriculum. (Secondary School Examinations Council, 1960)

The report continues:

The examination dictates the curriculum and cannot do otherwise; it confines experiment, limits free choice of subject, hampers treatment of subjects, encourages wrong values in the classroom.” We have heard these warnings reiterated, in terms of their own experience and judgement, by teachers, by educational administrators, and not least by the Council’s expert subject advisers who helped us with our study of some of the existing examinations. These arguments, it has been put to us, have all the more force as applied to examinations designed for ability ranges below the G.C.E. level, precisely because the educational pattern in which they will mostly be used is at a relatively early stage of evolution, when diversity and freedom to experiment are all-important, and anything may be harmful which introduces, and adds the stimulus of competition to, a tendency to uniformity, to rigidity in method or subject matter, to mediocrity of standards. In the words of the Ministry’s Circular 289 “An examination on a national basis for modern schools would induce uniformity of syllabuses, curricula and methods at stages and ages where uniformity would be most undesirable. Schools would feel unable to resist pressure to enter pupils for it, and the Minister fears that it would

prejudice the more widespread development of the varied and lively courses already to be found in the best modern schools.” “There is also the risk”, the circular continues – and this danger too we have in mind – “that it would be regarded as an index to the efficiency of schools, a conception which would be unrealistic and even oppressive in view of the wide differences in their circumstances and in the ranges of ability of their pupils. (Secondary School Examinations Council, 1960)

It is the next paragraph that warns about the dangers of relying too heavily on examinations in non-selective schools, such as the ones that we have today:

There is a further argument that can be and has been adduced. Non-selective schools cover a very wide range of aptitude and intelligence. But an examination, it is pointed out, has to be pitched at a particular level. At what level will this examination be pitched? If it is designed for children in the upper ranges of ability, say the first 30% in the age group, can it offer anything which is not already provided by the Ordinary level of the G.C.C.? And even if it can, will its existence not give rise to a sense of failure that may already have been engendered in them by their assignment to a non-selective school? If on the other hand the examination is pitched at a considerably lower standard, so as to cater for the “middle-of-the-road” pupil, will not the numbers taking it, which may run into hundreds of thousands, be such that it will inevitably become a “mass” examination? Examinations for these large numbers, it is urged, tend inevitably to produce “standardization of marking, achieved by a system of markable points; and the only markable points which are both recognizable at a glance and sufficiently objective to ensure uniformity among a large panel of examiners are facts and standardized opinions. This theme, already implicit in some of our own comments in Chapter II on the work of the existing Examining Bodies, is also taken up in Circular 289. “A new examination would have to be designed either for a relatively small proportion of the most able pupils just below G.C.E. standard, or for the majority of pupils leaving at the age of 15. The former would be open to the general objections (indicated) ... and it could not fail to exert

undesirable pressures on those for whom it was too stiff. Moreover its use could not be restricted to modern schools... An examination aimed at the majority of pupils leaving at the age of 15 would be of such a low standard that certification on a national basis would be of little real value. During a period when the modern schools ought to be encouraged to grow steadily in stature such an examination would tend to fix a “modern school standard” too modest to act as an incentive to development. Moreover boys and girls who had obtained a certificate at the age of 15 might well be tempted to leave when they ought to be staying on for a year or two more. (Secondary School Examinations Council, 1960)

Most, if not all, of these predictions have come to pass, begging the question: When is the madness going to end? We have gone from the Higher and Lower Education Certificate to the GCE; from the GCE to the CSE; from the CSE to the GCSE; and after flirting with the Baccalaureate, the Conservatives are now talking about a return to the old GCE. If this happens, the examination system will have gone full circle. This is progress?

C4.3- Is the current system working?

Both Labour and Conservative politicians have maligned the comprehensive, claiming that it has been a disaster. What they have all failed to acknowledge, however, is that very few, true comprehensives have been established in England, thanks to their meddling over the last fifty years or more. If they were to look elsewhere, to countries which do have a true comprehensive system of education in place, they would find that these countries, notably Finland, have better examination results and less social inequality than we do. But this, of course, is another secret that our politicians do not want to share.

But despite all the obstacles that have been thrown in its path the comprehensive has, surprisingly, held its own against the grammar in the examination stakes. This is clear from a study conducted by the Campaign for State Education (CASE) in its ‘Divided We Fail – Comprehensives Succeed’ campaign:

Has comprehensive education failed our children?

In 1965, when 8% of secondary pupils were in comprehensive schools, 17% of all school leavers got 5 passes at the equivalent of GCSE; by 1998, when 86.7% of pupils were in comprehensive schools, 88% got 5 passes at

GCSE. More young people stay on at school and go to university now than when we had grammar schools. In 1970 the percentage of pupils leaving with no graded results was 47%. In 1998 it was 6%. (PQs House of Lords 20.5.99; 9.12.99)

Recent research based on progress made by actual pupils compared the value added between KS3 tests and GCSE. The conclusion was that “comprehensive systems of educational organization are now delivering performance that is at least as good as if not better than that achieved by selective systems”. (Jesson 1999). A recent official analysis of the results of all 15-year old pupils in grammar schools and the top 25% of pupils in comprehensive schools showed that in grammar schools 96.4% achieved 5+ A to C grades at GCSE/GNVQ; whereas in comprehensive schools 100% achieved that. In grammar schools 99.6% achieved 1+ A* to G grades at GCSE/GNVQ; whereas in comprehensive schools 100% achieved that. In grammar schools the average point score per 15-year old pupils was 60.7; whereas in comprehensive schools the average point score was 60.9 (PQ Lords 6.2.2000)*

Much of the research comparing selective or comprehensive systems is now many years old. A recent analysis of House of Lords research concluded that the difference between the systems was small. (Crook, Power and Whitty 1999). Supporters of selection have to justify why we need to put children through the hurdle of selection when there is no evidence that selection provides the best educational opportunities for all children.

(Campaign for State Education (CASE), 2006)

Nevertheless, today many children are still under-achieving in schools, and by and large these are children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

C4.4 - The disaffected

In 2011, truancy rates were up 44% with no indication of there being an improvement in 2012, despite the government threatening parents with court action and fines. An extract from *The Sun*:

Truancy has long seemed unsolvable. It rose 44 per cent under Labour despite them throwing £1billion at it. Some of their measures – fining, or jailing, parents who let children bunk off – had merit. They at least recognized who bore the greatest responsibility for the problem. But many simply ignored the fines, and courts failed to lock them up. David Cameron is right to want to take it further. Cutting benefits for serial offending parents may focus their minds – and their kids’. That’s the stick. Long-term, the carrot may work better. More stimulating lessons and after-school activities increase motivation and reduce truancy. Michael Gove’s schools revolution could improve learning – and slash skiving too.
(The Sun, 2011)

Since then, exclusions and suspensions have also risen, suggesting the ‘carrot and stick’ approach is not working. When the authors read the above piece, they were reminded, once again, of Michael D and his first encounter with Duane. As reported in Book 1, this was a child who had been truanting for years, since he was seven or eight years old, but Duane brought him back into education without imposing any draconian sanctions. Duane listened to children and acted on what they had to say. His methods were simple, non-authoritarian, but very effective all the same.

The authors were also reminded of Duane’s belief that, because parents were required, in law, to ensure that their children attended school, expulsion was illegal. Consequently, they were curious to know how the courts dealt with the parents of children whom had been suspended or excluded permanently by the state, and so were not truanting of their own accord. Finding the answer(s) to this question, however, would, again, have taken them beyond the scope of this book.

Where Sweden’s free schools are concerned, it is important to point out that these have not been the run-away success suggested by Gove:

The schools – set up mainly by middle-class parents in affluent urban areas – had increased social segregation. Furthermore, their pupils had done no better than other children in A Level equivalent exams and were no more likely to participate in higher education.

Now, 17 years after the neo-liberal reforms were first enacted, it appears that they have not managed to bring about decisive changes ... into the Swedish education system. Despite almost 1000 new independent schools and 150,000 students attending them, researchers ... claim that the outcome in terms of achievement induced only slightly higher pupil attainment, but also higher costs and greater segregation. (Wiborg, 2010)

And:

Given that England's education system was already more divided than Sweden's, free schools 'may have more damaging effects on inequality and school segregation' (Wiborg, 2010)

As Gillard noted (2011) “Many others agreed. Clyde Chitty (2010), warned that academies and free schools would do irreparable damage to the education system of this country” and his fears are proving to be justified. Take, for example, the factors associated with truancies and exclusions where, it would seem, one of the reasons for the hike in exclusions is because academies and free schools operate independently of their Local Authorities (LAs), thus making it increasingly difficult for parents to exercise their statutory rights in terms of: (1) appealing exclusion decisions; and (2) making alternative schooling arrangements through their LAs. There is also a suspicion amongst some educationalists that academies and free schools are selecting children on a similar, if not the same, basis as the grammar, and this is exacerbating the problem.

As for Gove's “schools revolution” increasing motivation and “after-school activities”, it is worth noting that, when Gove became the Education Secretary in 2010, one of the first things he cut was the funding for PE and sports: this, at a time when health professionals were expressing concern about the need for children to become more active. Since then, the arts have been disappearing (slowly) from the curriculum, presumably because of the pressure on schools to meet their targets for reading, writing and mathematics. In the private sector, however, PE and sport remains an integral part of the curriculum, along with art, music and drama. It would seem that, while the private sector recognises the importance of providing a balanced curriculum for its pupils, the state sector does not: either that or the state considers

this to be a waste of time for children who have yet to learn how to pass their SATs: an indictment of educational policy in itself.

In bringing this chapter to a close, the authors return to the 1944 Education Act, and ask the question: What, in real terms, has changed? To set the scene, here are some of David Bell's thoughts about the 1944 Education Act on its sixtieth anniversary in 2004. Before becoming the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Education, Bell was the chief inspector at Ofsted. He is now the Vice-Chancellor of Reading University. His speech 'Change and continuity: reflections on the Butler act' (given at the House of Commons) pays tribute to Butler, who is credited with changing the face of education. The authors were particularly interested in what Bell had to say about the 1944 Act taking into account the 'whole child' which, he was quick to point out, chimed with the government's green paper, 'Every Child Matters'. They read this part of his speech with mounting incredulity:

We are about to embark on major change, guided by Every Child Matters, that will bring us full circle, back to the over-riding principles of the 1944 Act. These principles are to focus on the whole child, taking into account their social and welfare needs and not just their academic or other aptitudes. The gestation of the 2004 children bill has been carefully and thoughtfully managed, as was the 1944 Act, which is why I suspect future historians will identify these two pieces of legislation as having had the most influence on education in the 20th and early 21st centuries. (Bell, 2004)

He (Bell) qualified the above statement by pointing out that, although the Act did not define the types of secondary school to be provided, "firm guidance" was offered by the Ministry of Education when this was clearly not the case, at least not where the comprehensive was concerned. The government's failure to provide *any* guidance in this respect resulted in a system that was, as indicated in Book 1, and here in Book 2, not very different to that which had been in place before WWII. Indeed, Bell confirmed this to be the case albeit not directly:

The act did not define the types of secondary school to be provided, but firm guidance by the Ministry of Education stipulated a tripartite system of grammar, technical and secondary modern. However, in practice the

system that developed was largely bipartite, since few technical schools were established. (Bell, 2004)

Bell concluded:

So, overall, should we be disappointed with the progress that the education service has made since the 1944 act received royal assent? Unquestionably not. While we still have a way to go to fully meet the aspirations of the Act, LEAs, governors, headteachers, teachers and carers have worked hard and achieved much that is now taken for granted

Undoubtedly, the education service has markedly improved over the last 60 years. Our young people are better educated, they enjoy greater opportunities than ever before and their aspirations and expectations are higher than we could have dreamed of when we were their age. There is, however, a lot still to be done if we are to fulfil the vision for education outlined in the 1944 act.

If, after sixty years, Bell acknowledged that there was still much work to be done, and nobody would disagree with this statement, then what was the legacy of the 1944 Act? Did it not pave the way for the mishmash of schools that we have today? Or are the authors being overly critical?

It would be wrong to say that there have not been some improvements, but overall the authors do not think there is much to celebrate, and certainly not where the under-privileged in society are concerned. Change is desperately required, but as Michael Duane pointed out, change is impossible without a change in attitudes, particularly towards selection:

A genuinely comprehensive school is, in my view, impossible in an undemocratic system. Every school system in all countries reflects clearly the most dearly-held assumptions of its society. As long as society remains undemocratic, no matter what the external forms of the education system may seem to be, the system will maintain these basic assumptions. (Laiken, Undated)

Hence the reason (perhaps) for all the tinkering around the edges: the sad, but awful, truth is that we still live in a hierarchal, class-based society where selection is a necessary evil, however applied. To illustrate, the authors leave the reader with one final quote from David Laws, Executive Chairman of the Education Policy Institute, on the release of a report about the state of English education in 2016. It would seem that, twelve years after the sixtieth anniversary of the 1944 Education Act, there is still much work to be done:

Today's report demonstrates that, while we are seeing some signs of improvement, there is still a long way to go before the education system performs at a world-class standard. This is especially the case outside of London and for disadvantaged pupils. (In Perera et al., 2016)

This report, entitled 'Education in England: Annual Report 2016' highlights familiar problems, notably that over 60% of our secondary school children and around 40% of our primary school children are still failing to achieve on a par with countries such as Finland and Canada. While the gap between the most disadvantaged in society is improving, by the end of secondary school these children are, on average, two academic years behind their peers. The Newsom Report (1963) had said much the same thing, but as discussed in Book 1, the government of the day chose not to heed the warning(s), preferring to press ahead with its expansion of the grammar school model in a bid to drive up standards. And nothing much has changed since. In April 2018, for example, the current Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced her intention to fund up to one-hundred-forty new free schools, of which many will be grammars, which suggests that the 'Education in England: Annual Report 2016' has been consigned to the waste-paper basket in much the same way that the Newsom Report was.

As a wag once put it, much educational change is akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, and there is no doubt in the minds of the authors that, if politicians continue to meddle in education, come the hundredth anniversary of the 1944 Education Act, there will be even more work to be done if the system has not imploded by then.

CHAPTER C5 - Conclusions

*'The house of delusions is cheap to build but drafty to live in,
and ready at any instant to fall.'*

*A E Houseman (1859-1936)*⁴³

There are several lessons to be drawn from Risinghill, some obvious, some not so obvious, and some that will undoubtedly divide opinion, notably the concept of a single secondary school for all children. The aim of the RRG, from the very beginning, was to establish the facts about Risinghill, and now that these are out in the open, perhaps there will be less speculation about it, less criticism of Duane, and above all, more honesty in the debates about education.

It could be argued that, in revisiting Berg's story of Risinghill, the authors have been presumptuous: that the events examined are now very old; that things are very different nowadays and that what happened in the 1960s does not matter. Let them answer this point briefly. They feel their presumption is justified: (1) because they are now mature adults with memories of their education and further education (formal and informal) to guide them; (2) have seen their children (and for some in the RRG, grandchildren) go through schools which are heirs to the 1960s secondary school system; (3) are the end product of what has been described widely as a failed educational experiment; and (4) have been stigmatized for attending a notorious school with an inspiring and wronged headmaster. An injustice is an injustice, whether committed in the present or in the past, and although Duane was the principal victim, it was not just him who suffered. Akin to collateral damage, the victims were also the children. Isabel's story about one of her job interviews (where she felt that she had been judged, unfairly, on account of her association with Risinghill) bears testament to this fact (as reported in Book 1 at chapter A2).

The Risinghill parents were also victims - in the sense that they were deceived about the comprehensive in much the same way that the authors (on becoming parents) were deceived about beacon schools, specialist schools and the like. Today's parents are in exactly the same position that the authors were in with city academies and, more recently, free schools, being foisted upon them on the back of parental choice. As for their rights under the Education Act,

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Taken from a lecture at University College, London on 3 October 1892

the authors doubt that these amount to much. Schools continue to be closed and replaced on the whims of politicians with parents having very little, if any, say in the matter. To this the authors would add the growing problem of suspensions and permanent exclusions where the rights of both the parent and the child have been compromised, severely, as has been discussed. Building more grammar schools (under the free schools umbrella) will exacerbate the problem, not solve it.

Educationalists are extremely concerned about this state of affairs, notably the lack of accountability (and in some cases, transparency) of academies and free schools which, unlike other schools in the state sector, are accountable directly to the Education Secretary, not their Local Authorities (LAs). As mentioned elsewhere, these schools are funded directly by the government and by private sponsors so are not accountable to their LAs, thus making a mockery of the Education Act insofar as giving local communities (and by implication local parents) a say in how their children should be educated. This change in the 'reporting' structure also has a direct bearing on exclusions (temporary and permanent) in that because LAs no longer have much of a say in the exclusions and appeals process, they do not have the same clout or commitment when it comes to finding the excluded child another school place. By and large it is the disadvantaged child who is suffering the most, and one does not have to look very far to see the effects of this on parents, children and, indeed, communities as a whole.

This slavish preoccupation with standards and testing can also be seen in the number of young people suffering with anxiety and mental health problems, and in the droves of teachers leaving the profession, disillusioned with a system that: (1) does not value them; and (2) does not give them the job satisfaction that they so rightly deserve.

The authors' story has revolved around the following intertwined elements: Michael Duane; Risinghill school; the politics and administration of comprehensive schools; the teachers; the children; and Leila Berg, who continued the debate(s) about Risinghill and so kept its memory alive. In this chapter, the authors provide their collective views and conclusions on the different elements, starting with Duane.

C5.1 - Michael Duane

To the authors, Duane was an impressive man, someone who undoubtedly had presence. That is not to say that they were in awe of him, quite the opposite in fact. He was very

approachable, and for many of the children, a father figure, as the research in Chapter B3 has shown. The children always came first with him, especially troubled children. The authors did wonder how much of that care and commitment came from his turbulent childhood, also how much of it was honed by his harrowing war experiences. His biography would probably make a very interesting book or film.

That he was a gifted teacher and a man of principle shines through the RR story. In today's parlance he was a high flyer, as witnessed by the support from notables in the profession such as John Newsom, Robin Pedley, Kenneth Barnes and Alexander Neill. Socially and politically he was a democrat (in the widest sense of the word) and had little time for elitism; a position that seems to have been strengthened by his experience(s) of Risinghill. Was he a good school administrator? Based on the documents examined by the authors, for example the school's routine instructions to the staff and other material relating to the day-to-day running of Howe Dell and Alderman Woodrow (his previous schools) the authors think yes. Indeed they would argue that it was *because* of his attention to detail and meticulous record-keeping that Berg was able to produce such an accurate account of what happened at Risinghill. It was probably also the reason why Penguin Books (Berg's publisher) was never sued by the LCC or any of the LCC officials named and shamed in her book. The authors are of the opinion that he was nearly, or on top of, his game, possibly missing a trick or two, but at the time he was doing two jobs (his own as well as his deputy's) and was teaching several classes because of the staff shortages. Nevertheless he does appear to have been somewhat naïve in certain respects, for example in failing to recognise that his school was being run down (both in terms of its pupils and its staff) almost from the day that it opened. Hindsight, however, is a wonderful thing, and they doubt that any other head, placed in a similar position, would have recognised what now seems obvious. What also has to be borne in mind is that secondary school rolls were declining in the 1960s so there was no reason for him to be suspicious.

Would he have achieved more if he had not been so unbending – as some of his critics have claimed? On balance the authors think not. He took the right course (a righteous course one would have said in the past) for all the good that it did him. Looking at his career after Risinghill it is, however, difficult not to feel that the fight went out of him in that he continued to receive support from the educational community, and was very much in demand as a public speaker. However, as some of his critics have claimed, he did not achieve much

academically, and this is true ... if one considers the writing of an academic book or several academic books to be the yard-stick for success.

Some might argue that, when Risinghill closed, he was too inflexible to adapt to this new phase in his career and/or was unwilling to accept that he would never be allowed to teach again. That said, again one has to question whether, at the time, he would have recognised what now seems obvious, that his undying and very public support for the comprehensive was hugely embarrassing, and not just for the LCC but for the new Labour government in office. The same could be said for the Conservative administrations that followed. His public abandonment of corporal punishment (CP) at a time when there was no appetite in Westminster to dispense with the practice was another mitigating factor. Politically, he was seriously off message, but whether he would have been aware of this at the time is open to speculation. On CP, probably, and on the comprehensive, possibly, but the authors cannot be absolutely sure. He does seem to have been a man who followed his heart, regardless of the consequences. If there was a lack of spark in his later years, as some have suggested, this was probably more to do with the fact that he suffered a serious illness (encephalitis) in 1977 from which he recovered, but not fully. This might also account for the lack of an academic book as according to Margaret Duane, he was never quite the same afterwards.

C5.2 - The School

The first thing to say is that, contrary to popular opinion, Risinghill was never an experiment in progressive education along the lines of schools such as Summerhill or even Dartington. The authors know – they were there. They wonder, in fact, whether Duane became more aligned with the progressive education movement following Risinghill rather than in advance of it. Philip's 4th or 5th Form timetable (shown below) certainly looks normal, and would not have raised the eyebrows of the architects of the *London School Plan 1947*. That is not to say that, in some respects, he was in advance of his time – the introduction of a school council, sex education and the banning of CP being examples of this, though where CP was concerned, he was following the LCC's official guidelines.

	Morning periods				Afternoon periods			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
M	Social Studies T216	T203	Maths T118 T118		Games or gym			Phys[ics]
T	English T115 T115		Science S108 S108		Social Studies T203	RI T208	English T115	Geom[etry]
W	Math T115	Technical Drawing C101 C101 C101			Music T10	Private Studies T115	Discussion A35	Alge[bra]
T	Art C24 C24		Science S108 S108		Maths T119	PE Gym	Social Studies T208	Chem[istry]
F	Workshop				Eng T202	Clubs		

Philip's 5th Year School Timetable

Notes: Letter/number combinations indicate buildings/classrooms

The last column probably refers to homework subjects for that day

It is not clear if this is for the summer term (4th year) or the autumn term (5th year) or both. Philip thinks it is the Summer term (the first term of Risinghill) since entries correspond to individual diary entries

For the authors, the school, despite its problems, which were common to many inner city schools of the day, was, as they have stated throughout RR, much like the previous schools they had attended. Clearly it was a better learning environment as the class-rooms were light and airy, and its facilities were second to none. As for the corner-cutting which had gone into its construction, leading to issues for the staff and some of the pupils, and which were left suspiciously unresolved, in particular the safety catches on the windows, they were not aware of this or indeed any shortcomings. To the contrary, they were enthralled with the building, as were the majority of the pupils surveyed. However, as reported in Part B of this book, some of the pupils did find the size and scale of the school daunting.

C5.3 - Politics and administration

Politics and social attitudes, both educational and in the wider society, are at the heart of this story and, as the authors have demonstrated, operated at a number of levels. In the 1960s (and indeed beyond) these comprised many threads, some which were explicit, others unstated.

First and foremost there were class attitudes, to the working class in particular; manifested in the cavalier (and authoritative) approach taken towards students, staff and parents alike. The arrogance of elites and administrators within the education system towards what they believed to be their subordinates, and this included the general public, was common at the time. These attitudes, coupled with the divisive structure of English education - by ability to pay, by academic ability, by sect and by sex (all with profound consequences) - was another, huge factor in the equation. So too was the compartmentalisation of education, mediated by geography – comparing in this case the poor and wealthy London districts (Islington and Hampstead). A process which is still in evidence today is the use of schools to follow and/or push political agendas, both from the left and right, with devastating effects. Last but not least is the illusionary concept of parental choice, linked to the market-driven system that is currently in place – again mediated by geography and social divisions.

It is important to remember that the 1960s were a time when new freedoms were emerging, but were not yet established, especially pre 1967, the period under discussion here. People were only just beginning to flex their democratic/social muscles then, much to the concern of the old regime, now under threat and in consequence wanting to put up barriers to change. For Rivinghill there was constant interference by officers working under the LCC's Chief Education Officer (CEO) Houghton, who seemed to be out of sync or sympathy with the LCC's development plan for a system of comprehensive high schools in the capital (*London County Council, 1947*). Maybe this interference was common to all schools, though the authors doubt to the same extent. Rather they are inclined to believe that this was part and parcel of the chronically piecemeal approach to education, in particular its delivery, where, under the 'national system, locally administered' the balance of power seemed to have resided with those who shouted (or were feared) the most. At Howe Dell, for example, it was the chair of the governing body, Alderman Maynard, who seems to have held the balance of power, whereas at Rivinghill it appears have been Mr Houghton, the LCC's CEO.

Along with Berg, the authors strongly suspect that there *was* a hidden agenda to remove Duane and to close Rivinghill long before the official decision was taken, perhaps even before the school opened. Was this a conspiracy? Very possibly, but there was no obvious smoking gun to prove this, only strong, circumstantial evidence. However, they might have missed information destroyed earlier or which is hidden in closed files in the LMA or IOE

though the IOE gave the RRG full access to Duane's papers. If they have missed anything, it is probably at the LMA, not that conversations in corridors get recorded in the archives.

This brings the authors on to the question: Why? It is their contention that, in wanting to please or hoodwink their masters (the LCC councillors, and by proxy Islington's voters), Houghton and his officers wanted what they perceived to be a 'good' school – in other words, good academic results, pupils well-disciplined and under control – all indicators of 'success' in their minds, and in the minds of their masters, the politicians. It is ironic that, despite the obstacles thrown in its path, Risinghill was beginning to deliver on both fronts. Corporal punishment, however, was a lingering issue. To all intents and purposes the LCC had abolished the practice, but in reality was paying lip-service to it. In fact some of its officers were covertly supporting the practice, presumably because it was closely aligned to the previous point, discipline. When Duane announced (publicly) Risinghill's abandonment of CP this was very embarrassing – for the LCC and for other bodies and institutions, including the central government. This, coupled with his impartial support for all children, whatever their academic ability, at a time when academic success was becoming the focus, was probably the final straw that broke the camel's back, along with his vociferous support for the comprehensive, soon to be 'grammarised' – something else that he resisted, strongly. Past issues in his Hertfordshire post (at Howe Dell) and his refusal to take on the Gifford headship all contributed to his downfall. This extraordinary state of affairs was facilitated by the attitudes of politicians (of both the left and the right) and within the Labour Party itself; there being a faction that was beginning to kowtow to the middle-ground voter who supported the grammar school, and did not want to see its amalgamation with the comprehensive. Unfortunately for the plotters, the press was friendly towards Duane and the school, reflecting the emerging people-power that was taking place in the 1960s. It rankles with the authors that their parents (and by implication themselves) were treated with such contempt.

C5.4 - The teachers

At Risinghill, the hostility of the authoritarian left teachers (probably all members of the Communist Party) to Duane's policies exacerbated the teething problems, allowing Houghton's officers to capitalise on what they claimed to be dissent in the ranks. Interestingly, we see, once again, the authoritarian left allying itself with the authoritarian right. Where Terence Constable is concerned, the authors concur with Margaret Duane – that he was a 'plant' among the staff. Enough said.

It goes without saying that, as children, the authors were not aware of the hostilities between the staff and Duane. Along with their fellow pupils they have affectionate memories of most of the staff, and are grateful to them. At the time, they were of course unaware of the pressures that the teachers were under – either because they (the teachers) came from different, perhaps more conservative, educational traditions or were simply very young and inexperienced. Nor did it occur to the authors (as children) that some of the staff would have found Duane frustrating to work with. Where the issue of CP is concerned, some of the RRG members were aware, albeit vaguely, that this was a bone of contention; there being several teachers in the school (mostly male) who continued to beat and bully the children. Whereas Duane was loved, these teachers were disliked intensely. Taken at face value, the informal alliance of Conservative and Communist members of staff against Duane is curious, but wider experience of Communist Party attitudes shows that this was not uncommon. Insofar as the deputy head, Miss A, is concerned, aside from Lynn, the authors had no direct dealings with her. Miss A was the head of Ritchie, Lynn's previous school, and Lynn's opinion of her was that she was strict, but fair. This book gives an overview of some of the teachers' perceptions of Duane and the school, as reported in Chapter A1, and there is not much more that the authors can add to this.

C5.5 - The Children

With the exception of Philip, whose children were partly educated in Holland, everyone else in the RRG sent their children to the local comprehensive and was quite happy to do so. Risinghill had served them well enough – or so they thought - and as such they were not hung up about the grammar. Unfortunately, the RRG did not include a question in its survey with the pupils about this issue – whether they had any strong views about the comprehensive and/or the grammar. However, it did ask them what types of secondary school their children had attended and whether, if they could go back in time, they would have sent them to Risinghill. It also asked them what they thought about Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), school league tables and today's education system in general. The results (in Chapter B4) speak for themselves, and again there is not much more that the authors can say about this.

C5.6 – Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School

The school closed in 1965 amid much press coverage, most of which was hostile towards its closure. Three years later, when Berg's book was published, again there was a lot of press activity with the LCC, once more, coming under attack for closing the school. This was

probably one of the defining episodes of 1960s Britain. Berg's book served to keep the story of Risinghill alive – to the extent that it has never gone away completely. *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School* shone a light on the actions of the LCC and others, and also brought into the open the suspicion that some form of conspiracy (formal or informal) had been in play, making sense of the closure. The veracity of Berg's story and the care taken by Penguin in validating her version of events before publication, along with the authors' researches, adds credence to the view that she was correct. They do, however, have an issue with the way in which the Risinghill pupils and their families were portrayed, as has been discussed in Book 1 and here in Book 2. Whether this was done for rhetorical effect or from some kind of inverted snobbery is difficult to say; however this dramatization probably was responsible for the book having such a wide impact, and for this they should be thankful. On the whole, the authors are deeply grateful to Berg for keeping the Risinghill story alive. They are also indebted to her for providing them with so much information about her memories of that period, and for putting them in touch with key people like Margaret Duane and Bob Dixon.

C5.7 - Risinghill and Today's Schools

Looking from Risinghill to today's education in England the two main questions that arise are: What is the relevance of Risinghill to today's schools, and what is the relevance of it for today's education system?

To answer the first question, Risinghill provides an example of a school that was trying, within the state system, to deliver two things that seem to elude many schools today: (1) a high-quality education to a wide range of children; and (2) to serve those children as individuals, with a primary concern for their happiness. It attempted to do this in very difficult circumstances: in a deprived location that was very run-down; by resourcing constraints; by hostility and interference from the LCC's CEO; and by a rigged system of selection which determined its intake, mainly children in the lower ability groups with a large proportion bordering on ESN. Despite these difficulties, it was succeeding on many fronts: improving on its academic results; decreasing delinquency and truancy; generating splendid artistic outputs; establishing an *esprit de corps*; good race relations; and good integration with the local community. Alas it was not given the time to reap the benefits of its achievements, nor was it allowed to demonstrate its successes.

We should also look on Risinghill as a pioneer in finally seeing the back of CP in schools. It is (nearly) unthinkable⁴⁴ from today's perspective that we would return to the floggings and other abuses which were common in Risinghill's day. Our schools and today's children should applaud Risinghill's brave stand on this as it came at a huge cost – the loss of a promising career (Duane's) and the loss of a school which, ultimately, had a massive impact on its pupils.

The series of events which finally led to the premature closure of Risinghill – and subsequently Berg's story and that of the authors' – have potentially much wider relevance. Though the story has largely been forgotten at the level of individual schools and education authorities, it is still remembered in educational academia, and still used as a case study in some universities and colleges of further education. Where it remains very much a subject of interest is in 'progressive' educational circles or 'radical' education as it is now more commonly understood. The idea of a child-centred education is still very much alive with many still fighting for it. The authors hope that RR will contribute towards that fight and, alongside Berg's book, will continue to inform educational debates and developments.

Beyond these rather small audiences the story tells us much about the structure and prejudices in English society, and the delivery of its education system, then and now. It is perhaps tedious to reiterate them so the authors provide, instead, the key points:

- The system's divisive and fragmented nature, for example divisions by: ability to pay; gender; religion; dubious measured ability; fragmentation by different classes of school (academies, free schools, comprehensives (at least in name if not in substance), etc., etc. How parents are supposed to understand and negotiate their way around this mess is not clear. Nor is it clear to what advantage. Other countries manage without such a stratified system and still outperform the UK academically. Pity too the employer or higher education Admissions Officer, who is also confronted by pupils from all over this jumble;
- Constant change and interference by: politicians; new exams and qualifications (another source of confusion for employers); new forms of funding; new testing and inspection regimes, and new management structures;
- A poorly regarded (and rewarded) and under-professionalised teaching service;

⁴⁴ We say "nearly": the current rightward and authoritarian drift in our society cannot make us 100% confident.

- In-built class differentials – strengthened by geographical factors. Where you live can profoundly affect the quality of the schools available, and where you live is determined by your wealth and mobility;
- Politically inspired goals for education, which dictates how schools are organised (and for whom) and what teachers are supposed to deliver.

From the authors' perspective, it is the children who are important – as individuals and potential citizens rather than as potential economic/workforce fodder. It is their happiness and ability to live in a community that matters.

C5.8 - Authors Final Thoughts

One of the reasons for revisiting the Risinghill story was to give ordinary people an appreciation of the politics behind all the changes that have happened (and are still happening) in education today. The impetus for change is often driven by the consumer, and with this in mind the authors made a conscious decision to write something that would appeal to the prime users of the education service, that being parents and prospective parents whom, by and large, have little understanding of how the system works in practice. Knowledge is power and Berg understood this only too well. Her book was written in the same spirit:

To those who may query my right to record this history, let me say openly and willingly I am not a teacher, a psychologist, a sociologist, and anthropologist, a politician, or even a journalist on the staff of a paper. I am merely a writer, a parent, and a fully-paid-up member of a well-known democracy. (Berg, 1968)

The authors are not teachers, educationalists, politicians, journalists or psychologists either. Nor do they consider themselves to be writers, explaining, in part, the long gestation of this book. However, they are parents and as Berg so eloquently points out “*fully-paid-up members of a well-known democracy*”, one in which there is supposed to be more openness and transparency. If they have learned one thing from revisiting Risinghill, however, it is this: that when it comes to promoting all the changes that have taken place in education, our leaders have been somewhat economical with the truth.

Some of the authors' children, who are now parents, are just as naïve as the authors were in the 1970s and 1980s, not really understanding the debates about the comprehensive school, and all the other schools that have followed in its wake. Their children accept - in much the same way they had - that all the changes that have taken place in education are in their best

interests: that the plethora of schools currently on offer are there to give them more choice, and that SATs and school league tables really do drive up standards. However, when asked to name all of the schools on offer, they are unable to do so, much less tell them what the differences are between them. Similarly, they accept, without question, all the arguments about accountability, Ofsted, and the need to drive up standards, however measured. No doubt when the GCE is reintroduced, they will accept this too, not realizing that the CSE had replaced the GCE when their parents were at school.

The 1944 Act was hailed as one of the milestones in the history of education, providing equality for all children. And our politicians – be they Labour or Conservative – are still saying this today. Every child cannot, and does not, matter in the system that is currently in place; a system that, for the record, has not changed much in sixty years, as RR has demonstrated. There has been a lot of tinkering around the edges (explaining the introduction of so many different schools and changes to the examination system, not to mention Ofsted, SATs and school league tables) but in essence it remains a system that reflects the class-structured society that we have always lived in, of this there is no doubt.

It is clear to the authors that major surgery is required, followed by quiet convalescence, but will this happen? They doubt it, for the simple reason that it would take a seismic change to remove education from politics, especially now when it is becoming privatised through the expansion of academies and free schools. The private management of these schools is a lucrative business, worth billions of pounds to the economy, but the average person has no understanding of how these new schools are funded or function and/or why the government continues to support them. One of the reasons is probably because the genie is out of the bottle, and the other is tied up with money and complicated contracts.

Postscript: notes from the Authors

Each of us in the RRG approached this project with different views and prejudices about the education system. Some of us were more aware than others of the politics of the grammar and the comprehensive, but we were all shocked to discover that Risinghill was not a comprehensive school. Indeed, it was this discovery which prompted our research into the history of the comprehensive; something that, at the time, we were not planning. Our original aim was to write a story about our experiences of Risinghill, using a survey with our fellow pupils to respond to some of the issues raised in Berg's book, notably her portrayal of us coming from deprived and/or dysfunctional homes. There was (and still is) a perception of the disadvantaged child not being as 'bright' or as intelligent as its middle-class counterpart, and we wanted to tackle this. We also wanted to challenge the widely held view that Risinghill had been a rogue school, a 'Blackboard Jungle' no less.

Insofar as Duane was concerned, initially there were mixed views within the group as to whether or not he should play a pivotal role in our story as some felt that this might complicate matters, detracting from our original aim to write about the pupils. It did not take us long, however, to discover that Duane was central to our story, especially if we were to investigate the politics behind the school's closure. We believe that we have provided ample information for people to draw their own conclusions about the part played by him in the Risinghill affair, and leave it at that.

As for the other, equally important, issues that RR raises, much of what we have highlighted about the failure(s) of the education system has all been said before, by respected educationalists far more qualified to talk about this than us. Our story simply puts what many of them have been saying for decades in context. We conclude, with speculation, whether the situation for working class (now transmuted to the disadvantaged) children and the less academically-able has changed much over the years, probably not. The 11+ examination may have disappeared, but there is still selection – in the way that state schools are funded and operate in general. Take, for example, the practice of advertising for pupils in the press: a practice that seems to have become more common in the wake of SATs, school league tables, etc. Some of these advertisements are quite large, often taking a full or half-page, and they are being placed up to a year in advance of admissions. At a time when there is a dire

shortage of school places across the country, and when school budgets are tight, one does have to question why?

Last Personal Thoughts & Conclusions

We all have our different responses to the issues raised in RR and our collective view is as set out above. But of course we all have our own responses to some of the questions, finding some things more important than others, according to our experiences. For example, we have different attitudes towards the question of selection whether by ability (the grammar school issue) or by ability to pay (the private schooling argument).

Isabel

If someone had told me in 2004 that I would spend the next twelve years researching and writing a book about the politics of education, I would not have believed them. It has been a long journey, one that I would probably not choose to go on again. However, I have learned so much in the process, and am pleased to have been part of this project. One of my pet hates is lies, followed closely by injustice. Both turned out to be key elements of the Risinghill story, explaining perhaps my resolve to stick with it when, at times, I was ready to give up. I have to thank Philip here – for the enormous contribution that he has made to RR. Without his inputs RR would not have been possible.

What have I learned from revisiting my old school? Aside from learning that our education system is based on a premise that has no science attached to it whatsoever, I have learned that the comprehensive school is probably the biggest lie that has ever been told in the history of education. The introduction of academies and free schools, however, might well surpass this lie; only time will tell. I have also learned that, in this country, we have a school system that mirrors the class-structured society we have always lived in. Duane was shouting this from the roof-tops back in the 1950s, and I believe his demise was as much for this reason as it was his progressive methods. At the heart of all the debates about secondary education, is selection; something that is skirted around because few are prepared call it what it is, segregation. Schools, from the very beginning, have segregated children on the basis of class, sex, and/or faith and since the introduction of SATs and school league tables, increasingly on academic ability. Every child does not matter in this system, and it is disingenuous to suggest otherwise.

Some educationalists believe that the comprehensive was a missed opportunity, and I have to agree. Had schools like Risinghill been allowed to develop in the way that the *London School Plan 1947* had envisaged – where children of all abilities, all faiths, and all nationalities were educated under the one roof - perhaps by now we would have found a system that was fit for purpose, and one that every citizen could be proud of. If we must have selection in the state sector, then I think the time has come for our politicians to provide the reason(s) for this, and those reasons need to be supported with hard evidence, not a lot of political clap-trap.

Our focus has been on education funded by the state so I have not given a lot of thought to private schooling and/or how this impacts on the system as a whole. These schools are funded indirectly by the state (or so I am led to believe) as they contribute to the economy, reduce pressure on state schools and, I assume, because parents have a statutory right to choose how their children should be educated. In the overall scheme of things, this is not something that bothers me unduly. We live in a democracy, and if people choose to opt out of the state system, this, for me, is the same as giving people the choice to opt out of the NHS to pay for their medical treatment privately. However, I am not an educationalist: if I was, I would probably have a very different view. I suspect that the independent sector does have a negative impact on the education system as a whole, as does the private health sector on the NHS, but I am not in a position to argue the advantages or disadvantages of either. For me, the over-riding principle is one of honesty: without this, it is impossible to bring about change, and change is, without question, desperately needed. There is no doubt in my mind that our education system is, as Duane so often highlighted, tied to the structure of the society we live in: until this fact (uncomfortable though it might be to acknowledge) is recognised and addressed, I cannot see anything changing, which is a depressing note to end on.

Philip

I want to preface these conclusions with a couple of vignettes. I remember my brother telling me how he noted the differences in the children he saw going to school past his house in Lincoln: one set went to a private school uniformed, loaded with bags full of homework, sombre, herded along by their parents; the other set on their way to the local comprehensive free, talkative, full of life, minimally burdened. The contrast was stark and telling; I know - I witnessed this too.

- Perhaps to an even greater extent than in the '60s schools are now focussed on serving the demands of the labour market, producing good consumers, and serving political

goals. These goals outweigh considerations of the child's freedom to explore and exploit their full potentialities and concerns for their fulfilment and happiness.

- There is over anxiety (by government, teachers and politicians) about the child's academic performance; this feeds an illusionary idea of choice.
- A tension between wanting to control the product of school education and increasing privatisation of the means.
- Still too much tweaking and interference by officialdom and government.
- Lip service only paid to the concept of professionalism regarding teachers.
- Too much pressure on children to "succeed" in a narrowly defined sense.

I see little outlook for change at the moment for England. I now live in Scotland, where society is very different and where there is a spirit of change and hope in the air following the recent independence referendum. Perhaps a lead or example will come from the north, where a review is being undertaken of education by the Scottish Government. I hope it looks more towards the Finnish example, which combines attention to children's' needs and very high school performance. I have recently started to follow a Scottish initiative along these lines, Upstart Scotland (<http://www.upstart.scot/>).

Just one last thought: for me the major educational bugbear was the 11+, which categorised people too early, often unfairly, and was socially divisive (as was fundamentally the underlying tri-partite school system). In addition there was no real flexibility to move between schools if the original assessment proved wrong or premature. Add to that the opt-out from the state system for the well off into the privileged private schools. Always at the back of my mind is the question of whose education? for what? for whom? to whose benefit? – I know that as currently structured it is not for the individual or their aspirations. I feel I am just one of very, very many who have not been served well or fairly by the English educational system.

Lynn

This book would not have been finished without Isabel's determination and then ongoing support from Philip and others along the way. Since the start of this book we have all had many personal issues to contend with. Alongside this has been the need for some of us to continue working. Family issues and the need to work definitely limited my ability to be fully involved in this long-term project. Thankfully other ex pupils with a wide variety of skills

came forward to keep this book moving towards completion. What has also proved to be problematic for us was finding a publisher. Many showed an interest but because this book does not sit neatly into any particular category they did not feel it fitted their catalogue.

The research has been interesting and confirms what a diverse group of children attended Risinghill. It has been great to find so many pupils, who have been willing to share their memories and answer our questions. In addition to contact through our website, www.risinghill.org, there is also a Risinghill Facebook group 'In memory of Risinghill school (1960-1965).' Reading the posts and looking at the photos brings interesting connections between pupils, who may not have seen one another for decades.

It can be seen that this is not a traditional academic book, however we hope it can add to the debate on the importance of access to education and good welfare support in its broadest sense. We need to be listening to the needs and wants of children and young people, particularly those who are currently being failed by the education system. I am so pleased that I am not a child of these times, but hope for better long term prospects for my grandchildren and great granddaughter.

If we accept that all children are different and unique, then the challenge for politicians and education professionals should be to ensure that all children are educated to be able to achieve to the best of their abilities, and develop the life and work skills they need. This clearly is not happening when there are so many barriers in place for children, who do not fit the norm of achieving at least five good GCSE's, and then good 'A' level passes. Access to most jobs is now very dependent on academic achievements and being able to complete online tests and interviews.

I hope this book has helped to establish that exam results at school age are not the only measure of a child's intelligence and ability to achieve in life. Many children who have not achieved in school can be intuitively intelligent when resolving problems they encounter in life. Education and intelligence is not the same thing. Intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Education is the process for imparting and receiving the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be necessary at any given time. How we are educated depends on the society we live in. It's also important to recognise that positive and negative learning is something that happens throughout our lives formally and informally. It

could be argued that many of those who feel excluded from wider society find alternative ways to gain money, power and status in the part of society they live in.

At the beginning of this book I wanted to find out if there was any evidence to substantiate what I had been told about intelligence testing Risinghill pupils. I was particularly pleased when we received some information Denis Pym sent to Margaret Duane that corroborated the issue of Risinghill children being able to complete the intelligence tests without being taught how to do them. The view was that the children were taking a different approach to be able to understand the test questions. Unfortunately with the introduction of the national curriculum and continual testing it seems that there is even more focus for children on how to pass tests and exams, rather than encouraging them to research for themselves and think creatively.

State education is an ongoing political experiment and this is unlikely to change because education is subject to party politics, wealth, religious views and the class divisions in our society.

Just before the general election in 2017, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced that she was going to reintroduce selection in education by opening more grammar schools; soon afterwards this manifesto policy was abandoned as it was considered that this would not be a vote winner. So was this policy motivated by children's needs or political gain to win parents votes?

The Risinghill story has shown that children have very little say in their education and changes are often imposed without any real regard on the impact on the children and their teachers. Ex pupils have spoken about the disruption of being moved into and then out of the school when the decision was made to close it after such a short time. Pupils and their parents fought hard to get their voices heard, but as usual the professionals and politicians won.

Pupils and teachers are still subject to political reforms often without any discussions about the reasons and consequences. We have seen moves towards forcing even very young children into formal learning with testing, homework and longer days from a very early age. Is this narrow academic focus what children really want or need?

Most parents and carers want a good education for their children to ensure they can succeed in life. Parents can spend a great deal of time actively seeking out what they feel is the 'best' school for their child. However, there are now so many different types of schools that this can

be confusing. A great deal of research is needed to understand the similarities and differences between: community schools, foundation schools, voluntary schools, academies, grammar schools, special educational needs schools, faith schools, free schools, pupil referral units, city technology colleges, state boarding schools and private independent day and boarding schools.

Parents often use school league tables and the results of Ofsted inspections when trying to rate schools for their child. The terms ‘Tiger Parents’ and ‘Hot Housing Children’ describe the pressured environment for many children whose parents are focused on ensuring academic success.

Living near to a school or having a sibling in a school is no longer a guarantee of a place. To get their children into the school of their choice some families move house or join a church; others who can afford it withdraw from the state system entirely and pay for the education they want for their children. Some parent have also taken the decision to opt out and ‘home school’ their children or have had no other option when their child has not been given a place in a school of their choice. This is a particular problem for children with disabilities where there is a lack of suitable school places to meet their needs.

Unfortunately, the introduction of league tables and the publication of exam results do not benefit children who do not easily fit into mainstream schools, or who are not likely to achieve well enough academically to enhance the school’s exam results. Is it a coincidence that there is an increase in children in Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and alternative local authority provision? From personal experience I know of several children with behaviour/learning difficulties who were attending academies; when it came close to their exam years they were either removed to a PRU, told to ‘study at home’ and not entered for exams or advised to move to a different school more suited to their needs. It is recognised that there are grey areas in the exclusion process and unofficial exclusions do take place. These include: children being excluded within the school, sending children home for a cooling off period and/or part-time teaching.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 says that all children of compulsory school age should receive a full-time education, but unfortunately this is not the case. Statistics from the Department for Education for 2015/16 (www.gov.uk) show that school exclusions are

increasing for permanent and fixed term exclusions. It is notable that children with special educational needs made up almost half of all exclusions.

Children in local authority care also experience more exclusions from school. Their rates of permanent exclusion are twice as high as the rate for all children and they are five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion. I wonder how the Risinghill pupils would fare in today's education system?

Michael Duane's aim was to provide a holistic education for the Risinghill children, combining formal education and welfare as a means of keeping all children in school. Our interviews and questionnaires have shown how much this approach was valued by pupils, who felt that he and other teachers cared about their achievements and wellbeing. There is no doubt that the pupils remember the inspirational teachers and the very worst (especially those who were violent). The records show that, on the whole, we were offered a well-rounded education with broader opportunities to study for exams, and to try out vocational subjects in the school workshops that were open to girls and boys. I will never forget my surprise at being allowed to have metal work and woodwork classes whereas previously at Ritchie my only option was home making classes.

We have demonstrated that children who left school without qualifications in the 1960s were able to achieve and live independent lives because opportunities were available. However, we also have to recognise that the world of work is constantly changing. Our questionnaires show that many of the jobs and career opportunities that our parents and we enjoyed have now disappeared altogether.

Thankfully we, the Risinghill children, lived in a period of full employment with the chance to learn the necessary skills 'on the job' without always having qualifications. We did not leave school feeling failures because we knew we could work in a secure job and earn enough to progress in life. We expected to work; when we were still at school many of us had Saturday jobs, early morning jobs and after school jobs; these work experiences gave us some of the skills and knowledge we needed for joining the workforce. When we left school a wide range of jobs were available to us. There were also apprenticeships with day release from the work place. If we wanted to improve our education and/or skills outside of work, we had easy access to adult education night schools (evening classes). Although it was more difficult to get a university place we did not have to pay tuition fees; there were also local authority

maintenance grants to help fund our periods of study. This book has shown that many of us have benefitted from access to lifelong learning opportunities, including the Open University. Instead of being ‘waste clay’ a period of full employment and opportunities for lifelong learning gave us the opportunity to mould our own lives and careers.

Alan

Being a part of this project for a number of years now has opened my eyes to a number of things, in particular the injustice suffered by Michael Duane.

During my time leading up to and during the Risinghill era, I did not fully understand what was going on. I was more concerned with coming to terms with my deafness and short-sightedness; also I had to cope with illnesses which I now recognize as being the result of the then environment (London smog etc.). Despite this I did play a part in the campaign to stop the school from closing, and as mentioned earlier in the book, my family and I do feature in Leila Berg’s *Risinghill: death of a Comprehensive School* where I am referred to as Roger.

More recently (probably because of my involvement with this project) I have come to appreciate not just the issues surrounding Risinghill, but the thanks that I owe to three very individual headmasters: Mr Straker, my primary school Head; Michael Duane at Risinghill; and Mr Duncan, a retired Headteacher, who was the Training Manager at my first job. It was through the support, guidance and instructions of these three beacons in my life that I mastered what I now regard as one of the most important elements of my education ... the ability to think. You could well ask: Doesn’t everybody have to think to learn? But my own, personal, experience of the end product(s) of today’s education system makes me question this seriously. The way I was taught, was to understand the ‘why’ as well as the ‘how’ whereas nowadays it seems to me that the ‘why’ is fast becoming redundant. For example with the amount and depth of information available on the internet, today’s students have little need to consider why things are as they are, and this is the tragedy. They simply pose the question, get the answer, and MY issue with this is, that to accept the answer without question or proof is not learning.

Coming from an industrial engineering world, I could be accused of being unfair in making such a generalized observation; however, in my defence I can cite examples where failure to understand the ‘why’ leads to problems with the ‘how’ and these incidences are so frequent that I firmly believe it is an issue that transverses all walks of life.

A simple example of this is where young Engineers/Technicians are asked to size cable, or other similar equipment. Nowadays they are taught using lookup tables or specialized software to provide the answer [The How]. But however; when challenged to prove that the answer is correct, they shrug their shoulders and bemoan that they don't know how to, because they have never been taught. Real life situations like this have often lead to equipment being undersized or underrated, thus causing severe safety problems. In such occurrences the need to understand the basics is what I see as the missing WHY.

Despite my views on education, I know that I benefited from my time at Risinghill and that is to the good. However, there are also the bad and ugly to be considered. We (i.e. the Risinghill Research Group) or more accurately Isabel, Philip and Lynn have uncovered and explained the extent to which politics (central and local) determine the success or failure of a school. I was involved with researching the memories and feelings of many ex-pupils and teachers in relation to Michael Duane and the school, and I believe that both have earned their place in the history of modern education. Armed with this background and my subsequent involvement with young people as a mentor in my field, I am firmly of the opinion that education nowadays, despite its shortfalls, has adopted many of the principles introduced by Duane at Risinghill. Yet at the same time, I also see that these principles have, and are being misplaced or at worst, misused. Speaking purely from my own experiences, it is clear that the modern 'technical' teaching is failing to impart knowledge that can educate the pupils to think for themselves. The aim nowadays - whether deliberate or not - is to pass the exam and achieve the A* (or whatever the grading is) and, by doing so, the subject is left behind and, within a short period of time, is forgotten.

It is for all these concerns that I hope the reader reviews the educational issues surrounding Risinghill, and sees not only their historical importance, but also the needs of future generations, many of whom are being let down by a system that pigeon-holes them into an academic box where they become an insert. The system has not and does not encourage learning in the true sense and as a result has, over the years, wasted the abilities and talent of many scholars. The reason is purely and simply because governments are preoccupied with the achievement of academic qualifications for its own sake, rather than seeing what is accomplished with them.

John

I didn't go to Risinghill School but I was well aware of the debacle that went on in 1964 and 1965. At that time I was going out with an ex Risinghill pupil, and a great number of her friends were either still going there or had just left. Before I met her, my perception was that the pupils were a tough lot and not to be messed with. However, once I became friends with a number of them, I realized that they were no different from the pupils at my North London school.

I've covered my background and how I became involved with this project in Book 1, so I won't repeat it here. Looking at the Risinghill story there was obviously a lot going on behind closed doors that we may never know. Look at just two of the philosophies that Michael Duane supported, banning corporal punishment and comprehensive schooling. Corporal punishment is against the law now and, in some parts of England, the comprehensive system works. I suspect that Michael Duane was a little too far ahead of his time for the 'fuddy duddies' in charge and, quite rightly, he wouldn't back down. For a school to be set up at great expense and only remain in existence for five years must have been an enormous waste of public funds. What was worse, the children's education should have been priority and obviously wasn't.

I went to Stroud Green School (SGS) infants and juniors from 1952 until 1958. It was built in 1896 and divided up with infants on the ground floor, juniors on the first floor and seniors on the second (top) floor. My grandad used to look at my SGS badge on my green blazer and say it stood for Silly Girls School! I think he was right.

It was about 1956 when we were told that we wouldn't be going to the seniors in the Stroud Green building. In September 1958 my secondary education started in a new Secondary Modern school. The plan was to have one large school for Hornsey and Highgate located fairly geographically central in Crouch End. Bishopswood (now Highgate Wood) combined several senior schools from the Hornsey and Highgate area and we were the first intake, born September 1946 to August 1947. Unfortunately, the building wouldn't be ready to move into until September 1961 so we had to travel to the disused Tetherdown School building in Muswell Hill. As I lived in Stroud Green at the time, it was a long bus journey and a lot of walking. As we were the first intake there were no older bullies to worry about, which was great for me as I was a skinny lad. One of the quips I had to put up with was 'When he turns

sideways he disappears!' Also, not having to go to Stroud Green Seniors meant I avoided being beaten up by Bob Hoskins and his mates. Result!

We had several Grammar Schools in Hornsey but they couldn't cope with the sheer number of potential 11plus students in 1958. Word was they picked the pupils with well-off parents! One of my pals, who lived in the same Council flats as me, was very bright but didn't get a pass and he ended up as a senior manager with Whitbread plc. This wasn't a problem for me as I had dropped out of the A stream when I was 9. I never did recover after having my tonsils out. Well that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it. My biggest failing was spelling and that was paramount to being in the A stream in those days. Mind you, I have to admit I was also very lazy and hated studying.

However, looking back at my secondary education I feel I was lucky. I didn't have any academic interests and so the class timetable included more practical studies. Obviously, we all had to study the three R's (Reading wRiting and aRithmetic) but we had a lot of woodwork, metalwork, art and PE. I was quite good at mathematics and I loved history, geography and science but I was only really good at art but that didn't seem to count for anything! In those days we didn't worry about leaving school without qualifications. Our main concern was how soon could we leave and get a job. This was because getting a job was easy and you didn't need O or A levels. This did present me with problems later in life and to further my career in Post Office Telephones; I had to start college when I was 20. With hindsight, I regret not doing better at school. However, for an average child to do well at school, I'm convinced they need help and encouragement from their parents, something I never had.

As my close family has influenced my thoughts and conclusions on English schooling I'll give a synopsis of each one.

My brother went to the same school as me, but 5 years later. From what he told me, not a lot had changed. He wanted to be an instrument toolmaker and got the qualifications required.

My younger sister was an avid reader and a good speller and she passed the 11plus and went to Hornsey High for Girls. However, she wasn't academic and struggled. What's more, as Mum and Dad didn't have any spare income, she couldn't do the things she wanted to do at school, like tennis. When she tried to invite friends round, Mum would say they were too

posh. I think she ended up with no good friends from her grammar school. I reckon the lack of money and class status held her back. She did get a good office job though.

My wife's early schooling was similar to my sister. She was an avid reader and very good at spelling and writing. She was good at arithmetic but struggled with mathematics. That said, she was expected to pass the 11 plus. When she failed, the school arranged a meeting with her parents. She just didn't want to go to Leyton County High School for Girls especially as the school uniform included a straw boater hat! She just wanted to attend the same school as her friends. Like a lot of girls in those days, she just concentrated on practicing her typing skills, as she knew she could earn good money. In her heyday she went for a job interview with BP. When they tested her typing skills she typed 105 words per minute on an electric typewriter and 86 on a manual. She got the job.

My daughter was born in 1973 and first went to Grove Road School in Rayleigh. She had a traumatic experience when her close friend, who was near to her in the school swimming pool, hit her head and subsequently died, there was no counselling in those days! She was never quite the same little girl after that. In 1981 we moved to Eastwood so she had to change schools and she struggled to keep up. Her reading and spelling were always good but not her mathematics. What's more, I found it difficult helping her, as she would argue that I was wrong. As an example, we were working on volumes once and she insisted the calculation was height x width + depth. When I said that was wrong as I knew how to calculate volumes, she said, "I thought volume was sound!" I used that anecdote in my speech at her wedding much to her embarrassment. That's what dads are for. Needless to say, she didn't pass the 11plus. She managed to get some GCSE's and ended up - you will like this one - working for the Institute of Mathematics & its Applied Applications (IMA) in Southend.

My son was born in 1976 and had a better schooling than my daughter. His junior form teacher was an ex RAF pilot who flew Spitfires in the war. He inspired all his class and provided a foundation for my son's education. He could make every subject interesting. He passed the 11plus and went to Southend High School for Boys. From there he went to the Kent Institute of Art & Design (KIAD) in Maidstone where he got a first class honours degree. He then worked with the Art Attack TV programme team for a year. He then went on to do a post grad course in teaching and never looked back. He is now an Assistant Principle for an American owned school that teaches expats in Sweden.

Looking at public education in general, I'm not sure a lot has changed since I was at school. The modern way to make a business efficient is to introduce targets and set ways of monitoring performance. This approach only works if the body setting the targets understands what needs to be monitored and doesn't set too many parameters. Unfortunately, human nature being what it is, some individuals will cheat with the figures.

Years ago the teachers were not monitored like they are today. However, if they didn't come up to scratch, the head would sack them! Simple. Most of the teachers at my secondary school were excellent. They were proud of their jobs and were treated with respect by most of the pupils and their parents.

I think the biggest problem we have today is that pupils leaving school, with or without good qualifications, cannot get a job.

Yvonne.

Despite the presence of Mr Duane at Risinghill, a good teacher who tried to make a difference to the educational experiences of the young in his charge and the education system itself, the school played no part in my academic successes. Rather, the school, which was tough to survive, added to the nightmare that was my life. Nonetheless, I would say I am glad I had that experience because, in spite of the education I received and perhaps even because of it, I was more determined to succeed. And, I did. My nursing qualifications enabled me to take on the responsibility of running a busy Accident and Emergency department until my late forties, when I changed career and became a teacher for over ten years. I found teaching a hard and thankless job; I put a lot of myself into my work, but it was clear that I wanted more for the youngsters than they wanted for themselves. Those in my charge had so many more opportunities than we ever did, but most seemed to have no interest in grabbing them. I hesitate to suggest it may have been the geographical area I was working in, but the attitude of the children in the area I lived, including my own children and grandchildren, was a little different.

In my opinion, children today have lost that hunger for life. Perhaps this is partly because they have not had the opportunity to grab it or been encouraged by both parents and teachers to do so. Children are surrounded by expensive things that have been bought for them and by engagement to a huge extent with social media to the detriment of other activities. Schools frown on competition and in so doing fail to teach children one of life's lessons; that they can

fail but that hard work and struggle can make a difference. In other words, schools and for those that attend, universities, do not prepare children for the next stage in their lives. Making matters worse, labels are readily applied to any child who does not quite fit in with the school's ethos. Individualism is discouraged. Parents ferry their children from place to place and, in so doing, do not encourage them to take responsibility in any way in any area of their lives. Rather than being the 'parent', mothers and fathers choose instead to become their children's 'best' friend. Even children of less privileged parents, still manage to be given the latest 'in things' in order that they are not seen to be different from other children and to show that parents can provide. When I was a child, poor parents were concerned about providing food, clothing and heating for their families. Maybe, children today do not feel the divide between social classes in the same way as we did, despite what the media claims, because their parents try to close this divide by keeping their children supplied with the latest trends.

A close relative of mine who has been a primary school teacher for three years, said to me recently, 'the children I teach are only seven and eight years old – I'm not going to make any difference to their lives'. I sincerely hope this is not a feeling shared by her peers. This is obviously the wrong attitude for a young teacher. It is also wrong to imagine that all eighteen-year olds should be expected to go to university; it is not for everybody irrespective of class or privilege. I have been a university lecturer and have seen many unhappy young people who would rather be experiencing the workplace and many others who have been set up for failure because they cannot do the work. Rather than lowering the standard of the work to allow these young people to achieve, would it not be better that they were not pressurized, either overtly or covertly, to attend a university but encouraged to select a career more suited to their particular strengths? The benefits to them in terms of self-esteem would be tremendous.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – The teachers’ questionnaire

The following questionnaire is designed to be answered by ex-teachers of Risinghill Comprehensive School. Please answer all applicable questions and continue on a separate sheet if necessary All information will be held in the strictest confidence and used only by the Risinghill Research Group.

Section One: Personal Information

Question					
1.1	Surname:				
1.2	First Name:				
1.3	Gender				
1.4	Surname at Risinghill if different from above				
1.5	Current contact details: (Address, Telephone No email etc.,) *optional				
1.6	Age range when joining Risinghill <small>(Circle applicable group)</small>	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
1.7	Ethnicity:				
1.8	Languages spoken other than English:				
1.9	Where did you live when you taught at Risinghill:				

N.B This part of the questionnaire is to be separated from the main body.

Section two: Teaching before Risinghill

Question			
2.1	Did you teach at one of the following schools before joining Risinghill, if so which one (Circle applicable group)		
	Northampton Boys	Bloomsbury	
	Gifford	Ritchie	
	A.N.Other (please indicate the name of the school)	Ans:	
2.2	How long had you been teaching at the above school and what subjects did you teach?		
	Ans:		
2.3	Was corporal punishment used at this school? [Yes/No] If yes can you give details of how it was applied and by whom?		
	Ans:		
2.4	If the answer to Question 2.3 is YES, how effective was the corporal punishment? (Circle applicable group)		
	Very Effective	Fairly Effective	Not Effective at all
2.5	Can you recall what your feelings were regarding corporal punishment prior to joining Risinghill and whether or not these views changed afterwards?		
	Ans:		
2.6	Where you ever in receipt of any LCC booklet or instruction concerning the need and/or usage of corporal punishment (YES / NO). If YES can you explain how you came by this and have you still got it?		
	Ans:		

Section three: Amalgamation

Question			
3.1	At the time of the amalgamation did you belong to a teaching union? If so which one:		
	Ans:		
3.2	Do you know why the decision was taken to amalgamate the four schools into Risinghill?		
	Ans:		
3.3	If you came from one of the four main schools cited in question 2.1, please answer the following questions. If not please go to question 3.4		
A	Did you agree with the amalgamation of your school	Yes/No	
B	What benefits or disadvantages did you envisage?	Ans:	
C	How far were you involved with the amalgamation? (Circle applicable group)	Very involved	Partly involved
		Not involved at all	Can't remember?
D	How far were the unions in the	Very involved	Partly involved
			Mostly involved

	school involved in the amalgamation? <i>(Circle applicable group)</i>	Not involved at all	Can't remember?	
E	Did you have to reapply for a position at Risinghill?		Yes/No	
F	When you transferred to Risinghill were you:	Promoted Demoted Stayed at the same level		
G	What methods were used to stream pupils for the new school, and were you involved in this process?	Comments:		

Question 3.4	What were your views on the amalgamation and integration processes? <i>Tick the three boxes you most agree with</i>		
	Pupils	Teachers	Other staff
Fully achieved			
Mostly achieved			
Partly achieved			
Not achieved at all			
Can't remember			
Other Comments:			

Section four: Joining Risinghill

Question						
4.1	What year did you join Risinghill?					
4.2	What position/s did you hold at Risinghill?					
	For Example: Management, Head of House, House Tutor, Subject Teacher Other					
4.3	What subject/s did you teach at Risinghill? (If different from question 2.2)					
	Ans:					
4.4	Was the educational ethos at Risinghill explained to you when you joined <i>if so – how by?</i>					
	YES / NO					
	Comments:					
4.5	From your personal experiences how far would you agree with the following statements about the children's families you taught?					
Views about Families		All	Most	Some	None	Other comments
The families could be described as working class						
The families lived in very poor housing conditions						
The parents had received a limited education						
They understood the benefits of further education?						
They supported their children's education by attending the school meetings and open events?						
They helped their children with their homework?						

Their homes contained books for the children to read?					
They used corporal punishment as the main form of control?					
They supported the school in its attempts to improve their children's language and behaviour?					
The families wanted the best for their children					
The families had different expectations for boys and girls					
Both parents worked					
The families spoke English as a second language					
The families suffered from one or more forms of deprivation					

Please expand on any of your answers to the questions above or provide other relevant information about the families on a separate sheet of paper

Section five: Children's abilities and experiences at Risinghill

Question						
5.1	What methods were used to stream children when they joined Risinghill?					
	Ans:					
5.2A 5.2B	Would you describe Risinghill as a comprehensive school? (YES/NO) Given that the majority of the children who attended Risinghill were in the lower ability bands – how were the differing educational needs catered for across the whole spectrum? <i>(For example access to the curriculum, vocational classes, entry to exams etc, special educational input etc)</i>					
	Ans:					
5.3	Were you aware of children suffering from bullying or any other forms of abuse in the school and/or at home? (YES/NO) If so, was this reported, and what forms of action were taken, if any?					
	Ans:					
5.4	Do you feel that some of the children/ classes you taught were virtually unteachable? (YES/NO) If yes what would say the reasons were					
	Ans:					
5.5	Were you aware of the use of the Raven's Matrices or other intelligence tests being used to assess the children at the school? (YES/NO)					
5.6	How would you describe the quality of the different aspects at Risinghill?					
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> The quality of the building/s The layout of the school The range of facilities, The breadth of the curriculum The quality of teaching The stability of the teaching team </td> <td>Ans:</td> </tr> </table>	The quality of the building/s The layout of the school The range of facilities, The breadth of the curriculum The quality of teaching The stability of the teaching team	Ans:			
The quality of the building/s The layout of the school The range of facilities, The breadth of the curriculum The quality of teaching The stability of the teaching team	Ans:					
5.7	How much contact did you and the other teaching staff have with Michael Duane?					
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>Formal Meetings</td> <td>Informal Meetings</td> <td>Individual supervision</td> <td>Staff Room</td> </tr> </table>		Formal Meetings	Informal Meetings	Individual supervision	Staff Room
	Formal Meetings	Informal Meetings	Individual supervision	Staff Room		

Regular contact				
Some contact				
Very little Contact				
No contact at all				
Can't remember				
Comments:				
5.8	How far were the teaching staff involved in the running of the school?			
	Very involved Partly involved Not involved at all Comments:	Ans:		
5.9	As the headmaster, did Michael Duane prioritise the needs of any or all of the following?			
		High	Medium	Low
	The pupils			
	The teachers			
	The parents			
	The governing body			
	The educational authority			
5.10	In your view were problems caused because <i>some of the</i> teachers did not have enough experience to manage their classes without using corporal punishment?			
	Ans:			
5.11	Were you involved in the School Council? (YES/NO)			
5.12	Do you think the School Council was helpful for the running of the school? (YES/NO)			
5.13 A	Did you or any other teachers use corporal punishment at Risinghill? (YES/NO) If YES what type of punishment was given and who administered this? If NO what types of punishment/sanctions were used and were these successful?			
	Ans:			
5.13 B	If corporal punishment was used, was Mr Duane aware of this? (YES/NO)			
5.14	Would you say there were factions within the teaching staff at Risinghill? (YES/NO)			
	If yes were the factions split between any or all of the following: Management positions Subject specialisms Union membership Political views Views on corporal punishment/discipline Other	Ans:		
5.15	What do you think prompted the inspections of Risinghill?			
	Ans:			
5.16	Do you feel that the inspections of Risinghill were justified?			
	Ans:			
5.17	Do you feel that the inspectors were sympathetic to the school?			
	Ans:			
5.18	Did you agree with the findings from these inspections?			

	Ans:	
5.19	Would you describe Risinghill as an integrated multi-cultural school? If yes, how would you say this was achieved?	
	Ans:	
5.20	Do you believe that the reasons the authority gave when they took the decision to close the school were justified?	
	Starcross school needed new premises	
	Risinghill was under subscribed	
	There was plenty of spare space in local secondary schools	
	The school governors unanimously endorsed the closure	
	New parents wanted single sex schools	
5.21	In your view was there a hidden agenda behind the closure and what were the real reasons for this?	
	Ans:	
5.22	Can you remember when you first began to feel that the school (and perhaps your job) was at risk because of Starcross?	
	Ans:	
5.23	In your view did the majority of teachers support the closure of the school?	
	YES / NO / DON'T KNOW	

5.24	Did you agree with the closure of the school and if so why?	
	Ans:	
5.25	Did the majority of families support Michael Duane and want the school to stay open?	
	YES / NO / DON'T KNOW	
5.26	Similarly, did the majority of teachers support Michael Duane in wanting the school to remain open?	
	YES / NO / DON'T KNOW	
5.27	Were you involved in the campaign to keep the school open? YES/NO If yes, what did you do?	
	Ans:	
5.28	When did you leave Risinghill and why?	
	Ans:	
5.29	In your view: What were the schools 5 main strengths?	
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	

	5.	
5.30	In your view: What were the schools 5 main weaknesses?	
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
5.31	Can you describe any examples of good practice and co-operation between pupils and teachers at Risinghill?	
	Ans:	
5.32	Can you give any examples of serious conflict you witnessed at Risinghill?	
	Ans:	
5.33	Would you have supported a public inquiry into the school's closure at the time? YES/NO	
	And do you know why such an inquiry was never held?	
	Ans:	

<i>Section six: Nowadays</i>	
Question	
6.1	What do you think of the Education system today? Is it better or worse?
	Ans:
6.2	In your opinion are SATS and regular testing necessary?
	Ans:
6.3	Do you think that school league tables are necessary?
	Ans:
6.4	Do you feel that a return to focussing on vocational education will benefit some groups of children?
	Ans:
6.5	What do you think are the most important things that children need to learn in school?
	Ans:
6.6	Do you have any other comments/anecdotes about your time at Risinghill, or education today?
	Ans:
6.7	If a reunion and/or television programme were organised would you be interested in taking part?
	YES / NO / DON'T KNOW

Thank you for taking the time and effort in answering these questions, If you have queries or want to pose questions or points of view concerning Risinghill not covered in the above questionnaire please contact us at the above address or: -

Risinghill Research Group

Our website address can be found at: www.risinghill.co.uk

Appendix 2 - The pupils' questionnaire

‘RISINGHILL REVISITED’ QUESTIONNAIRE

Full Name:(please print)	Age:
Name at Risinghill:(please print)	Ethnicity:
The school opened in May 1960 Year that you joined (i.e. 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964 or 1965)	Year:
How old were you when you started Risinghill?	Age:
Address when you joined Risinghill : How did you travel to school?	Type of Accommodation house/flat/rooms (owned, council or private rented) Travel:
What type of family did you live in (i.e. 2 parents, single parent, extended family foster or adopted family?)	Family:
How many people were there in your family (include brothers, sisters and any other relatives)? Did you all share the same accommodation?	Number: Share: Yes/No
Is English your first language, if not what other language/s did you speak and could you speak English when you started at Risinghill?	
Did your parents both work if so what type of work did they do?	Parents Occupation Father: Mother:
How do you think you would have described your family's status as a child? For example did you think you were comfortably off, just average or poor?	Very Good Good Adequate Poor
How do you think you would have described the quality of your housing if asked this question when you were a child?	Very Good Good Adequate Poor
Similarly, how do you think you would have described your street/road overall? (In making this assessment, include the type of people living in the street with you)	Very Good Good Adequate Poor
Did you like the area in which you lived when you were a child? If not please explain why?	Yes/No

Where and/or how did you meet your friends out of school hours? And what did you do?	
Were you ever conscious of living in “deprived” circumstances? If so can you explain what was missing from your life?	
Do you think your family was poor, if so why?	
Was your family a happy one?	Yes/ No
Did you have a job when you were at school, either in the evenings or at weekends?	If Yes, please give brief details
If your childhood was unhappy (and it is not too sensitive a question) can you explain why? If not, go to the next question.	
What was your school before Risinghill? Gifford, Ritchie, Northampton, Bloomsbury, Primary. At that time did you know why the schools closed and were amalgamated into Risinghill?	School: Reason:
Do you remember being punished at Risinghill or in your previous school?	Yes/No
If so can you give details i.e. Cane/Ruler/Detention/Any Other (and name of school.)	Method: School:
Who administered the punishment? Headteacher, House Teacher, Form Teacher?	
In your opinion how did Risinghill compare with your previous school in terms of the building itself, the facilities, the wider curriculum and the quality of teaching? Was it better, similar or worse?	Building: Facilities: Curriculum: Teaching: Discipline: Atmosphere:
What House were you in at Risinghill i.e. Blake, Johnson, Defoe, Keats, Fox, Milton.	
Can you remember the name of your House Tutor?	
Can you remember what class you were in when you joined Risinghill? (i.e. 3C)	
Did you stay in the same grade each year, or did you go up/down?	

How old were you when you left school?	Age:
Do you remember the Headteacher, Mr Duane? If you had personal contact with him, what did you think of him?	Yes/No/Can't remember (Use separate sheet if necessary)
Were you and/or your parents involved in the campaign to stop Risinghill closing? If so, please give details.	Use separate sheet if necessary
If you went to another school when Risinghill closed, please specify the school	School:
How did this school compare with Risinghill?	Better/Same/Worse
Did you leave school with any qualifications? If yes please specify and the school where they were achieved	Qualifications: School:
Would you still like to improve any aspects of your education, if so what?	
Can you remember your ambitions when you left school? (Work, Family, Education)	Ambitions:
Have any of these ambitions been achieved?	Yes No
What types of work have you done since leaving school?	
Did you enjoy any of this work in particular and if so why?	
Have you achieved any qualifications since leaving school? If yes, please give details	
What parts of your education did you enjoy the most?	
What parts were most important and/or useful for you?	

Looking back, do you think Risinghill should have remained open?	Yes No
If Risinghill had a detrimental effect on your life, can you give details?	
Do you believe that Risinghill or anyone at the school particularly influenced or contributed to your life in any way?	Details:
Do you still live in the same area as when you were at Risinghill, if not what area do you live in now?	Yes No Area:
If you have children of your own what type of school/s did they attend?	
If you could go back in time would you or wouldn't you have sent them to Risinghill and why?	Yes/No
What do you think of the Education system today? Is it better or worse?	Better Worse Comments:
In your opinion are SATS and regular testing necessary?	Yes No
Do you think school league tables are necessary?	Yes No
What do you think are the most important things children need to learn in school?	
How would you describe your life now?	
Current Contact Details: Address/Telephone/Email (<i>This is optional, see *** below</i>)	

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